Introduction

Food, Drink, and Modern Social Theory

In his famous article on the sociology of the meal, Georg Simmel (1858–1918) observes that "of all the things that people have in common, the most common is that they must eat and drink."[1] This truism, however, comes with a paradox insofar as the "exclusive selfishness of eating" (that is, the necessarily individual act of ingesting food and drink) mostly overlaps with the "frequency of being together" (eating and drinking in society). "Because this primitive physiological fact is an absolutely general human one," Simmel continues, "it does indeed become the substance of common actions."[2]

The present book is about the interaction between that exclusive selfishness of eating and drinking and the common actions of society this basic physiological fact engenders. We show how modern social theory can illuminate and explain many of the processes and institutions that have resulted from people eating and drinking in society, and how, in turn, much modern social theory has been informed—sometimes directly, generally circuitously—by specific patterns of food production, preparation, and consumption. Each chapter in the book focuses on a set of key concepts in modern social theory that shed light on the structures and dynamics of the relationship between food, politics, and society today and in the past. If we take, for instance, the photograph by Josep María Sagarra that graces this book's cover, it shows men and women consuming food and drink in close company. We know from the title of the image that it was shot at a fundraising party for a Red Cross Hospital in

Barcelona in 1932. We might also surmise from the guests' formal and bejeweled attire, the linen and silverware that adorn the table, and the large mirrors and chandeliers that furnish the room that this was an occasion open only to the city's high society. It was likely the type of reception where people come and eat and drink in common, but not one where common people come to eat and drink.

There are, therefore, immediate reflections to be made on class and gender as they're represented in this picture. And if we take a further step back to think of how the food and drink got to that table and how the room was set and subsequently cleared up, all sorts of other social relations involving the production, processing, preparation, and serving of food and drink, as well as their consumption and disposal, come into view.[3] What relations of production facilitate the common acts of consumption at the fundraising party? Why is the food and drink taken standing, and with cutlery seemingly lying idle? Why offer such a spread at a charity event for a humanitarian organization? Who selected the wine, and who washed the dishes? These sorts of banal questions shape the chapters that follow because they speak to some of the grand themes of modern social theory since its inception in the late seventeenth century. The separation between the private and public spheres of social life; competing conceptions of identity, belonging, and community; diverse notions of distinction, civility, and taboo all permeate the common act of eating and drinking, and all have also been central to the development of modern social and political theory. Moreover, the defining socioeconomic and political transformations of the modern period—urbanization, industrialization, rationalization, commercialization, democratization—have clearly impacted the production, preparation, and consumption of food and drink as much as they've articulated the principal concerns of modern social theory. In fact, as we'll try to demonstrate, food and drink has been a focal point of many more classic studies in social and political theory than is often acknowledged—from Habermas's political writings on the public sphere of the coffeehouse to Bourdieu's sociological reflections on gastronomic "distinction" and "habitus" and from Mary Douglas's and Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological musings on food prohibitions and cuisine to Amartya Sen's political economy of famine. It is, of course, telling that these represent a selection of late twentieth-century authors expressly concerned with food and drink and not the earlier Western canon of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, among others.[4] But, as the rest of the book endeavors to show, many of the ideas of these great luminaries have been adopted

and extended over the past few decades to build up a formidable corpus of food-related social and political theory that cuts across old and new disciplines like sociology, cultural studies, environmental history, global political economy, gender studies, anthropology, and political philosophy.[5] It is our ambition in the pages that follow to convey some of the richness emerging from this combination of social and political theory with the study of food and drink.

The book thus sets itself the tall order of making huge comparisons between big structures and large processes attached to the modern food system.[6] We adopt an approach broadly identified by Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke van Otterloo as "developmentalist," in that it emphasizes the changing nature of the relationship between food, politics, and society across time and place, although there are also some "materialist" strains present in our understanding of the socio-ecological determinants of such interactions.[7] We aim to let our theoretical insights emerge from the historical-sociological narrative, rather than impose some tight, parsimonious theoretical framework on the wide-ranging experiences conveyed below. There are, however, a number of conceptual threads running across the following chapters that require some clarification and explanation. The rest of this introduction seeks to do this, first, by defining some of our core terms and showing how they relate to the modern food system and, second, by outlining how the various chapters apply diverse social theories and their associated categories in explaining the dynamics of the modern food system.

DEFINITIONS: THEORY, MODERNITY, SOCIETY

Modern social theory crystallized as a distinctive way of thinking about human affairs in the course of the 1700s, in response to what Bruce Mazlish called the "breakdown of connections."[8] Whereas in most parts of the world, and in Europe in particular, human societies had until then been organized around political units that connected people and nature through a fairly static hierarchical order legitimized and enforced by religion and otherworldly cosmologies, the arrival of modernity was marked by the unshackling of multiple socioeconomic, political, and ideological fetters in the form of inherited privileges, codified rank, clerical rule or restrictions on trade and economic activity. "A great tectonic shift seemed to be taking place," Mazlish suggests, that "proclaimed itself in an omnipresent, even compulsive concern with the snapping of ties, the unchaining of all established verities and social arrangements."[9]

The origins and periodization of this radical change—and its main drivers—are, of course, still the subject of heated debate in the social sciences. For the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck, the hundred years from 1750 to 1850 represented a "threshold period" *(Sattelzeit)* in European history in which, spurred on by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment (themselves conceptual progeny of the *Sattelzeit*), ancient categories like "democracy," "nation," "civil society," or "culture" were reappropriated and transformed into basic concepts—terms that are indispensable when understanding the socioeconomic and political structures and processes of modernity, and also, without which, we moderns cannot make sense of our own time.[10] Other historians of ideas, such as J. G. A. Pocock or Quentin Skinner, have underlined the rise of secular (i.e., time-bound, this-worldly) understandings of politics and society during the European Renaissance and Reformation, which, in turn, generated the modern institution of the sovereign territorial state, whose absolute authority increasingly trumped that of seigneurial or ecclesiastical jurisdictions.[11] For their part, thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment claimed it was the complex division of labor, commodity exchange, and widespread extension of private property rights that delivered a modern commercial or civil society where, as Marx and Engels would have it, "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man *[sic]* is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."[12]

Without imposing some false uniformity across all of the chapters, we adopt in this book many of these claims made for modern social theory as a body of thought that both *emerges from* and *reflects upon* the systematic breakdown of connections that began with the long sixteenth century (1450–1650) and arguably continues into the present day. Here, "theory" simply involves the process of critical reflection or contemplation on the causes and consequences of human agency—both individual and collective—in the development of enduring socioeconomic and political phenomena. In other words, producing concepts that account for what Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) called "social facts."[13] It includes the analysis of politics too, understood as the processes and institutions of government that have emerged from living together in a *polis*—a city or spatially delimited community that abides by given rules, procedures, and practices of power. We therefore use social and political theory interchangeably, only singling one out from the other for purposes of emphasizing the informal, everyday dynamics of the former and the more formal, institutional character of the latter.

In both cases, however, there is a recognition that "theory" and "practice" are deeply intertwined (concepts always operate within a concrete social context), and that this relationship changes through place and time (ideas, practices and their contexts vary geographically and can be transformed historically). We are, moreover, mainly engaged in what Nicos Mouzelis once described as "sociological theory": the application of "conceptual tools for looking at social phenomena in such a way that interesting questions are generated and methodologically proper linkages established between different levels of analysis."[14] It is not the task of this book to present an entirely new, substantive theory, but rather to put to work existing conceptual frameworks and paradigms in the explanation of the interaction between food, politics, and society.

This all said, "modernity" serves in this book to identify a distinctive historical period and condition, ranging from the long sixteenth century to the present, where certain isms and izations (including capitalism, nationalism, socialism, racism, feminism, individualism, secularization, industrialization, rationalization, and commodification) have become the dominant expressions of human agency. The invocation here of modernity should not be confused with the resuscitation or endorsement of modernization theory, understood as a linear sequence of stages through which all societies must pass through or "skip over." In what follows, we think of modernity as an epoch and condition that not only unfolded in all kinds of uneven and protracted ways across different times and places but also has arguably intensified and combined distinct modern and traditional temporalities or worldviews in, for instance, the recharging of ethnic or religious identities in contemporary food cultures or the unequal globalization of primary food commodities. More specifically, our study addresses three distinctive yet interconnected phenomena that have characterized modern history: transformation, stratification, and globalization.

One of the characteristics of modernity is the self-consciousness of its own temporality, however contrived. Be it the idea of the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the Enlightenment, the historical semantics of modernity imply a radical break with the past. The very notion, for instance, of a Neolithic revolution (first approached in the next chapter) as the birth of agriculture is a modern construct, the product of an evolutionary and secularized understanding of social development that organizes human history along different stages in our collective relationship with nature. Similarly, the idea of "the self"—the individual subject able to make conscious choices and shape his or her own future through independent

agency—is a modern creation (as chapters 7 and 11 indicate). Manifest in art, literature, and philosophy, the modern subject also finds intense expression as a customer through our food choices (including, quintessentially, the restaurant menu), as a target of marketing, and in the connections between diet, health, and our bodies. We are therefore especially attuned in this book to the notion of modernity as an eminently revolutionary period, where all sorts of identities, customs, institutions, techniques, and ideas are constantly reformed and transformed.

This is why the Industrial Revolution appears in so many of the chapters below. In chapter 5, we show how the Industrial Revolution forever changed our diets, eating and drinking habits, as well the food system's modes of production and consumption. But it also transformed the physical landscapes and the built environment, reshaping notions of private and public in cities, as well as the relationship between town and country. Moreover, the extensive urbanization that followed created the spaces of consumption where many new political ideologies, commercial enterprises, cultural entities, and social movements were forged. We suggest, somewhat counterintuitively, that the transformation of the early-modern British food system through changes introduced by agrarian capitalism long predate, and in many respects, instigated the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century. Thus, rather than technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution radically transforming agriculture, it was changes in British agriculture from the seventeenth century that paved the way for the subsequent Industrial Revolution. Whatever the causal chain, the Industrial Revolution increased average calorific intake across most human societies, raising life expectancy and thereby contributing to our exponential population growth. It also improved average land yields and agricultural productivity through mechanization, the use of synthetic fertilizers, and artificial irrigation. The "second wave" of the Industrial Revolution introduced words like *pasteurized, refrigerated, canned,* and *tinned* into our gastronomic vocabulary, as well as revolutionizing both household and retail cooking and cleaning through the mass extension of gas and electric lighting, cookers and ovens, food processors, toasters, washing machines, and internal plumbing.

It is important to note that Mazlish refers to both the *making* and *breaking* of connections as the midwife of modern sociology. The deep ruptures that accompanied the birth and development of modernity launched what political economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) called the "creative destruction" of industrial capitalism, which allows all manner of preexisting social forms—caste, patriarchy, ethnicity,

religion, and empires—to be recast and reinvented in the construction of modern patterns of production, processing, and consumption. Hence the socioeconomic and political transformations occasioned by the French and Industrial Revolutions also brought in their wake new expressions of social stratification. The rise of an urban proletariat and its dependents is an obvious example of this. But so are the attendant rearticulations of gender relations, particularly in the household, as women acquired the double burden of salaried work outside the home only to continue their working day as carers and homemakers in the domestic sphere. Social stratification through the production and consumption of food and drink obviously predates modernity, but the modern period witnessed a distinctive reformulation of rank, status, and distinction through what social theorist Norbert Elias (1897–1990) called the "civilizing process."[15] As we indicate in chapter 9, during the long sixteenth century, the European court became a site for the development of table manners—including the protocols on use of forks, knives, and serving devices—as a social mechanism for reinforcing and reproducing the elite status of courtly aristocracy. By the end of the nineteenth century, this attention to the social organization, preparation, and presentation of courtly cuisine was converted by famous chefs, restaurateurs, and hoteliers like Carême, Escoffier, and Ritz into the canon of French haute cuisine whose innovations, we indicate, involved a move away from heavy sauces and toward lighter ones as a marker of the transition from the past to a more delicate, "modern" cuisine. The period also witnessed the shift from the French to the Russian style of serving, which required the service of individual dishes in sequence, signaling a wider trend to greater simplicity and delicacy in food preparation and presentation, which is represented in much fine dining to this day.

The mass migrations (both within and across borders, voluntary and forced) facilitated by capitalist industrialization also reconfigured racial hierarchies and ethnic segmentation within cities and in rural areas. The modern food system has plainly been affected in various ways by these changing structures of class, gender, and ethnic integration, gradation and segregation. In chapter 8—on national, regional, and ethnic gastronomy—for example, we highlight the role of urbanization in the codification of national cuisines through the concentration and admixture of otherwise dispersed and highly regionalized repertoires. State formation was, however, accompanied by the reinvention of class and regional hierarchies as part of a process of national standardization well into the contemporary period. With reference to the recent Turkish

experience, that chapter describes how, during the 1980s in particular, the spicier, stronger flavors of Anatolian food came to Istanbul and other major cities along with Anatolian migrations, in the form of kebab grills, known as *Gaziantep,* provoking condescension and disdain from the Istanbul bourgeoisie.

It would be impossible to fully understand the modern experiences of transformation and stratification just alluded to without also referring to a third phenomenon—globalization. This admittedly slippery term acts as shorthand for the wider process of worldwide traffic in goods, peoples, and ideas inaugurated by the European conquest of the Americas. Once again, there is obviously no question such socioeconomic and cultural transfer was occurring long before the advent of modernity (most notably subsequent to the Agricultural Revolution discussed in chapter 2), but the uniquely global dimensions of what environmental historian Alfred W. Crosby Jr. called the "Columbian exchange," allied with the birth of a world market it occasioned, gives the 1492 turning-point a distinctively epochal quality.[16] If our book's focus relies disproportionately on European theories and illustrations, this is not because we wish to endorse some spurious Eurocentric superiority or exceptionalism, but simply because we are keen to underline the sharp structural inequalities within and between states and regions that has resulted from the European colonial expansion since the end of the fifteenth century. The Columbian exchange, we insist in chapter 3, was deeply unequal and uneven—it simultaneously integrated the world into a global economy and fragmented humanity and nature along new political, geographical, and cultural hierarchies. The Columbian exchange was not just about the cross-Atlantic transfer of corn, beans, and squashes in one direction and livestock, sugar, and wheat in the other—it entailed colonial conquest, with all the subjection, oppression, and despoliation this implies. We are therefore alert, throughout this book, to the relations of exploitation and domination that underlie the seemingly innocent use of terms like "fusion cooking" or "creole cuisine," enriching as these often are. Indeed, chapter 10 in particular—on the political economy of the global food system—highlights the continuities in the geographical unevenness and the socioeconomic inequality of the various modern "food regimes." Furthermore, as in other areas of social life, the modern food system has found diverse expressions across different parts of the world—it has been modified, adapted, and challenged by local social forces and cultural traditions. Yet, in line with the dialectic of creative destruction we are also adamant here that, like culture or identity, modernity is never static or one-sided (once

again, it is not a series of predetermined stages), but rather it constantly revolutionizes social relations in both time and place. With specific regard to food and drink, this has been especially noticeable in the changing economic and cultural geography of food production and consumption, as many erstwhile colonial societies (think of South Africa, Vietnam, Brazil, or Ireland) have become major players in regional and global food and drink sectors.

These, then, are some of the common denominators that bind together the otherwise diverse themes covered in the book: a focus on the acceleration and intensification of social life during the loosely defined period of modernity, an emphasis upon the new or reconfigured social cleavages this epoch has produced, and a resolutely globalist approach to social change and stratification that constantly probes the transnational and international dimensions of the modern food system. Here, "society" and the "social" refers to a "reciprocity of strangers" that gradually but irrevocably replaced the prevailing hierarchies of community in the organization of human life, and "modern social theory" to the conceptual explanations for the structured processes that characterize this shift. Modernity is understood as both a historical era with a relatively elastic periodization (some argue it began only with industrialization; others, that it ended in the 1970s, giving way to postmodernity), and a specific social condition marked by what Max Weber called the "disenchantment" of the world. The modern food system—a globally integrated market in the production, processing, distribution, and consumption food and drink—is one outcome of our historical period, which, as the next section of this introduction suggests, can be fruitfully analyzed with reference to some key concepts in modern social theory.

SOCIAL THEORY AND THE MODERN FOOD SYSTEM

At its best, social theory renders intelligible the otherwise unfeasibly large number of discreetly individual actions that form society and that cannot be merely described empirically. Like all theory, social theory deals in categories that abstract out the main features of specific phenomena in order to provide some analytical coherence and explanatory purchase on myriad human interactions. This explanatory labor has been undertaken within specific academic disciplines—sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, political science, geography—which have developed their own problematics, debates, research methods, and seminal texts, each reflecting different analytical registers and theoretical

preoccupations. Moreover, successive waves of ideological tendencies and methodological paradigms—functionalism, Marxism, feminism, constructivism, structuralism, and postmodernism, among others—have made their way into social theory over the years, including in the study of food and drink. We don't explicitly take sides in those debates or offer any taxonomy of the various social-theoretical approaches to food and drink. Instead, we focus in this book on three pairs of categories that are no less real for being abstractions and that, from our perspective, capture both the macro-sociological spatio-temporal dynamics of modernity and its more intimate and micro-sociological expressions in everyday life. They offer an opportunity to illustrate how many of the categories issuing from modern social theory can explain the modern food system and how, in turn, food and drink have shaped some of the chief concerns of modern social theory. These binaries are the public and private, nature and society, and the self and other.

In February 1960, four black students from the local agricultural university sat at the lunch counter of a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and ordered a cup of coffee. They were denied service because that lunch counter was, in that state, reserved for whites only. What subsequently became—together with various other sit-ins and occupations of public space—a signal moment in the American civil rights movement clearly tells a political story about segregation, protest, and the struggle for racial justice and equality in the United States. However, it also raises important issues about the separation between the private and the public and the role of food and drink in defining this social distinction. The dynamics of violence and resistance represented opposite, in the iconic photograph by Fred Blackwell, taken in the course of another civil rights sit-in, this time in Jackson, Mississippi, in May 1963, speaks volumes about the complex relationship between individual act of ingesting food and drink and the "substance of common actions" Simmel spoke of.

Were it not for the color of their skin, the "Greensboro Four" and their counterparts in the other sit-in campaigns would have been considered private customers—that is, "sovereign consumers"—entitled to do with their own money as they pleased, engaging in the commonplace market transaction of buying a hot drink at the Woolworth's lunch counter. (Indeed, the Jackson sit-in formed part of a wider boycott of segregated Capitol Street stores, where protestors presented themselves as regular customers, merely demanding "service on a first-come, first-serve basis for all customers—blacks as well as whites").[17] Yet because

FIGURE 1. 1963 Jackson, MS, Woolworth Lunch Counter Sit-In. Photographed by Fred Blackwell.

these private exchanges took place in a public setting, in southern U.S. states where racial discrimination was authorized by law, the simple act of black people ordering coffee or of blacks and whites merely sitting next to each other as equals at a segregated counter immediately acquired a wider social and political significance. It was registered as an individual act of defiance that soon mobilized collective protest, publicized an everyday experience in the lives of African Americans that many of their fellow citizens might otherwise have been oblivious to, and, most obviously, challenged American notions of freedom and equality for all.

Powerful as these local acts of resistance were, they formed part of a longer history in the social and political reconfiguration of public spaces of food and drink consumption, where social action and personal conduct are differentiated from that obtaining in the private sphere. The German critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (1929–) identifies the coffeehouse of early-modern London as one of several social sites responsible for the "structural transformation" of the public sphere during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Habermas, these places became more than plain drinking establishments, as they also

nurtured distinctively modern, bourgeois forms of debate and communication that, in their emphasis on reasoned argumentation and informed conversation among equals, became an essential plank of democratic deliberation in subsequent centuries. Critics of Habermas have noted how women and artisans, among others, would generally have been excluded from the bourgeois public sphere, thereby limiting the democratic potential of this domain.[18] The essential role of the coffeehouse as a venue of commercial exchange also suggests that the free and egalitarian modes of communicative action Habermas champions were severely compromised by an instrumental rationality dominated by profit and calculation. The sit-ins staged in Greensboro and Jackson thus remind us about the politically contested nature of the public sphere as conceived by Habermas—it can foster both an egalitarian reciprocity of strangers associated to "civil society" and the exclusionary, secretive, or elitist expressions of public sociability, such as that of the whites-only lunch counter at Woolworth's. Yet, as we discuss in chapter 6, none of this diminishes the profoundly political character of coffeehouses, taverns, pubs, and restaurants, notwithstanding their differences. Food and drink consumption in these locales is politically determined in much the same way as the public-private distinction. Drawing on Richard Sennett's work, we argue against theorists like Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) who claim that the "common act of eating" is about (consumer) sameness, not (political) equality. We instead insist that the material spaces and practices of consumption in coffeehouses, alehouses, taverns, or, indeed lunch counters are not just incidental to political debate, organization, and contestation, but a condition of them.

This is an important insight for our book's premise, since it suggests that food and drink are not merely contingent to Habermas's idea of a bourgeois public sphere, but are a fundamental, substantive component of his account. In focusing on the coffeehouse as a fulcrum of distinctive forms of communicative action, Habermas is also necessarily incorporating, however inadvertently, some of the material properties of food and drink (coffee, in this instance) into his political theory. Coffee was imported into England as part of an increasingly complex international trading network (which also included tea, tobacco, and sugar as other social stimulants); it was, like other imports, taxed by the fledgling state; and its consumption, unlike other tradable commodities, involved a performance of sharing that "primitive physiological act" of ingestion in the company of others. Thus, the truly cosmopolitan character of the coffeehouse, its encouragement of peculiarly modern forms of public

sociability, and its place within a wider political economy of profit, trade, taxation, and state regulation (all key elements of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere) are in large measure conditioned by the fact that coffee was a foreign drink. This is plainly not to say that London developed a public sphere because of coffee, but it is to suggest that the attributes of coffee (and, indeed, tea, tobacco, and sugar) shaped London's public sphere, as analyzed by Habermas.

Thinking about the public-private distinction through food and drink also directs us to questions of state authority, market power, and household consumption. Anecdotally, the political vocabulary of many states can be traced to foodstuffs. The words *salary* and *dole* derive from Latin words that, in ancient Rome, denoted, respectively, a soldier's payment (partly in salt) and grain handouts, while the Arabic term *makhzen,* which in Morocco is synonymous with the state, means "granary" or "warehouse"—both pointing to the historic role of food storage as a source of political power. Similarly, the Chinese character for a grain bushel, *shih,* was used by the Han Empire to rank different bureaucratic offices, reflecting the agrarian foundations of this redistributive polity. In chapter 9, "Distinction," we chart the mutual reinforcement in early-modern Europe between state centralization, new norms of civility, and the replacement of a feudal by a courtly aristocracy. Here food played a significant role in bolstering the public authority of the state, not merely through taxation of comestibles (such as the infamous *gabelle* salt levy), but also in the exhibition of courtly patronage and munificence through state banquets and dinners that, though exclusive in their guest lists, had a pronounced performative dimension aimed at a wider public. (There are arguably remnants of this courtly display of food consumption in the fundraising reception captured in the cover image of this book). We contrast this spectacular exhibition of luxury and grandeur with the markedly private, low-key, and secluded dining of the Ottoman court, which remained repetitive and confined, thus illustrating the different geographical expression of modernity. The civilizing process associated to absolutist Europe (the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century control of the state through dynastic power) did reinforce public institutions in various guises, but it was also premised on the personalized rule of the monarch through private patronage. In its combination of public authority with private gain, absolutism produced what Max Weber called a "patrimonial state," and this was captured in the organization of courtly cuisine discussed in that chapter.

On some liberal interpretations, the absolutist conflation of public and private power was undermined by democratic struggles for the separation

between these two spheres from the nineteenth century onward, so that individuals' "negative freedoms" over their personal beliefs, identity, and property came to be increasingly distinguished from the "positive liberties" of collective welfare, education, and employment to be secured by the state. The public life of salaried work, political activity, and commercial exchange was thus ideal—typically contrasted to the affective realm of the household, where care, reproduction, and intimacy characterized human relations. The pub, tavern, or restaurant was deemed an arena of the male breadwinner; the home a sphere reserved for the housewife's task of raising and nurturing the nuclear family. Patterns of private household consumption (including the number, content, and timing of daily meals) have thus often been linked to the structures of public life (relating to class, region, and religion): male English workers ate their "(high) tea" after work and before going to the pub, while their bosses would have "dinner" at home or at their private club. Jewish families in postwar Baghdad might be invited to a non-Jewish home to partake in the typical national specialty, *masgouf* (prepared with *shabbout* fish or varieties of carp), previously cooked in the neighborhood baker's oven.[19]

Feminist and other radical critics of the public-private distinction have long argued that the personal is political and that housework plays a critical public function in the reproduction of modern societies. They have, moreover, shown how the stereotypical gendered division of labor underpinning the public-private divide (insofar as it permanently existed) has been challenged by the feminization of the workforce and, indeed, the changing notions of what constitutes gender or a family. With the proliferation of takeout and home-delivery dining, "eating out" is no longer distinguishable from "eating in," to the extent that some perceive a terminal decline of the public sphere through private takeover by corporations and other agencies in the era of neoliberal capitalism. Yet not only has the ideal of familial commensality been grossly exaggerated (throughout history, including the modern period, most people have eaten their everyday meals outside the home, often alone, and generally quite quickly, since there was little to consume), the politics of the private-public distinction in the provision and consumption of food has fluctuated, depending on the prevailing articulation of technology, culture, and economy. The modern state has played a major part in regulating these forces—be it genetically modified organisms or the distilling and sale of alcohol. The point, therefore, is not to entirely disavow the distinction between the public authority of the state and the private power of markets or the household, but to recognize the regular interpenetration of these discrete

spheres, and the place of politics in their changing interface: without the action of the Greensboro Four that fateful day in February 1960, Woolworth lunch counters may today still have been formally reserved for whites.

Like the moral philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment and then Hegel, Karl Marx (1818–83) understood the emergence of a distinctive civil, commercial, or bourgeois society in the course of the long sixteenth century as the outcome of a historically unprecedented organization of social labor in the transformation of nature: the capitalist mode of production. Although characterized by the class antagonisms and social inequalities of previous modes of production, capitalism exacerbated what Marx called the "metabolic rift" between society and nature by "simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker."[20] Capitalism, Marx contended, widens the separation of town and country and deepens the commodification of agriculture and the consequent emergence of a class of propertyless workers, thus increasing urban squalor, but crucially also "disturb[ing] the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e., it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil."[21] There is, therefore, a reading of Marx that centers our attention as much upon the origins of capitalism in the process of agrarian change as on its subsequent development in urban manufacturing. Such an approach is clearly germane to our claim in this book that Marxist and, indeed, other materialist social theories are in important respects rooted in the "agrarian question": how and why have human societies moved from organizing the production and distribution of food as use-value (through communal, patrimonial, or tributary means) toward doing so mainly for exchange-value mediated through competitive markets? How, in other words, has the modern food system come to represent a market society rather than a society with markets?

No doubt, the place of food and drink in the agrarian question was for Marx and his contemporary materialists (i.e., those emphasizing the centrality of everyday structures of social reproduction in the analysis of human societies) merely a circumstantial aspect of a wider critique of political economy—the commodification of agriculture could relate as much to the cultivation of cotton or hemp as it might of sugar or corn. Yet the conceptual challenges capitalist agriculture posed for Marx's theory of ground rent or his understanding of trade, price, and inflation indicate

that the industrial food system as it was emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century was a spectral presence in his work. It has since then certainly preoccupied Marxist, *marxisant,* and, more generally, historical-sociological scholarship, most obviously in the writings of the French *Annales* school and later among the advocates of dependency, world-systems, and political ecology approaches to global capitalism. Thus, as we will be discussing at greater length in chapter 10, "Political Economy," concepts like "value," "comparative advantage," "rent," or "free trade"—all derived from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates involving, *inter alia,* Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill, and Karl Marx—are core to contemporary discussion of the global food system.

There is, then, no escaping the very modern problematic of the metabolic rift between society and nature or the growing tensions between culture and ecology in our understanding of the contemporary food system. The application of technology across all stages of the food chain is one obvious instance of this, and it is addressed at various junctures in the book, not just in relation to the Industrial Revolution, but also in chapters 11, "The Self," and 12, "Consumption," where the interrelationship between diet, health, cooking, and the body are shown to be strongly affected by the growing scientific engineering of nature, not least through the effects of climate change. Carbon dependence, mechanization, and genetic modification in agriculture and fisheries have incorporated these sectors—previously linked to the natural resources of land and water—squarely into the secondary and tertiary sectors of manufacturing and services, that is, into a "second nature" characterized by their full integration, from farm to fork, into the capitalist logic of value-creation. This means that—in addition to price, profit, and competition—the global food system is today subject to forms of risk, disease, and ecological degradation that are markedly different from those of premodern societies, in that they are overwhelmingly manufactured crises. Thus, modern famines are rarely the product of natural scarcity, but rather of manmade shortages. "Starvation," Amartya Sen famously argued, "is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not being enough food to eat."[22] Similarly, contemporary food scares—be it mad cow disease or the contribution of trans fats to cardiovascular disease—are far removed from the more basic forms of food adulteration of previous centuries, reflected instead in the positive-feedback loops inherent to what sociologist Ulrich Beck called "manufactured risk."[23]

Environmental historians too have helped us to trace the epochal changes in global food regimes triggered by complex ecological transactions. The Columbian exchange takes a leading role in our understanding of the relationship between culture and ecology when it comes to food and drink, since it captures—like few other processes—the systematic interaction between modern transformation, stratification, and globalization discussed earlier. On this account, "banana republic" is no longer just a politically pejorative label; it also conveys the reality of a global food system that, since Columbus' New World landings, has profoundly shaped the (geo)political economy of international relations. Industrial capitalism would have been unthinkable without the "ghost acreage" dedicated to sugar plantations, grain fields, and cattle ranches—as well as the enslaved labor, both native and imported—that the conquest of the Americas bequeathed the European economies. Without the introduction of potatoes, chilies, tomatoes, cassava, or avocados from the Americas, many clichéd "national" dishes in the rest of the world—fish and chips, vindaloo, *fufu,* "tricolore" salad—would have been impossible to prepare. Demographic growth across Europe, Asia, and later Africa was facilitated by the adoption of American staples as a major source of calories by peasants and workers. The "breakdown of connections" we noted earlier as marking the birth pangs of modernity has therefore found important expression in the disjuncture between nature and society in the production, preparation, distribution, and consumption of food and drink, a theme we pick up in both the chapter 2 on the Agricultural Revolution, and chapter 5, on the Industrial Revolution.

One consequence of this detachment has been the cultural, socioeconomic, and political revalorization of terroir, seasonality, and locality in response to the globalization of food. Be it the call for food sovereignty by social movements like the *Via Campesina* or more bureaucratic exercises in certifying the unique geographical provenance of certain products, food and drink have been "re-naturalized" through eminently social processes of marketing, legislating, and mobilizing for an organic, localized, artisanal, and authenticated food system. In some versions, this naturalization extends to the national, regional, or ethnic appropriation of food as belonging to—and therefore yielding a superior product within—a defined territory: proper hummus is Lebanese; real feta cheese, Greek; authentic haggis, Scottish; and so on. Paradoxically, as we argue in chapter 8, "Identity," it is globalization itself that provides a sort of global stage where different ethnicities, nationalities, and regions (or their representatives) can perform and declare their food

identities. Food nationalism, we suggest, is reinforced, when not constructed, as the question "what is your national/ethnic cuisine?" invites a response that invents a coherent culinary tradition.

If spatial power and organization is the main concern of the public-private distinction discussed above, and value that of the nature-society divide, then meaning and identity are the principal categories informing our third dichotomy in the study of food, politics, and society, namely the self and other. Traditionally the preserve of social sciences like anthropology or psychology, which are especially concerned with daily structures and routines or the inner life, emotions, fantasies, and desires of human subjects, the notions of self and other appear in various guises throughout our study. They are clearly integral to chapter 11, "The Self: Food Choices and Public Health," where we consider the shifting definitions and recent medicalization of obesity in different cultural contexts across the Global North, from the level of the individual (feminism, body image) to the social (access to nutrition, food deserts). Here, the tension between Simmel's "exclusive selfishness" of eating—and the "frequency of being together" in doing so—draws attention to the interface of the personal, psychological sources of eating disorders like anorexia or bulimia and the collective, sociological dimensions of these conditions as represented in consumer culture. The complex interaction between the personal and the political is also apparent in the discussion of alcohol regulation by the state in chapter 7 as an instance of what Michel Foucault labeled "the government of the self": the production of embodied (i.e., not just psychological, but also biological) subjectivities in the political control and administration of populations as collection of bodies. Similar concerns emerge in the final chapter, "Consumption," which in many respects acts as a companion to the preceding one, "The Self." There we invoke Guy Debord's idea of society as a representational spectacle to underline the fetishized power of symbols, images, and signifiers in the mediation between food and personal identity. We are, it would seem, no longer just what we eat, but also what and how we consume. From a different ideological orientation, but sharing Debord's fascination with the semiotics of market societies, Roland Barthes wrote in an essay on the psychosociology of contemporary food consumption that "When he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies."[24]

Ascribing a symbolic value to food and drink is clearly not a uniquely modern phenomenon, but the cultural analysis of the meal or the socio-

logical account of dietary prohibitions are arguably exercises in distinctively modern social theory, as is explored in chapter 4, "Culture." Indeed, the rituals associated to eating and drinking, or the cultural values underpinning different methods of preparing food, have, together with death, sex, and violence (i.e., creation, procreation, and destruction) been a mainstay of modern anthropology. Chapter 4 surveys different anthropological approaches to food and drink, showing how treating food as a universal cultural object helps us to understand the structure and variation in social and sociopolitical organization. Rituals, feasts, and festivals all express group identities and their connection to the world, both cosmologically and in relation to the rest of humankind. From James George Frazer's early reflections on totemic objects, taboos, and animistic cultures to Mary Douglas's later work on purity and danger, social anthropologists in particular have been drawn to food as an organizing signifier in the explanation of cultural practices across time and place. The expression of self that tends to emerge from such writing is one defined by the sense of belonging to one group in opposition to another, often mediated through dietary laws. Thus, as is discussed in chapters 4, 8, and 11, disgust, rejection, and prohibition in eating and drinking says less about our embodied selves and more about the collective efforts by given authorities to create a social distance from perceived others—be it on religious, ethnic, or ideological grounds. It is perhaps precisely because eating and drinking represent such "absolutely general human" physiological facts that food and drink become such powerful conduits of social identification and distantiation.

BETWEEN FOOD STUDIES AND CULINARY DETERMINISM

There may have been a time in the not-so-distant past when the pairing of food and drink with social theory would have raised eyebrows among many students of the humanities and social sciences, or at least would have been circumscribed to the specialist realms of social anthropology or psychology just mentioned. Social theory, so the perception ran, might explicitly deal with food and drink at the intimate, personal level of consumption, choice, and identity or at the very abstract level of ritual and myth. But only incidentally, or in very specialist fashion by demographers or environmental historians, on a global macro-sociological scale. This is no longer the case today—nor, we have argued, was it in the past. The relevance of social and political theory in all its variants

to the study of food is nowadays uncontroversial, as evidenced by the impressive range of books, courses, journals, symposia, and conferences that discuss food politics, in both academic and wider public settings. Indeed, food studies has emerged as a self-conscious academic discipline, reflecting a growing awareness that our social lives are deeply interdependent with the planet's biosphere, and that the human need to eat and drink shapes our social structures. Our book contributes to this ongoing effort in the sociological study of food, offering a survey from the perspective of modern social theory. In this regard, it serves as a primer for those wishing to deepen their understanding of food and drink as social and political phenomena.

Yet we also aim in this volume to go beyond the mere recognition that social theory in its various forms can explain the production, preparation, and consumption of food. This introduction has staked a more ambitious claim, to be cashed out in the rest of the book, about the centrality of food and drink to the rise and development of modern social theory in the West. We argue that eating and drinking are unique in their literal, material connection between the inner world of the self and our outer social lives. These connections, moreover, have generated distinctive expressions of subjectivity, modes of production, and patterns of consumption that modern social theory has constantly returned to in its conceptualization of the public and the private; the relationship between nature and society; and the interaction between self and other. There is, to be sure, in this proposition the risk of falling into some kind of culinary determinism, whereby complex human activities are reduced to the primitive physiological fact that we all need to eat. We hope this introduction has begun to sufficiently qualify the influence of food and drink upon the development of modern social theory and has emphasized enough the powerful mediating role of states, markets, households, and civil society to allay that charge. It is in the chapters that follow, however, where the book's premise will be tested. As the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.