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Human Biology: Zonulin, Gluten, Leaky Gut and Mystery Ailments. **Human Mentality:** Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western reductive thought (part 2). **Human Mentality:** Psychedelics in Ancient Egypt? **Food Ideas:** Christmas Dinner – Wild Boar Ragout & Bohemian red Cabbage. **News Shorts:** Measures of Obesity & Breast Cancer Risk; Keto Diet restarts Periods; Flavonoids reduce Dementia Risk; Vitamin K2 in Managing Leg Cramps...

Human Biology

Zonulin, Gluten, Leaky Gut and Mystery Ailments

In September 2005, I was invited to give a private talk to a group of business associates in Oslo, Norway. The talk was well received and my books were in great demand.

Recently (19 years later), I heard from the Norwegian organizer saying: "I wish that I had taken your words more seriously at the time!"

The organizer, now in his mid 70s, explained that for 2½ years he has been suffering from a debilitating level of nausea every morning which gradually dissipated towards evening. He had had a vast range of tests – blood, urine, enteroscopy, MRI, and many more, from a gamut of expert physicians – all to no avail. Finally, he alighted on a specialist who detected that he had abnormally high levels of a substance called "zonulin" in the bloodstream.

Zonulin is a chemical, secreted by body tissues which, amongst much else, controls the **POROSITY** of the gut. Too much, and the gut becomes 'leaky', allowing all kinds of bad actors (bacteria, viruses, funguses, yeasts) to invade from the gut into the blood and lymphatic system. See, **Leaky Gut**, [March 2003](#) [1]. This pollution from the leaky gut was making our organizer sick.

But what provokes the body to make excess zonulin? Nothing other than the wheat protein, gluten! More specifically a component of gluten, another protein called 'gliadin'. See **Grains**, [Deadly Harvest](#), [Chapter 5](#) [2], p. 123. >3

Human Mentality

Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western reductive thought (part 2)

Continuing insights from psychiatrist & neuroscientist, Dr Iain McGilchrist's monumental work [3].



Dr Iain McGilchrist. Credit [4]

<https://bit.ly/3BORhwB>

[Last month](#) we saw how our brains are split into two hemispheres, Left and Right. They work differently. The Left makes rapid assumptions by stripping out context; the Right takes a global point of view.

McGilchrist goes on to say that the Left blindly "follows the rules" in contrast to the Right, which is creative and thinks outside the box.

He describes an unusual experiment which utilizes the remarkable technique of paralyzing (freezing) one hemisphere to see what happens when the other one has free rein.

Volunteers were tested on syllogisms, both true and false. A syllogism is a logical structure whereby two propositions taken together lead inevitably to a conclusion. A classic example is:

1. All men are mortal,
2. Socrates is a man
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. >4

Human Mentality

Psychedelics in Ancient Egypt?



Blue Water Lily. Cr [5]

In [March 2024](#) [6] in **Psychedelics in Perspective**, I followed Brian Muraresku's journey to identify psychedelic use in the ancient world.

Now my attention was drawn to a paper describing the results of an advanced chemical analysis of the scrapings of the inner wall of a 2,000-year-old Egyptian vase from the Ptolemaic period [7].

The vase had contained a cocktail of psychotropic drugs: wild rue (*Peganum harmala*), blue water lily (*Nymphaea nouchali* var. *caerulea*), and a plant of the spider flower (*Cleome*) genus.

The concoction also contained alcohol and was flavored with honey, sesame seeds, pine nuts, licorice and grapes

My View? Did Mark Anthony imbibe? Possibly! But these plants (wild rue and so forth) are as likely to poison them as to give them a high – is that what happened to Cleopatra?

Muraresku's prime suspect was LSD as obtained from the fungus ergot – and this has yet to be convincingly found in ancient artifacts.

Food Ideas

Christmas Dinner: Wild Boar Ragout & Bohemian red Cabbage



<https://bit.ly/4a2G8VM>

That is what we had as a main dish for dinner this year. The last time we did this was in 2020 when we published the recipe for **Wild Boar Ragout**, [Nov 2020](#) [8]. You can download an updated version here: <https://bit.ly/41TEmE6>.

Bohemian red cabbage is another old stalwart from Nicole's cookbook [Paleo Harvest](#) [9]. The original recipe came from my grandmother who, indeed, came from Bohemia – then part of the Hapsburg's Austro-Hungarian Empire and which is now a province of the Czech Republic.

Traditionally this dish is cooked for up to 1½ hours, until the cabbage is limp. However, nutritionally speaking, the less the cabbage is cooked, the better. Try cooking for no more than 30 minutes. Bohemian Red Cabbage is particularly well accompanied by a portion of game, such as venison, wild boar or pheasant.

- 1 red cabbage (about 2lb, 1kg), thinly shredded
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium red onion (about 5oz, 140g), thinly chopped
- 2 tablespoons caraway seeds
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons xylitol, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 green apple, unpeeled & grated
- salt to taste
- black pepper, to taste

1. Steam the cabbage for about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
2. Meanwhile heat the oil in a large saucepan and sauté the onion until soft and translucent, but not brown.
3. Add the caraway seeds and sauté briefly. Stir in the vinegar, xylitol and allspice and sauté for another 2 minutes.
4. Mix in the grated apple.
5. Add the cabbage. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir thoroughly, to coat the cabbage evenly with all the ingredients.
6. Cover and bring slowly to a boil. Simmer on very low heat for 20-30 minutes, stirring once in a while, to avoid the cabbage sticking to the pan.
7. Adjust the seasoning, if necessary, and check for doneness. The cabbage should be very tender and soft.

You can download the recipe here: <https://bit.ly/3BSBSvh>

News Shorts

Measures of Obesity & Breast Cancer Risk

BMI is commonly used for assessing risk of post-menopausal breast cancer. A BMI greater than 30 is classed as 'obese'. Now a Spanish study finds that BMI underestimates risk of such cancer cases [10].

It found that a measure of body fat called "CUN-BAE" gave a much higher risk of breast cancer caused by obesity: 38% compared to BMI giving a risk of 23%.

My View? BMI is a crude 'rule of thumb'. It measures a person's weight compared to their height and takes no account of what percentages of that weight are attributable to muscle [good], fat

[bad], and bone [good]. See **Jack Sprat**, [Sept 2000](#) [11].

This study focusses on the only factor that counts: body fat percentage. So there is no hiding: high body fat is a high breast cancer risk. But there are many other factors too see: **Breast Cancer**, [Deadly Harvest](#), [Chapter 9](#) [12] page 234.

See also: **Waist-Height Ratio Beats BMI**, [July 2017](#) [13] and, **Slim People might not be as Healthy as they Appear**, [Dec 2006](#) [14]

Keto diet restores Periods



<https://bit.ly/4fHp0pJ>

The subjects ate prepared meals carefully formulated to provide a healthy ketogenic diet.

On a ketogenic diet (see **Ketogenic Diet Revisited**, [Jan 2024](#) [15]) healthy but overweight pre-menopausal women, average age 34, had improvements in menstrual frequency and/or intensity. [16]

In addition: "There were six women who hadn't had a period in over a year- who felt like their typical cycles were over – and their periods actually restarted on the diet," said lead author Madison Kackley of Ohio State University. "One of our participants was 33 years old and had never had a period in her life. She had her period for the first time after being in nutritional ketosis for five days."

None of the women was using the contraceptive Pill. Two women who were on the Pill had no change in their periods.

Meanwhile, and in contrast, a control group of women on ordinary low-fat diets did not report any change to their periods.

All women had lost the same relative percentage of weight.

Kackley and her team have no idea just what is going on so they intend to research this and also the effect of a keto diet on menopause and postnatal depression.

My View? I don't know what is going on either. All I do know is that in a state of nature foragers are skinny and probably close to, or in, ketosis much of the time.

These participant women were overweight or obese and, prior to the experiment, were on a classic American diet rich in sugars and starches. There is a connection between obesity, high blood sugar levels, insulin resistance, and sex hormone secretion.

But we don't have to get 'stuck in the weeds'. Just live and eat like nature intended and these things work out just fine.

Flavonoids reduce Dementia Risk

A study on a UK population, published in the American physician's trade journal JAMA, suggests that a high adherence to a flavonoid-rich diet was associated with a 28% lower risk of dementia [17]. Flavonoids are micronutrients in coloured plants which are important for human health [18].

The reduction in dementia risk was even greater for individuals with a high genetic risk (43%), hypertension (30%), and depressive symptoms (48%).

The greatest risk reduction (38%) was observed in participants consuming at least 2 of the following per day: 5 servings of tea, 1 serving of red wine, and 0.5 servings of berries, compared with those who did not achieve any of these intakes.

Higher intakes of flavonoid subclasses, including anthocyanins, flavan-3-ols, flavonols, and flavones, of which tea, red wine, and berries are the main contributors support these findings. Tea had the strongest association.

What is going on? The researchers suggest that since flavonoids can permeate the blood-brain barrier,

they reduce brain inflammation and improve blood vessel flow.

Flavonoids also get involved with the gut microbiome and its influence on the brain via the vagus nerve which connects the gut with the brain.

Finally, flavonoids have a favorable effect on nerve signaling and the working of the synapses (the nerve ends which send electrical signals to their targets).

My View? Tea, berries, and red wine? I think we can manage that all right. Bring it on!

I was a little surprised to see the prominence of tea – but after all, this study was on an English population for whom tea, brewed hard and strong, is still the national drink – at least among the age-group studied (40 to 70 years old).

As for berries, blackberries, blackcurrants and blueberries are richest in the all-important flavonoids known as 'anthocyanins'[19] [20].

Vitamin K2 in Managing Nocturnal Leg Cramps

A Chinese study published in the American doctor's trade journal JAMA, demonstrated that vitamin K2 supplementation of 180 micrograms per day over 8 weeks alleviates muscle cramps in older individuals (average age 71) affected by nocturnal leg cramps (NLCs) [21].

There was decreased frequency, shortened duration, and weakened intensity. Notably, cramping frequency was less than once per week in the K2 group compared to four per week with the placebo group.

My View? In a state of nature, foragers would get plenty of K2: a) from their gut bacteria and, b) from organ meats, egg yolks, and oily fish. So that's all right then.

However, vegans run a strong risk of deficiency which they can remedy by consuming some kinds of fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kombucha and tempeh.

See: **Vitamin K and Beta Carotene - and the Meaning of**

"Precursors", [June 2006](#) [22] and **Osteoporosis & Vitamin K2, [May 2017](#) [23]**

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Zonulin, Gluten, Leaky Gut and Mystery Ailments

3 weeks ago, our organizer went on a gluten-free diet and already he is feeling better for it. Even so, it will take months for his gut to recover normal porosity and for his symptoms to completely subside.

My View? This man's experience simply reinforces the view that grains in general are not human food and, in particular, that gluten-bearing grains – like wheat, rye, and barley – are best eliminated from the diet.

High Protein Wheat

The situation has been aggravated in recent years by the development of 'high protein' (that is, 'high gliadin!') varieties of wheat that, worse, are grossly overconsumed [24].

Crohn's Disease

In fact, our organizer did have an early-warning when, in his 40s, he was diagnosed with a mild case of Crohn's Disease. See:

Inflammatory Bowel Diseases, [Deadly Harvest, Chapter 9](#) [25], p. 243. The Crohn's disease was controlled by medication but the root cause (presumably gluten intolerance) was not investigated.

Zonulin Testing

A second lesson can be drawn: there must be a vast range of mystery ailments that ultimately find their cause in a 'leaky gut'. A test of zonulin levels might well reveal the cause to be gluten intolerance.

Lactose Intolerance

Another trigger of leaky gut is 'lactose' which is present in milk and some other dairy products. See **Milk, [Deadly Harvest, Chapter 5](#) [26], p121 and, **Ancient Europeans still Lactose Intolerant after Agriculture, [Nov 2014](#) [27].****

Age-related Intolerance

A third lesson is this: during the first part of our lives, for most of us, our bodies cope, albeit reluctantly, with these irritations. However, as we get older, our body's ability to cope with these insults fades.

From middle age onwards, be particularly aware that intolerances could be at the origin of many of those mystery ailments.

Gluten-free Grains?

Finally, 'gluten-free' breads and other wheat products are available. Are they safe to use? No! They are still loaded with the other grain antinutrients like lectins and alkyl-resorcinols, and are sharply more glycemic, causing unhealthy blood-sugar spikes. See: **Gluten-free Bread**, [Aug 2012](#) [28]

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Savanna-bred brains subverted by Western reductive thought (part 2)



In the investigation a cunning twist was introduced – one of the

propositions is false. This is an example:

1. All monkeys climb trees [true]
2. The porcupine is a monkey [false]
3. Therefore, the porcupine climbs trees

Five false syllogisms were used on 10 different healthy subjects. First in the normal state (when both hemispheres are working), the subjects reply that the conclusion is false since the porcupine is not a monkey [Good].

Similarly, when the Left hemisphere is frozen the Right hemisphere replies with some indignation, that "This is all wrong – the porcupine is not a monkey!" [Good].

But when the same syllogisms (written on cards) are used on the SAME volunteers with their Right hemispheres frozen, their Left hemispheres reply that: "yes the syllogism is true... the porcupine climbs trees, *since it is a monkey*". When the examiner asks the subject if she knows that the porcupine is **NOT** a monkey, the reply comes: "Yes", but she insists on her answer. Why? "Because it says so on the card".

As McGilchrist observes, "As far as the Left hemisphere is concerned, truth is fidelity to a closed system which defines its own reality... thus helping us to identify in the thrust of some Post-modern philosophy the triumph of the Left hemisphere... Internal, theoretical consistency is more important than truth to experience."

The Right hemisphere, meanwhile, thinks it might be worthwhile checking by looking out of the window where, whatever it may say on the piece of paper, a porcupine is not actually a monkey."

McGilchrist goes on to opine that: "the views currently on offer in public debate today – naïve positivism and naïve deconstructionism – are typical Left hemisphere **FICTIONS**." And that: "our currently dominant model of reality is mistaken."

Indeed, McGilchrist is gradually building a case which says that, in a state of nature, the Right hemisphere is the 'Master' and the Left brain is the 'Emissary' (or servant). The reversal of these roles in Western thought is destabilizing us and our societies.

[Next Month](#): "The Servant when he reigneth" and Alienation.

Paleo in a Nutshell: Geoff's latest work encapsulates, concisely and easily, current thinking on living the way nature intended. www.paleo-nutshell.com

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