



Food Choice Is Not the First Event

Caloric A Priori, Metabolic Homovictimus and the Edible Onopticon

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Abstract

This article analyses the modern food regime not only through production, consumption, price, corporate concentration and dietary habits. It also examines the conditions under which human beings encounter hunger, satiety, health, choice, the body and soil. Its central claim is that food choice is not the first event. Food choice takes place within a historically and infrastructurally organised caloric field of encounter that precedes the act of choosing.

The article develops three main concepts: *caloric a priori*, Edible Onopticon and Metabolic Homovictimus. Caloric a priori refers to the historical-infrastructural conditions that determine, before individual food choice and consumption, which foods appear as accessible, cheap, visible, normal and realistic options. The Edible Onopticon refers to a regime in which technical, economic and institutional infrastructures render food, bodies and soil recognisable, measurable, processable, priceable and governable. Metabolic Homovictimus names the subject-position of those who are held responsible for making healthy choices while being largely deprived of the material, economic, temporal and infrastructural conditions of healthy choice.

The article engages with Foucault's concepts of historical a priori and dispositif, Deleuze's analysis of societies of control, Zuboff's account of surveillance capitalism, food regime theory, STS infrastructure studies, nutrition transition literature, food justice debates and ontological politics. The Onopticon is not presented as a general theory replacing dispositif, but as an operational concept that analyses how, within a dispositif, certain layers of reality become institutionally recognisable, measurable, processable and contestable. The aim is not to offer a policy programme, but to diagnose the conditions under which the modern food regime acquires an Onoptic character.

Keywords: caloric a priori, Edible Onopticon, Metabolic Homovictimus, food regime, historical a priori, dispositif, infrastructure studies, metabolic responsibility, pedological rupture, food-reality.

1. Introduction: Food Choice Is Not the First Event

The modern food regime is often discussed through a familiar set of questions. What do people eat? Which foods are healthy or harmful? Which products are cheap, and which are expensive? Which corporations shape global food circulation? Which diets are associated with obesity, prediabetes or metabolic disease? Which agricultural model causes greater soil degradation?

These questions matter. Yet this article opens with a more basic question:

Within what food-reality can human beings become hungry, become satiated, fall ill, choose, be held responsible and object?

This question removes food from the narrow category of a consumed object. Food is treated here as an infrastructure through which human beings encounter the body, health, the market, soil, labour and the state. In other words, the modern food regime does not merely determine “what we eat”; it also organises which foods appear as “real options”.

The central argument is therefore this: **food choice is not the first event**. Before an individual chooses in a supermarket, school canteen, workplace cafeteria, neighbourhood shop, online grocery platform or medical dietary setting, the

encountered food-world has already been shaped. Some products have been cheapened. Some have been given long shelf lives. Some have been made transportable and storable. Some have been legitimised through health discourse. Others have been pushed aside as expensive, niche, organic, local or inaccessible options.

Before choice, there is a field of encounter. Before choice, there are shelves, prices, logistics, seeds, silos, ports, futures markets, labels, advertisements, certifications, processing plants and retail architectures. This article names that prior caloric field of encounter *caloric a priori*.

This is not a deterministic claim. The article does not declare the entire modern food regime to be automatically Onoptic. A food system acquires an Onoptic character only when three conditions operate together: **compulsory recognisability**, **closure of possibilities** and **weak contestability**. These three criteria mark the analytical boundary of the concept and prevent it from becoming a loose metaphor for everything.

2. Method, Scope and Criteria of Evaluation

This study is not empirical fieldwork, a systematic literature review or a comparative case analysis. It is a theoretical article that proceeds through **critical concept formation and theoretical reframing**. Its aim is not to prove the modern food regime as an empirical chain of cause and effect. Rather, it opens a conceptual plane for thinking food choice, metabolic responsibility and infrastructural access together.

The concept formation pursued here consists of four steps. The first identifies the explanatory limit of existing literatures. The second shows why that limit calls for a new concept. The third defines the distinctive dimensions of the new concept. The fourth specifies the conditions under which the concept would not apply, thereby setting its analytical boundaries. This approach is consistent with Sartori's warning against concept stretching, Goertz's account of multidimensional concept formation, and Timmermans and Tavory's emphasis on abductive thinking in the production of theoretical novelty (Sartori, 1970; Goertz, 2006; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

The success of this article should therefore not be judged by whether it establishes definitive empirical causality. It should be judged by whether it conceptualises a level often left in the background of food regime analysis: the conditions of encounter that are already organised before choice takes place.

The article proceeds in three movements. First, it situates itself in relation to food regime theory, biopolitics, surveillance, infrastructure studies and nutrition transition literature. Second, it defines the concepts of *caloric a priori*, Edible Onopticon and Metabolic Homovictimus. Third, it proposes three criteria for identifying when a food system can be described as Onoptic: compulsory recognisability, closure of possibilities and weak contestability.

The FAO, OECD-FAO, CDC, FDA, European Parliament and other institutional data are not treated as causal proof. They are used as analytical indicators that concretise the fields in which the framework can be applied. The claim is not that "this data proves this theory". The more modest claim is that these data make it possible to think the food regime through infrastructural conditions of encounter.

The article does not offer a programme of solutions. Alternative food regimes, practices of resistance, public policy options and normative strategies of transformation remain outside its scope. This does not imply that solutions are unimportant. It means that the

purpose of the article is conceptual diagnosis rather than normative programming.

3. Positioning within the Literature

This article is situated in dialogue with six bodies of literature: food regime theory, biopolitics and *dispositif*, STS infrastructure studies, nutrition transition literature, food justice and food sovereignty debates, and ontological politics.

Food regime theory analyses modern agriculture and food systems within the historical structures of the capitalist world economy. Friedmann and McMichael's classic formulation opened the question of how agriculture and food are related to the nation-state system, the world market and capitalist accumulation. McMichael's genealogy of food regimes further shows that food regimes are not merely modes of production, but historically organised configurations of global power, trade, state formation and market relations. This article contributes to that literature by arguing that food regimes should be analysed not only at the level of production and circulation, but also at the level of the individual's encounter with food (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 2009).

Biopolitical literature treats the management of populations, bodies, health risks and life processes as central to modern power. Foucault's concept of *dispositif* enables an analysis of heterogeneous arrangements consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, laws, administrative measures and scientific statements. This article does not position the *Onopticon* as a new general theory replacing *dispositif*. It positions it more narrowly, as an operational concept that analyses how, within a *dispositif*, particular layers of reality become institutionally recognisable, measurable, processable and contestable (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 2007).

Deleuze's analysis of societies of control emphasises the continuous modulation of behaviour, the coding of access and the regulation of passage. Zuboff's account of surveillance capitalism focuses on the transformation of human experience into behavioural data, prediction and economic value. At the intersection of these debates, the *Onopticon* does not primarily ask how behaviour is monitored or predicted. It asks within which field of reality the subject becomes recognisable and able to act (Deleuze, 1992; Zuboff, 2019).

STS and infrastructure studies provide an important background for the article's account of infrastructural imposition. Star describes infrastructure as relational and ecological, often operating invisibly through forms, standards and bureaucratic arrangements. Bowker and Star show that classification systems are not merely technical instruments, but shape worlds and social relations. Larkin analyses infrastructures as material networks that allow goods, people, ideas, waste, power and finance to move through space. This article treats food infrastructures not merely as distribution mechanisms, but as conditions that determine which foods appear as real options (Bowker & Star, 1999; Star, 1999; Larkin, 2013).

Nutrition transition literature is directly relevant to the article's metabolic argument. Popkin's approach links economic development, urbanisation, food processing, income shifts and lifestyle changes to changing dietary patterns and energy balance. Swinburn and colleagues argue that global obesity is shaped by changes in food systems and that individuals often respond "normally" to obesogenic environments. This article reframes that discussion through the relation between metabolic responsibility and infrastructural deprivation (Popkin, 2006; Swinburn et al., 2011).

Food justice and food sovereignty debates focus on inequality, access, corporatisation, hunger and the paradox of scarcity within abundance. Patel's work makes visible the contradiction between hunger and undernutrition on the one hand, and excess consumption and processed food abundance on the other. Guthman examines the relation between obesity, food justice and neoliberal discourses of responsibility. This article does not contribute to that literature by proposing a direct policy programme; rather, it conceptualises the conditions of encounter that make food injustice possible (Patel, 2007; Guthman, 2011).

Finally, Mol's concept of ontological politics emphasises that reality is not singular and fixed, but enacted in multiple socio-material practices. The concept of food-reality used here is compatible with that approach. The focus, however, is not primarily on the plurality of realities, but on which forms of reality are institutionally rendered recognisable and operational (Mol, 1999).

4. The Status of the A Priori: Not Kantian, but Historical-Infrastructural

The term "a priori" is not used here in the Kantian sense of universal, necessary and transhistorical conditions of experience. In Kant, the a priori refers to the conditions that make experience possible; these conditions are understood as universal and necessary. By contrast, *caloric a priori* refers to a historical, contingent and transformable infrastructural condition.

The concept is therefore closer to Foucault's notion of historical a priori. Foucault's historical a priori refers to the historical conditions under which things become sayable, visible, classifiable and available as objects of knowledge. In a similar sense, *caloric a priori* refers to the infrastructural preconditions that determine which products appear, within a given historical food regime, as accessible, cheap, normal, healthy, filling or realistic options (Foucault, 1972).

The difference is this: Foucault's historical a priori is primarily concerned with the conditions of discursive formations, whereas *caloric a priori* focuses on how those conditions are entangled with material infrastructures. Shelves, prices, supply chains, cold chains, nutrition labels, market standards, logistical networks and quality classifications are not merely external tools. They are historical-infrastructural conditions that determine which foods become recognisable, accessible and realistic.

Caloric a priori is therefore not universal. It is historically variable. The food infrastructure of the 1950s, the grain crises of the 1970s, the food price shocks of 2008 and the supply chain disruptions of the COVID-19 period may each generate different forms of *caloric a priori*. This article does not offer a detailed historical analysis of those transformations. It establishes the concept as a historical-infrastructural category rather than a transhistorical one.

5. Core Concepts: Caloric A Priori, Edible Onopticon and Metabolic Homovictimus

The conceptual architecture of the article rests on three main concepts: *caloric a priori*, *Edible Onopticon* and *Metabolic Homovictimus*. Other concepts operate as explanatory subcomponents of this triad.

Caloric a priori refers to the historical-infrastructural conditions that determine, before hunger, satiety, health, preference and consumption, which foods appear as accessible,

cheap, visible, processable, shelf-stable, normal and realistic options. Infrastructural a priori refers to the technical, economic and administrative conditions that precede the subject's encounter with the world. Caloric a priori names its specific form in hunger, satiety, health and consumption. This definition moves food debate away from the field of individual morality. Liberal health discourse often says: "people choose badly". Political economy says: "bad options are made cheap". This article goes further: the food-reality encountered by the subject is organised before choice.

Hunger is biological; what one becomes satiated by is infrastructural.

The Edible Onopticon refers to the regime through which food, bodies and soil are forced into forms of reality that are recognisable, measurable, processable, priceable, consumable and governable through technical, economic and institutional infrastructures. It is the specific form taken by the Onopticon in the field of food. The Onopticon does not mean a surveillance apparatus in the narrow sense. The central question is which foods become recognisable products, which bodies become metabolic risks, which soils become production surfaces, and which consumers become subjects responsible for healthy choice.

Metabolic Homovictimus names the subject-position of the individual who is held responsible for healthy choice while being largely deprived of the material, economic, temporal and infrastructural conditions of healthy choice. Homovictimus does not name victimhood as an essential identity; it names the structural relation between responsibility and infrastructural deprivation. The concept does not flatten all actors into one category. A low-income consumer, a prediabetic patient, a contract farmer and a middle-class subject disciplined by health discourse are not Homovictimus in the same intensity. The concept refers to a structural position that appears with different degrees of intensity across different locations.

6. Onopticon, Dispositif and the Example of Nutrition Labelling

The difference between Onopticon and Panopticon is not merely terminological. The Panopticon operates by making the subject visible; the subject is seen and disciplined within that visibility. Societies of control operate through continuous modulation, the regulation of passage and the coding of access. Surveillance capitalism extracts behavioural data, predicts future behaviour and turns such prediction into economic value. The Onopticon targets a prior level: it organises in advance the reality within which the subject can appear, the options the subject can encounter, the categories through which the subject can be recognised and the routes through which objection can be made.

The Onopticon is not, however, a general theory replacing Foucault's dispositif. A dispositif may be understood as a heterogeneous arrangement of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, laws, administrative measures and scientific statements. The Onopticon names a narrower operation within that arrangement: the operation through which certain layers of reality become institutionally recognisable, measurable, processable and contestable.

Nutrition labelling makes this distinction concrete. From the perspective of dispositif, the nutrition label is a heterogeneous power-knowledge apparatus linking state regulation, nutritional science, corporate disclosure, consumer responsibility, public health discourse and market competition. The Onopticon asks a narrower question within that arrangement: through which measurements are product and body made institutionally

real, risky, healthy or preferable? Calories, added sugars, fat, fibre, portion size and percentage daily value do not merely provide information. They determine the categories through which food and body become recognisable.

For this reason, the Onopticon does not replace dispositif. It makes visible how conditions of reality-recognition operate within a dispositif. In the field of food, this means that food is not merely produced, circulated and consumed. It is also made recognisable through product codes, quality standards, nutrition labels, retail architectures, supply chains, health measurements, insurance categories, soil data and trade standards. When a food system becomes Onoptic, the individual does not simply choose a product; the individual chooses within a food-reality already rendered recognisable, priceable and accessible.

7. The Grain-Oilseed Complex and Caloric Infrastructure

In global agricultural trade, the term “grain” is too narrow if used in isolation. The field is often organised through cereals, oilseeds and protein crops together. Wheat, maize, rice, barley and sorghum therefore need to be analysed alongside soybean. Soybean is not technically a grain; yet through animal feed, vegetable oil, protein inputs and industrial food chains, it operates as an inseparable component of the grain system.

The **grain-oilseed complex** is not merely a supply chain. It is the material ground of infrastructural imposition in the field of food. For a food to take part in social reality, it is not enough for it to be produced. It must become transportable, storable, standardisable, priceable, insurable and processable. It must acquire shelf life, enter quality categories, become legible to markets and appear before consumers.

FAO forecasts global cereal trade in 2026/27 at 507.2 million tonnes, showing that grain is strategic not only as production but also as global circulation. OECD-FAO reports that international cereal trade accounted for around 17 per cent of global production in the base period. This does not mean that all grain is traded internationally. It does, however, show the strategic importance of circulation channels for import-dependent societies (FAO, n.d.; OECD/FAO, 2025).

A 2024 study prepared for the European Parliament estimates the ABCD companies' share of world trade in essential cereals, oilseeds and protein crops at around 50-60 per cent; when COFCO International and Viterro are included, the estimate rises to 70-80 per cent. This does not mean absolute control over the entire food system. It indicates trader concentration in specific strategic commodity groups (European Parliament, 2024).

These data do not, by themselves, prove the existence of caloric a priori. They do, however, mark the analytical field in which the concept becomes applicable: food systems operate not only through production, but also through infrastructures of circulation, standardisation, classification and access.

If a product cannot enter these infrastructures, it remains weak in social reality even if it has been produced. Maize is powerful because it can become feed, starch, syrup, ethanol and industrial input. Wheat is powerful because it can become flour, bread, pasta, biscuits and packaged products. Soybean is powerful because, even when not directly visible on the table, it operates through animal feed, oil, protein and processed food chains.

These products are not merely produced. They are transformed into the edible infrastructure of the world.

Mini-Case: Bread in Türkiye and Caloric A Priori

Bread in Türkiye offers a focused mini-case for observing the concrete operation of caloric a priori. Bread is not merely a food product. It is a historically and infrastructurally organised field of encounter linking the daily energy intake of low-income households, municipal policy, bakers' organisations, flour supply, wheat markets, price regulation and social eating habits. In Türkiye, bread and simit price tariffs may be determined through institutional processes involving chambers, unions, municipalities, provincial directorates, professional organisations and ministerial opinion. This shows that bread has the status not simply of a market commodity, but of a publicly regulated staple food (Ministry of Trade, Türkiye, 2024).

This case shows that caloric a priori is not constructed only through corporate food chains. It may also be constructed through state, municipal and professional mechanisms. Keeping bread prices accessible, or providing lower-cost bread through municipal "public bread" networks, is an infrastructural intervention that shapes which calories appear as real options. Ankara Halk Ekmek's price list offers a current example of bread being arranged as a standardised and institutionally mediated object of sale (Ankara Halk Ekmek, n.d.).

For a low-income household, protein, fresh vegetables, minimally processed foods or diversified diets may exist as theoretical options. Yet in terms of price, accessibility and capacity to produce satiety, bread often becomes the more real, nearer and more compulsory option. At this point, caloric a priori diverges from a simple rational choice explanation. The individual does not choose bread only because it is cheap. The individual encounters bread as already constituted as cheap, accessible, filling, culturally normal and publicly protected.

The same case links the macro-level of food regime theory to the micro-moment of encounter. Wheat, flour, bakery, municipality, price tariff, household budget and everyday satiety converge in the same caloric field of reality. Bread is therefore not merely a consumed product; it is a concentrated form of caloric a priori in everyday life.

8. Metabolic Homovictimus and the Regime of Responsibility

The modern individual is repeatedly told: eat healthily, avoid sugar, lose weight, exercise, read labels, manage yourself, monitor your glucose, reduce your risk, choose correctly.

Yet the same individual lives in a reality structured against that responsibility. Cheap food is often refined carbohydrate; healthy food is expensive; working hours disrupt eating rhythms; urban space favours fast consumption; packaged products dominate supermarket shelves; advertising shapes desire; labels are complex; food time is classed unequally; and metabolic risk is framed as individual will.

This contradiction is the field of **Metabolic Homovictimus**. Responsibility is demanded of the individual. Yet the infrastructural conditions of that responsibility are not given.

Prediabetes can last for years without clear symptoms and may remain undetected until serious health problems arise, which indicates that metabolic vulnerability does not always appear through immediate clinical visibility. CDC states that people can have prediabetes for years without symptoms and may not know until serious health problems appear. The American Diabetes Association gives an A1C range of 5.7-6.4 per cent for prediabetes and 6.5 per cent or higher for diabetes (American Diabetes Association, n.d.; CDC, 2024).

Food labelling also exceeds the status of technical information. FDA explains that added sugars are listed on the Nutrition Facts label to support informed choices. UCSF SugarScience notes that sugar may appear under at least 61 different names in ingredient lists. This shows that sugar circulates not only under the name “sugar”, but through multiple technical names and ingredient categories (FDA, n.d.; UCSF SugarScience, n.d.).

In this article, glycaemic architecture is not used to explain political behaviour. It is used to show how, under health responsibility, the individual can become metabolically readable and governable. The chain is as follows: glycaemic architecture -> metabolic risk environment -> responsibility for healthy choice -> Metabolic Homovictim.

The relation between glycaemic architecture and Metabolic Homovictim is not one of direct biological causality. It is an institutional and discursive translation: structurally produced metabolic risk is recoded as a personal health responsibility that the individual must manage.

The article therefore does not claim that glycaemic load produces political obedience. Its more limited and defensible claim is that the modern food regime can position the individual as a metabolically risky, monitorable and responsible subject.

Yet Metabolic Homovictim is not only a passive closure. It is also a potential point of fracture. The individual’s lived experience of the contradiction between responsibility for healthy choice and deprivation of the conditions of healthy choice may create the ground for naming that contradiction and turning it into collective questioning. The “victim” dimension in Homovictim does not indicate an essential identity of victimhood. It refers to the tension between structural responsibility and material impossibility. The concept therefore does not offer a normative programme of resistance, but theoretically indicates the contradiction from which resistance could arise.

9. Glycaemic Architecture and Metabolic Readability

Glycaemic architecture refers to the structural food environment created by the ways in which carbohydrates are refined, processed, portioned and circulated, and by the metabolic responses these forms can produce. The concept does not explain political behaviour directly. It is an intermediary concept for understanding energy rhythm, hunger-satiety fluctuation, repeated consumption and metabolic risk environments.

The glycaemic index measures how quickly a carbohydrate-containing food raises blood glucose. The Linus Pauling Institute classifies carbohydrate-containing foods as low-GI at 55 or below, moderate-GI at 56-69, and high-GI at 70 or above. These values can vary according to variety, processing, cooking method, portion size and meal composition. Glycaemic architecture therefore does not accuse isolated foods; it analyses the speed, form and density through which foods enter the body (Linus Pauling Institute, n.d.).

Gaylor and colleagues’ 2022 meta-analysis examined the effect of breakfast glycaemic load on cognitive performance. It did not find a general cognitive effect in the first 119 minutes after consumption, but reported limited advantages for low glycaemic load in immediate episodic memory after 120 minutes. This makes the relation between glycaemic load and attention or memory researchable, but it does not permit a mechanical inference from glycaemic load to political behaviour (Gaylor et al., 2022).

At this point, the concept of **metabolic readability** becomes important. Metabolic readability refers to a regime in which the body is constituted not as a living existence, but as a set of measurable, monitorable, riskable, optimisable and intervenable

metabolic indicators.

This concept does not reject medical measurement. HbA1c, glucose monitoring, prediabetes diagnosis and metabolic health indicators can save lives. The problem is not measurement as such. The problem emerges when measurement ceases to be an instrument of care and begins to replace the institutional reality of the body itself.

The body becomes visible as glucose curve, calorie count, BMI, risk profile, sleep score, activity score, insurance data, health application metric and performance indicator. These indicators can be useful. Yet the Onoptic question is this: what happens when measurement ceases to be an instrument of care and becomes the operational ontology through which the institutional reality of the body is determined?

10. Pedological Rupture and the Ontological Deprivation of Soil

Pedological rupture refers to the tendency to treat soil not as a living, diverse, organic and local ecosystem, but as a production surface attached to chemical, mechanical, digital and corporatised processes of production. The concept does not condemn all industrial agriculture. It targets, more specifically, the production model in which monoculture, high chemical input, intensive mechanisation, standardised seed and short-term yield pressure operate together.

Pedological rupture names the historical tendency through which soil is treated not as a living ecosystem but as a production surface; the ontological deprivation of soil names the consequence of that tendency for the institutional forms through which soil is recognised. In other words, pedological rupture is the process, while ontological deprivation is the narrowing it produces in the reality-status of soil.

This critique does not deny the historical productivity gains of industrial agriculture or the Green Revolution. Pingali discusses both the achievements and limits of the Green Revolution in relation to agricultural productivity. The issue is not to deny historical gains in yield, but to analyse the consequences of the same model today in terms of soil health, input dependence and ecological cost (Pingali, 2012).

The FAO's assessment states that approximately one third of the world's soils are moderately or highly degraded. The cited causes include erosion, salinisation, compaction, acidification and chemical pollution. This indicates that soil is now a critical field of vulnerability not only in terms of agricultural productivity, but also in relation to ecological sustainability, water retention, carbon cycling, biodiversity and food security (FAO & ITPS, 2015).

Within this framework, **the ontological deprivation of soil** refers to the suppression of soil's capacity to sustain its own cycles as a living ecosystem under the logic of short-term yield, standardised product, chemical input, digital measurement and production surface.

This does not attribute human-like agency to soil. The aim is to emphasise that soil is not a passive surface available for human use alone, but a living process field composed of microorganisms, water, organic matter, roots, carbon and local ecological relations. This limited use touches Bennett's account of vibrant matter, Haraway's non-human relationality and Latour's critique of the nature-politics divide. Detailed engagement with that literature is not the article's central task (Bennett, 2010; Haraway, 2016; Latour, 2004).

Soil does not disappear. But it is recognised not through its living reality, but through indicators such as yield, pH, moisture, organic matter percentage, fertiliser need, pesticide need, satellite data and production capacity.

These indicators are not false. The problem is the reduction of soil to these indicators alone.

11. Criteria of Onoptic Character and Intensity of Determination

The Onopticon must not be expanded conceptually beyond its analytical use. A case should be analysed as Onoptic only when three conditions appear together: compulsory recognisability, closure of possibilities and weak contestability.

Compulsory recognisability means that a food system requires the subject, product, soil or farmer to become recognisable within particular categories in order to enter the system. The product is recognised through barcode, standard, quality code, certification, shelf life and ingredient list. The farmer is recognised through contract, certification, credit, input use and supply chain compliance. The body is recognised through BMI, HbA1c, glucose profile, risk score and health data. Soil is recognised through yield, pH, moisture, organic matter and digital agricultural data. This recognition is not neutral. To be recognised is to be translated into the language of the system.

Closure of possibilities means that recognition and classification narrow the field of options. Local seed cannot enter the market. The farmer cannot produce without inputs. The low-income consumer cannot access healthy food. Soil cannot escape short-term yield pressure. Alternative production cannot secure financing. The individual becomes metabolically vulnerable but remains responsible for healthy choice. These closures are not merely “lack of preference”. They are contractions of the field of reality.

Weak contestability means that the individual or farmer finds it difficult to understand, question or reverse the system. Labels are complex. Supply chains are invisible. Price formation is opaque. Seed-pesticide packages are concentrated. Import dependence lies beyond individual control. Metabolic consequences are presented as a matter of personal will.

When these three conditions operate together, the food system becomes Onoptic. Yet Onoptic effect does not have the same intensity in every case. The intensity of Onoptic determination varies along three axes: **access**, **transparency** and **concentration**.

The first axis is **access**. As the price, availability and visibility of alternative foods decline, the determining power of caloric a priori increases. When healthy and minimally processed foods become expensive, distant or temporally demanding, refined, highly processed and quickly satiating products appear as more real options. Choice does not disappear entirely. Rather, the field of choice is infrastructurally narrowed.

The second axis is **transparency**. As supply chains become less visible, labels more opaque, additive names more technical and price formation more complex, the individual’s capacity to object weakens. Food appears merely as a consumed product; yet the logistical, financial, chemical and institutional arrangements that make it possible remain in the background.

The third axis is **concentration**. As seed, processing, storage, transport, retail and data infrastructures become more concentrated, the space for alternative forms of production and consumption narrows. The local producer, small farmer or low-income consumer

gains weaker bargaining power and a weaker capacity to object in relation to concentrated structures.

When these three axes intersect, the Onoptic character becomes stronger. When access expands, transparency increases and concentration weakens, Onoptic determination becomes weaker. Caloric a priori is therefore not an absolute determination, but a historical-infrastructural condition of encounter whose intensity varies.

12. Discussion: The Contribution of Caloric A Priori

The contribution of this article is not to reject approaches that analyse the modern food regime through individual choice, market circulation or metabolic health. Its contribution is to draw attention to a prior level: the historical-infrastructural conditions that determine which foods, prices, measurements, health categories and responsibility discourses the individual encounters. Caloric a priori names this level. The Edible Onopticon makes visible the operations of recognition and classification within that level. Metabolic Homovictimus analyses the subject-position produced within those conditions.

This article extends the previously developed discussion of **caloric sovereignty** towards the concept of caloric a priori. Caloric sovereignty analyses which calories are made cheap, abundant, transportable, processable and ordinary within everyday life. Caloric a priori examines how those calories appear before the individual as “real options”. The analysis thereby moves not only towards the production and circulation of calories, but towards the historical-infrastructural constitution of the caloric field of encounter.

Caloric A Priori in Relation to Rival Explanations

Caloric a priori positions itself in dialogue with three strong approaches to food choice. The first is rational choice theory. That approach often explains choice through individual utility, cost and constraint. Yet it frequently takes the choice set as given. Caloric a priori problematises precisely that assumed level: before the individual chooses, which foods appear as real, cheap, accessible and reasonable options?

The second approach is Bourdieusian analysis of habitus and classed taste. This approach is powerful in relating dietary preferences to class, bodily discipline, cultural capital and everyday practice. Yet it does not always make sufficiently visible the autonomous force of infrastructural arrangements such as shelves, logistics, price, labelling, supply chains and product standards. Caloric a priori analyses the material field of options encountered by classed taste (Bourdieu, 1984).

The third approach is food regime theory. This theory is powerful in explaining global production, trade, state formation, corporatisation and agrarian transformation. The contribution of this article is to show how those macro-structures become options, prices, labels, access and metabolic responsibility in the everyday moment of encounter. Caloric a priori conceptualises the level of encounter between macro food regime and micro food choice.

The modern food regime is not merely a production-consumption system that determines what people eat. It is a historical-infrastructural regime of reality that shapes in advance the conditions under which hunger, satiety, health, choice, soil and responsibility are encountered. Through caloric a priori, the grain-oilseed complex can help determine which foods become real options, which bodies become metabolic risks, which soils become production surfaces and which subjects are recognised as responsible consumers.

This thesis proposes three transformations. First, the discussion of caloric sovereignty is extended towards caloric a priori. The issue is not only which calories are made cheap, but which calories become real options. Second, metabolic vulnerability is rethought through Metabolic Homovictimus. The issue is not only that the body is at risk, but that responsibility for healthy choice coexists with deprivation of the infrastructural conditions of healthy choice. Third, pedological rupture is reframed as the ontological deprivation of soil. The issue is not only soil degradation, but the recognition of soil not as a living process field but as a production surface.

This determination is not direct, one-directional or absolute. Not every food system is an Onopticon. Not every processed product produces metabolic destruction. Not every measurement captures the body. Not every form of industrial agriculture kills soil. Not every corporation consciously imposes reality.

The issue is not intention.

The issue is infrastructure.

13. Conclusion: Food, Conditions of Encounter and Onoptic Determination

Food-reality is organised through price, shelf, seed, port, silo, ship, processing plant, nutrition label, health data, quality standard, import route and market architecture. When the individual enters this reality, they may think that they are choosing. Yet the choice often takes place within a caloric a priori that has already been established.

Food choice is therefore not the first event.

The first event is the imposition of food-reality.

The final formulation may be stated as follows:

The Edible Onopticon does not command; it organises the conditions of encounter. Caloric a priori is the historical-infrastructural ground of that encounter. Metabolic Homovictimus is the subject held responsible while deprived of the conditions of responsibility. Ontological deprivation of soil is the non-recognition of soil as a living process field. At this intersection, the modern food regime produces not only nutrition, but reality.

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