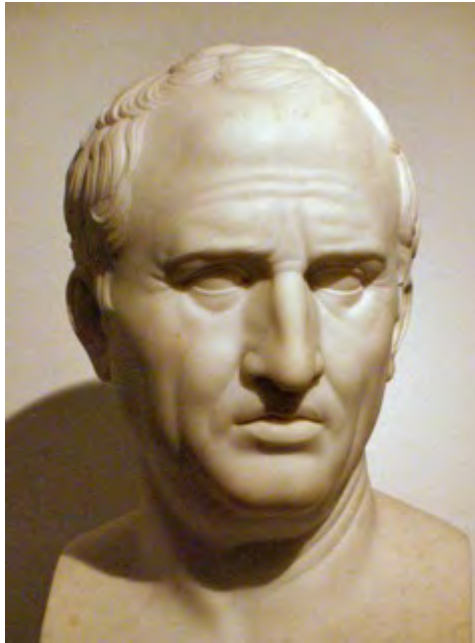


O TEMPORA! O MORES!



Cicero

“O Tempora! O Mores!”

Cicero

Georges M. Halpern, MD, PhD

with Yves P. Huin

O TEMPORA! O MORES!



"*O tempora!, o mores!*" is an observation by Cicero in the fourth book of his Second Oration against Gaius Verres (chapter 25) and First Oration against Lucius Sergius Catilina. It translates literally as *Oh the times! Oh, the customs!* but more accurately as *Oh what times! Oh, what customs!*

The cover story of *The Atlantic* June 2017 issue was written –shortly before he died in March 2017- by the Pulitzer Prize- winning journalist and author Alex Tizon. The title is ***My Family's Slave***. It described the life, death and story of *Lola*.

"She lived with us for 56 years. She raised me and my siblings without pay. I was 11, a typical American kid, before I realized who she was." Who was she? And why this story? "Her name was Eudocia Tomas Pulido. We called her Lola. She was 4 foot 11, with mocha-brown skin and almond eyes that I can still see looking into mine—my first memory. She was 18 years old when my grandfather gave her to my mother as a gift, and when my family moved to the United States, we brought her with us. No other word but slave encompassed the life she lived. Her days began before everyone else woke and ended after we went to bed. She prepared three meals a day, cleaned the house, waited on my parents, and took care of my four siblings and me. My parents never paid her, and they scolded her constantly. She wasn't kept in leg irons, but she might as well have been. So many nights, on my way to the bathroom, I'd spot her sleeping in a corner, slumped against a mound of laundry, her fingers clutching a garment she was in the middle of folding."



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This type of ‘employment’ with a meager or no salary at all is common in China and Southeast Asia –and elsewhere. Poor –mostly rural- families are happy to give away their daughter(s) to save on education, food, clothing, and escape the recruiters for brothels.

In the May 18, 2017 issue of *Time* magazine, Joseph Hincks writes a long article titled: ***In the World's Most Expensive City, 1 in 10 Maids Sleeps in a Kitchen, Toilet, or Corner of the Living Room.*** He describes the daily condition of several ‘maids-helpers’, now mostly from Indonesia. He writes:

‘Hong Kong's labor law stipulates that employers must provide migrant workers with "suitable" furnished accommodation with “reasonable privacy” but its vagueness opens the system to abuse. The only two examples of unsuitable accommodation specified in the regulations are “made-do beds in the corridor with little privacy” or rooms shared with teenage or adult members of the opposite sex.

Mission for Migrant Workers says that expanding the definition of what constitutes unsuitable accommodation to include balconies, toilets, kitchens and the like would help.

Hong Kong has not ratified the Geneva-based International Labor Office's most recent Convention on Domestic Workers (C189), which among other guidelines states that maids must not be forced to live at their place of work. Although Singapore—which has been criticized for its treatment of migrant domestic workers—has not ratified the convention either, its on-paper requirements for domestic workers' accommodation are at least more exacting. Rooms must be properly ventilated, beds not near any dangerous equipment, and maids should have "adequate space and privacy," Singapore's ordinance states.

A spokesperson for Hong Kong's Labour Department told TIME by email that it was "not feasible or appropriate to provide a more detailed or exhaustive definition of suitable accommodation," without stating why this was the case. The spokesperson did note that employers are required to submit details of the accommodation they intend to provide to the immigration department for assessment before a migrant domestic worker arrives.’

And on September 19, 2013, the *Wall Street Journal* published an article saying:

‘A Hong Kong couple were sentenced to prison this week for torturing their Indonesian

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maid. Tai Chi-wai and Catherine Au Yuk-shan will be jailed for just over three years and 5 1/2 years, respectively, the court said Wednesday. The couple, who denied the charges, were found guilty of repeatedly assaulting Kartika Puspitasari over a two-year period, during which she said she was forced to wear diapers, whipped with a bicycle chain and scalded with a hot iron on her face and arms. The court also heard testimony that she was periodically kept bound in a chair and denied food before receiving assistance from the Indonesian consulate last October’.

Since March 26, 2017, Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor is the Chief Executive of Hong Kong. A pure product of the political/business oligarchy, she (in)famously asked during the fraught electoral campaign if *‘toilet paper is sold at 7-Eleven’*, and takes a taxi to go around the block because *‘it is difficult to walk on crowded sidewalks in Hong Kong’*. She never rode the MTR, the only daily mean of transportation for millions of Hongkongers. She represents fairly well the coterie that runs the SAR- like a reincarnation of an Asian *Godfather* extended family.

YES, slavery exists in many parts of the world. Since passports and other official papers are usually confiscated by the ‘employment agent’ or the employer, these women are at the mercy of their ‘owners’. Rape is common. Complaints are rare, and the police is far from always being sympathetic, often even less helpful.

If you can afford a human servant who cleans, washes, irons, dusts, cooks, cares very well for the children/elderly parents/guests –all this without higher energy bills-, human labor is a real bargain. Slavery these days is here to last, everywhere.



I was a Butler...



Alamy Stock Photo

Obviously, I never looked *that* professional and handsome! But indeed, in May-July 1951, in Edinburgh, Scotland, I was hired by a couple, the MacDonnell.

Food in Scotland –the whole UK- was rationed; this lasted until 1953. You should have your *coupons* to avoid starvation. And even then, the food was despicable. The family who hosted me –as part of an exchange program with the Lycée Henri IV- were the MacCullochs. Nice but poor. Their breakfast was a *porridge* without milk, salt or sugar, and dinner was forgettable.

During weekdays, I had lunch at the George Watson's Boys College (GWBC); that fed me, but barely. I still remember the daily dessert: it was Jell-O; on Monday it was green, on Tuesday yellow, Wednesday was for orange, Thursday it was blue, and Friday bright red. Hence we knew the day of the week...

The daylight was very long at 56° N, and I had plenty of time each afternoon to amble on Princes Street, at the foot of the Castle, and in lots of parks. Princes Street '*never slept*'; there were lots of bars, open until dawn, and quite a few (occasional)

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prostitutes. Some were French, and I befriended one, Jacqueline, to whom I confided my hunger. She asked me if I would accept to be a *butler*, a.k.a. a male servant; she had a couple –the MacDonnell- with whom she was doing *threesomes*, and the missus needed a part-time servant (not during daytime, but certainly on weekends); she was offering room & board and a small stipend –that, to me, glittered as a fortune. I met the couple the next day, before they embarked on their acrobatics with Jacqueline, and visited them the very next Saturday to seal the deal.

For 10 weeks, I started at 05:00 by collecting the milk and *The Times* on the doorstep. I then ironed *The Times* to prevent ink stains on the fingers of Mr. MacDonnell; and got their breakfast ready. At 07:00, I served breakfast and delivered *The Times* in the masters' bedroom. Then, after cleaning the kitchen thoroughly, off I was to GWBC until 16:30. My late afternoons were devoted to waxing floors (on my knees, as my father did in the early 1930s) with beeswax, cleaning shelves, laundry using a boiler (like my mother), pinning the bedsheets and other items on a string in the backyard hoping to get these dry enough for ironing, and, once a week, taking off all the curtains for a bath of fresh air. I also polished the copper pans, scrubbed the ceramic floors of the bathroom and toilet, hanged balls of naphthalene in the garment closets and changed the sachets of lavenders in the bedsheets cupboards. I do not remember all the details, but started longing for my bed quite rapidly after 20:00. Fortunately, the cook –Mrs. Garfield- was excellent and her inventions were worth Carême's!

One afternoon, I found Mrs. MacDonnell in bed, reading; I apologized, but she asked me to come closer; she then told me that she liked me a lot, and invited me to 'join her' in bed. I told her: "*Mrs. MacDonnell, you are VERY, VERY attractive. But I need the Money. We better keep it the way it is.*" She was disappointed, but did not keep that against me.

And I took the train back to Paris on July 22nd, 1961. In August and early September of that year, I was in Seefeld-in-Tirol. But that's a very different story...



Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

Acts 9:32-10:23

Yes, **you must wash your hands** (with plain soap), as often as possible. Nothing beats that simple practice to stay healthy and avoid infections.



Bernard N. Halpern, MD, DSc 1904 (Tarnoruda, Eastern Galicia)- 1978 (Paris)

My father was a world-class microbiologist, an avidly searched practicing internist and immunologist, a discoverer of many life-saving drugs who introduced immunotherapy in leukemia and cancers, and a simple, empathic, warm doctor as on the paintings of Norman Rockwell.

To reach medical school (“*only in France!*” he claimed as a child), the road was long, full of pitfalls, borders to cross, lice and bedbugs to fight, and then being accepted in an anti-Semitic, xenophobic foreign country, with one of the most complex and difficult languages to communicate and learn local science.

He had the clothes from 1923, when he left Poland. He washed them regularly in hot water until they fell apart in...1929, when he reached the *City of Lights*.

He had reached Nancy, in Lorraine, when German bilingualism had not yet been eradicated. Notably Pre-Med could be taken in German –which he did, while working overtime to master French. When finally in Paris, he had to find a way to survive;

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public shelters (e.g. Salvation Army) existed, populated by drunks always fighting, shouting, smoking like chimneys, and the shelter closed at 06:00.

Then there was the money. And, most importantly, the Faculty of Medicine.

He went there and asked...for a job, any job. He was lucky: the Chairman of Physiology, Prof. Jean Gautrelet, was looking for a lab cleaner –who could be promoted to *préparateur* (preparator). The pay was symbolic, but he had more than a foot in the door, and Gautrelet took him under his wing: he registered my father as *bona fide* student, advised him on his hospital internships (every morning), gave him textbooks, and invited him often to dinner at his home.

My father was an early riser; he had the FASPS gene (identified in 2001, and that I inherited from him); as a lark, getting up at 04:00 was not a problem. That's why he got a position at a department store, *la Samaritaine*, on the right bank of the Seine river [it still exists, and now belongs to the luxury group LVMH] where he waxed the floors, for 2 hours.



<https://www.pariszigzag.fr/lieux-insolites/ces-lieux-parisiens-qui-font-vivre-lart-nouveau>

Then he was a busy, enthusiastic med intern, a lab technician and instructor, and soon after a medical doctor (MD), a DSc. (Doctor in Sciences), a husband and father. He was the real performer behind the best-selling book of Jean Gautrelet: *Éléments de Technique Physiologique*, 1932, 420pp, Masson & Co, Eds.

What my father learned, experimented, and taught me about hygiene, cleanliness,

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and food safety was amazingly ahead of his era. He knew that antiseptics had their role in the hospital, but that soap (without antimicrobials!) was best for daily use since it respected the skin microbiome balance; that lauryl-sulfates (modern detergents) would damage the skin and scalp, and the environment because of lack of biodegradability; that fermented foods (e.g. yogurt, clotted milk, brine-preserved gherkins or cucumbers, herrings, etc.) were great for a healthy digestive tract, the immune system, and energy-saving; that bleach was *the best* –and the cheapest; that sulphonamides (the first wonder drug vs. infections introduced by Gerhard Domagk in 1935) would rapidly generate selected resistant bacteria; that vaccines were the future of global health; that a diversified diet –with fermented foods!- had no needs for supplements of any form; and many, many more recommendations that resonate today more than ever as true, proven and life-saving.

The first performance of *Ubu Roi* of Alfred Jarry was in Paris on December 10, 1896; the opening lines are: “*The scene takes place in Poland, that is to say **nowhere***”. Poland, as it exists on a map today, was recreated in 1918 with the Treaty of Versailles.

My mother was born in a mostly Jewish area of Warsaw, Poland in 1909. Her family was secular upper middle class, and her nursemaid was German -hence her later fluency in that language. She decided to be an artist, a painter, attracted by vibrant colors, painters like Vincent van Gogh, Lucien Léger, and, of course...Paris, the world epicenter of all arts in the early 1930s.

She managed to secure a two-year scholarship at the School of Decorative Arts, within the Louvre Palace, and off she went to the *City of Lights* –attracted like a night butterfly.

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My Mother In 1946



and in 1976

Her scholarship stipend was meager, and Paris, as today, a very expensive city. Hence she offered her projects for dress fabrics to the *Haute Couture* houses, and soon fashion shows were displaying her creations for Lucien Lelong, Robert Piguet, Jean Patou or Jérôme Lanvin. She could live in Paris supporting herself!

She remained a gifted milliner, and, later, regularly made our (mine and Françoise's) clothes until 1953, since we were growing and changing shape. Her sewing machine was a Singer, and she carried it until December 1942; a sister Singer was her first purchase in 1945.

My parents met through common friends from Poland or nearby areas; all were staunch antifascists: they saw the writing on the wall; later some joined Leopold Trepper's *Red Orchestra*.

Most were trying to grab the devil by the tail: they were short on cash, and could not expect support from what had been home. They shared some meals with flavors from the *old country*; sometimes a shot of vodka; rarely wine. Their lives mimicked the ones of the immigrants screened at Ellis Island. Hope certainly; but for how long? What is sure is that Bernard and Renée fell in love despite the class difference, and soon moved to live together.

Both kept ties with their geographical roots by hobnobbing with young singles from Poland, Ukraine or other Slavic countries; on summer, sunny weekends they would

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go to a 'resort' (in name only!) by the Seine river, as it were the plush Deauville.



My parents in 1935

My father was naturalized French in 1933, and soon after married my mother, then pregnant with a son. The baby was born in Paris, and did well until the *green diarrhea* (pathogenic virulent *E. coli*) struck and killed the infant within hours; there was no treatment to speak of, except rehydration, and that did not work. My father suspected the tap water and/or the cow's milk that had not been boiled long enough.

When my mother got pregnant again, at the beginning of 1935 –this time with me-, her father summoned her to deliver in Warsaw where she would get the best care money could buy, and not lose another heir. That's why I was born there.

Then, in 1937, Françoise was born (at the American Hospital, in Neuilly –a posh suburb of Paris); and soon war struck. My father was mobilized as physician in charge of a hospital train in the Eastern border of France, no match for the *panzer divizionen* of Heinz Guderian and his *Blitzkrieg*. The French war was over in a few months, and Philippe Pétain's government was established as an enthusiast

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supporter of the Nazi-led Axis; it gave full powers to the victor over the Northern half of the country, and established a puppet government in Vichy, a spa in the center of France. The Southern *free* zone did not last: in November 1942, the fiction evaporated.

After returning to civilian life, our family fled Paris and moved first to La Bourboule (a spa for asthmatics) in the Massif Central, but after a few weeks the small town of Jaujac, in the mountains of Ardèche, recruited my father as (the only!) physician.



Jaujac

The previous doctor (who had fled to Morocco) had left a house and a car that ran with a gasifier, a huge black cylinder fed with charcoal; unusual, but it worked for a gifted handyman. Patients were poor, scattered over the hills and mountains, with only trails to reach their farmhouses –that they shared with their goats. Most people took three baths in their lifetime: at birth, before wedding, and before getting into the coffin. Goats were carriers of *Brucella melitensis* (that aborted their kids), and passed it to the humans; there was no known treatment: humans had undulant fevers, sweats and horrible joint and muscle pain.

But *sulfapyridine*, a sulfonamide, was manufactured by Rhône-Poulenc, my father's employer until 1940 (and that he joined again in 1942). The drug was very active, and killed *Brucella* in a few short days. When my father brought it to the farmhouses, the *patients* did not want to use it: they wanted sulfapyridine for their *goats* first and foremost. After saving caprines, my dad also cured the humans. But he had to launch a basic education campaign on hygiene and enrolled the local schoolteacher. It took months, but eventually boiled water, soap, rubbing alcohol became household staples.

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The peasants were poor but grateful and ‘paid’ with eggs, milk, cheeses, goat’s milk butter, honey, weekly bread, seasonal fruits and vegetables including corncobs, potatoes, and Jerusalem artichokes. My mother kept the house tidy and clean, and enrolled me; she trained me with patience -and some rewarding tartines of cheese. I became *chief assistant housekeeper*, expert in laundry, polishing pans and pots, using wood ash as soap substitute judiciously, and much more. I was also assigned to learn *by heart, verbatim* the whole, complete *Petit Larousse Illustré*, the quasi encyclopedic dictionary typically French. My father would check me at regular intervals on a random selected entry. Since then –thanks to *Larousse!* - I am almost unbeatable on spelling, etymology, basic world history and geography, and most Latin memorable quotes (in the ‘pink’, central pages).

Rhône-Poulenc asked my father to rejoin the company then relocated in Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon, in early 1942. They provided lodging on the 5th floor of a (quite) recent building at 7 Rue de l’Université. My routine continued: cleaning, some sock mending, waxing the parquet, mastering the nitty-gritty of the *Petit Larousse*. Until June 1942: my father had submitted to a Belgian respected scientific journal an article describing the chemistry, pharmacology, and efficacy of the first **antihistamine** that could be used in *humans*, because of its negligible toxicity: *Phenbenzamine* (Antergan). He also mentioned that this compound, if added to donated blood, would prevent spoilage for >5 days. The Germans were informed; the battle of Stalingrad had started in late August 1942, and casualties were mounting. Blood was essential and providing life-saving blood required time – a few days. It got worse after November when the Axis 6th Army was overrun and surrounded by the Red Army’s *Operation Uranus*. Berlin was informed of my father’s discovery, and Rhône-Poulenc’s brass heard of it.

My parents had been informed of *die Endlösung der Judenfrage*, the Final Solution to the Jewish Question formulated in January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference. The Holocaust was in, with meticulous German precision. My parents decided to save their two children, and found in June 1942 a small apartment on the top floor of a house in Aiguebelette, Savoie, not too far from the Swiss border. The owners of the house were sympathetic to the *Résistance* underground, and had a slightly mentally-impaired 15-year old daughter who could help maintain the rented place –for a fee.

We took the train, first to Chambéry (the *préfecture* of Savoie), and transferred to a

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slow, local one until Aiguebelette. Aiguebelette-le-Lac is an idyllic place!



Aiguebelette-le-Lac

Françoise and I were registered at the local elementary school. A single room, with rows: from left to right preschool, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade. My sister was in preschool, and I was accepted in 4th grade (I was barely 7!); we both shone, with A+ galore, according to the records found by an archivist in the early 2000s; we also were labeled *Jewish* on the school record book.

Our mother would take the train every 2 to 3 weeks from Chambéry to the Western end of the 800 meters long tunnel ending in Aiguebelette; then she would walk, razing the walls in the dark with a weak flashlight, until we met in broad daylight at the end of darkness; she would go back, the same way, after a day or two, overwhelmed by hugs, cries, tears and promises to come back soon. She had brought new clothes as needed, soap, cookies, and fresh bread. Then I had to take over again the daily chores before diving in my homework.

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Françoise and I, Aiguebelette, October 1942

My classmates were funny and friendly: they initiated me to fishing with a safety pin and a giggling earthworm (it worked!); catching rabbits (even cats), skinning them and selling the ‘fur’ to the local pharmacist, while later enjoying a great stew; picking ripe fruits on trees (and often getting shot in the butt with rock salt by the orchard owner); harvesting blueberries, blackberries, red and black currants, or delicious mushrooms after the first autumn rains (hence my passion for mycology); I was, in a way, living for a few short months the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* –on a much modest scale.

On December 21st, 1942, Rhône-Poulenc tipped my father: the Gestapo is looking for you, and *‘the Führer himself is offering full protection to you and your family’*. He rushed back to the apartment, told my mother to just grab a coat, and they both ran into the service staircase, while the Gestapo was banging at the front door. They ran to Perrache, the train station serving Chambéry, and arrived at the Aiguebelette shelter around 17:00, on the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year; it was dark, drizzling, and we had just a few minutes to put on warm clothes: a gasifier car (from the *Résistance* network to which my father –unbeknownst to us- belonged) was there and drove us, all headlights out, to a cellar close to the Swiss border. We had to wait, and wait, until another smuggler arrived to drive us to a barren area that seemed to expand to the (invisible) horizon. He gave us (I listened) instructions: *“Walk straight. You’ll find a first line of barbed wires. Manage to get under or across. Then walk straight again until a second line or razor wire. Then reach a road: you’ll be safe. Good Luck!”*

I was clinging to my *Petit Larousse*, but we had strictly no luggage, just the clothes we were wearing (and will wear for months to come). And we started in the dark, the cold, the mud, the anguish. After the first line of wires, I heard a series of *plocks* and

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saw holes splashing in the mud: the French gendarmes were shooting at us. It was a VERY, VERY close call. But indeed, we were arrested by the Swiss border patrol, wearing the same *feldgrau* uniforms and helmets than the Wehrmacht –and speaking... *Schweizerdeutsch*, that eerily sounds like German.



Summer 1943, Saint-Luc, Valais, with the *Petit Larousse Illustré*

Then began another life. As refugees, *wetbacks*, stateless, initially with a Nansen passport, nomads. Ultimately Citizens of the World.



“Guests, like Fish, Begin to Smell after Three Days” - *Benjamin Franklin*



Benjamin Franklin, Wikipedia

Fresh fish, crustaceans, shellfish, etc., smell lightly of the sea when they're first caught, but they should never smell distinctly fishy. Unless you have an amazing fishmonger, or caught the fish yourself, the week-old cod you're buying from the supermarket will most likely reek.

Fish tissue contains an odorless chemical known as *trimethylamine oxide*. Once the fish is killed and exposed to air (and microbes), the chemical breaks down into derivatives of *ammonia*, and therefore smells bad. Refrigeration will prevent the worsening of the stench, but if seafood has been exposed, even for a few seconds, to air it will 'smell'.

Sweat itself is virtually odorless to **humans**; it is the rapid multiplication of bacteria in the presence of sweat and what they do (break sweat down into acids) that eventually causes the unpleasant smell. The smell is perceived as unpleasant, many believe, because most of us have been brought up to dislike it, and because some humans produce more sweat with their *apocrine* glands found mostly in the groin, armpits and around the nipples of the breast. The apocrine glands are mainly responsible for body odor because the sweat they produce is high in protein which



bacteria can break down easily.

Two types of acid are commonly present when there is body odor: **Propionic acid (propanoic acid)** is commonly found in sweat - *propionibacteria* break amino acids down into propionic acid. *Propionibacteria* live in the ducts of the sebaceous glands of adult and adolescent humans. Some people may identify a vinegar-like smell with propionic acid, because it is like acetic acid, which gives vinegar its sour taste and pungent smell; **Isovaleric acid** (3-methyl butanoic acid) is another source of body odor because of actions of the bacteria *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, that are also present in several strong cheese types.

My wife Emiko can detect a few aired molecules of ammonia from raw fish. As Japanese, this may be a life-saving feature. But she also has a strong feeling about odors: there are the *good*, pleasant ones (shrinking), and the *awful*, disgusting ones (many, many more as the list grows).

As a child I was fed –when available- with the rind of overripe Camemberts or Epoisses; I love *surströmming*, a fermented Swedish Baltic herring that is eaten...outdoors: ‘*according to a Japanese study, a newly opened can of surströmming has one of the most putrid food smells in the world*’; as well as home-made kimchi, natto, Limburger cheese, Nigerian iru, Korean doenjang, stinky tofu, durian, or *casu marzu* from Sardinia. We agreed to disagree on these, and most US-educated friends pinch their nose when I dare to mention any of those. I do not have any affective (good or bad) opinion on odors: I was the only intern in our Med School to volunteer to autopsy and dissect the cadavers of homeless tramps that had marinated in the Seine river for weeks; even the lab workers of the Institut Médico-Légal on the Quai de La Rapée could not stand the putrid stench; I did not mind –and still didn’t when I visited (and worked with the people of) *Smokey Mountain* in Tondo, Manila, or the São João landfill on São Paulo, Brazil.

Obviously *Bawdy Ben*, a.k.a. ‘*The First American*’ meant more than just fish, or another pungent odor. But he had a point: the human nose has roughly 400 types of scent receptors that can detect and distinguish at least *1 trillion* different odors, a resolution orders of magnitude beyond the previous estimate of just *10,000* scents. However, we accept, tolerate, even like odors that *match* us, e.g. our genes, personal secretions, habits, human and usual environment, etc. Unusual, quite different perceived odors, or some associated with past painful experiences (e.g. food

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poisoning) or social taboos (e.g. corpses) are perceived as inherently *bad*. Hospitality of strangers involves such exposures, and our tolerance can quickly reach its tipping point.

Most people assume we all like the smell of roses and hate the smell of skunk, but except for irritating odors (e.g. ammonia), smell is something we come to know from personal and cultural experiences. We come to smell with a blank slate, and why we like or dislike it should do with experiences.

Of the five senses the olfactory system is the only one that passes through the limbic system before it reaches the processing center of the brain. The limbic system controls our emotions. Odor is the most emotionally evocative of all our senses. It goes back to a time in our evolution when smell was much more important than it is now. We can still identify something like 16 different emotions through pheromones given off via apocrine in our sweat. The primary reason we have hair under our armpits and at our genitals is to transmit odor that others can detect to determine those emotions, including sexual availability and interest.

Since the power of smell is so powerful, with odors being distinguishable even after 30 years if they are associated with an emotional issue in our life, that people are affected by different ones is no surprise. One odor may be redolent of another odor that was associated with a particularly emotional time. For example, many people are affected by the odor of the kind of lilies that are used at funerals. When a loved one dies, they might not even notice the odor at the funeral home, but years later, when they smell a lily, it brings them right back to that moment. The aversion to cilantro, and its reminder flavors (people complain the herb tastes like soap or reminds them of bedbug odor) make sense, since chemically they are like both bugs and soaps. Flavor chemists have found that cilantro aroma is created by a half-dozen or so substances, and most of these are modified fragments of fat molecules called aldehydes. The same or similar aldehydes are also found in soaps and lotions and the bug family of insects. Further research has shown it's not the flavor but the scent of cilantro that is offensive to some people, and it seems to be because those who have an aversion smell less well than others — they aren't smelling the "good" part of cilantro while those of us who like cilantro do smell that part. Something similar is behind aversion to celery; it's the smell that is so awful to some; when it's cooked in a soup, they don't mind the flavor at all. It looks like the cilantrophobia is a genetic

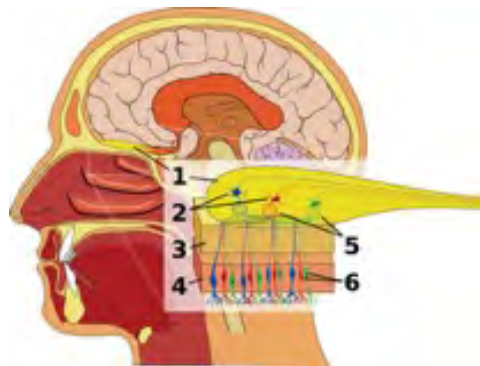
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thing, as Charles J. Wysocki of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia has preliminarily determined by testing twins for cilantro dislike.

But what about other foods? Turns out we are all tasting the world a little differently, depending on our genes. Can you smell apples? Many people can't. Tomatoes are another fruit that different people perceive differently. Many odors have genes associated with them. We might expect everyone to have their own unique set of smells that they are sensitive to. These smells are found in foods and drinks that people encounter every day, such as tomatoes and apples. This might mean that when people sit down to eat a meal, they each experience it in their own personalized way. We are all likely smelling (and tasting) foods a bit differently. And maybe our almost irrational hatred of a certain food has a basis in our own unique perceptions. Brussels sprouts, garlic (both sulfur), cinnamon are other seemingly genetically disliked flavors.

As for people who like coconut or some other unique odor, it may be a trigger because it has components of some other odor. Humans have been trying to manufacture emotions via odor for thousands of years and it is why we are so keen on perfumes and colognes to mask or enhance our true feelings. These things mix with our own chemistry and create a smell that is unique to our persona and that other people will always associate with us. Odor is one of the most complex and powerful forces that impacts us as humans.



Overview of the human olfactory system:
1: Olfactory bulb 2: Mitral cells 3: Bone 4: Nasal epithelium
5: Glomerulus 6: Olfactory receptor neurons.

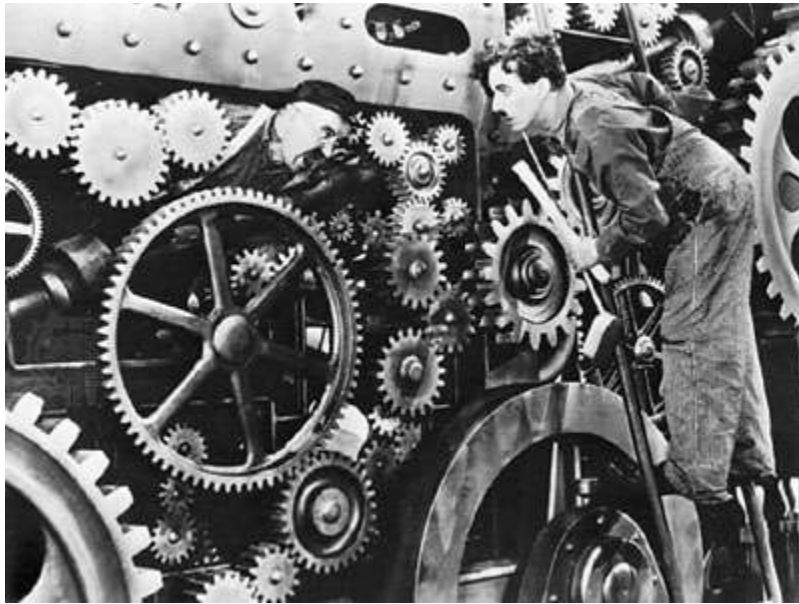
O TEMPORA! O MORES!



But besides the unease or malaise triggered by these scents, the habits and behaviors of some guests will be quickly annoying: we all have, and survive thanks to *habits*. These get forged early in life and become our *second nature*. The familial and personal cleaning rules are a perfect example: they allowed *us* –but not necessarily *others*– to feel safe, healthy, and comfortable. We share these diktats and inculcate them to our children and close relatives. They could possibly be framed as *Rules and Regulations*, but we often cringe at mentioning them to visitors by fear of sounding arrogant, inhospitable, rude or bad-mannered. Then, after the departure of the invitees, we clean *our way* (the *only & best* one) ... and complain.

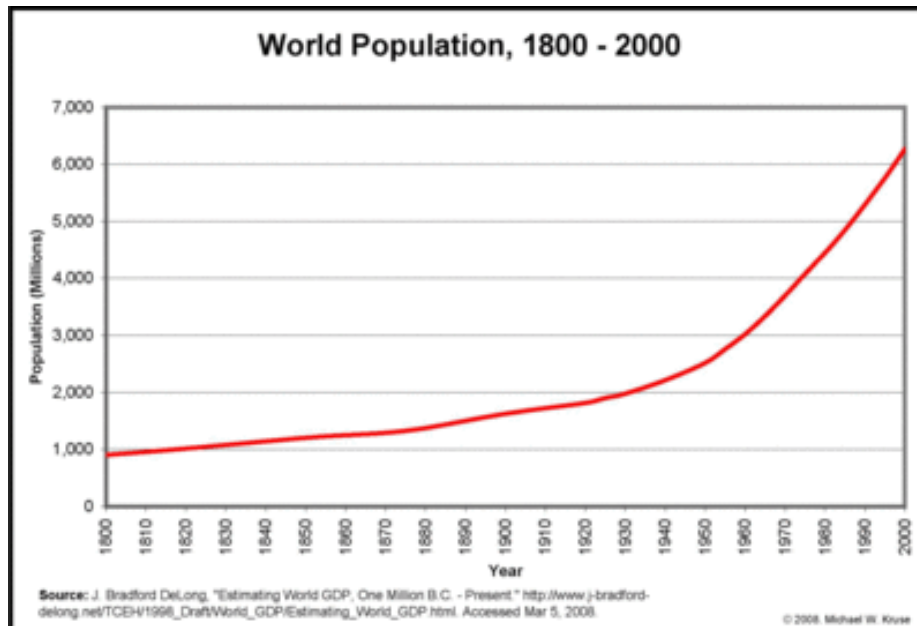


Modern Times



<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Modern-Times-film>

Hygiene, cleanliness (including clean water), immunizations, public health and the implementation of the 19th century discoveries transformed the fate of humans (and

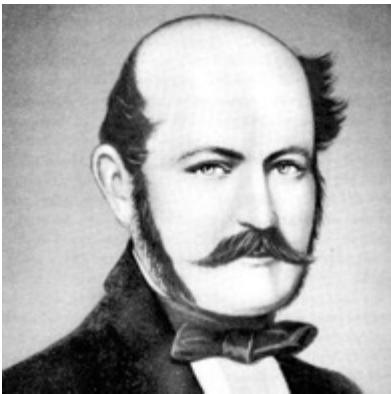


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animals), expanding life expectancy and the supply of protein in the diet.

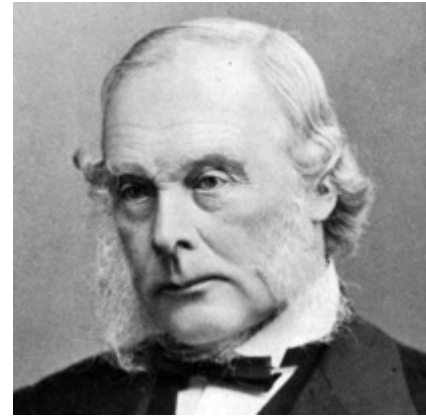
The hygiene revolution had its heroes: Ignaz Semmelweiss (1818-1865), Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), Joseph Lister (1827-1912), and many unsung ones.



Ignaz Semmelweiss



Louis Pasteur



Joseph Lister

What was achieved by most nations was the acceptance of scientific facts, and implementation necessary policies in a seamless collaboration with adequate financial support. Education was –and remains– the cornerstone of progress; schoolteachers were on the forefront –the foot soldiers of human health and progress. With the exponential growth of knowledge, data, technologies, and desire of the masses for a *better* life, the challenges are growing. The wealthy are not that much interested in human welfare, pulling majorities out of poverty, fighting ignorance and myths. The recent history of the United States and of Western Europe is a sad example.

When Julius Caesar's engineer, Vitruvius (75 BCE-15 CE), reported '*water is much more wholesome from earthenware pipes than from lead pipes. For it seems to be made injurious by lead, because white lead is produced by it, and this is said to be harmful to the human body*' it was too late: with a weakened, disabled defense, the Empire crumbled. Ceruse –the *Spirits of Saturn*– was the white base of lead paint, and became widely used; but in 1897 lead-induced toxicity in children was recognized and reported in Australia. France, Belgium and Austria banned white lead interior paint in 1909. But in the United States, laws banning lead house paint were not passed until 1971, and it was fully barred in...**1978**. Lots of pre-WW2 buildings –most in impoverished city areas– still have walls peeling flakes of lead paint that toddlers

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inhale and ingest when they crawl on the floor.

Despite Vitruvius' warning, lead pipes are still everywhere, and if the water stagnates, or is acidic lead poisoning epidemics occur debilitating children as the ones –decades ago- at Baccarat (France), Swattens (Austria –where Swarovski is located), Lalique and Daum (France), Riedel (Kufstein, Austria), Steuben (Corning, NY, USA), Arc (Arcques, France), or in 2016 Flint, Michigan and Hong Kong schools demonstrate.

The current Trump administration, made of billionaires with organic links to profit-oriented corporations and other deniers of science, has announced that it will unravel public health, and *privatize* as many as possible public services. Universal health coverage and education are floundering. Health supplies for schools are slashed. School nurses are disappearing, and the life expectancy curve in the US is flattening while the US ranks **38th** in infant mortality.

Education is under attack: *intelligent design* (creationism) must be taught in Arizona (15 schools), Arkansas (all), Colorado's Douglas county, Florida (164!), Indiana (37), Louisiana (all), Ohio (20), Texas (all), Tennessee (all), as well as stressing that *global warming is a myth*.

Conquests of science are never established: they are models for skepticism, free-thinking, implementation and establishment of the common good. We must fight for them incessantly, like the peoples of the Arctic or the Pacific Islands who know that the planet is in danger. With **all** its inhabitants. Epidemics of infectious disease are more common; poisoning of waters, air, food occur more often. It is an emergency.



Acknowledgements

This is a **very personal** essay in which I confide about our family and myself. I am pleading for addressing urgent concerns. I hesitated for months to address our past, but the clock is ticking, and time has come. I am ready to address my recollections, and answer comments.

My sources –besides the omnipresent Wikipedia- are listed; they were selected. Many more could have been chosen, but would not have changed the discourse.

Yves P. Huin –as always- is making the confession-*cum*-diatribe a readable (albeit poorly digestible) text. He is the one you should thank.

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