

Tempo Diet

A Consideration of Food and the Quality of Life

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"Many thoughts are necessary
in order to grasp one that is essential."
Stanislav Lec

Food is a major topic of discussion. Never before has so much been said and written about eating and the consequences, and this is a development definitely predating our awareness of B.S.E. Culinary concerns and concern about calories feature prominently in magazines - above all in the countless women's magazines in which the very latest diet philosophy comes most conveniently together with the requisite recipes. Similarly, the book trade has discovered that nutritional guides and cookbooks now sell like the proverbial hot cakes. If the Germans' nutrition were to be affected by merely a fraction of what is read and heard throughout the land, they would turn into a nation that fed itself both wisely and well. However, if this is not the case - as indeed we have to fear - at least we can credit ourselves with ranking amongst the best informed of those who spurn a viable gastronomic culture.

When a topic arouses such interminable discussion, this is a clear indication of insecurity. An approach to food selection and preparation passed down from generation to generation (more affectionately referred to as "just the way Grandma used to cook") is becoming increasingly obsolete in the face of modern-day requirements and the pressure of time. Who can nowadays still find the time to go down to the weekly market to buy "everything fresh" and then turn it all into a tasty meal - let alone then leisurely enjoy it in peace and quiet. Rather we opt for the practical solution of having all this done for us by the foodstuffs industry, which in Germany provides three-quarters of what we eat, in the US already 95 % (Furtmayr-Schuh, 1993: 93), be it anything ranging from ready peeled bottled potatoes to a pre-packaged multi-course TV-dinner that - thanks to the microwave oven - will be ready for us sooner than we can lay the table (which may well be why the table no longer gets laid at all).

The Banality of "a Land flowing with Milk and Honey"

Consequently, it is no contradiction in itself if we are being inundated as never before with nutritional information whilst at the same time our food becomes more banal than ever before. Taking a closer look, we observe the banality of "a land flowing with milk and honey" where everyone has been catered for. "All the time and everywhere, everything must be available as rapidly and easily as possible!" That is the maxim to which the food industry and its customers (i.e. all of us) most fervently adhere. A glance at the diversity on offer on the bulging shelves of a well-stocked supermarket suffices to show us how successful this policy has proved to be. Every wish has its fulfilment guaranteed, be it for Parma ham or for "Kiddies

"Super Choco Treats". Likewise, the satisfaction of culinary requirements, which we didn't even know we really had, is assured. "Just like in paradise" - a condition that becomes even more miraculous in view of the fact that food - in becoming ever more plentiful and accessible - appears to cost us less and less each year. In Germany we are now even down to spending on our food an average of less than 16% of our net income - about as much as we spend on our cars. Just thirty years back, the proportion was more than twice as much. Should this trend continue, there may well come a time when Brussels or some higher authority actually starts paying us to eat.

This generally boundless availability of food, largely irrespective of region and season, is a relatively new phenomenon. Some 100 to 150 years ago, around 95% of what people ate had been produced within sight of their own church steeple. This had both advantages and disadvantages. One could see and experience how the crops and animals that one lived from grew and flourished. One was, however, much more dependent than today on *whether* they grew and flourished. That sensory proximity, with its accompanying and ever-present threat of shortages, has today been largely replaced by an abstract and for the most part remote relationship that now makes little appeal to our senses. Although kiwi fruit will be familiar enough to today's children, they have on the other hand never encountered "curds and whey" outside a nursery rhyme. Whilst distance has lost its magic, we have become alienated from our immediate surroundings. And since around the world everything indeed is somewhere in season, we have as consumers largely lost our feeling for seasonal change. Irrespective of season, everything is available: we have strawberries at Christmas time and asparagus to help us bring in the New Year. In order to maintain a seasonally adjusted lifestyle intent on paying no attention to the seasons of the year, we Germans are currently importing almost twice as many vegetables from overseas as we obtain from Europe and around ten times as much fruit (Furtmayr-Schuh, 1995).

It would appear that our foodstuffs have become as unaccustomed to a settled mode of existence as we ourselves. They have become surprisingly nomadic. Although there has been only a minimal increase in food consumption during the past thirty years (our appetites are after all a limiting factor), related transportation activity has practically doubled within one generation (Böge and v. Winterfeld, 1995: 100). We all know about the EU's subsidized transportation rituals, those countless diversions that apparently prove profitable in turning a pig into sausage and milk into cheese. Christine von Weizsäcker suspects that "food doesn't appear to be appetizing until it has travelled at least one hundred kilometres, and it needs to be transported at least one thousand kilometres in order to rank as a delicacy" (v. Weizsäcker, 1992/93: 180).

Let us take a closer look at such delicacies by examining the production path of a customary hamburger meal served up at one of McDonald's German outlets. What we have lying before us on the plastic tray is a "multinational product brought into existence in a manner reminiscent of a NATO manoeuvre" (Grefe et al., 1985: 58). The white bread has been manufactured from US wheat in Pfungstadt. The meat cattle were fattened in southern Germany (using concentrated feedstuffs from abroad); subsequently, the animals were slaughtered and turned into patties of minced meat. The cheese hails from Holland. Develey, a long-established Bavarian producer, has provided the gherkin, mustard and mayonnaise. In winter, the lettuce is imported from California - and in summer from Spain. The onions are

from the US. The French fries have been purchased in the Netherlands. An American company located in Italy supplies the ketchup. Canada has provided the raw materials required for the cup. The wrapping paper from Scandinavia was printed in Germany but cut to size in France. ... The Germans at least are responsible for digestion.

What this transportation orgy also demonstrates is that, with regard to nutrition, even in the case of fast food we are dealing not only with acceleration phenomena. For all transportation, no matter how speedily it is effected, constitutes a delay. Such delays are indeed undesirable and consequently require the speeding up of procedures elsewhere. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is: to travel any distance takes time.

In contrast, ecologically oriented agriculture and food production, which is geared not to global but rather to regional markets, can - on account of the reduced distances travelled and time spent travelling - accomplish the different operational sequences very much *faster* than mass production methods allow. Having agricultural production located close to processing facilities saves time and consequently speeds up the entire process of food production (e.g. by avoiding lengthy transportation and the need for related refrigeration facilities). In this case, however, saving time has a wholly positive effect on the products' quality: the food is fresher and will need none of the treatment required if it were to survive a long journey. Accordingly, faster must not always be worse, and slower is not always better!

The question as to whether processes are fast or slow - and that's what this example should demonstrate - does not go to the root of the problem. Rather it is a matter of seeking the *appropriate*, proper tempi, or - in accordance with our subject - the all-round "agreeable tempi". In speaking of a "tempo diet", it is in *this* sense. As we perhaps know from personal experience, a diet must not only require "less" of everything, it also needs to be "balanced". Everyone subjecting themselves to a diet must exercise moderation and find out the proper measure. Those who prescribe a tempo diet for themselves will have to find out and maintain the proper tempi. But what does "the proper measure" imply and what can provide us with orientation in the face of this apparently normative expression?

The Flavour of Time

In line with the highly complex nature of our field of inquiry, a variety of criteria can assist us in our endeavours to ascertain the proper tempi. An obvious yardstick that we can use in assessing whether the tempi at present employed in agriculture and food provision are generally "agreeable" (cf. Schneider, 1995) would for instance be *flavour*. It is not invariably - but surely with increasing frequency - the case that one can literally "taste" that something has been lost as a consequence of the artificial means and sophisticated technological know how that have been employed in our attempts to accelerate or delay natural processes, with nature's own pace and rhythms having been perceived as disruptive factors that need to be eliminated. All of us have experienced food with such a flavour, or rather absence of taste:

- Could it be a matter of the time that the apple would have more happily been left hanging on the tree, instead of "subsequently ripening" down in the belly of a ship? (By the way, when fruit is still biologically unripe, albeit "ripe" for transportation, the experts term such a state "technical ripeness"!)

- Could it be a matter of the time of which an animal has been deprived and the "temporal conditions" under which it has been required to live? (All today's unnaturally rapidly fattened pigs still have their milk teeth when at five months - and weighing in at 100 kilograms - they are adjudged ready for the slaughterhouse - not all that long ago they needed twice as long!)
- Could it be a matter of the time that cheeses have no longer been allowed to ripen or of the so-called "quick souring agent" that is added to bread?
- Could it be a matter of the time that is saved in shortening the fermentation process so that beer can be turned into a product that seemingly keeps for ever?
- And last but not least, could it be a matter of the time that we no longer allow ourselves for eating, or believe we are no longer able to afford.

Flavour forfeited on account of time gained? There are indications enough of this causative connection. - However, in seeking the proper tempi we may find flavour isn't everything that counts, even if some people deem everything bereft of taste to be worthless. Attention must also be paid to the *ecological agreeability* of the way in which we manage time, for example the increases in material and energy turnover that are all a part of modern food supply. These increases have resulted in our investing very much more energy into producing and processing food than we subsequently obtain from consuming it. This makes little economic or ecological sense, or it would be truer to say that there are only few people who benefit economically.

Quite apart from such issues, which would need to be dealt with in greater depth under the aspect of "an ecology of time" (cf. Held and Geißler, 1994, 1995; Kümmerer, 1996; Adam et al., 1997), it can be shown that time management ("time is money") increasingly fails to fulfil its purpose at the individual and social levels, and at best represents a zero-sum calculation. As regards this *social agreeability* of our tempi, here are a couple of examples drawn from the kitchen.

"Frenzied Marching on the Spot" in the Kitchen

Right at the beginning of this century, indeed in 1901, such a pronouncement as the following could be read in the household calendar distributed by the Liebig company: "Surely it has never been more true than now at the commencement of the 20th century that time is money, and this is now equally so for women." What this meant of course were women in their role as housewives. At the latest since the middle of the nineteenth century the way in which women had managed their households and kitchens had been brought into line with the industrial society's ideal of efficiency. In addition to the holy trinity of washing machine, vegetable steamer and stock cubes, which exemplified household management at that period of time, a Basel Sunday newspaper for instance recommended to its female readers in 1880 that household efficiency could be enhanced by their wearing "expedient clothing" which would be equally suitable for purchasing provisions outside the home as it would be for working in the household, "for frequently being obliged to change one's dress during the day takes up time, and time is precious" (Messerli, 1995: 186). A detailed timetable was also viewed as indispensable, whereby household duties could be "rationally apportioned" and much precious time could be saved. "Just as a general draws up his plans before marching into battle," as another book of household hints advised in 1888, "so must a housewife draw up hers in advance for the work to be accomplished." The helpful tip was likewise proffered that clocks telling the correct time, at least in the parlour and kitchen, were a precondition for ensuring

that the household plan of battle was adhered to with the requisite "strict discipline". Kitchen management had now at last caught up with modern life (and with men's tactical approach to warfare).

Plausible though the equation "time is money" may appear, it was nonetheless at that time, if taken literally, misleading if not wholly erroneous. By virtue of the rational management of her household, no direct monetary advantage was to be gained by a middle-class housewife in the late 19th century since as a rule she was not employed elsewhere. Above all, she accumulated "symbolic capital" (Jakob Messerli) in the form of supposed social respect. The purpose underlying this alignment with the veneration shown for efficiency in industrial production was that the ideological status of housework should be enhanced and its appeal for women bolstered: an enhancement that was at the same time a "defensive strategy" in order to exclude women from the job market (cf. Messerli, 1995: 188 sq., 227).

This can no longer be said of our present times. The proportion of women in employment has risen; the multiple responsibility for household, family and job is, however, seldom fairly divided between the partners in a marriage or relationship. Whilst the pressure of time increases, there is increasingly less chance of doing justice to one and all. A particularly large proportion of time has always been consumed by food preparation, which still accounts for 40% of daily housework (Meier-Ploeger, 1995: 90). Small wonder then that, especially in view of this, there is great enthusiasm for the pre-cooked items provided by the food industry. Even without concerning ourselves with the details of a domestic management time-and-motion study (cf. Andritzky, 1992), we can safely say that in today's world - thanks to ready-made products and such household appliances as the microwave oven - the time has been enormously shortened that was previously required purely for preparing food. In this connection, mashed potato has been subjected to thorough-going research. Series of tests and comprehensive evaluations have shown that potato-mash producers have reduced the time one requires for preparing mashed potato on average from 35.564 minutes to 8.305 minutes (Meier-Ploeger, 1995: 89) - a time saving of all of 80%. If one did not know it from personal experience, one would notice at least by the third decimal place how precious time in the kitchen appears to be.

Unfortunately, as so often, this too is a Pyrrhic victory. The equation "time is money" for the modern housewife at the conclusion of the twentieth century appears to be just as inappropriate. For whilst on the one hand modern technology seems to save us time, on the other hand we are doomed to find that practically all the time we have saved will now be spent on shopping for food: for example, since the little shop on the corner has long since closed down, we now have to travel on average eight kilometres to stock up with groceries according to calculations made by the German parliament's Select Climate Committee. Since one readily drives such distances, in Germany alone this adds up to an extra 30 billion kilometres being driven per year (Meier-Ploeger, 1995: 90). In addition, the increasing range of goods offered by supermarkets means proportionally more time spent hunting up and down the supermarket's aisles, and thirdly as the kitchen's technical appliances grow ever more sophisticated, more time is spent setting up and cleaning the equipment. Time previously spent washing vegetables is now devoted to cleaning the food mixer and reading its operational instructions. The bottom line is, as domestic science teaches us, that the rule in the kitchen as regards time is: *what you gain on the swings, you lose on the roundabouts*. What Paul Virilio recognized as a

characteristic of our times is equally true of running a household, namely "frenzied marching on the spot" (Virilio, 1993).

"Enjoy it quick!"

It is, though, not only a matter of this temporal zero-sum calculation. There are changes too in the *quality of the time* we have. This is not merely because the speeding up usually results in an increase in hectic activity and greater demands being made upon our time (instead of our winning more free time). All this turns us into rather paradoxical "harried time-savers" (Linder, 1970). The abundance available on supermarket shelves appears also to render the cultural and social rules that previously governed eating superfluous: wherever we look, we see that the rhythms and rituals of eating are disappearing. We have come to feel able to eat whatever we want, wherever we want, whenever we want, however we want, with whomever we want ... all in accordance with the post-modern motto "anything goes" (or to put it more aptly: anything runs).

As the social and temporal synchronization of our eating habits declines, we are increasingly developing into what the experts call "circumstanced lone eaters". This is indeed not particularly surprising in view of the fact that the number of single households and "loners" in our society is very much on the increase. But it is not only such people, for whom solipsism has become their lives' guiding principle, who eat alone; this is also the situation within families and in other relationships where people would claim to be "living together". Scarcely anyone succeeds nowadays in synchronizing the different daily rhythms and paces that characterize the lives of working fathers, working mothers and school-age children: consequently, family members as a rule eat after each other instead of with each other. It is now the case in Germany that two thirds of all families eat either no or only one meal together during the week (Furtmayr-Schuh, 1993: 37). Above all, it is the microwave that enables each member of the family to satisfy his/her own requirements "just in time". And this is also increasingly becoming the case for children, who now in the US are being targeted with products specifically designed for them such as "Kid's Kitchen", "Kid Cuisine" and "My Own Meal". This means that kids no longer need to wait for their parents in order to "push in" their own meals (Ritzer, 1995: 229).

In the absence of the social cohesion that results from people sitting down to meals together, eating in general is losing its significance. The way in which meal times used to break up the course of a day is disappearing from our "non-stop society". Eating takes place alongside some other activity and in between times: a bar of chocolate here, a hamburger there. American researchers are already speaking of a *culture of constant "grazing"*. According to the German news magazine "DER SPIEGEL" (1989, vol. 37), every second German has already adopted this attitude. In the US, two thirds of the population already live this way. Wolfram Siebeck, who writes influential articles on culinary matters for "DIE ZEIT" newspaper, seeks to paint a somewhat different picture of typical fast-food consumers. He sums them up purely and simply so: "They eat like you fill up a car" (Siebeck, 1990). In any case, it scarcely takes longer: no more than between two and a half and four minutes on average elapse between the first and the last bite of a hamburger snack. And at the latest after ten minutes the average customer has again quitted the hamburger bar (Grefe et al., 1985: 94). There is by the way in the US reputedly a hamburger chain that simply calls itself "Eat and Run" (*ibid.*: 156) and in

the UK one has encountered Indian-food take-aways going by the name of "Curry and Hurry". At least one has the consolation of knowing that Mother Nature, apparently unwilling to be wholly accommodating, has prudently built retarding processes into our metabolic systems. For if we were to digest as rapidly as we eat, we should indeed be constantly hurrying off assailed by the runs!

The trend towards eating fast has not only come to affect different countries but also different species. Even dogs and cats, our most dearly beloved household pets, are becoming increasingly caught up in the accelerated pace of modern household management and food preparation. Recent weeks have seen the Effem company launch its latest dog food onto the market accompanied by a large advertising campaign: "the 3-minute complete meal of Chappi". With Fido's master happy to settle for any "ready-to-eat-in-five-minutes" meal, Fido himself - inherently impatient as dogs are - settles down happily to down his "3-minute" Chappi. Being man's best friend, he apparently deserves the remission of not being required to wait the extra two minutes. The advertising slogan promoting the brand speaks of a three-stage culinary progression: "First dry, then wet, then tasty!" - a promise that might equally well accompany a number of the "boil-it-in-the-bag" dishes devoured by Fido's owners.

The economic boom in the sector of fast food and convenience foods clearly shows how we all expect to live in "a ready-to-use world", in which everything is immediately ready for consumption (cf. Gronemeyer, 1993). All things must be available at all times - and indeed straight away. And woe betide anyone who causes delay. If we are anything at all, we are impatient. That is a character trait that has turned us into post-modern fidgetigibbets. We feel that everything that requires time requires too much time. Time itself is viewed as delay. The satisfaction of a desire must follow hard on the heels of the desire announcing itself. This makes us also prepared not to choose the best but only the second best.

This is by the way an impatience that otherwise we see only in whining babies and toddlers, and which leads me to the - admittedly daring - psychoanalytical supposition that many of us find "grazing" amidst consumerist pastures so appealing since it reminds us of being breast-fed: a time of fast and convenient nourishment that presented us with the primordial experience of permanent availability and inexhaustibility; it must nonetheless be mentioned that this was at the expense of culinary variety and choice. Viewed in this way, fast food and convenience foods are symptomatic of an increasing *infantilism of eating*, which is even exceeded by the ever more frequent phenomena, evident above all in the evening, of exhausted city folk being fed by "call-a-pizza" and other home-delivery services.

If we leave this image of breast-feeding and redirect our attention back to the shelves of a well-stocked supermarket, then in the first instance we can scarcely speak of monotony and loss of variety. Close to 1,300 new foodstuffs are launched onto the German market in an average year; over the whole of western Europe this amounts to all of 10,000 new articles (Meier-Ploeger, 1995: 91): *the eternal return of what is new*. Most of this diversity indeed comes to us not from a farmer's fields but rather from the laboratory, and not every one of these laboratory products will survive. Moreover, considering the "global food", all the numerous foodstuffs imported from all over the world, that we buy every day, it would at first sight appear difficult to lament a loss of diversity. Never before have we been able to sit down to tables so laden with abundance and variety as we can today.

A World without Surprises

It is astonishing, however, that at the same time we are experiencing an equally unprecedented global standardization as regards food and eating habits: *always the same everywhere and at all times*. The food offered by restaurant chains and supermarkets worldwide is becoming so increasingly uniform as to lead to what Rolf Schwendter (1988) has called "world market structure cuisine". It is all so reminiscent of the foible that Howard Hughes, the late American multimillionaire, allowed himself. With his legendary hypermobility leading him in the 1950's to owning innumerable houses and apartments throughout the world, every day he had the same meal, together with the same flowers, served in each of these residences according to a predetermined schedule. The servants had been instructed to behave as though he were about to arrive at any moment. Everything was so arranged in order that everywhere he should feel at home (Virilio, 1993: 38). Thanks to McDonald's and their ilk, that multimillionaire's eccentricity has now become the reality experienced by millions. It is evident everywhere that the former habit of eating together with accustomed table companions is being replaced by a new and now "anonymous eating community" (Rath, 1984), in which as though predetermined by an invisible hand everybody receives the same - and everybody receives too much. Social loyalties are being replaced by product loyalty, which also - even if in a roundabout way - creates something of a feeling of belonging to a community.

The apparent contradiction just mentioned between the variety on the one hand of what is on offer in our supermarkets and on the other hand the trend towards worldwide uniformity of food does not, however, stand up to closer examination. The food industry does not merely iron out regional differences and culinary specialities, it at the same time multiplies them worldwide - even if in forms that are greatly altered because they have been standardized and homogenized. "'Traditional' varieties of cheese that have become particularly rare and expensive are being replaced by pasteurized products, but such industrial French cheeses are being consumed in Germany just as in the remotest outpost of the American Midwest. ... In this way, international agribusiness, exploiting culinary folklore, to whose destruction it has contributed, distributes homogenized and simplified versions to every corner of the globe." (Fischler, 1996: 259)

Since the large food companies now operate worldwide, the trend towards global standardization and uniformity of food is no doubt economically attractive and accordingly is energetically pursued. Thus it is hardly surprising that the hamburger has become an icon of fast food and culinary interchangeability: it is surely unsurpassed as the embodiment of the universality principle of goods (and of money), namely *the abstraction of place and time* (cf. Claussen, 1987). No matter whether in New York or Moscow, in Munich or Vienna, no matter whether one year ago or one year hence, it will taste the same everywhere and for all time. Companies such as McDonald's are moreover especially proud of this dearth of imagination, which is in fact a masterpiece of operational control. What, however, is the attraction for consumers of such stereotypical food bereft of all variety? Why do they apparently crave for a permanent *déjà-vu* experience as regards taste? In view of the high innovation rate in the food sector, may we not here be encountering a compensation phenomenon? Isn't it perhaps in accordance with the motto: "Here you know what you've got; here you aren't required to choose from a wide variety"? Is the menu offered by such fast-

food chains as McDonald's and Burger King so sparse not because there isn't anything else but rather because there is a virtually unlimited range of other items? Lurking behind the simplicity is there not a multiplicity which for some people appears to be too much? Be that as it may, it is at least clear that for many people it is apparently attractive to live in a world devoid of surprises.

Liberation from "Liberation" from Place and Time

In recent times, one has repeatedly been confronted in Germany with whole-page advertisements and posters proclaiming a sentence that is not without its own prophetic charm. In large lettering the simple yet mysterious message is: "And again mankind will be liberated from place and time". The reason for this vainglorious announcement does indeed turn out to be something as relatively harmless as telebanking (in other words, a large-scale attempt to turn us all into little bank clerks). However, since advertising strategies generally are indeed seismographs of what is adjudged to be appealing, especially this advertisement tells us so much by what it promises and by what it avoids mentioning.

Place and time must apparently be something hostile, something to be overcome, and from which we should seek to "liberate" ourselves; after all, is it not *they* that force themselves in between our desires and their satisfaction (cf. Anders, 1980). With it understandably being our wish to make our existence as agreeable as possible, it is precisely this place-time issue that in a most fundamental manner constantly defers that proclaimed state "in which nothing is absent but rather where everything is 'immediately available'" (*ibid.*: 337) - a shift from here to there and a postponement from now to sometime soon.

Perhaps the moment has come for us to attempt a new orientation: instead of chasing after "liberation" from place and time, which is in any case a childish illusion, we should be better advised in my opinion to *recultivate our approach to place and time* - and consequently also our approach to ourselves (cf. Held and Geißler 1994, 1995; BUND and Misereor, 1996). Without a "dietetic" understanding of tempo, we shall be unable to take in what is obvious, immediately to hand and special. Only when we have slowed down shall we again be able to enjoy, for enjoyment needs time and it needs leisure. "Enjoy it quick ..." appears to me to be a self-contradictory demand. Under the pressure of constant acceleration, all differences disappear, just as under the pressure of globalization a feeling for regional niceties and specialities is forfeited. What all the billboards and hoardings praise as an enrichment with regard to time and place or indeed as "liberation" from place and time is in point of fact an impoverishment because it is a propagation of indifference. Whoever in turn is not indifferent to this should seek and cultivate the experience that the restrictions of place and time - and consequently the variety of what we do, as well as of the things and creatures with which we have to do - are *a source of quality* and not, as is constantly suggested to us, *a source of torment* (even if that is no more than the torment of being obliged to choose).

"Flip-flopping between fast food and delicacies"

Eating enables one to obtain this experience in a particularly enjoyable fashion, for example through a more pronounced orientation towards what region and season have to offer: the unmistakably distinctive fruits of place and time. Despite the fact that the entire nutrition sector is, as we have seen, increasingly under pressure to conform to the (post-)modern

temporal patterns of acceleration, disappearance of rhythms and non-stop activity, we are nevertheless as much as ever dealing with an everyday field of experience that presents us with a variety of alternatives to our simply joining in the collective stampede. And these are alternatives that are increasingly being perceived and also appreciated.

Even if the highest growth rates are being prophesied for the fast-food sector, even if McDonald's worldwide is opening up a new restaurant every three hours this year, this trend is nevertheless not wholly unbroken. In this respect, I am not thinking so much about the much-heralded "Slow Food"-Movement, a protest movement that - fully doing justice to its name - is proving appropriately slow to get into gear. Having spontaneously come into being in Italy in 1986 when McDonald's sought to establish one of its "hamburger joints" in Rome's venerable Piazza Navona, it is concerned - for example by means of appropriate cookery books and by recommending restaurants - to maintain regional cuisine and gastronomic culture in Italy. Reputedly with already 30,000 supporters throughout the world, it now has 1,000 fee-paying members in Germany, who have dedicated themselves to taking time to dine unhurriedly and pleasurabley. Admittedly, though, this can scarcely be declared a sea change.

It is nonetheless a different matter if we consider the parallel worlds which most of us inhabit: during the week hastily downing hastily prepared meals, but then at the weekend devoting libidinous attention to cooking and eating, be it in the form of a carefully thought-out succession of dishes or be it rather in the form of a plain and simple meal enriched purely by allowing plenty of time to enjoy it and sharing this enjoyment in friends' company. The eating habits evident in our society are anything but uniform and consistent. It is rather more the case that most of us evidence a remarkable mastery in dealing with opposites, which is not viewed as inconsistency for the simple reason that these opposites are separated from each other in time and are subjectively ascribed to different "worlds": we have on the one hand everyday behaviour determined by constant pressure of time, and on the other hand we have the safe haven of Saturday evening when we appear to have all the time in the world - provided of course that we have not succumbed to "Saturday night fever". Consequently, the "flip-flopping between fast food and delicacies" (cf. Tränkle, 1992), between snack bar and elegant restaurant, which for many of us is a daily and weekly occurrence, does not strike us as anything special. In view of the way in which we place alternating emphases on the quantity and quality of what we eat, it is therefore less appropriate to speak of two opposing cultures than of *culinary parallel cultures*, with the simple and casual character of fast food immediately juxtaposed with the "new laboriousness" (Andritzky, 1992: 14) of haute cuisine.

Some people may feel that the latter seems somewhat exaggerated and excessive, for example when gastronomic culture is turned into a gastronomic cult, when all endeavours are no longer focused on the food but rather on how it is presented. It does, however, show that in living and eating fast we apparently remain *emotionally undernourished* and that in our society there still are remnants of a yearning for the fulfilment felt after a successful feast - a yearning for leisure, good company and good taste.

In such rare but blissful moments, the suspicion dawns that whilst a tight control over time and a speeding up that serves to product greater efficiency may indeed raise the standard of living, the quality of life is if anything diminished. Consequently, those remnants of gastronomic culture that we have retained or newly acquired constitute a ray of hope - not on

the distant horizon but rather in the "blind spot" of our accelerated everyday life. They form as it were the green strip alongside the expressway of fast food and quick happiness. It is narrow, but at least it's something: for it is on such occasions - when enjoying cooking, eating and drinking together - that we experience time in a way that we otherwise do not allow ourselves. For example, in body and soul we experience:

- that only a rhythmic structuring of time allows us once again to pause and "find ourselves" amid the hustle and bustle of everyday life;
- that, in the words of the Bible, "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven", and therefore what really matters in all that we do and don't do is "agreeable tempi" and "the right moment";
- that waiting and being patient need not mean that our time is as it were idling in neutral but rather that this is a prerequisite for all success and a foretaste of pleasure;
- that supposedly wasting time on all these activities can also be understood and experienced as savouring time;
- and lastly that a re-acquisition of time in eating together can also mean re-acquiring a social life.

Why should it not be possible to retrieve such perceptions of time being experienced also in our everyday lives in order that we not only again take our own longings more seriously but also make the schizophrenia of our successful and harried lives a little more bearable!? It may perhaps be surprising but it is precisely the stereotypical objection that one no longer has time for all this during the week that is probably the least justifiable. Whoever is able to spend several hours a day watching television, even if it is only to see what some TV chef is cooking up, would appear to be amply blessed with free time. As so often in life, it is less a question of whether we *are able* to do what we want than rather a matter of whether we *want* to do what we could.

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