

Why
the world



needs
convivialité.



Pernod Ricard
Créateurs de convivialité

Please note:

This document draws on scientific research, newspaper articles, philosophy and art, as well as on surveys performed by independent polling institutions.

Nevertheless, it does not claim to be a scientific paper. It simply presents our Corporation's deeply held conviction, one that is shared by our collaborators and that inspires our daily efforts and how we see our profession. It's our perception of the world and its issues, and it is key to explaining why we do what we do.

**Our modern,
hyper-connected era:**

The triumph
of loneliness

The truth of that paradox can be seen all over the place. Loneliness is often tied to old age: senior citizens who are no longer professionally active and who have to cope with a world that's becoming ever more technological and less human. A British study from 2017¹ shows that the spread of self check-out machines in supermarkets has had a negative impact on old-age pensioners' social lives. They find the system

intimidating and unfriendly, since the social interaction of shopping is an important part of their daily lives. It's worth remembering that in the USA and Great Britain, approximately 1/3 of people over 65 live alone, and for those over 85 in the United States, that figure reaches 50%.

Loneliness's social impact is real. In the UK, 9 million people admitted that they often or always felt lonely, so in 2018, the British government created a ministry² devoted to loneliness to try to cope with that new public-

The world has never been so connected, distances so reduced, the population so concentrated, and yet, people have never felt so alone.

1. The Centre for Future Studies consultancy group

2. Source: Time, How the World's First Loneliness Minister Will Tackle 'the Sad Reality of Modern Life', 25 April 2018



health issue.³ The wave of gloom has even reached Scandinavia, which is often held up as a role model for happy societies: more than 1 in 10 people say they suffer emotionally on a daily basis.⁴ In Finland, which took top place in the UN's 2018 ranking of happy countries, one third of premature deaths are suicides.

What about young people?

This is surely the most worrisome information. Younger generations turn out to be even more affected than their elders. Feeling out of place in a technological society or confused by a world they “no longer understand,” can not be the issue in their case. And let's be perfectly clear: we're not talking about typical teenage crises, like rebelling against parental rules and social norms or yearning to share idyllic freedom with friends, “those who really understand me.” No, the issue



here is loneliness amongst young people who, on the contrary, can't connect to the resource of sociability. Unable to create favorable conditions for socializing with each other, young people are lonely even amongst themselves.

Why?

It is hard to provide a single, indisputable answer to such a complex question. Yet we can envisage the digitalization of social relations as a contributing factor. At this point in time, although no study has formally proven a connection between de-socialization and the use – or abuse – of social networks, it seems obvious that social media have taught the younger generation *not* to be entirely “here and now,” since their attention and expectations are always divided, and at least partially attuned to the solicitations of social networks. Yet to truly be with others, one must first be in the present moment, in the famous here and now, where one's peers are... The digitalization of social relations entails the risk of reducing the amount of time actually spent *with* other people even more, both quantitatively and qualitatively.⁵ A whopping 90% of Millennials, including parents of young children, acknowledge texting⁶ during mealtime. The side effects of “relations

3. Source: Eurostat, Do Europeans feel lonely?, 2017

4. Source: Study by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen, 2018

5. Source: *The Independent*, People who use social media a lot are isolated, study says, 6 March 2017

6. Source: “How America Eats” survey for Uber Eats, December 2017



without sociality” are patent: from Facebook “friends” one doesn’t actually know or never sees to real people met on Tinder for instant mutual “gratification,” this new kind of sociality dispenses with the selfless aspect of real relations, which is the foundation of their authenticity and sincerity.

Yet the digitalization of social relations has become generalized: the number of people using social media is expected to reach the 3 billion mark by 2021. In the United States, 81% of the population has a profile on at least one social network.⁷ Not only has the number of users grown, but more importantly, the amount of time spent on social media – and therefore away from “real life” – has increased. On average, in 2017, users spent 135 minutes a day on those media, as opposed to 90 minutes in 2012.

In the United States, one study⁸ revealed that loneliness has reached critical levels: nearly half of all Americans admit to feeling lonely. According to the study, members of the hyper-connected Generation Z – meaning people 22 and under – are the most likely to feel that way. More than half of that age group say they feel 10 out of the 11 feelings related to loneliness:

7. Source: Statista, Social Media Statistics & Facts

8. Source: Cigna study, May 2018

feeling alone in the middle of other people (69%), shyness (69%), or like nobody truly understands them (68%). The phenomenon is global: research from the British Office for National Statistics shows that almost 10% of people aged 16 to 24 were «always or often» lonely – the highest proportion of any age group,⁹ and Asia has seen the disconcerting phenomenon of young people attempting to end their social isolation by... buying companion robots.¹⁰ And so *Blade Runner 2049*'s futuristic vision featuring an A.I. companion is no longer fictional. Gatebox is a holographic companion robot with a \$2,700 price tag; the ads feature a man saying, “*You know, somebody’s home for me.*” It sold out in Japan. It would seem that the fear of a loss of socialization due to the digitalization of relations with friends is old hat. Nowadays, socializing with machines is the new threat...

Is it really a problem?

The health consequences are actually quite alarming. There is a whole host of studies connecting loneliness to physical and psychological health problems. Loneliness is a risk factor that represents a 30% average increase in the likelihood of premature death,¹¹ and a Danish study from June 2018 indicates that it doubles

9. Source: BBC News, 10 April 2018

10. Source: *South China Morning Post*, Asia's lonely youth are turning to machines for companionship and support, 16 June 2018

11. Source: Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality, 11 March 2015



We wind up with huge, impersonal social fields, divided into “gated communities,” whether the “gates” are political, religious, ethnic or other.

the chances that an individual will die of heart disease.¹² It also multiplies the frequency of anxiety and depression threefold. Feeling lonely also increases the likelihood of relapse, since, according to a study by Julianne Holt-Lunstad,¹³ the single most important factor in 12-month survival rates after a heart attack turned out to be the quality of patients’ social networks. Ahead of quitting smoking, obesity or exercise.

The reasons for loneliness can be found in modern society. Today’s world generates more and more stress while reducing our opportunities for genuine socialization, or “convivialité” at the same time. This is due, in

large part, to the growing difficulty in having authentic relationships with other people, or even with oneself. That is particularly true in urban areas, which is where 60% of the world’s population will be living by 2020.¹⁴

12. Source: *The Independent*, 10 June 2018

13. Source: *Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-Analytic Review*, 27 July 2010

It’s hard to pinpoint blame for the loneliness epidemic on any one specific aspect of modern life. Things are actually more complex and subtler than that. Sue Bourne, the director of *The Age of Loneliness*, a documentary from 2016, puts it this way: “I wish after making *The Age of Loneliness*, I could identify 10 key reasons people today are lonely. And 10 key things that could be done to help. But it’s complex.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, we can identify a few features of contemporary society that contribute to isolating individuals.

It’s somewhat of a cliché, but cities are realms of anonymity. The German sociologist Georg Simmel formulated the concept as far back as 1903, in a lecture

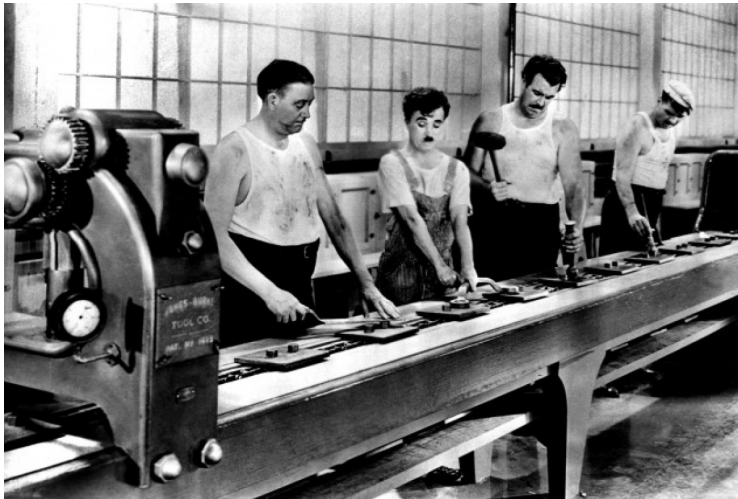


14. Source: le dessous des cartes, arte.

<http://ddc.artetv/nos-cartes/villes-du-futur>

15. Source: *The Guardian*, 4 January 2016

called *The Metropolis and Mental Life*. Although urban areas were more anonymous than the social structure of traditional villages, they also allowed greater individual freedom. According to Simmel, the anonymity related to the vastness of the social setting was made up for by more circumscribed fields of socialization, particularly the work sphere. But nowadays, the world of work is far more widely associated with stress than with personal fulfillment. For many of us, it no longer performs its socializing mission. Quite the opposite, in fact. Work's loss of meaning, the wearing effect of routine, the difficulty in expressing one's personality professionally all generate stress in individuals, reinforcing their malaise. That's one of the themes of Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, which illustrates the inversion of the work/worker relationship by featuring individuals



at the service of a machine rather than the other way around. We don't necessarily all do assembly-line work, but more and more people do feel like they have no compelling reason to get up in the morning.

The situation is the same worldwide: nearly half of all Singaporeans say they are unhappy at work;¹⁶ in Hong Kong, 25% believe their job offers no perspective for happiness;¹⁷ in France, 24% of employees say they feel burned out at work,¹⁸ a mental state that can harm your health ... the list could go on and on. At a time when the anonymity of urban life makes us need an outlet for self-expression all the more, work no longer reliably offers a means of self-fulfillment. The reversal of the individual / society relationship, which tends to turn people into the spare parts needed to keep the wheels turning, can be found everywhere:

16. Source: *Today online*, 22 January 2018

17. Source: Study by jobsDB.com, 18 December 2017

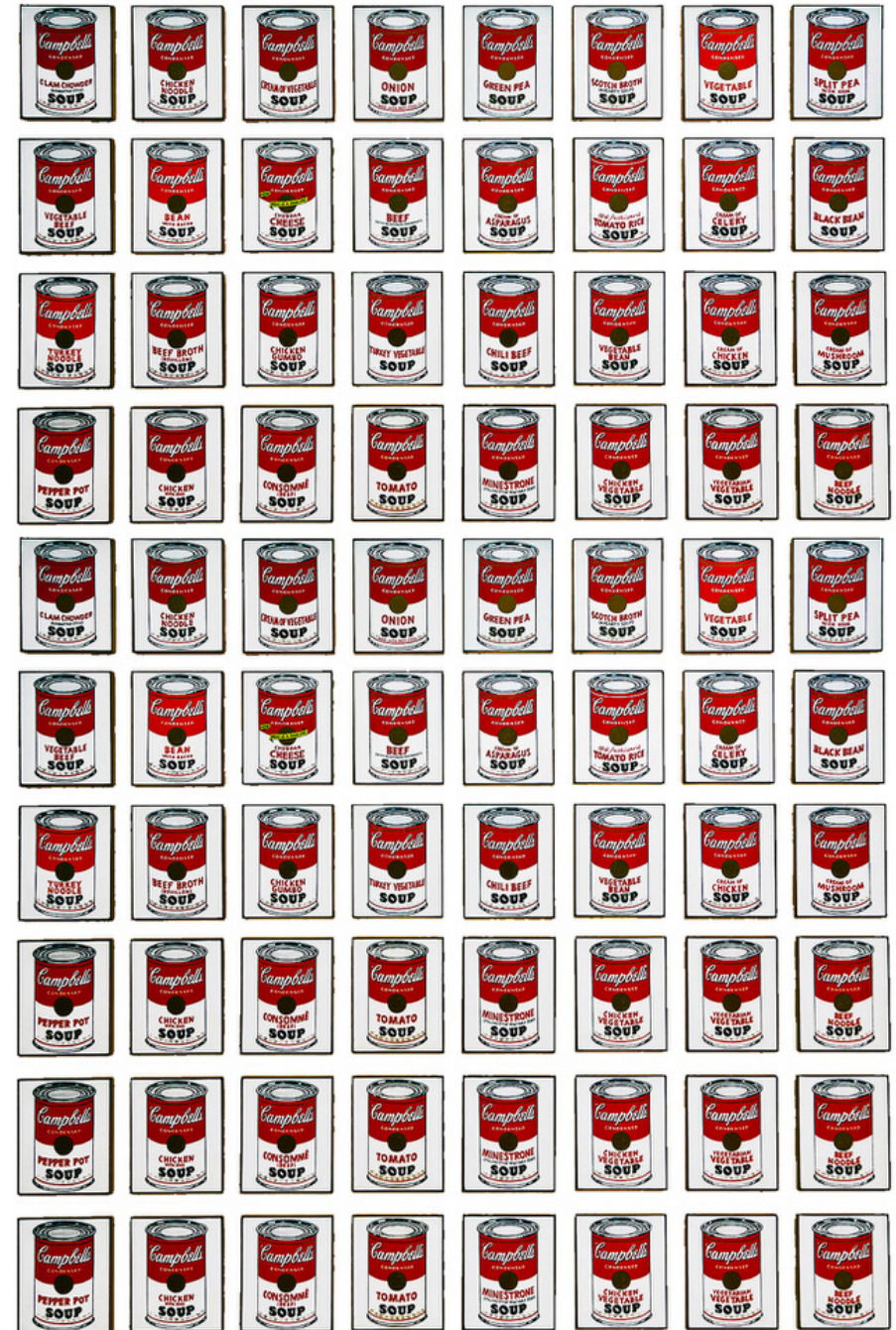
18. Source: France TV info, 27 November 2017

in the dehumanization of public transportation; the lonely crowd; the industrialization of entertainment; normative education, and even at gyms, where members run side by side on treadmills, watching TV or wearing headphones... Society no longer tries to help individuals express what makes them unique, but instead undertakes to force them to submit to its own process, in other words, to format them like cogs in a wheel. That is the theory that Ivan Illich developed in his book-length essay *Tools for Conviviality*, a radical and uncompromising perspective on modernism that highlights society's loss of humanity.

Is being together necessarily convivialité?

A social space governed by anonymity leads almost mechanically to the creation of hermetic communitarianism, when people seek out the company of like-minded others. We wind up with huge, impersonal social fields divided into “gated communities,” whether the “gates” are political, religious, ethnic or other.

We no longer share with people unlike ourselves, we no longer seek them out; instead we circle the wagons, drawing close to those we identify with, affirming who we are by excluding anyone who's not like us, rather than allowing ourselves to be enriched by those differences. Since anonymity is a source of anxiety, our reflex reaction is to protect ourselves from it... by withdrawing, if need be. The infinite difference between convivialité and social



homogeneity is this: while the first tends towards universality by overcoming differences in order to unite, the latter is a kind of private club based on excluding alterity. Identities are asserted negatively there, i.e. through signs that show what we are not. Thus hermetic communities start the mirror effect in social groups compare and contrast their images in order to distinguish themselves from each other. Angela McShane's research into vessels for liquor in English history makes that explicit. Just like with mealtime ceremonies, drinking liquor in society follows certain rituals whose specifics vary depending on the following criteria: the qualitative nature of the beverage (beer, wine, spirits); the time and place; the amount consumed, and finally, the expected behavior (both for those who serve the liquor as well as for those who consume it). The language of having a drink together constitutes a fundamental medium in the ties that bind individuals to their communities.

After the anonymity of where we live and our disenchantment with work, let's take a look at the growing uniformity of lifestyles. Above and beyond local particularities that are becoming more and more trivial, people everywhere have similar commutes, buy the same transnational products – which no longer have any concept of origin or roots – and consume the same mass cultural goods. One consequence of this standardization of lifestyles is that it uproots individuals, cutting them off from their own identity. Once again,



it is up to the person to conform to products designed for the widest possible audience. Yet in order to be universal, one must first be from somewhere. That is no longer the case for much of what we consume: anonymous, identity-less products for standardized consumers. The modern world leaves less and less room for people, and more and more for individuals.

Anxiety and stress are also fed by the loss of rootedness with family and friends. Family meals, which are unanimously recognized as positive factors in people's psychological and physical equilibrium, are becoming less and less common. What's more, the ritualization of family mealtimes, traditionally moments of sharing and communication, is threatened by scheduling constraints: one study revealed that, in the USA, parents are now so busy that they eat 156 meals a year standing

up.¹⁹ A University of Oxford study informs us that, in the UK, 69% of those polled had never shared a meal with their neighbors, and 20% had not shared one with their own parents in at least 6 months.²⁰ Inside families as well, time spent pampering oneself has practically evaporated: 21 minutes a day for parents, and even less (15 minutes) if one only considers mothers. All those blows to people's family and emotional lives feed to a permanent malaise.

In 2017, Gallup's Negative Experience Index — which tracks people's experiences of stress, anger, sadness, physical pain and worry in the day before the poll — reached its highest point since the survey began, in 2006. Nearly 40% of adults polled in 146 countries said that they had been worried or stressed the previous day.

90% of Millennials,
including parents of
young children, text
during mealtime.

19. Source: New York Post, 14 May 2018. OnePoll Study

20. Source: Oxford University, Social eating connects communities, 16 March 2017.



The search for new kinds
of convivialité:

Happy
modernism

Although all this paints a dark portrait of a modern world that is short on convivialité, a reaction can also be observed: people are refusing to accept a joyless daily life as an inescapable fatality. Everywhere you look, and in myriad different ways, people who want to bring the human aspect back into our lives and who are determined to become instigators of convivialité are taking initiatives, coming together, and designing its new forms.

Digital technology serving human sociability?

Used for a different purpose, social networks constitute a remarkably efficient tool for “real-life” socialization. A large number of apps are being created that enable people with shared interests to meet: from looking for someone who plays the same sport or has the same kind of pet to wanting to make new friends in a foreign country, there’s an app for that. And those apps aim to help turn our all-digital all-the-time existence on its head. In this instance, rather than replacing authentic



socialization, the virtual revitalizes it by introducing and bringing together people who would never have met otherwise. Technology is also inventing a new route towards convivialité by allowing people who are far apart to feel closer. After postal mail and the telephone, digital communication abolishes distances: in 2014, the CEO of Samsung Electronics, Boo-Keun Yoon, predicted the era of the smart home: *Far beyond current smart-home technology, the Home of the Future will allow your daughter across the country to take a virtual place at the dinner table.*²¹

This desire for connection has even infiltrated the financial sphere. In reaction to a certain distrust of financial giants and to how difficult it can be to find financing to develop projects, crowdfunding is emblematic of how people can come together around shared values or an idea they believe in. Often altruistic, thinking outside the financial-investment box, crowdfunding embodies the power of many, in the sense of a group of people united by nothing more than faith in the same project. It is a revolutionary economic vision, the advent of the participative, of the group coming before the individual. A single statistic suffices to grasp the extent of this transformation: the global sharing economy was worth \$14 billion in 2014;

21. Source: BIG, *the next big wave, future growth opportunities*



its value is forecast to reach \$335 billion by 2025.²²

The trend towards sharing and all things “co-” is undoubtedly the best proof of the quest for warmer, more human relationships. Car-sharing, co-living, co-working: everyday needs, which until recently were seen as constraints, have suddenly become excuses for meeting new people. Non-existent just a few years ago, co-working has now been established in some 15,000 locations around the world.²³ “Co-working is the new normal.” This flexible, open new way of designing work spaces is not only more fulfilling, but it also offers highly productive working conditions by encouraging communication and task sharing.

Places like Station F and the “104” in Paris are convivial of course, but they are above all performance hubs that stimulate a confluence of ideas by deconstructing the workplace.

The quest for a more human-focused world is also manifested in the growing interest in products with a history that can tell a story that is rooted in a specific place and fed by a specific culture.

22. Source: Statista 2018, Value of the sharing economy worldwide in 2014 and 2025

23. Allwork, Coworking is the new normal, and these stats prove it, 14 March 2018



Co-working can be seen as individuals taking public spaces back in order to turn them from anonymous spaces, where people cross paths without connecting, into fertile ones, where genuine personal encounters and collaborations are possible. But the porosity between public and private spaces can also be understood the other way around, through the opening of the private sphere. In that logic, intimate spaces become a new stage for sociality, a new location for entertainment.²⁴ Convivialité migrates from public places like bars and moves into private or semi-private places that offer more intimacy and authenticity. My Little Party, for instance, a collaborative platform that enables users to organize or join private parties, signals an evolution in the relationship between the private and public spheres.²⁵

The notion of the opening of private spaces clearly explains part of Airbnb's success. Over and above the economic aspect, the platform offers the opportunity to "live like a local," and to spend time in authentic places, in someone's home. Many people prefer a possibly less perfect, but surely less sterile place that reflects the owner's personality, and perhaps even their soul, to a cold, impersonal hotel room. Far more than just a platform for short-term housing ads, Airbnb is above all a community-building model based on the desire to reach out to another person and to slip inside their shell, to slough off the role of tourist and become a real Parisian, New Yorker or Korean. In 11 years, the site has attracted 150 million users around the world. People's homes, traditionally seen as closed-off cocoons



24. Source: BIG, *the next big wave, future growth opportunities*

25. Source: BIG, *the next big wave, future growth opportunities*

within the social arena have become open places, thoroughfares welcoming those who are “just passing through.” Thus meeting others is no longer reserved for the public sphere, like work or clubs, but can even occur inside our own homes. This represents a real evolution of mentalities in our society.

Yet another example of the permeability between public and private spaces can be found in the many apps cropping up that aim to redistribute uneaten foodstuffs in order to reduce food waste. Traditionally, private homes were the end of the line for consumer goods: they were either consumed or thrown away. But these networks are opening up new pathways for plowing consumer goods back into the distribution circuit, strengthening the social and economic model’s circularity above and beyond the divisions between public and private the spheres.

A cultural revolution in the making?

Going even further, the co-living phenomenon makes a utopic vision of living together come true. Reducing private spaces to the bare minimum, co-living inhabitants share all the common spaces. Far more than the financial or material advantages offered, the model is based above all on a mutual desire for genuine encounters and being part of a welcoming and enriching social environment. Unlike a model of sociality through exclusion, like hermetic communitarianism, an inclusive model designed to create a social ecosystem focused on opening up



towards others is emerging. It is based on an image of the Other as someone who is both different from myself (and therefore a source of enrichment) but also profoundly identical (which enables being open and welcoming). That is the foundation of *convivialité*.

The quest for a more human-focused world is also manifested in the growing interest in products with a history that can tell a story that is rooted in a specific place and fed by a specific culture. This quest reflects a movement from (uniformizing) western universalism to (hybridizing) “multi-local” universalism.²⁶ The “fusion” concept is replacing the tendency towards uniformity: distinct, differing origins are blended together; they don’t disappear. Single malt Japanese whisky, for instance, has conquered Europe and North America, illustrating a new form of cultural



globalization, one founded on exchange and dialogue. Another example of the success of fusion culture: Gustu, a restaurant in La Paz, Bolivia. Gustu’s chef, Kamilla Seidler, combines the best of Bolivian cuisine with the Scandinavian flavors of her native Denmark; she was voted the best chef in Latin America in 2016. Curiosity irrigates modes of consuming, that lead us to discover the world’s diversity. Exclusion and rejection yield to marriages and to hybridizing an open and multi-faceted world.

“Exclusion and rejection yield to marriages and to hybridizing an open and multi-faceted world”

Granted, the world exerts toxic psychological pressure. The rise of technology makes individuals more dependent, constantly available, “on call” at all times. But signs of a return to conviviality – one that harnesses the power of technology and the tools of modernity to put humans back at the center – are cropping up everywhere. Why? Because *convivialité* is in humanity’s DNA. A world without *convivialité* is an inhuman world.

26. Source: BIG, *the next big wave, future growth opportunities*

**There can be
no humanity...**

**without
convivialité.**

Let's go back to basics. The word “convivialité” comes from the Latin word *convivium*, meaning a meal eaten together. Right away, looking at the etymology allows us to grasp the two often conflicting forces that characterize humanity: nature and culture. Because although the “meal” part refers to satisfying a natural, biological need, “together” implies a social framework for doing so. Human beings may not be the only ones who eat *with* their fellow creatures, but they are the only ones who eat “together.” In other words, we don't simply eat side by side, or in physical proximity with other people, we turn mealtimes into times of sharing, discussion, and communication. The word *convivialité* itself is something of a neologism; coined by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, he uses it in his *Physiologie du goût* (*Physiology of taste*, 1825) to refer to “the pleasure of being together, of trying to find the balance necessary



for good communication, for truly friendly discussion at a dinner table.” Clearly Humanity is what that's all about.

Claude Fischler, an anthropologist and sociologist specialized in human being's relationship to food, points out that humans are unlike other animals because “they don't just eat their food, they theorize it.”²⁷ Because for humans, food is part of culture. “Eating,” Fischler has written, “is a complex act, to say the least. It includes fundamental dimensions. The first goes from physiology to culture, from the nutritional role to the symbolic one; the second from the individual to the group, from the psychological to the social.” Everywhere you look, in every era, human beings have always orchestrated mealtimes as a ritual that anchors the activity in sociality, in other words, in a relationship to other people. Man, in Aristotle's words a “political animal,” uses meals eaten together together to create a connection to others that satisfies a need that is no less essential than hunger:

Mankind goes from the flavor of food to savoring social bonding.

27. Source: *L'alimentation du biologique au social*, 1990



the desire for convivialité through which we assert our own humanity and see ourselves reflected in the humanity of others.

As Jean-Jacques Bouteaud has written,²⁸ mankind goes from “the flavor of food to savoring social bonding.” Human beings “eat symbolism,” to quote Lévi-Strauss, meaning that they incorporate values connected to foods. Even greater is the importance of doing so together in a ritual that determines the value of foodstuffs and drinks – whether recommended or forbidden – in order to compose a collective identity or to seal an alliance.²⁹ This holds true for all civilizations. In other words, from the moment that we do it along with other people, what we eat and drink is part of the

28. In *Le sens gourmand. De la commensalité – du goût – des aliments*. Jean-Paul Rocher éditeur, 2005

29. Source: Actes Sémiotiques, Françoise Parouty-David, 5 July 2007





most profound and universal language of humanity. Breaking out a bottle of champagne or XO spirits for a milestone event isn't just about the taste, it *means* something. Because behind the instinctive drinking action, there is a spiritually elevating one. "[Clinking glasses] is probably the vestige of sacrificial libations in which a holy liquid was offered to the gods," Dwight B. Heath wrote: "blood or wine in exchange for making a wish come true; prayer summarized in the words *to your health!*"³⁰

For the writer Daniel Lacotte, clinking glasses symbolizes being accepted in a group, agreeing

30. Source: in *International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1995

31. Source: *Le Pourquoi du comment* 2, Éditions Albin Michel, 2006

to symbolic sharing.³¹ As legend has it, back in the Middle Ages, the point of clinking glasses was to blend the contents: first and foremost, it was meant to display trust that neither glass had been poisoned. Regardless of whether or not that apocryphal story so dear to drinkers' hearts is actually true, it does contain a kernel of something essential: clinking glasses is a way of exposing one's true self, it displays a willingness to open up to others; it's a sanctified way of saying, "Hello, this is the real me here before you." We only clink glasses with someone whom we recognize as an alter ego – another self – above and beyond social status, ethnic origins and religion. So sharing a drink means signing a pact. A human pact, a social pact. For that matter, it's significant that the *type* of alcohol people drink is as much of a parameter of social recognition (showing that one belongs to a clan, social class, etc.) as the way they drink it. Of course,





alcohol has a key place in this social ritual: on the one hand, it is an essential component of the codified ritual itself, but it also contributes to loosening those codes through the relaxing of manners, speech and thoughts that it generates. Robin Dunbar, an anthropologist specialized in primate evolution, explains that alcohol activates neurological mechanisms involved in social bonding in both the great apes and human beings. Alcohol's "socializing" effect helps explain humanity's millennia-old connection to it.

A ritual that dates back to the dawn of time?

Archeologists made an intriguing discovery recently at the Neolithic site of Göbekli Tepe,³² in southern Turkey. They uncovered a series of giant stone troughs erected more than 10,000 years ago. At the bottom of the vessels, they identified traces of a chemical called calcium oxalate, which is generally secreted during the fermentation of grains. Based on that, they concluded that Göbekli Tepe, like a distant ancestor of Burning Man, Coachella and others, was the site of an incantatory festival where our prehistoric forefathers and mothers came together for a group initiation involving large quantities of beer.

32. Source: *The Guardian*, 1 September 2018

The archeologist Patrick McGovern has uncovered similar traces on clay-pottery vessels in China that date back more than 8,000 years. Some anthropological theories go so far as to assert that farming was started for the sake of producing alcohol – rather than food.³³ Elements have been discovered establishing alcohol-consumption-based rituals from as far back as the second millennium B.C. The earliest traces of alcohol intake as part of funerary rites have been found in Can Sadurní cave, near Barcelona, Spain. In the Massif Central, a mountainous region in central France, archeologists have shown that the sanctuary in Corent is the perfect incarnation of the socializing role of alcohol as cultural “glue,” and of its symbolic power.³⁴ It was used to crystallize elaborate rituals that strengthened political elites’ social status, and thus the tribe’s social order.

In Guyana, an indigenous tribe produces parakari, a fermented beverage considered to be “the source of life.” Parakari is seen as a source of energy for participating in communal activities (particularly work) and for creating social cohesion. Consuming parakari is often ritualized. Shamans, for example, would never start a therapeutic without drinking parakari first. Drinking it – always in moderation, never to excess – is essentially a factor of harmony and of commitment to collective labor.³⁵

33. Source: *Financial Times*, “Why drink Is the secret to humanity’s success”

34. *National Geographic*, “Our 9,000-Year Love Affair with Booze,” February 2017

35. Source: Conference *The earliest toasts: archaeological evidence for the production and consumption of alcohol in Prehistoric*, September 2018

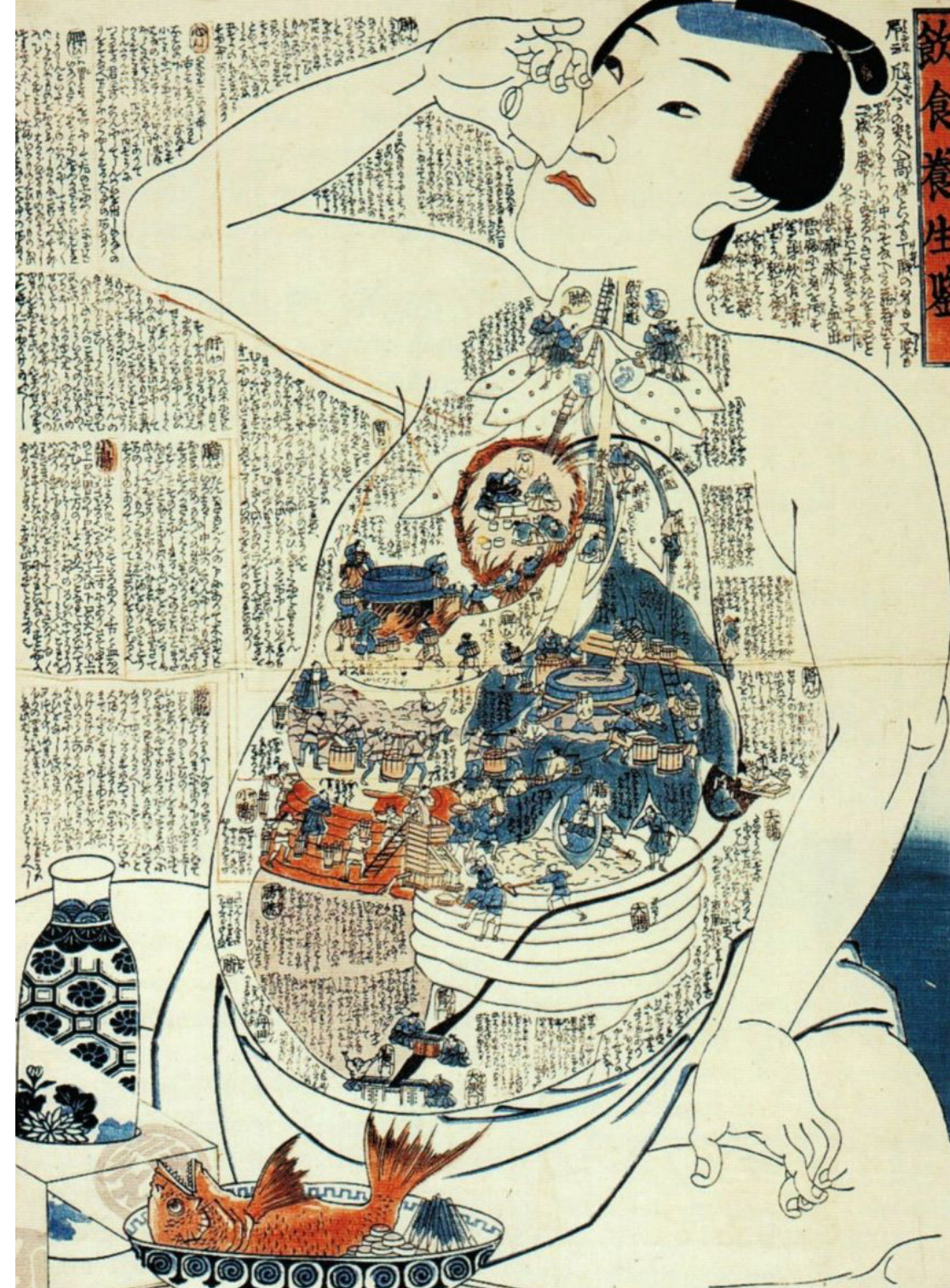


In fact, homo sapiens is the only species that has demonstrated the capacity to develop the agriculture and know-how required to consume a steady supply of alcohol. Thanks to technological evolutions, both production and intake grew steadily, and became a part of many social rituals. The archeologist Raymond Allchin locates the true birth of the art of distillation in the Indian subcontinent, in a region corresponding to today’s Pakistan, and dates it to the 6th century B.C. The oldest known recipe comes from a Sumerian tablet dating back to 1500 B.C.: it explains how to make, not bread, but a fermented beverage.³⁶

36. Source: Social Issues Research Centre, Social and cultural aspects of drinking

Scenes featuring alcohol's social function abound in art and literature; they also emphasize the fine line between conviviality and loss of self-control: ancient Egyptian painting portrays alcohol consumption, which suggests its importance in daily life, the Greeks associated it more to mythology and the Gods, while the Romans favored images of festive orgies. In western painting, representations of alcohol constantly waver between madness and excess on the one hand, and social union, or even elevation towards a more spiritual plane, on the other. In fact, the theme is so intimately connected to human existence that you could compose a very thorough history of art through the prism of representations of alcohol alone.³⁷

There are no two ways about it: excess in alcohol consumption – as with many other things – can not be justified in any way, shape or form. And it is precisely by going back to the roots of what it represents, i.e. its social purpose, that we find the best approach for enjoying the principle of moderate, positive consumption. One study tells us that there are three essential factors that contribute to the pleasure of going to a party or dinner party: laughter, shared memory or prior events, and alcohol. In the broadest sense, parties are a fundamental factor of socialization. We



37. Source: BBC, culture, 5 January, 2016



spend 40% of our socialization time with just 5 people we know, and 60% with 15. Parties and celebration are a prime way of forging new relationships, especially in the vastness of contemporary society. Extending one's social network is actually critical to one's personal equilibrium, as we have seen. The advantages are even greater when get-togethers including drinks take place in the evening, when social constraints are loosened. CAMRA's pubs and wellbeing study³⁸ shows that people who have a local pub are not only happier, they also have more friends, are more trusting, feel more engaged with their local community, and are more satisfied with their lives overall. Similarly, acting as

38. Source: University of Oxford, The benefits of social drinking 6 January 2017
 39. Source: *Le Figaro*, L'oktoberfest, miroir de la fierté bavaroise, 5 October 2018

human-sized spheres of socialization, conversations in small pubs involve fewer people but turn out to last longer and get more personal. Still, oversized events like Oktoberfest, the annual beer festival in Munich, also have a role to play in constructing individuals' social identity. Oktoberfest, which attracts thousands of locals, is profoundly tied to the region, and is an iconic expression of its culture and history. "[Oktoberfest] is a place of integration," according to Marita Krauss, professor of regional history at the University of Augsburg. "It provides a response to globalization and satisfies the need for rootedness."³⁹

It turns out that sociality is crucial to protecting not only people's physical health, but their psychological health as well. The world's longest study of happiness is being performed by Harvard. Having followed some participants since 1938, it has revealed that people's capacity for empathy and the quality of their relationships to others are decisive to their chances of ageing in good health. "Embracing community helps us live longer and be happier." So convivialité is not just



a question of “comfort,” something desirable for human beings, it is indeed fundamental to our personal equilibrium.⁴⁰

A study carried out by the University of Pittsburgh found out that moderate alcohol intake – in a social setting – encourages positive emotions and social bonding:⁴¹ by making people more outgoing, extending the length of conversations, and reducing negative emotions. The study showed that not only was the frequency of “sincere” laughter increased among the drinkers, but laughter was also more likely to be shared among participants in the study, implying greater group harmony. In other words, alcohol helped create “golden moments,” or magical bubbles, by bringing people closer together and helping them open up to each other. Those results were corroborated by a study by Dr. Mathias Liechti⁴² in which behavioral and facial-expression tests were performed on two groups of people, one that was given beer, the other non-alcoholic beer. The outcome showed that the first group was noticeably more interested in spending time with other people in a cheerful, convivial atmosphere, particularly the women and those who were more inhibited. By enabling participants to recognize expressions of joy

40. Source: *The Harvard Gazette*, “Good Genes Are Nice, but Joy Is Better,” 11 April 2017

41. Source: A Multimodal Investigation of the Effects of Alcohol on Emotion and Social Bonding, June 2012

42. Source: BBC News, Glass of beer ‘makes people more sociable’ 19 September 2016

and openness more quickly and easily, as well as by increasing emotional empathy – especially amongst those whose initial level of empathy was low – alcohol contributed to the group’s cohesion and to individuals’ becoming closer.

Our conclusion is that in our modern world, which is a source of stress and unhappiness because it contributes powerfully to inhibiting people’s personality, festive moments of sharing pleasure with friends and family are like priceless “bubbles” out of time. The practical, functional, anonymous time of social constraints is temporarily suspended, yielding to genuine, sincere and direct interaction between several people. Thanks to both its physical effect, and above all its symbolic one, alcohol contributes to creating conditions that are conducive to those “magical moments.” That is what makes what we do most meaningful: speaking all the languages of *convivialité*, in order to create the conditions for it to blossom everywhere. Because the desire for *convivialité* is universal. Because without *convivialité* there is no humanity.



Convivialité...

brings joy.

Jacques Salomé helps us grasp what it is about convivialité that feeds our innermost selves. In our cold daily lives, convivialité stands out like “the antidote to the impoverishment of relationships and the mediocrity of social dialogue. ‘Convivialité’ contains simplicity, trust, pleasure of being in each other’s company, kindness and concern for others. Signs of interest that are often missing in the desertification of today’s human relations.

Convivialité occurs when, within a human group, there is a shift from *connaissance* (French for “knowledge”) to *co-naissance* (“co-birth” or “being born together”), to the possibility of achieving greater self-knowledge through being born together, being able to reveal one’s vulnerability, to show one’s true feelings, without having to worry about misleading anyone or playing a role. The word can be connected to the notion of doing someone a favor altruistically and

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cheerfully, just for the pleasure of pleasing someone. It’s as though being convivial were the capacity for welcoming the hazards of the unpredictable in order to turn them into something upbeat and enjoyable.”⁴³

That quote from Jacques Salomé has it all: the simplicity, the trust, the pleasure, the reco-naissance (“recognition/being born together”), altruism, unpredictability and more.

Born of convention, convivialité
actually helps us to overcome it.

It is indeed true that convivialité – like beauty, or any other cultural construction – is created within a syntactical structure ruled by convention, with symbolism that is specific to each distinct time, place and even social class or group. Yet it resides nevertheless in a field that also breaks free of that



43. Source: Psychologies, La convivialité, c’était ma mère, Jacques Salomé, November 2002



convention-bound framework. Conventions are needed to create the conditions for recognition, and trust in others that are pre-requisites to letting oneself go, but encounters that are unable to free themselves to go beyond social rules will be stuck in cold, impersonal formalism. For convivialité to arise, you need real people with real personalities. Meaning someone unique who is about to meet someone else who is no less unique.

Sincerity is the starting point.

That's why simplicity is ideal for cultivating a convivial relationship, because it excludes the notions of appearances and keeping up with the neighbors. The social setting already exists, but breaking loose from it to simply be yourself symbolizes one of the postulates of convivialité. The concept of simplicity is, undoubtedly, relative, and won't mean the same thing in a private club in London and on a terrace on the Old Port of Marseille. But in both cases, and in fact, whatever the social setting, people can tell the difference between someone who is simply being him or herself and someone who is disguised behind a social façade.

It is based on mutual trust.

That simplicity, or sincerity, is fundamental to forging a genuine relationship to others, because it enables trust. We are more likely to show our true selves to someone who isn't hiding behind



a social mask. Convivialité is like any interpersonal relationship – from dancing, to friendship to love – both people have to reach out to the other. It also implies a certain altruism, an altruistic satisfaction, as Kant might say. If someone is opening up to the other person in order to try to seduce them, for instance, the relationship becomes unbalanced because the desire to simply *be with* the other is replaced by a desire *for* the other.

Trust generates the pleasure of being with.

The concept of trust is key. It reassures, allowing us to place the pact on a shared foundation and to create a relationship that is nourished equitably by all concerned. Once that virtuous cycle has been set in motion, it seems like the rest falls into place “organically,” drawing us into that desire for

convivialité that is essential to our humanity. *The enjoyment of good food is one of society’s main bonds; it gradually spreads the spirit of conviviality that brings different states together, melts them into a single whole, animates a conversation, and softens the hard edges of conventional inequality.*⁴⁴ The art of being together is a learned one, because you have to speak the language; but it is an innate disposition, because we are all capable of speaking it. Pleasure acts as an invitation to go further. In a moment of true convivialité, the comforting sense of reassurance is palpable, we feel good about ourselves. Protected from the toxic attacks of daily life, from the constant need to conform to false image of ourselves, convivial moments provide us with the experience of being accepted and appreciated for what we are.

Convivialité is the mirror effect of the universal.

Deep-seated reasons for pleasure can be found in that experience. Jacques Salomé talks about “co-naissance” (“co-birth”), and that is undoubtedly the most powerful statement he makes on the subject. Convivialité demands not only that we be sincere in our presentation of ourselves, but also that we display the same kindness and acceptance towards others. The exposure is not one-sided – as can

44. Brillat-Savarin, in Méditation XI, De la Gourmandise, Physiologie du Goût, 1826

happen during a psychotherapy session, for instance, an experience that is rarely considered convivial – instead, exposure is instantly welcomed by both participants. Because as in any verbal relationship, conviviality means recognizing oneself in the other person's gaze.

Robert Zemeckis's film *Cast Away* sheds an interesting light on this idea. Tom Hanks's character needs sociality in order to exist; that is the role assigned to the little doll that accompanies him in his daily life. In this play of reco-naissance ("recognition/co-rebirth"), the doll becomes human because Tom Hanks projects his own humanity onto it, erasing the physical differences that become secondary from then on. He needs another's gaze in order to feel human, so he has to recognize the other's humanity in order to achieve that. That is the convivialité pact.

Humanity tries to find itself in others, to be recognized and tested, and content to see itself in the infinite mirror effect that reveals it as both the same and different. I is another, as Rimbaud wrote, and that is what we feel during a genuine encounter with another person. Each person brings what makes them unique and human, offering it to the other in a shared – or neutral, we could say – space. For a magical moment, interiorities merge. To find the other, you have to *want* to find them; midway is where the encounter has to take place.

What makes convivialité magical, of course, is that it can't be dictated.

You can plan the setting, take care with the preparations, offer the best food and drink... but you can never be sure to set off a spark between two people. It's up to them to draw convivialité from a mysterious space-time equilibrium. We have all been surprised to realize how late we've stayed at a dinner: "2 AM already? How did it get to be so late?" On the other hand, we can all remember boring evenings when even 20 minutes felt like hours... That distortion of time and space is a crucial aspect of the experience of convivialité: time flies when you're having fun, as the saying goes. In everyday life, we are formatted to conform to the slots in our social schedule: business meetings, appointments, etc. The time slots in those schedules are abstract, homogenous units of measurement. Bergson's phenomenology



reveals an entirely different way of perceiving time. We experience moments that can be infinitely elastic, or, on the contrary, frustratingly brief; each and every instant in our lives is incomparable to any other. What we are experiencing is what is actually in command of our temporality. Convivialité corresponds to that real experience of time, because it puts us in direct contact with an authentic, fully-lived moment. We cease to think rationally in order to feel, and from that point on, our social clocks become emotional ones.

The same thing goes in terms of space, which has been extremely codified by social conventions. The social distances that should be kept in every day life make individuals feel safe. Although those distances can change depending on cultural references, there is always a zone of intimacy that should not be “invaded”. Convivial dialogue breaks that distance down, turning it into proximity. Keeping one’s distance is no longer what matters; drawing close and establishing a connection is. Think about the distance between guests at the beginning of a party and at the end. People have naturally drawn closer together in order to shift from a social relationship to a more affective one. Human contact, within the framework of trust, is a source of comfort and warmth.

What makes convivialité so important is that its advantages outlast the moment that brought it into being. It offers comfort, soothing the stress and





anxiety of daily life. But more importantly, it gives life meaning. Humanity is what brings meaning to the world. Humanity is the only transcendent value that needs no justification other than itself in order to inspire others to join in. Convivialité awakens that deeply generous relationship to others. It arises when we stop behaving egocentrically, or even egotistically, and instead adopt a kind and welcoming stance.

That's why we love what we do

The world needs convivialité, because it is a source of joy, hope, pleasure, and emotion. Our profession plunges us right to the heart of that extraordinary – and extraordinarily human – experience. Our savoir-faire tells the tale of women and men who imprint what they produce with their unique personality and character. Our products can go all over the world because they are rooted in a specific place, because

they are born of a unique culture. Our products are words of true diversity, whose identity, sculpted from a specific soil, from a *terroir*, is offered to whoever agrees to go to meet it.

Our job is to speak all of convivialité's languages, because convivialité raises us to the universal, but always from the starting point of a specific cultural foundation. Rather than trying to impose standardized modes of consuming that lack respect for cultural identities, we endeavor to read all of convivialité's rituals. From the times and ways of sharing to the reasons for and meaning of those experiences of opening up to others, our mission is to fit into them, all over the world, in order to help them reach their full potential in terms of both strength and beauty. That's why here at Pernod Ricard, we love what we do. Because the world *needs* convivialité.





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Créateurs de convivialité