

## Steven Abood

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Throughout human history, it has been our existential fear of famine, not obesity, that has preyed upon our collective consciousness. Food scarcity through hominin evolution likely led to numerous biological adaptations and cultural evolutionary advances that allowed our ancestors to extract energy from food and store adipose tissue more effectively. These advances in energy extraction and storage have been hypothesized to have diverted energy from the gut towards brain development, as evidenced by the modern *Homo sapien* gut that is half the size of analogous size mammals, and brain that is five times as large. This energy diversion to the brain could have been a primary driver of the cognitive modules responsible for creative and religious thought. Additionally, the food acquisition strategies of hunting and gathering, made possible by and necessitated by increased brain development, as well as motivational dopanergic systems, are likely related to the Hero's journey and the search for the divine. These cognitive modules also allowed for the acquisition of medicinal and sacred plants that are preserved in religious forest traditions, as well as in sacred texts, and give clues to modern pharmaceutical development.

The evolutionary legacy of food scarcity and the taboo against refusing to engage in reciprocal food sharing, has also manifested itself in religious and psychological archetypes of the fear of famine. These include the rider of the black horse symbolizing famine from the Biblical Book of Revelations, the wendigo from traditional belief systems of Algonquin-speaking peoples, the fear gorta from Irish folklore, the ghoul from Islamic belief, the gashadokuru from Japanese Shinto, and the zombie of Haitian and West African belief, as well as modern pop culture. As the most pressing biological survival concerns of a people influence their fears and religious belief systems, the recent global shift to a planet where more people are overweight and obese than underweight, and the concomitant effect of this shift on mortality and morbidity, may influence the psychology and religions of the future.