

## CHAPTER THREE. TRANSFORMATIONS OF SOCIAL BONDS

Every culture defines itself in relation to nature; every culture makes use of a grid to integrate and encode gods, humans, animals, and things.

PIERRE VIDAL-NAQUET, *The Black Hunter*

Human imagination had been shaped to suit tribes that were small enough to move quickly, yet strong enough to defend themselves.

RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI, *Living a Double Life*

The concept of social bond belongs to those elementary sociological notions whose meaning has undergone banalization and simplification, actually precluding any precise reconstruction of its sense. Although it is now commonly used and increasingly often plays a crucial role in accounts of contemporary society, which is said to be haunted by the “erosion” or “dissolution” of these bonds, analyzes of contexts in which it is employed show, at best, that this term is usually given two fundamental meanings – or more precisely, two categories of meanings. In the first case, the idea is used to denote all kinds of links formed between people, thus making it the opposite of individualization.<sup>77</sup> In

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77 This is how Ulrich Beck seems to use the concept of social bond. In the sociology handbook by Robert Nisbet and Robert G. Perrin – notably titled *The Social Bond* – the only reference to the eponymous term is contained in the claim that the basic problems of sociology are linked to the nature of social bonds, i.e. “the mechanisms and processes through which human beings become members of the social order and by which they remain members” (1977, 37–38). In Polish sociology, a similar approach is represented by Jan Szczepański, who considers social bonds to be “fundamental concepts in sociology,” defining them as “an organized system of relationships, institutions, and means of social control, which unites individuals, subgroups and other constituent parts, forming a collective that is capable of lasting and developing” (1970, 239). This definition brings irresistible associations with the concept of society, which makes it little wonder that Beck considers the dissolution of social bonds to be synonymous with the dissolution of society.

the second, it is employed to refer to the identification of the individual with a social group.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, it becomes the basis for creating social identity. In both cases, social bonds are treated as an individual property rather than a collective one. Moreover, the concept of social bond functions as a technical term rather than a theoretical idea. As a result, it appears to have little explanatory value.

Nevertheless, social bonds were what creators of sociology assumed to be the conceptual foundation for explaining the very essence of society understood as an entity that transcends the individual and cannot be reduced to the actions of particular individuals. The specific bonds that tie us to other people – both living and dead – would facilitate the existence of society and constitute the only reason why humans are unique among social species found in the natural world. In this perspective, social bonds would be an indispensable component of socializing processes.

It was already August Comte who argued that “[n]othing but the bewilderment caused by theological and metaphysical doctrines can account for the shallow explanations of human affairs given by our teachers, attributing as they do to Man what is really due to Humanity. But with the sounder theory that we now possess, we can see the truth as it really stands. We have but to look each of us at our own life under its physical, intellectual, or moral aspects, to recognize what it is that we owe to the combined action of our predecessors and contemporaries. The man who dares to think himself *independent of others*, either in feelings, thoughts, or actions, cannot even put the blasphemous conception into words without immediate self-contradiction, since the very language he uses is not his own. [...] Without further illustration, the tendency of Positive doctrine is evident. It appeals systematically to our *social instincts*, by constantly impressing upon us that only the Whole is real; that the Parts exist only in abstraction” (2009, 235–236; emphasis added). This was echoed by Durkheim, who emphasizes that “*association* is the only thing genuinely social

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78 Ralph Dahrendorf and Stanisław Ossowski use the concept in this way. For the latter, social bonds are equivalent to the phrase *esprit de corps*, which comprises the following: “an approving sense of belonging to a group; preservation of key conventional elements distinguishing the group; shared values; a consciousness of shared interests; and finally, the readiness to put the group’s interests first, before personal ones, if such a conflict arises, or at least the conviction that group interests should be put first” (1967b, 153).

and sociology is *the science of association in the abstract*" (1981, 1055; emphasis preserved).

What is even more important, for most thinkers of the period the existence of "social instinct" or "association" was not a given, but something that demanded explanation. Therefore, matters pertaining to the existence and shape of social bonds became for them an independent field of inquiry. Answers to the question of what constitutes social bond contained in themselves at least partial responses to the question of what society is and what it is like. This is clearly visible in efforts, made independently by Durkheim and Tönnies, to describe the transformations of social bonds – efforts that could be also considered as attempts at a typology of the dominant forms of sociality. Additionally, these efforts make it visible that for both thinkers the move from one form of sociality to another entails not only the transformation of fundamental social "structures" but also a radical reconstruction of the entire psychic apparatus of individuals.

Founders of sociology viewed social bonds not only as something that ties humans together to form a higher-order whole but also – or perhaps even primarily – as something that transforms people in a way that cannot be reduced to either individual features or properties of emergent structures. This was clearly expressed by Simmel in his analysis of the category of faithfulness: "The external sociological situation of togetherness appropriates the particular feelings that properly correspond to it, as it were, even though they did not justify the beginnings of the relationship" (1950, 382). The role of such a feeling is that "by virtue of it, for once the personal, fluctuating inner life actually adopts the character of the fixed, stable form of a relation. Or vice versa: this sociological fixity, which remains outside life's immediacy and subjective rhythm, here actually becomes the content of subjective, emotionally determined life" (386). In other words, the essence of social bonds – and consequently of socializing processes – would consist in the transformation of personal *emotions*, which are naturally mutable and transient, into more stable *moral sentiments*.

The concept of moral sentiments appears already in the title of a work produced by one of the fathers of modern economy – Adam Smith (1984). However, the idea that underlies this concept found fullest expression only in the classics of sociology. Comte, who argued that "intellect, as well as social sympathy, is a distinctive attribute of our nature," nevertheless ascribes greater significance to the latter element, whose foundations rest in sentiments. As he puts it, "common experience proves that after all the principal condition of right action is the benevolent impulse; with the ordinary amount of intellect and activity that is

found in men this stimulus, if well sustained, is enough to direct our thoughts and energies to a good result. Without this habitual spring of action, they would inevitably waste themselves in barren or incoherent efforts, and speedily relapse into their original torpor.<sup>79</sup> Unity in our moral nature is, then, impossible, except so far as affection preponderates over intellect and activity” (2009, 15–16).

A similar idea was expressed by Durkheim, who argues that “man is twofold. Within him are two beings: an individual being that originates in the organism and whose sphere of action is strictly limited by this fact; and a social being that represents within us the higher reality of the intellectual and moral order that we know through observation – by which I mean society. In the realm of practice, this duality of our nature makes it impossible to reduce a moral ideal to a utilitarian motive; and in the realm of thought, this duality makes it impossible to reduce reason to individual experience. Because he participates in society, the individual naturally transcends himself when he thinks and when he acts” (2001, 18). Durkheim was well aware that behind Adam Smith’s “bands of love and affection”<sup>80</sup> (1984, 85), which bind members of human societies, a control apparatus is hidden, one that is specific to a given form of society and safeguards social coercion. “In conclusion,” Durkheim argues, “social life is nothing other than the moral milieu, or better, the sum of various moral contexts which surround the person. In calling them moral we mean these *milieux* consist in a complex of *ideas*: as a result, they are, with respect to individual minds, just as the physical setting is to living organisms” (1981, 1064; emphasis added). Acceptance of these ideas entails active recognizing of others as members of the same “moral universe.”

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79 It is worth to emphasize here that this claim of the – considered today as entirely obsolete – classic, harmonizes with latest findings on the functioning of the mind, discussed in the previous chapter. Comte devotes an entire chapter of his work to family as the place where individuals are imbued with moral sentiments. A defense of Comte as a thoroughly modern thinker was penned by Norbert Elias (1978), who emphasized that it would be completely unjustified to treat Comte as a forerunner of methodological positivism, because the Frenchman considered the essence of scientific thinking as an inseparable combination of observation and interpretation.

80 “It is thus that man, who can subsist only in society, was fitted by nature to that situation for which he was made. All the members of human society stand in need of each other’s assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. All the different members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common center of mutual good offices” (Smith 1984, 85).

To be sure, the central role of morality in regulating human actions was recognized a long time ago: morality has been explored by theology and philosophy. The former would seek the source and confirmation of morality in God, whereas the latter – in individual reason guided by either the categorical imperative (Kant) or individual interest (Hobbes). The creators of sociology intended to locate this discipline in the space between the above two forms of thinking: it was supposed to emerge as a positive *science* of morality, which meant searching for natural (not revealed or transcendental) sources and grounding of morality. The crucial novelty of this emerging science was to replace the individual with *society* as the moral subject. It was processes of socializing, considered primarily as processes of forging social bonds, that were supposed to be the source of moral sentiments felt by individuals.

Of course, the individualization of sociology (described in previous chapters) led to a significant modification of all its classical axioms. Sociology ceased to be a science of society viewed as a specific moral universe forming individual actions, and became a science of society viewed as a system of structures formed by these actions. In effect, the very concept of social bonds was transformed. They were no longer emotional ties that transform human motives, enforcing such courses of action that one would not undertake out of his or her own initiative; instead, they became the kinds of ties that create some structures or individual identities. This also transformed the theoretical status of the discussed concept: whereas in the first case bonds can undergo substantial changes (e.g. they can move from mechanical to organic solidarity, from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*), in the latter case they may only exist or not.

It needs to be strongly emphasized at this point that emotional bonding, which lies at the heart of social bonds (as demonstrated in the previous chapter), is by no means a question of “love,” “fidelity,” “loyalty,” “shared values,” or other similar positive feelings that should be naturally experienced in relation to other members of the community, as some of the classics argued. The emotional character of bonding is rather founded on feelings of guilt and obligation, which are often in conflict with individual interests, sentiments and predilections. One may hate his or her family and yet feel an internal obligation – indeed, one of moral nature – to help its members. One may harbor a grudge against one’s homeland, owing to its treatment of him or her, and yet stand up in its defense if the need arises.

Thus, an analysis of the transformations of social bonds must begin with restoring them to their proper place within the concept of society understood as a moral universe.

### 3.1 The nature of social bond

It is symptomatic that the conviction about the dissolution of social bonds in post-modern society has led in the contemporary social sciences to the foregrounding of concepts that do not just help in analyzing ongoing transformations, but rather create a certain normative framework, a specific “Design,” or *telos*, whose finding and implementing would restore the lost harmony and order to the social reality. A closer look at the currently most popular areas in sociological research – such as those defined by the concepts of the civic society, social capital, social trust, or even social identity, alongside with Giddens’ “pure relations” that lie at its foundation – makes it clear that all of them are based on a mythologized view of community, at the same time calling for efforts to restore it.

However, as Jean-Luc Nancy argues (1991, 23), despite the fact that contemporary thought is “magnetically attracted toward community,” it is nevertheless incapable of “thinking community” because it cannot thematize any issues otherwise than by taking as its point of departure the nearly dogmatic assumption about the sovereignty and ontological primacy of the individual subject. In consequence, instead of engaging itself with the search for the true meaning of the sense of community it merely repeats fairy tales about the lost, total community that needs to be recovered.<sup>81</sup> According to Nancy, it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who promulgated this “retrospective consciousness of lost community” and expressed the view that it was the emergence of society that created separate individuals, ruining the original intimacy and totality of communal being. Nancy also argues that although Rousseau was the first to articulate this thought, the concept of lost community runs throughout Western history, beginning in ancient Greece and culminating in Christianity, which developed the idea of universal brotherhood, in which the entire humanity would be joined in communion with God.

As Nancy claims, today’s widespread “communitarian engineering” – which creates communitarian projects and desires to impose them on all the living – entirely disregards the fact that none of the empirically known communities like family, *polis*, or the early Christian Church ever created such a substantial and total communal identity. “A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project – nor is a *project* at all”; rather, it is, for its members, “the presentation of the[ir] finitude and the irredeemable excess

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81 Cf. for example a more detailed analysis of contemporary views on family as a kind of a myth of “a lost paradise” in Christopher Lasch’s *Haven in a Heartless World* (1977).

that make up finite [human] being: its death, but also its birth” (15; emphasis preserved).

Nancy claims that the two typically modern cults – that of the individual and that of the communal totality – are actually two sides of the same coin as well as a source of confusion, making it difficult to recognize that “being-in-common” is the only model of community. Being-in-common allows us to become conscious of our birth, death and existence as separate beings. It is the fact of common existence that allows individuals to consider themselves as individuals. “Outside of community,” Nancy argues, “there is no experience” (21), emphasizing at the same time that “being-in-common is not a common being” (29), it is not a communion of souls united in the realization of a specific goal, or under the banners of a specific idea. “In place of such a communion, there is communication,” Nancy writes (28), referring earlier to Georges Bataille, who claims that “[c]ommunication is a fact that is not in any way added onto human reality, but rather constitutes it” (after Nancy 1991, 21) by making our difference present for others, and for ourselves through these others.

What we consider to be the most interesting element of Nancy’s argumentation is the attempt to combine commonality with individualism, or rather – to use a more appropriate phrase – with the “singularity” of individuals. For him, the essence of the community does not lie – as has been usually assumed – in the similarity of lifestyles or worldviews. Rather, communities emerge from coexistence, which involves interactions between distinct and different beings. It lies *between* them, just like the word “and” in the phrase “me *and* you *and* them”: “a formula in which the *and* does not imply juxtaposition, but exposition” (29). In other words, “community means [...] that there is not a singular being without another singular being, and that there is, therefore, what might be called, in a rather inappropriate idiom, *an originary or ontological ‘sociality’* that in its principle extends far beyond the simple theme of man as a social being” (1991, 28; emphasis added). Therefore, community is not established through formal similarity or some need to become like others – it cannot be produced by an act of the arbitrary will.

We have deliberately used the rather archaic term “arbitrary will” – which was employed by Ferdinand Tönnies to describe one of the two types of social bonds he distinguishes<sup>82</sup> – because Nancy’s account of commonality turns out

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82 Tönnies himself did not use the concept of bonds, employing the term “relationship.” Similarly, Durkheim used the term “solidarity” to describe two kinds of relations he distinguished. In contemporary sociology, both terms are defined as relating to different kinds of social ties. We need to remember that the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and

to be unexpectedly identical to what the venerated sociologist claimed to be the meaning of *Gemeinschaft*. Considering it as synonymous with a community whose members works harmoniously for the common good, contemporary scholars usually forget that the meaning of the concept of *Gemeinschaft* was, in Tönnies' theory, determined by the idea of "natural will." "Thus, in its origins," he writes, "natural will must be understood as being inborn and inherited" (Tönnies 2001, 97). It is natural in the same sense in which any organism's biological functions are natural. "The exercise of will or desire," he argues, "cannot be taught" (143), just like one cannot learn to breathe, because both "actions" are simply part of our biological nature. As far as natural will is concerned, "[its] underlying motive forces are found in organic life" (100); what provides them with particular directions and forms is "mental life," possible due to communication and finding expression in customs and religion.

Natural will manifests itself in three basic ways. The first one comprises *preferences*, i.e. affirmative feelings (or repulsion, i.e. negative feelings), formed in relation to outside objects or particular people. They are rooted in organic drives connected with survival, while their full description brings to mind the concept of Damasio's "somatic markers" (1995; cf. also Chapter Two). The second form of natural will comprises *forces of habit*, which originate in repeatable actions, gestures and experiences. As any other form of training, they lead to the formation and embodiment of action schemes, resulting in the emergence of a disposition to act in a certain way. Finally, the third component of the natural will is comprised by *memory*, which Tönnies describes as a specific development of the mental apparatus whose vital element is thinking ("the physiological processes that correspond to thinking"). Memory is the condition of abstract thinking, which is in this sense rooted in and dependent on it. In order to emphasize this point, Tönnies quotes Spinoza saying that "[p]eople who believe that they speak or keep silent or do anything by free decision of their own minds are dreaming with their eyes wide open" (108).

According to Tönnies, as an effect of the natural will, the community's existence does not demand from the individual any reflective or abstract realization of the very fact of belonging to it. Insofar as people can identify the whole of which they are part, this whole exists in them, sustained and conditioned by them. Just like "intentionality without consciousness" (cf. Dennett 1996), community "floats in the air" (Tönnies 2001, 64). Individuals adjust to each other

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*Gesellschaft*, introduced by Tönnies, denote both the type of bonds and the type of community created by them.

or – to put it more colloquially – click with each other in the course of intense interactions; they incorporate the community as their second nature through actions generated by the natural will, i.e. through preferences, habits and memory. As far as this kind of activity is concerned, he argues, “[i]ts purpose lies in itself, not in some outside aim” (166).

Thus, despite the fact that community creates a specific dependency in which “life means *mutual* possession and enjoyment, and possession and enjoyment of goods held *in common*” (36; emphasis preserved), this dependency is not an intentional product of its members. It is not the case that individuals can grasp the “rationality” of communal living, and then form a community in order to secure greater benefits. Communities cannot be formed by a decision coming from the domain of an “arbitrary will.” They are rather formed by living together – “being-in-common,” as Nancy puts it – and emerge from actions whose course is determined by pre-reflective preferences, adaptations and memory. Mutual connections are therefore the product of these actions, just like the joint use of goods, which has nothing to do with the contemporary understanding of the common good.

Let us pause briefly and consider the last issue. The reception of the concept of *Gemeinschaft* was certainly influenced to a large degree by Tönnies’ argument that “the theory of *Gemeinschaft* is based on the idea that in the original or natural state there is a complete *unity* of human wills. This sense of unity is maintained even when people become separated” (22, emphasis added). This claim probably provided a basis for those contemporary accounts of the commonality that emphasize the necessity to subordinate individual preferences to the idea of the common good.<sup>83</sup> However, such “idea” is the result of consideration, whereas for Tönnies – as we have demonstrated – the “unity” of natural will is somewhat guaranteed by the needs and experiences shared by people in a given collectivity. What is more, it has an organic character insofar as “the whole is not merely the sum of its parts; on the contrary, the parts are dependent on and conditioned by the whole, so that the whole itself possesses intrinsic reality and substance” (21). By opposing a mechanistic approach typical for physics and related disciplines, which splits such wholes into a multitude of “atomic particles,” Tönnies declares that atoms are “somethings which are nothings, or nothings which are somethings” (20). One could argue along the same lines that the individual abstracted from an organic unity does not really exist outside such

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83 As Will Kymlicka demonstrates (2002), this is a characteristic feature of communitarianism, which Nancy criticizes.

community. It is only inside the community that s/he acquires her/his proper meaning; therefore, every individual becomes indispensable. It is their complementarity which contributes to the unity of the “organism,” i.e. community.

Community means mutual dependence among members of this type of organic unity. Rationality, on the other hand, being the effect of consideration and separating desire from action, is the domain of the arbitrary will. It constitutes itself on the basis of the individualization of acting people. Arbitrary will grows out of the natural one “through a concentrated effort of thought which is constantly extended and renewed” (Tönnies 2001, 114). Thanks to this intellectual effort, preferences are transformed into goals, memory yields to consideration, while habits are subjected to decisions. In other words, thinking sets up a space between impulses or drives which originate in the “natural,” biological component of human beings and their actions. This allows to reveal the arbitrary will – the will *sensu stricte*, in its contemporary understanding. This is also the way in which Weber’s rationalization of action manifests itself.

One needs to keep in mind that for Tönnies the transition from the natural to the arbitrary will – the two terms could be treated as shorthand for changes in the functioning of the psychic apparatus, or in the general attitude towards reality<sup>84</sup> – is linked to the transformations of the fundamental framework of social organization. “Thus, the natural will of the individual generates from within itself the abstract way of thinking and rational calculation which tend to break it up and make it dependent on these new forces. In the same way, we observe among historic peoples the development process of market Society and the system of market rationality evolving out of the original Community-based forms of life and will. In place of the culture of the people we get the civilization of the state” (249–250). The existence of this kind of connection suggests that the currently observed changes in forms of social organization should be accompanied by the emergence of a new type of the “will.”

In contemporary sociology, especially in its variants that focus on postmodern society, we encounter many ideas supporting the above conclusion. Giddens’ “pure relations,” Habermas’ “actions aiming at coming to an understanding,” and the fundamental assumption of the interpretive paradigm, namely, the claim that the social order is created in the process of *symbolic* interactions – all convey, either implicitly or explicitly, the belief that social reality is, or could be, constructed reflectively through dialogue. One could also say that whereas the

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84 Similar changes were described by Weber as the process of rationalization of actions accompanying transition to modernity.

consideration underlying the arbitrary will is, in a sense, derivative of action (being rooted in experiences of particular individuals), the concept of reflexivity, which contemporary theories invoke, entails much more, involving continuous monitoring of one's identity, actions and social reality, which would be carried out in abstract terms derived from the symbolic realm or "expert systems."

Following this idea and adhering to Tönnies' wording, one ought to say that the transition from modern to postmodern society is accompanied by the emergence of a new type of "will," in this case one developing out of the "arbitrary will." This type of will – let us call it "reflexive" in reference to Giddens' discussion (2006) – would involve a transition from consideration to reflection, from decision-making to developing strategies of action, and finally, from goal to project. Its fundamental function would not be to make behavior more rational, but rather to increase its authenticity, its relevance to the abstract project of identity, and to reach agreement in dialogue with others.<sup>85</sup>

The concept of identity, which emerges in many theories discussed here, is what links the various changes in the functioning of the psychic apparatus, described by Tönnies and further discussed in accounts developed by contemporary scholars. This is best exemplified by Jürgen Habermas (1979), who associates the transformations of social identity with the transformations of "institutionally embodied structures of rationality," underlying different "stages in the development of social integration." Habermas invokes the theory of moral development proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), which is well grounded in empirical research, assuming that there is a compatibility between the occurrence of three different patterns of solving moral problems in onto-genetic development (pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional) and the "social evolution of moral and legal representations" at the level of society. At the same time, he emphasizes that "the reproduction of society and the socialization of its members are two aspects of the same process; they are dependent on the same structures" (1979, 99).

According to Habermas, the most primordial form of identity is the "natural identity," in which the "I" has primarily a physical dimension. Its basic parameters are sex, age, and physical appearance. It is the identity of the organism whose internal integrity is based on the distinction between the "I" and its surroundings.

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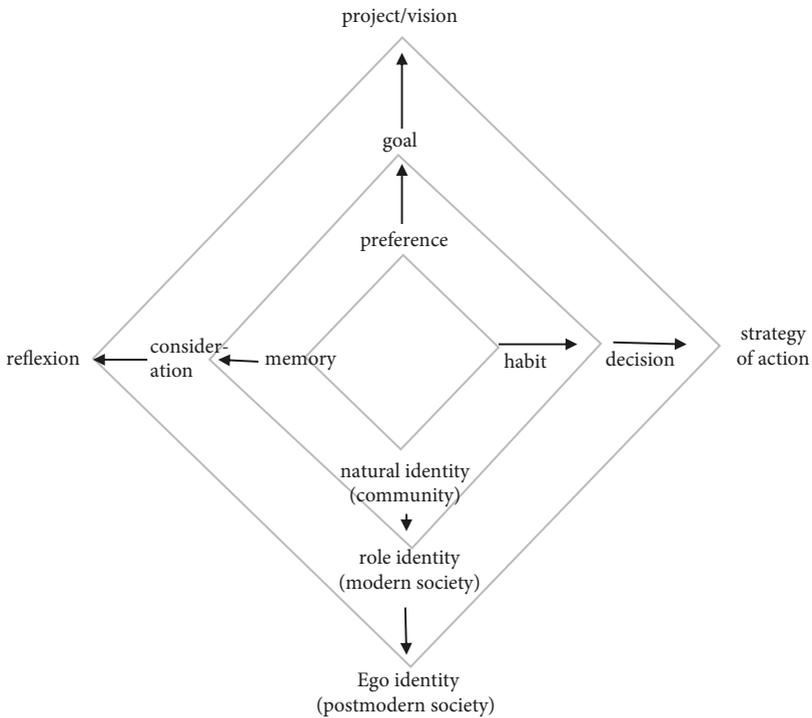
85 In Habermas' theory of communicative action (1987a; 1987b), real action is a test verifying whether consensus has been reached; however, it does not create the possibility of finding that consensus. Similarly, shared knowledge, necessary to initiate dialogue, is conceived of in conceptual categories, not in categories of sharing certain experiences.

The transition to modern society, in turn, entails the emergence of “role identity.” Individuals assimilate the general, symbolic nature of basic social positions, first in their families and peer groups, later in broader social circles, but physical or material qualities still remain a part of the symbolic definition of roles. Finally, the contemporary stage of development, characterized by great intensification of individualization, is distinguished by “ego identity.” It involves the ability to conceive of oneself as an autonomous being, presenting oneself as independent from one’s direct surroundings, and to retain continuity, stability and credibility in terms of behavior in situations of conflict and in the face of contradictory expectations regarding the roles that individuals are supposed to play. At this stage, the individual acquires “free access to the interpretive possibilities of the cultural traditions” (93).

It is easy to notice that the transition from natural identity to role identity and then to ego identity, considered as resulting from the transformations of structures of rationality, corresponds to the transition from the natural will to the arbitrary and then the reflexive will. Fig. 3.1. provides an overview of the relationships between these concepts.

This part of Tönnies’ argumentation, which combines the two types of the will with different types of ties that connect individuals, could be supplemented in a similar way. Insofar as he ascribes the natural will to community, and the arbitrary will to society, one could expect that the reflexive will would correspond to another type of collectivity. According to what is pointed out in contemporary sociological literature, it is network systems that would be most apt to play this role. In this way, we would obtain a concise record of the process in which the forms of social order change – one that would combine the transformations of psychic apparatus with the transition from traditional society, through modern one, to postmodern network society (cf. Castells 2001a). In order to complete it, one would simply need to align types of social order with types of attitudes towards reality (the “will”), adding to the scheme something that would correspond to the dominant modes of socialization and social control – two factors that form the “moral sentiments” that lie at the foundation of social bonds. It would be possible to adapt for this purpose the well-known division into cultures of shame and cultures of guilt (Benedict 2005, 222–223), supplementing it with the “culture of authenticity,” which has taken its toll today.

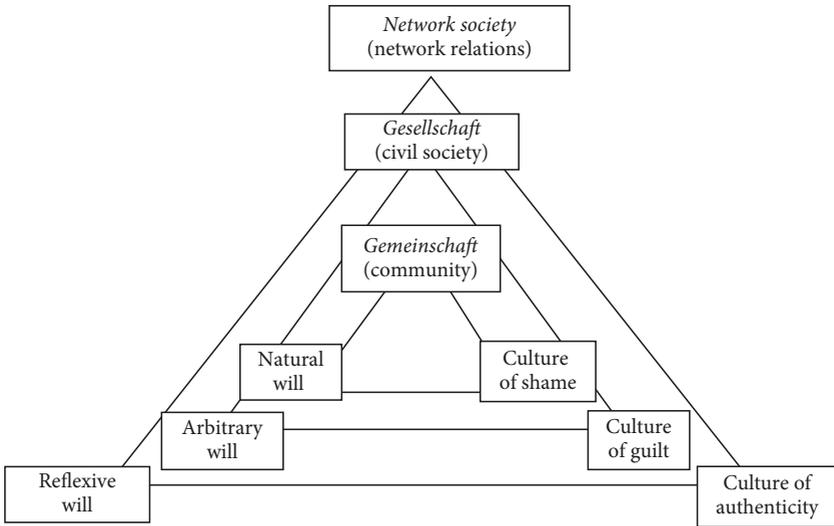
The scheme obtained in this way (cf. fig. 3.2a.) has one undeniable advantage: it provides a synthetic description of the co-variance of three fundamental categories of variables used in sociology to analyze the functioning of society – structures from the systemic level, individual actions, and mechanisms that guarantee the sustainment and reproduction of society. However, its



**Fig. 3.1:** Hypothetical transformations of individual “psychic apparatus” and its positioning with regard to the community

fundamental disadvantage is that it unambiguously imposes a vision of *progress*, both of people and societies. This progress would be a process in which humans break the “shackles” of both nature and culture (it is the “liberation” from cultural norms that supposedly guarantees authenticity), reaching ever higher levels of self-reflection and fulfillment, while society itself achieves ever greater degrees of complexity and progress (whatever these terms might actually mean).<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Let us draw attention to the fact that the idea of self-realization, particularly underscored in humanistic psychology and appropriated into mass culture in the form of “being authentic,” collides – in a rather amusing way – with the “naturalness” ascribed to members of primitive communities. The assumption made by humanistic psychologists, namely that every person is equipped with a certain potential to develop, and that culture merely thwarts and enslaves us, best illustrates the conviction,



**Fig. 3.2a:** Hypothetical co-variability of types of social order, types of the “will,” and types of culture

This is exactly the kind of vision we protested against in the previous chapter; moreover, it contradicts the assumptions made by Tönnies, for whom both the concepts of the natural and the arbitrary will, as well as those of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, constitute tools for describing various types of social ties, and

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widespread in social sciences, about the ontic primacy of the individual over the society. This reveals an important crack, especially in sociology, because it remains unclear what the individual’s “authenticity” would be based on if it is assumed (as is done widely in this area) that the “producing of a human being” occurs in the process of socialization. Similarly, one could undermine the concept of “network society” as an entity characterized by greater complexity than primitive communities. In our view, the term “network society” (developed by Castells) unjustifiably limits the concept of the network to a specific system of relations that begins to emerge in contemporary society. This makes it more difficult to discern that communities and societies also create *networks* of relationships, only of different properties. However, to do justice to Castells, it is worth underlining that his concept certainly contributed to an increased interest in network analysis, an immensely interesting approach, one of whose key representatives in sociology is Barry Wellman (cf. e.g. Wellman & Wellman 1992).

not processes of society's evolution.<sup>87</sup> As Tönnies claims in one of his later works, he knows "no state of culture or society, in which the two elements, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, would exist in separation" (after Szacki 2002, 445).

We emphasize the typological character of Tönnies' theory not only to render his intentions faithfully but also to express the conviction that his concepts would be far more useful today if we were to treat them as a means of describing distinct forms of ties that manifest themselves in human relationships. Indeed, what we see as Tönnies' greatest contribution is his indicating of the fundamental difference between the ties characteristic for communities and the ties that underlie other forms of human association, as well as his drawing attention to the non-reflexive and (in this sense only) "natural" character of mental processes that accompany the communal kind of relationships among people.

However, in order to make use of current knowledge for analyzing consequences entailed by such a conceptualization of the nature of communal ties and their later transformations, we need to examine the process that lies at the foundation of the above-mentioned changes in the functioning of psychic apparatus, which – as could be inferred – should in turn affect the transformations of social bonds. By this we mean here the process of changes in human thinking. After all, in the light of conclusions drawn in the previous chapter, the "natural will" is not as "natural" as Tönnies assumed.<sup>88</sup> Nor is it possible to consider the development of thinking, which sparks the transformation of this will, as a spontaneous product of the unique properties of the human mind. Dennett's concept of mind, adopted in this book, rests on the assumption that human intentionality and intelligence are not the direct products of our genetic equipment, but a function of the use made of culture by particular individuals. This means that,

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87 It has to be noted right away that he was not entirely consistent in his considerations of the nature of this distinction (cf. Szacki 2002, 444–446). In his best-known work (2001), the "emergence" of the arbitrary will from the natural one clearly has some properties of a developmental process, just like *Gesellschaft's* domination following that of *Gemeinschaft*. However, in his later works Tönnies clearly declares that both pairs of terms constitute ideal types of basic social relationships, and it is this statement we take to be binding here. We shall return to the problems arising from mixing historiography with typology towards the end of the chapter.

88 Both individual tastes and habits, let alone memory, are a complex product of socializing processes and have nothing to do with naturalness in the biological sense. In this respect, Tönnies was much more influenced by nineteenth-century views on humanity than his peer Marcel Mauss, who was able to demonstrate in his essay on "techniques of the body" that even our physiological reactions are culturally conditioned. Cf. Mauss 1973.

if we wish to fully grasp the transformations in thinking indicated above, we have to closely examine both the concept of culture, and the factors that shape its “use.”

### 3.2 Culture as a “toolkit”

In social sciences, we encounter two competing and contradictory accounts of the relationship between humankind and the culture it has created. The first emphasizes the weakness of human beings, which (as distinct from animals) would be deprived of any instinctual basis for behavior, making them defenseless in contact with threats posed by the natural environment. In this account, culture is considered to be a prosthesis that supplements the biological “imperfections” of humanity.<sup>89</sup> In the second view, culture is considered primarily as evidence of human magnificence, a living proof of the incredible qualities of the human brain, which has proven capable of producing “plasma physics, Picasso and pizza,” to recall once more the words of Stringer and McKie (1996). Whereas the former view entirely disregards the fact that humankind was managing quite well without culture for thousands of years after becoming fully developed in biological terms, the latter passes over other human “inventions” like civil wars, concentration camps or racial segregation.

Both approaches can be found within sociology. Adopting one of them usually depends on whether the question of culture appears in the context of socialization processes, or that of explaining human behavior. Generally speaking, however, the place of culture in strictly sociological analyzes remained marginal for quite long. As has been emphatically stated by an eminent culture scholar Robert Wuthnow, “[a]lthough it is possible to point out specific studies in sociology that have contributed greatly to the understanding of culture, the discipline as a whole has not given particular prominence to the importance of culture. In fact, culture often appears in empirical studies as a vague concept to which relatively superficial attention is given or as an outdated form of explanation that must be superseded by factors of greater objectivity and significance” (1987, 2).

Importantly, the most widespread understanding of culture found in sociology has been the one that refers to values and norms, beliefs and attitudes. Ann Swidler (1986) associates it directly with the tradition initiated by Weber,

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89 This human quality is viewed by Gehlen as the source of humanity’s originality and its special status in the natural world. In his words, “given their innate physical construction and shortage of instinct, humans dealing with raw nature, like animals, would not be able to live by any means” (2001, 37).

emphasizing that although he saw interests as the main motivation to take action, he would view the goals and means of such actions as “ideas” defining social values. She also indicates that Weber’s understanding of the role that culture plays in shaping actions was fundamentally modified by Talcott Parsons, and in this later form adapted by American sociology.<sup>90</sup> “For Weber’s interest in the historical role of ideas, Parsons substituted global, ahistorical values. Unlike ideas, which in Weber’s sociology are complex historical constructions shaped by institutional interests, political vicissitudes, and pragmatic motives, Parsonian values are abstract, general, and immanent in social systems” (Swidler 1986, 274). Therefore, they could be incorporated into Parsons’ theory to serve the function of integrating the said systems.

The processes of individualization of sociology, described in the first chapter, did not fail to affect the concept of value, linking it directly to individual actions.<sup>91</sup> Ann Swidler is right to observe that one of the reasons for the continuing popularity of such explanations can lie in the intuitively self-evident assumption made in our culture, which consists in the belief that human actions are organized in accordance with the “means-ends” scheme.<sup>92</sup> In this account, “[c]ulture shapes action by defining what people want” (1986, 274). The popularity of this explanatory scheme has been long-standing, despite analyzes demonstrating that people rarely have the occasion to behave exactly as they wish to, that cultural values are often socially contested and interpreted in various ways, and finally, that sharing values does not necessarily have to lead to similar actions, or even have any direct relationship with them (Swidler 1986; cf. also Marody 1996, 2000b; Giza-Poleszczuk et al 2000).

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90 One could add that most of world’s sociology has followed this model. This is particularly true of Polish sociology, which developed clearly under the influence of the American tradition, and is to a large extent a “sociology of attitudes and values.”

91 Robert Whutnow sees this an example of how contemporary sociology has come to be dominated by subjectivity, because in this discipline “the fundamental elements of culture are not mental constructions, created or adopted by individuals; and [because] they represent, are rooted in, express or indicate subjective individual experiences such as opinions or fears” (1987, 11). It is worth noting here that Wuthnow attributes the subjective approach not only to the research that refers to attitudes and values as the fundamental component of culture but also – and perhaps even primarily – to all analyzes based on the assumption of the symbolical construction of social reality.

92 Let us note on the margin here that this premise corresponds with Tönnies’ assumption regarding the dominance of arbitrary will in the modern society.

The inadequacy of interpreting human behavior in terms of ends and means becomes even clearer when the problem is considered from a longer time perspective. The claim that the culture created by the Cro-Magnon shaped their actions by defining what they desire seems absurd. Doubtless, even if we disregard the issue of the development of intentionality, the very conditions created by the period's natural environment (a completely "un-socialized" habitat, let us note) subordinated Cro-Magnon's "desires" to the fundamental struggle to survive.<sup>93</sup> In other words, assuming a longer time perspective has convincingly revealed the historical "locality" of the analyzed scheme and its underlying vision of individuals as reflexive beings who choose their goals from among a culturally sanctioned catalogue of values, and who consider rationally which means should be employed to achieve these selected goals. However, even in the case of contemporary humans this account does not embrace the full spectrum of actions, whose "goals" are, after all, also defined (in some cases predominantly so) by various moral constraints stemming from a sense of responsibility, and by existential pressures determined, on the one hand, by human needs, which have a biological basis but are in fact already socialized to some extent, and on the other hand – by the means of taking actions, available to particular individuals and collectivities.

The last factor is particularly emphasized in the theory developed by Ann Swidler, who notes that "culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather, it is more like a 'tool-kit' or repertoire [...] from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action" (1986, 277; emphasis added). In this perspective, taking action is explained in terms of strategy, or "a general way of organizing action [...] that might allow one to reach several different life goals" (277) – not by considering individual forms of behavior from the perspective of how they match specific means and goals. As she argues, "[i]f culture influences action through end values, people in changing circumstances should hold on to their preferred ends while altering their strategies for attaining them. But if culture provides the tools with which persons construct lines of action, then styles or strategies of action will be more persistent

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93 Survival of individuals and the species as a whole involves reproduction and related activities. Of course, this does not preclude the existence of other factors motivating the actions of our distant ancestors (cf. Marody 1991), but gives them a different meaning by linking them with the principal striving to survive. It is worth mentioning that the desire to survive is not treated here as equivalent to the "fight for survival." For more on this subject see: Sahllins 2006.

than the ends people seek to attain. Indeed, people will come to value ends for which their cultural equipment is well suited” (277).

Swidler also underlines that the impact of culture may take different forms depending on whether it occurs in a period of stability, or one of social change.<sup>94</sup> In the former case, culture reinforces and supports strategies of action developed by distinct social groups, whereas in the latter, culture itself becomes the source of new strategies. In the former, culture’s influence materializes primarily through the impact of tradition and common-sense knowledge, whereas in the latter – through ideology, or “explicit, articulated, highly organized meaning systems (both political and religious) [...] aspiring to offer a unified answer to problems of social action” (278–279).

Drawing attention to the inconsistent or even incoherent character of cultural contents also seems to be an achievement creditable to Ann Swidler. As she remarks in the article quoted above, “all real cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action” (277). This perspective radically departs from the dominant trend in sociology, which emphasizes the coherence of culture and its power to integrate a given collectivity.<sup>95</sup>

One particularly important element in Swidler’s theory is how she underlines the active attitude assumed by individuals in relation to culture. “Realistic cultural theory,” Swidler writes, referring (among others) to Denis H. Wrong (1961), “should lead us to expect not passive cultural dopes, but rather the active, sometimes skilled users of culture whom we actually observe” (277). Let us immediately add – in reference to the theories of Mead and Dennett – that for such users the tools are not only something that is stored in culture and can be utilized by reaching out for it, but also constitute the fundamental form of the mind’s “equipment,” its fundamental mode of existence, outside of which it would lose all of its specific qualities characteristic for people only.<sup>96</sup>

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94 Although this distinction is explicitly introduced, it has not been made clear. The author uses descriptive terms (“settled vs. unsettled lives”), without commenting on what makes the two types of life different, and what mechanisms cause them to become “disorderly.” The text contains references both to social transformations (278), as well as to orderly and disorderly “cultural periods” (281).

95 Despite being one of the most frequently quoted definitions in contemporary sociology of culture, the conceptualization of culture proposed by Swidler has not become popular in other areas of the discipline so far. It is a pity, because it could decidedly influence the understanding of relations between culture and humanity.

96 For accuracy’s sake, we should note that this link is not found in the theory of Ann Swidler, who does not explicitly mention where individual users would derive their skills from. Even more importantly, she does not discuss the sources of the human

This way of conceiving the relationship between humans and the culture they create and use immediately leads to another problem, analogous to the one we dealt with when considering Mead's assumption regarding the social framework of shaping the mind, analyzed at the level of processes of anthropo- and sociogenesis. If human mind derives its unique abilities solely from culture, i.e. if we deprive it of any genetically-programmed "surplus" competences, then even assuming the "foundational holism" hypothesis could not explain the source of its development and, consequently, the source of societal development, or – if we prefer to avoid the evaluative connotations contained in the word "development" – the source of socio-cultural changes.<sup>97</sup> After all, "active users of culture," could also include other gregarious animals: not only primates but also ants or bees, to recall examples referred to earlier; however, their activity does not lead to any fundamental changes in their "culture."

However, the above comparison allows to assume that the source of difference between the functioning of people and other gregarious animals should be located primarily in the more specific properties of the "peripheral devices" that aid the human mind and simultaneously act as basic vehicles of social memory, exteriorized and accumulated in human culture. Taking into account the earlier discussion of mechanisms that underlie the emergence of specifically human forms of intelligence and social organization, one could also assume that there are three basic kinds of such "devices": language, tools *sensu stricto* and

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mind, restricting her argumentation to the framework defined by an individualistic perspective that dominates in sociology. However, it is possible to link the theme of culture as a "toolkit," which she develops, with Dennett's views on the functioning of the mind. Suffice it to recall one passage from the article quoted above, in which she claims that "people will come to value ends for which their *cultural equipment* is well suited" (1986, 277).

- 97 This problem is usually articulated in contemporary sociology as one of relations between the level of individual actions and that of social structures. It is "solved" by ascribing agency solely either to autonomous actors or social structures. In the "individualizing" approach – regardless of its underlying vision of the individual as equipped with a unique mind – it remains unresolved how social structures emerge from individual actions. In the "structural" approach, in turn, it remains equally problematic to determine how social change is possible. Although such a change is experienced on the empirical level, it cannot be logically explained within the framework of assumptions regarding the reproduction of social structures through individual actions. It is usually explicated by referring to factors operating outside the entire system. Cf. a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon in Marody 2000.

established schemes of action, which are “embodied” in human habits. Let us consider them one after the other.

### 3.2.1 Language

From among the three above carriers of culture as social memory, it is language that has attracted greatest attention. We shall not even attempt summarizing what has been written by various scholars on the subject of its properties in the context of processes that have shaped human thinking and gave it its specific character. A survey of such investigations can be found in the work by Berger and Luckmann, who emphasize first and foremost language’s ability to communicate contents that are not given “here and now,” which causes, first, that it is “capable of becoming the objective *repository* of vast accumulations of meaning experience, which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations” (1991, 52; emphasis added); second, that it “bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole;” and third, that it “is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether” (54), thus facilitating the creation of a symbolic universe.

Fully accepting the basic functions of language listed above, we nevertheless wish to draw attention to the omission of the process of language’s historical development.<sup>98</sup> This makes it difficult to grasp the influence exerted by language transformations on the emergence of more specific characteristics of this “device,” and consequently on the information it produces and transmits. There are at least three properties lying at the roots of these transformations, which introduce a fundamental difference between human and animal communication. The first two have their origin in language’s immanent properties, while the third is a derivative of the changes that have occurred in the area of technology.

The first property is usually described metaphorically by claiming that the language of animals is based on “sentences,” whereas the human one – on words (cf. Bronowski 1979). In the basic, task-related function, both human and animal communication serves primarily to coordinate individual actions by joint

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98 It is not an accusation against the theory developed by Berger and Luckmann (whose significance cannot be overestimated), but merely an observation: they were not interested in that aspect of the functioning of language. Anyway, it is neglected by most researchers who analyze the properties of language as *langue*, disregarding the fact that its functioning as *parole* ought to account for those of its properties which – like lexical changes or shifts in the meaning of some words – are an effect of the historical evolution of everyday spoken communication.

attention to specific elements in the natural environment (cf. Tomasello 1999). However, sounds made by animals<sup>99</sup> form the entire message which contains a usually general indication of both the object and the action that ought to be taken with regard to it. Breaking down such holistic messages into individual words allowed humans not only to achieve greater precision in directing attention by being more specific in relation to objects and dissociating them from actions but also – and perhaps primarily – to create the potential for “wresting concepts from their interwoven connectionist nests and manipulating them” (Dennett 1996, 159).

It was precisely this ability to manipulate the ever more precise internal representations of the outside world that lay at the basis of processes that made human language such an effective tool: not just for storing information but also for *creating* it.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, one could assume that the distinguishing of words in the human system of communication constituted the first step towards the emergence of more complex forms of reflexivity. It would focus on relations between particular objects and states of the external reality (which, in turn, necessarily contributed to the development of the specifically human ability to treat oneself as an object of examination), and on the very essence of concepts considered in separation from any particular objects they represent or actions taken in relation to them (which in turn contributed to the development of science).

The second important step was to functionally dissociate the purely factual contents of conceptual representations from emotions that could be associated with them. Jacob Bronowski draws attention to this, when he argues that “[while communicating] animals do not pass any information. What they communicate are instructions” (1984, 43). In the language of vervet monkeys, the call “Leopard!” (1984; cf. footnote no. 1) is unambiguous and cannot be interpreted in any other way than as a signal calling for a specific set of actions. If uttered by a human, this call would become information since it could have multiple

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99 It is worth mentioning that animal systems of communication do not have to be sound-based only. Bee dance is a good example of a precise “language” used to communicate information about sources of nectar.

100 Hedgehogs can “remember” that apples fall in certain places. However, due to the kinds of representations that dominate in the functioning of their brain, they cannot ask themselves how it happens that apples fall on the ground (and not the other way round) because they lack distinct words to denote all of these “objects.” We do not intend to suggest that at the basis of Newton’s physics there is only manipulation of words, but rather wish to demonstrate the potential inherent in the mere change of word order in a sentence, not to mention more advanced forms of processing concepts.

possible interpretations depending on additional factors shaping the reception of its content.<sup>101</sup>

Two consequences of this characteristic of human language ought to be emphasized here. First of all, the use of language for giving direction to human action – both on the social level by establishing what we call value, and on the interpersonal level by the use of various techniques of exerting verbal influence – demands secondary association of certain emotions with concepts/words (Damasio 1995). Furthermore, the secondary association of emotions with linguistic elements does not really have any limitations – any word can acquire a positive or negative connotations, which allows generating an infinite number of further meanings. Let us draw attention to the fact that this characteristic enabled both the rise of different ideologies, which are based on different evaluations of factually identical phenomena, and the emergence of science, which demands becoming a neutral observer (cf. Elias 2007).

Finally, the third peculiarity of human communication is the emergence of writing as the basic means of storing linguistic messages. Preserving speech in writing creates completely new possibilities for the reception and analysis of messages. On the one hand, this contributes to the emergence of new types of intellectual competence (Goody 1978; cf. also Marody 1987). On the other hand, it fundamentally alters the character of stored information. In societies using oral communication, the only option for preserving individual innovations or intellectual discoveries was to incorporate them into the group’s oral tradition, which often depended on non-cognitive factors. With the advent of writing, individual intellectual discoveries were given a greater chance to survive and stimulate other people’s cognitive processes. Expanding knowledge became independent of contextual circumstances and political or economic pressures. Stored information can be re-interpreted many times, depending on the changing context. We should add, however, that its physical survival does not predetermine its social impact. The last element relies on the noticing and “activating” of the message kept in the storehouse of culture.

Whereas the first two steps, which furnish human language with its specificity, necessarily belong to the early stages of language development, the third

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101 As Bronowski indicates, interpretation depends, for example, on those properties of the sender that are known to the recipient of the message. If the cry “Leopard!” is raised by a person we know to be timid and inclined to exaggerate, it becomes more likely that we would underestimate it, in contrast to the situation in which such a call would be made for example by a safari guide.

one is related to the transition from oral culture (which relies on the oral preservation of information important for the community) to written culture. In the latter, words cease to be directly related to actions, and can themselves become objects to be acted upon. This is a fundamental change, one that leads primarily to a thorough remodeling of language's function within human systems of communication. This was already observed by Bronisław Malinowski, who expressed the need to "realize that language originally, among primitive, non-civilized peoples was never used as a mere mirror of reflected thought. The manner in which I am using it now, in writing these words, the manner in which the author of a book, or a papyrus or a hewn inscription has to use it, is a very far-fetched and derivative function of language. In this, language becomes a condensed piece of reflection, a record of fact or thought. In its primitive uses, language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behavior. It is a mode of action and not an instrument of reflection" (1936, 312).

What is more, in order to facilitate the transition from "mode of action" to "instrument of reflection" – to use the terms proposed by Malinowski<sup>102</sup> – it was necessary to create a meta-language allowing, among other things, to analyze utterances on the level of "mode of action." In other words, the emergence of reflectivity, as it is understood today, had to be preceded by the development of a "higher-order intentionality" (Dennett 1996, 121; cf. also Marody 1987, 271–284), which in turn has at its basis not only the gathering of new experiences in the course of developing social praxis but also a fundamental restructuring of the said "peripheral device" of our mind – language.

It is important to stress that all these changes in the social dimension took place as part of long-lasting processes,<sup>103</sup> whereas in the individual dimension they have always required specific training. It is because features of the

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102 This transition would correspond to the one distinguished by Tönnies, namely the transition from the natural to the arbitrary will. The "naturalness" of the former manifests in this perspective not in the lack of thinking, but rather in the lack of its "psychologization" (to employ Norbert Elias' term). For more information on the development of the latter skill see: Elias 2000, especially Part Four.

103 Jack Goody locates the beginnings of the development of a "writing mode of thinking" in ancient Greece, emphasizing that the invention of writing was a factor that created merely the *technological* possibilities of developing a new style of cognitive functioning, and that in order to initiate this development a series of additional conditions had to be met – social, political and economic ones – which happened for the first time in the Greek society. Cf. Goody & Watt 1972.

“language of action” are somewhat genetically coded in our brains.<sup>104</sup> Features of the “language of reflection,” in turn, are the effect of using a particular tool (i.e. writing) and their development is subject to rules specific to the second vehicle of culture: tools in the strict sense.

### 3.2.2 Tools

The role of tools in the development of certain features of the human mind is discussed to some extent in Chapter Two. Following Guille-Escuret, the moment when “language was combined with technology” served as the key stage in the process of anthropogenesis. This moment – which marks the transition from tools based primarily on the use of slightly modified natural objects (stones, bones, branches, etc.) to proper tools that are products of complex processing and contain an “intentional aim” defining their specific use in specialized contexts – was certainly genetically conditioned by earlier anatomical changes (lowering of the larynx, enlargement of the brain) linked to the biological evolution of the human species. However, this fact does not provide solid grounds for inferring on its basis that historical development is accurately captured by the “March of Progress” image. Even if we disregard Guille-Escuret’s hypothesis (ultimately, it is only a hypothesis, and others could be formulated as well), it turns out that the vision according to which subsequent generations of Humanity face an unwelcoming natural environment and utilize properties of the Mind to invent ever better tools to fulfill their specific needs and coincidentally enslave Nature, does not really take into account at least two important and well-known facts.

First, the discussed theory does not fully explain the fact that there still exist societies that use only Stone Age tools. Nor could their members be attributed with any mental deficits – after all, they can actually use even the most complicated tools after proper training. Second, it does not account for the well-documented fact that most inventions we consider revolutionary from a historical perspective did not actually arise from any, even most general human needs. They were either rejected by a given society, at least initially, or never

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104 This is indicated, first, by the fact that human children have no trouble mastering this immensely complex activity, and second, by the fact that the “restricted code” identified by Basil Bernstein (1971; a counterpart of the “language of action”) is a code to which we all have access, whereas the “elaborated code” (a counterpart of the “language of reflection”) can be found primarily among families of people who have at least high-school education.

found “proper” use in it.<sup>105</sup> As Jared Diamond has indicated, most typically, when a given “device had been invented, the inventor then had to find an application for it. Only after it had been in use for a considerable time did consumers come to feel that they ‘needed’ it;” ultimately then, he concludes, “invention is often the mother of necessity, rather than vice versa” (1999, 242–243).

Therefore, one could say that if some contemporary people are entirely satisfied with Stone Age tools, and if hunter-gatherers, whose brains did not differ in any way from those of today’s people, did not use them to improve their “technological equipment” for thousands of years, then the later accelerated development of tools should not be linked with genetically-programmed properties of the human mind, but rather with external factors. This is also the conclusion reached by Diamond, who indicates that the decisive moment in technological progress was the adoption of a settled lifestyle, which entailed replacing gathering with agricultural production of food. A settled way of life facilitated the gathering of possessions.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, accumulation of food surplus led within each community to the emergence of specialists developing currently existing tools and inventing new ones.<sup>107</sup> The development of technology was also crucially affected by the exchange of information between particular collectivities, which is indicated by the fact that the post-Pleistocene acceleration of technological progress was most rapid in Eurasia – an area characterized by the lack of any major natural barriers, and inhabited by numerous competing communities (Diamond 1999, 399).

The fundamental factor supporting this exchange of information had to be the circulation of tools themselves, as well as other objects produced in individual communities. This is related to two characteristics of such objects, which allow treating them as carriers of information, in turn developing human intellect. The first stems from the fact that many tools contain encoded information about the intentions of their makers, while all tools offer diverse affordances. When we take an unknown object into our hands, its very shape and design suggest

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105 The most famous and widely quoted example is the discovery of gunpowder in China, where it was used solely for making fireworks, or the discovery of wheel by the Mayas, who used it solely in kids’ toys and not for transportation.

106 Perhaps, it would be an exaggeration, but one could thus say that this was a moment when the “spiral of needs” began to spin, resulting today in thousands of objects presented by marketing specialists as absolutely necessary in our lives.

107 This was part of a broader process that also led to the emergence of “specialists in thinking,” which is discussed in Chapter Two, where the theory of Lewis-Williams is expounded.

certain kinds of movements possible to be made with it, regardless of whether it is a hammerstone, a regular hammer or a modern laptop.<sup>108</sup> The second feature is derived from the first: manipulation of tools in an attempt to answer the question “What *is* this used for?” leads to the question “What *could* this be used for?” and to the discovery of new uses. This is the precise meaning of the statement that human intelligence is materialized in tools. It becomes unleashed each time solely through the act of using them, regardless whether such uses comply with the creator’s intention or not. One could even say that objects become tools only through their use. Thus, the impact of such “peripheral devices” on individual intelligence would consist in assimilating various possibilities inherent in a hammer into possibilities of the mind.

Such a view of the role played by the use of tools in the development of specific features of human thinking is valuable in itself because it represents an approach that undermines the above-mentioned popular vision of humanity as the crowning of evolution. However, just like general considerations on language’s function, this perspective disregards the historical processes in which the said “peripheral devices” of mind are transformed, as well as its impact on changes both in the very character of information accumulated in tools, and in the human potential to assimilate it. Let us draw attention to the fact that, in the case of most contemporary tools, their solely physical manipulation does not necessarily have to lead to an increase in the intelligence of an individual. Except for extreme situations,<sup>109</sup> we would consider the use of a cell phone in the function of a hammerstone – which is a kind of “examination by use” – as a proof of intellectual limitations rather than a step forward in the intellectual growth of a given person.

Therefore, we once again come to face the following question: “Which elements of the historical chain of technological transformations ought to be

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108 Let us draw attention here to the fact that the principle of ergonomics – a chief tenet in today’s design of tools and objects of everyday use – reinforces the intentionality of the makers, as coded in the shape. “Appropriate” gestures ought to suggest themselves. Just like an armchair “invites” one to rest, so a laptop keyboard “invites” one to press the keys.

109 A great example of such a situation, as well as the perfect illustration of the relationship between manipulation of objects and generating what Richard Gregory calls “Kinetic Intelligence” (after Dennett 1996, 99), is provided in the film *Cast Away*, in which the protagonist, stranded on a deserted island, is forced to cope with basic survival-related issues while having at his disposal just a random collection of items found in a package washed ashore.

considered the most significant?” Attention would be brought here not to their significance for the development of technology, but rather to the presently analyzed processes of social change, and the role played in them (in the past and now) by tools considered as carriers of information accumulated in culture.

To answer this question, it becomes paramount to shift attention away from those who use tools to those who create them. After all, they are the ones who “encode” the original intentionality in the tool, defining the boundary between its intelligent or senseless usage. As Jacob Bronowski strongly emphasizes, “[c]ivilization is not a collection of finished artefacts, it is the elaboration of processes” (2011, 1086). He compares the creators of the earliest tools to modern scientists by indicating that at the basis of efforts made by both there lay a search for *structures* that are hidden in matter. Both would arrive at their discoveries by submitting nature to the use of tools. “The tool that extends the human hand is also an instrument of vision. It reveals the structure of things and makes it possible to put them together in new, imaginative combinations” (1107). The fundamental difference between the inventors of first tools and their contemporary counterparts – the scientists – lies not in the type of actions, but the type of structures to which the latter guide their attention. This is because “the visible is not the only structure in the world. There is a finer structure below it” (1107). It was the interest in discovering this hidden structure that lay at the foundation of modern science, making it a kind of a meta-tool that codes, in a highly specific way, information generated by the use of tools *sensu stricto* in the course of scientific *praxis*.<sup>110</sup>

Assuming such a perspective, the basic caesura in the historical course of technological changes would consist in the transition from tools developed by practitioners to tools that are derivative of broadly understood scientific endeavors.

The earliest tools were made with particular tasks in mind – something needed to be cracked, cut, or stored.<sup>111</sup> Later on, inventiveness was also inextricably tied

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110 As Jan Poleszczuk has brought to our attention, the modern cyclotron is nothing more than a kind of a “mega-hammer,” whose use on nature brings the same results as the use of an ordinary hammer – it breaks a given element of nature into smaller parts.

111 “I see that process of ‘invention’ going on,” writes Jared Diamond, “whenever I take New Guineans to work with me in an area away from their homes. They constantly pick up unfamiliar things in the forest, tinker with them, and occasionally find them useful enough to bring home.” The assessment of usability depends on the lifestyle of a given collectivity – for modern inhabitants of New Guinea, the yellow pencil left by Diamond turned out to be useful “as an ornament, inserted through a pierced ear-lobe or nasal septum” (1999, 246).

to collecting experiences gained from working in the natural environment and upon it, all thanks to observation and attempts to utilize, through trial and error, materials available in immediate surroundings. As Diamond notes, “complex innovations were usually acquired by borrowing, because they spread more rapidly than they could be independently invented locally” (Diamond 1999, 255).<sup>112</sup> Their later development was made possible by improving already existing tools and technologies, and due to the necessity to solve particular problems encountered while using them. As the history of more recent inventions shows (such as Watt’s steam engine, or Edison’s light bulb), the “heroic theory of inventions” that ascribes them to lonely geniuses is actually a myth disseminated in stories for children.

The case is different with inventions made since the end of the nineteenth century: “few [...] were the consequence of a steady piecemeal development or improvement of existing processes; the overwhelming majority resulted from new materials, new sources of power, and above all else from the application of scientific knowledge to industry” (Barraclough 1969, 46). Ways of putting them to use often could not be predicted at the time of their discovery. This was the case, for example, with the electricity-generating dynamo (one of today’s basic sources of energy), one hundred years later with laser, which is now standard equipment in dental clinics, or with the relatively recent emergence of the Internet.<sup>113</sup> The history of these inventions best illustrates the positive feedback between using tools and discovering their possible applications.

However, the fundamental difference between inventions made by the practitioners and those rooted in science discoveries lies in the latter’s increasing “informatization,” which denotes both the augmentation of information contained in the tool itself, and the increase in the volume of outside information necessary to operate it in accordance with its “inbuilt” potential. Surely, it is possible to start a laptop by randomly pushing its buttons; however, from that moment on, further exploration of its uses is made possible only by information provided by the manufacturer in the form of icons or explanations. Generally

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112 This is how the wheel has been made popular: it is “first attested around 3400 BC near the Black Sea, and then turns up within the next few centuries over much of Europe and Asia. [...] Other examples of complex technologies that diffused east and west in the ancient Old World, from a single West Asian source, include door locks, pulleys, rotary querns, windmills – and the alphabet” (Diamond 1999, 255).

113 Stanisław Lem aptly put it by saying that the Internet “constitutes the answer to a question that has not been posed yet.”

speaking, an accompanying user manual is indispensable to operate most of today's tools.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, the highly “informatized” tools come with the assumption that their users have previously acquired certain cultural competences, such as reading, but at the same time “hide” most information that lie at the basis of their functioning. In order to efficiently use a computer, travel on an airplane, or watch satellite television we do not need to possess knowledge necessary to comprehend the complex technological processes that underlie their production. Anyway, large portions of such knowledge become difficult to access, even for well-educated people, due to the specificity of the “structures” that contemporary science deals with. This was addressed by Werner Heisenberg, who once remarked that people are now examining such regions of reality that are inaccessible by senses and can be probed only thanks to complicated apparatuses. Thus, we are leaving the domain of sensual experience – the area in which everyday language was shaped. As a result, the language used in physics is now understood only by physicists (1979, 165). One could even say that whereas the basis for socializing processes was provided by the “combination of language and technology” (as Guille-Escuret claims), we are now witnessing the divorcing of these two factors.

The increasing “informatization” of tools is accompanied by two other processes that have had a significant impact on the transformation of culture understood as a repository of information. The first one is the rapid development of tools used to store information. This is touched upon in the above discussion of changes in language as carrier of culture, which culminated in the discovery of writing as the basic tool for preserving oral messages. However, this invention only marked the beginning of changes that bore fruit in the “technological” dimension, giving rise to diverse, specialized devices used directly to store information. The emergence of print, photography, phonography, as well as today's CD-ROM and computer hard drives, defines subsequent stages in the development of the kinds of tools whose shared function is to store two kinds of information: the one preserved using a particular medium, and the one “recorded”

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114 In many cases, instruction manuals are not only meant to provide information to users but also protect the producers from the consequences of using tools in ways differing from their original purpose. One US manufacturer of washing machines was forced by court order to add a warning for consumers that “the washing machine is not suitable for cleaning and drying domestic animals” after a client washed her poodle in the machine and sued for compensation after being unpleasantly surprised by the result.

indirectly in its form and mode of functioning, as well as in the technology used to make it, and so forth.

The crucial stage in this development was certainly the discovery of print. Just like the invention of writing, it initiated processes leading to a specific qualitative leap, both changing the way people use information gathered in culture, and introducing completely new kinds of messages (cf. McLuhan 1996). Although writing facilitated the transition from the “language of action” to the “language of reflection,” the latter remained for centuries the domain of narrow elites having access to handwritten books and documents, because it was developed mainly for religious, scientific and administrative purposes. The invention of print not only contributed to the gradual spreading of this new type of language and the style of cognition associated with it (which was achieved mainly by extending the education system; cf. Marody 1987) but also gave the masses access to already accumulated information, while at the same time initiating processes in which those masses would introduce their own content and thus overcome the elite’s monopoly in this domain.

The second type of transformations was related to the development of specialized tools meant to improve communication among people. For thousands of years since the emergence of language, direct physical contact was necessary to communicate with each other. Communication was thus constrained by the distance needed to be covered to establish such contact and also by all kinds of natural obstacles, often difficult or impossible to overcome, as well as the fear of Aliens, which inclined one to avoid contacts rather than seek them. The avalanche-like development of means of mass communication witnessed since the end of the nineteenth century – both ones allowing to cover huge distances and ones allowing to communicate directly at a distance – played a key role in the transformation of two fundamental concepts around which human thinking has been formed: time and space. For many researchers, this constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of the newly emerging type of society (Harvey 1995; Castells 2001a). Moreover, it has also had a huge impact on the transformation of the third carrier of culture understood as accumulated information, i.e. human habits.

### 3.2.3 Habits

Habit is one of the oldest and thus least clear concepts in social sciences. The transformation of its meaning – from Aristotle, who considered customs to be our second nature, to behaviorism, which saw it as a trained reaction to stimuli, and to Bourdieu, in whose theory habit turns into *habitus*, or a socially

constituted and legitimized scheme of dispositions to act and think – was summarized by Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2001). He also attempts to restore the original meaning to the concept of habit, viewing it as “a piece of social memory, individually embodied” (105). It is Kaufmann’s understanding that is adopted in this discussion.

Habit is essentially non-reflexive: “habits gain force only when they disappear from conscious thought and become inscribed in hidden memory” (166). In other words, habit is the tendency to act in a specific way, somehow inscribed in the human body and actualized without the participation of our consciousness, or sometimes even against the conscious will.<sup>115</sup> However, the “embodiment” of habits does not mean that they can be treated merely as a property of the biological body. After all, habits are formed in the process of acting, which involves objects and people, all of them being carriers of social memory.<sup>116</sup> This runs counter to the assumption, commonly made in contemporary sociology, that all individuals create their worlds from scratch, using the power of their minds to discover the immanent properties of objects, and negotiating definitions of situations with other social actors. It would be more adequate to claim that people develop habits by “adapting” their hands to the properties of hammer (its very shape contains the social memory of specific actions), and by “adapting” to the behavior of other people, whose habits, in turn, contain memories of past interactions and social cooperation, sometimes even memories of solutions to various problems.<sup>117</sup>

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115 In this sense, habits are more similar to unconditional reflexes rather than instrumentally conditioned reactions to stimuli which were studied by behaviorists (cf. e.g. Skinner 2002).

116 Dennett draws attention in this context to the kinds of changes in behavior that occur among elderly people who have changed their environment (e.g. as a result of moving to old people’s home) and have been deprived of all their memory “anchors.” He concludes that “[t]aking them out of their homes is literally separating them from large parts of their minds – potentially just as devastating a development as undergoing brain surgery” (1996, 138–139).

117 A perfect illustration of the last issue is provided in an anecdote related by Linnda Caporael (1995), which tells of a young woman who would always cut a slice off the end of a piece of meat before placing it in the oven. Asked about the reason for doing that, she replied that this was something her mother would always do, who in turn imitated her own mother. It was only during an interview with the oldest of them that the reason was finally revealed: for many years, she used a roasting pan that was too small for the entire piece of meat, which meant she had to cut it.

Insofar as most of our habitual actions involve use of tools and entail some form of communication with others, habits understood in the above sense appear as a fundamental carrier of the information that forms a part of human culture – one that includes a concise “record,” not only of information stored in tools and language, but also of socially preserved ways of coping with fundamental existential problems and with the ties between people, which have been constructed on top of these problems. This is aptly demonstrated by Stefan Czarnowski in his 1956 essay, which attempts to explain the diffusion of technologies in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He focuses on cases in which people rejected tools that were evidently more effective and allowed to achieve desired results more efficiently and with lesser effort on the part of individuals. His analysis clearly demonstrates that these tools affected both individual habits and their more complex structures. A hand “adapted” to a goose quill could not transform itself so as to efficiently handle a penholder with a nib; it was only the young, who had little or no practice in writing, that could “embody” the new tool by developing the kind of manual dexterity that was necessary to master the new habit. The spinning wheel made the thread even and allowed to spin faster, but nevertheless immobilized women, not letting them spin and simultaneously oversee work in the garden, or play with children, which the spindle made possible.

However, the most interesting example analyzed by Czarnowski is the resistance that manifested itself when the wooden plough was being replaced with the improved metal plough. This example shows that some technological innovations interfered not only with existing individual habits but also with the dominant pattern of ties within a group, in consequence endangering the stability of social relations. Using a wooden plough established a specific structure of dependence within the team of working people, a structure in which the husbandman played “a role similar to that of one steering a fishing boat: he worked with others, at the same time directing their work. While working, he was the same kind of ruler he was in his patriarchal country house among family and household members” (130). The new plough, as Czarnowski demonstrates, undermined the husbandman’s special position, making him almost dispensable: even a woman could plough a field now, not to mention a farmhand or the farmer’s son. Therefore, the introduction of a new kind of plough not only altered previously embodied habits, but also affected the structure of peasant family, which was vaguely sensed by Breton peasants who viewed the invention as a harbinger of moral decay and heralded “the rise of sons against fathers.”

As is clear from these examples, habits are a factor stabilizing social actions and consequently – the relations between people, which arise from these

actions.<sup>118</sup> This does not mean, however, that these relations are permanent and unchanging. On the contrary, “their fundamental characteristic is dynamism” (Kaufmann 2001, 154). “Habits,” Kaufmann writes further, “are not satisfied with repeating the past – they also record the new” (152). He emphasizes that the stabilizing effect of habits does not stem from the repeatability of certain actions, but from the continuous process which is the essence of collective life and in which individual habits are adapted to one another within the framework of a larger structure, where relations are formed in response to the habits of others and in contact with the material world. However, it means that, in order for this process of mutual adjustment to be ultimately successful, i.e. to stabilize social reality, it has to occur within a certain framework, or in accordance to specific rules whose breaking would deprive reality of its “common” character sustained by habits.

It could be argued that the said Breton peasants regarded the plough as a threat not just because it violated the structure of their habits, but primarily because it affected them so deeply that a certain fundamental part of common, habitual reality was shattered, undoing the image of the world in which sons, farmhands and women held specific positions established in relation to the husbandman. It is worth mentioning that in this perspective the said “image” is not a starting point for the formation of habits, but emerges somehow *as a result* of their disturbance. Action precedes thought or – as Kaufmann puts it – individual reflexivity occurs when various, often conflicting schemes of action come into contact, causing internal conflict and forcing the individual to reflect. This happens regardless of whether it would be a reflection on the gesture of the hand that, previously “trained” so as to use a goose quill, now loses its ease of movement when shifting to a penholder with a nib, making it more difficult to write letters, or whether it would be a reflection on the changing nature of the world, in which – as Czarnowski writes – “sons and farmhands began to get out of the husbandman’s hand.”

“People do not have habits, but are made of them; when it comes to regulating behavior, they are almost entirely made of habits,” Kaufmann argues

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118 Hence the process of developing habits is usually treated as the basis for their institutionalization. This is how Berger and Luckmann treat it: “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (1991, 72). However, they treat the term “habit” as an equivalent of “routine,” assuming the repeatability of certain actions, i.e. performance in accordance with a certain pattern, which – as we shall see later – contradicts Kaufmann’s conceptualization adopted in this book.

(2001, 151), claiming that habits lie at the foundation of making reality common and banal – a process that “simultaneously creates the smoothness of gestures, the obvious points of reference and the ‘simply here’ effect of familiar setting” (123). Therefore, as long as surrounding reality remains in accordance with our habits, there is no necessity to ponder over its image. Thinking begins when a “gap” opens between our habits and those elements of the outside world that are or have to be engaged in carrying out these habits: tools, ideological or scientific messages promoting certain patterns of behavior, habits of other people, and nature.

Thus, as Kaufmann notes: “It is not individuals as such that shape their reflexivity in order to (possibly) change the course of action, but social contradictions, which are expressed in conflicts of schemas, prompting reflexivity and – with its mediation – facilitating subjective initiative” (155). Let us note, however, that insofar as those “social contradictions” are produced in contemporary society by the coexistence of various schemes of actions, interiorized by individuals in the process of socialization, and by the coexistence of competing “ideologies of life,” whose summary is contained in the form of tools and messages that constitute the contents of culture, in earlier periods of human history, when “holistic” communities dominated, such contradictions were revealed mainly in contacts with representatives of other cultures, or in the course of action taken with regard to the natural environment. It is the move from the society in which individuals constituted a part of an integral whole, i.e. a world organized around socially selected habits, to the society in which the place of the Alien begins to be occupied by the Other, that can be treated as the fundamental historical threshold in the process of transforming habits understood as carriers of information gathered in culture.

This long-lasting shift from societies in which individual habits support and complement each other, upholding the socially constructed reality, to societies in which individuals are constantly exposed to the influence of competing habits that create diverse visions of the world, or emerge from such visions, is accompanied by two important processes. The first is a specific “acceleration” of reflexivity, related to the initially slow but now rapid rise in the number of the said “gaps” in individual habits, which need to be “covered” with thinking. Invoking a concept developed by Beck, Anthony Giddens observes that “[l]iving in the ‘risk society’ means living with a *calculative attitude* to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence” (2006, 28; emphasis added). What is more, the “radical increase in reflexivity” ceases to be limited to the thinking of “here and now,” accompanying habits actualized at a given

moment, but begins to cover the past, ceaselessly reinterpreted from the perspective of the present, and the future, or more specifically: “futures” that are “organized reflexively in the present in terms of the chronic flow of knowledge into the environments about which such knowledge was developed” (42).

One consequence of the “radical increase in reflexivity” is that habits lose their fundamental quality which derives from the “embodying” of fundamental operational schemes and manifests itself precisely in the smoothness and a-reflexive nature of so many actions taken by individuals. In contemporary societies, where the possibility to make choices has been raised to the rank of the chief principle ruling over all actions, it cannot be further claimed that “[h]abitualization carries with it the important psychological gain that choices are narrowed” (Berger & Luckmann 1991, 71). The possibility and constant necessity to choose between competing operational schemes that assume the permanent presence of “imagined,” alternative goals of actions, and to continuously adapt these actions to rapidly changing conditions and ever new people, who in turn enter into interactions by introducing their own habits, often radically different from ours – all this has triggered the second process, i.e. the emergence of specific meta-habits: rationality, planning, as well as being elastic, open, spontaneous or “cool.”

The above meta-habits represent attempts to introduce orderliness and “normalcy” to the contemporary reality, whose chief feature is variability and fluidity, which stem from the rapid increase in the pace of technological changes, and from the growing “multiculturalism”<sup>119</sup> of particular societies. In turn, however, they contribute to the intensification of the said feature, because accepting variability entails consent to or even encourages experimenting with operational schemes that are part of our habits, thus introducing an additional change-inducing mechanism to the surrounding reality. The source of ideas for these experiments does not lie anymore in the person’s experiences gathered in the course of interacting with nature or other people, but can be found in the huge amounts of information amassed throughout the centuries in individual cultures and now “merged” through new communication technologies.

### 3.2.4 Factors determining the transformations of culture

This necessarily brief survey of the human mind’s “peripheral devices” – tools that carry accumulated social memory inside themselves – and the indication

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119 We put this term in quotation marks because in the light of theoretical assumptions adopted here it would be rather more appropriate to speak of a “differentiation of group representations within dominant forms of sociality.”

of the transformations that they have undergone in the course of history make it possible to distinguish three basic factors that underlie changes in human culture.

The first is rooted in the specific “openness” of all analyzed media. None of them has been developed once and for all. As a specific “peripheral device” of the human mind, each can be subjected to transformations whose direction is determined primarily by the consequences of its use. It could be said – summarizing some of the above points – that every one of them is “open” due to its very structure. This allows, in the case of language, for free recombination of words; in the case of tools – for experimentation with their usage; and finally, in the case of habits – for the addition of new links to existing chains of actions. Additionally, language is “opened” by the ambiguity of its messages, anchored in the intentions of the senders.<sup>120</sup> A tool is “opened” by nature, which puts up resistance and enforces perfecting it. Finally, habit is “opened” by the counter-habits of other people, which make it visible and allow it to become the subject of reflexivity.

The second factor behind the transformations of human culture is a derivative of the *interdependencies* that link all the discussed media. This is especially clear in the above analysis of habits, which involve actions, use of tools, and communication with others. Any of these elements could trigger transformations of habits – different habits of another person, a new tool, or a new conceptual representation – and simultaneously entail adjustment of other elements. Generally speaking, a change in any of the carriers of culture affects others, which increases the probability of changing their users’ ways of thinking.

This is closely related to the third factor. What we find at its foundation are specific *qualitative leaps* that occur in the process of historical changes in all the analyzed basic vehicles of culture. Each of those “leaps” has contributed to a dramatic change in the functioning of the human mind. Taking into account the fact that they did not occur simultaneously but sequentially, every further “leap” was a consequence of changes triggered by the previous one. The formation of the meta-tool that science has become today demanded the earlier development of a meta-language, while the emergence of meta-habits could be regarded as the effect of moving from the “language of action” to the “language of reflection,” the latter combining strictly linguistic changes with scientific achievements.

Taking this sequence into account, one could say (risking gross simplification, a step that is nevertheless worth taking to ensure clarity of argumentation)

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120 This is the origin of the necessity to negotiate meanings, which is postulated by interactionism.

that the emergence of meta-language, meta-tools and meta-habits marks the beginnings of further stages in the development of human societies, or – to put it in terms closer to the idiom adopted in this book – it accompanies the emergence of consecutive, qualitatively different forms of sociality, which correspond to the move from the traditional society to modern and postmodern one. However, three caveats are necessary here.

First, it needs to be remembered that although we speak about changes in thinking, which are a consequence of changes in the human mind's "peripheral devices," the processes described above are basically related to the transformation of *culture* as an information resource, not to the evolution of individual minds. Strictly speaking, one ought to say that the discussed changes translate onto the functioning of the human mind (and consequently – of human societies) only insofar as (and to the degree that) individuals and social groups "make use" of information contained in those basic carriers of culture. Given the unchanging nature of genetically programmed properties of the brain<sup>121</sup> – whose evolution has concluded in distant past – the mode in which the minds of contemporary people function becomes in this perspective linked to at least three other elements: "the technologies of the intellect," which allow to store and use information; socially differentiated processes of socialization, in the course of which individuals acquire different scopes of competences, allowing for more or less fluent use of the said "peripheral devices" of the mind<sup>122</sup> (cf. Marody 1987); and the dominant forms of sociality, which act as a mechanism of selecting contents, both those processed by the mind and those that constitute its product.

Second, it means that *a sense of progress*, which accompanies the transformations discussed above (primarily regarding technological progress), does not stem from some fundamental changes of humankind as such, but from the accumulation of information that occurs in culture. This information is a

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121 What is referred to here is the unchanging character of the species, which naturally allows for the existence of numerous variations on the individual level.

122 In this sense, we do not share the optimism expressed by Dennett, who claims that we "are the beneficiaries of literally thousands of such useful technologies, invented by others in the dim recesses of history or prehistory but transmitted via cultural highways, not via the genetic pathways of inheritance" (1996, 139). In our view, those "highways" are fitted with specific "toll gates" that grant access only to a relatively small part of the population (even today), whereas the rest is still moving along narrow, old "paths," the only difference being that the latter are socially made. Cf. a broader discussion of this problem in: Bourdieu 1986 (especially the part devoted to the conversion of one form of capital into another); Bourdieu & Passeron 2000.

product both of historical changes in particular carriers of culture, and of the individual creativity displayed by those who utilize cultural potential. As a result, it is not only the continuing but also the very maintaining of the achieved level of culture that demands from the population to keep recreating the competences that allowed to reach that level. This needs not only formal teaching, but also contacts with people who are “carriers” of these competences.<sup>123</sup> At the same time, however, it is important to remember that the cultural “domestication of the savage mind,” as Jack Goody termed it (1978), has not deprived us of all the elements of our “animal” equipment. Contrary to what has been assumed – either explicitly or implicitly – culture has neither supplanted nor substituted biology in humanity’s development; it is rather woven into it in a way that is unique to the individual and specific to a given form of society.<sup>124</sup> Its impact is therefore dependent both on the repeated process of “embodying” habits, skills and beliefs in new-born individuals, and on the quality of those collectively sustained elements of cultural equipment.

Third, and finally, it turns out that we do not deal with a collective “March of Progress,” but rather with a very long journey (to retain the metaphor) of a disorganized crowd. In this mass of people, some are marching forward, while others stand in place, sit down comfortably, go around in circles, or even turn back towards the point of departure. Everyone is constantly running into everyone else. To put it in less visual terms, at every point in time and space *the ways of socializing human minds* are radically different, not only in terms of content (this has been traditionally emphasized in reference to cultural diversity) but also in terms of the more general features of the “will” which lies at the foundation of individual action. In other words, in every particular, historical human

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123 This fact has been indicated by Michael Polanyi (1967), who emphasizes that a large portion of our competences have the character of “tacit knowledge,” which cannot be put into words but which can be acquired only through practice, preferably under the tutelage of an adult (in the case of children), or a “master” (in the case of adults). This constitutes the essence of socialization processes, both primary and secondary, which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

124 Cultural training basically boils down to the creation of neural links in the brain, i.e. filling the purely biological “organ of thinking” with social content. However, this “organ” is certainly not a *tabula rasa*, because it is fitted with older, evolutionary and instinctive action-controlling mechanisms (cf. Damasio 1995). Regulating those instinctual mechanisms constituted the fundamental function ascribed to culture in traditional views. In our approach, it constitutes merely one of many functions performed by culture in the process of “humanizing people.”

collectivity that forms a distinguishable whole, we can observe the coexistence of individuals who have interiorized different sets of skills stored in human culture (different both in terms of scope and structure). At the same time, the degree of that differentiation increases along with the rise in the complexity of information accumulated in human culture, the growing size of the human population, and the constantly improved access to means of communication that facilitate exchange of information.<sup>125</sup>

It was the abruptly rising degree of this differentiation, which accompanied the shift to the modern society, that foregrounded in classical works the question about the dominant principle coordinating collective action. This question would also lead to the distinguishing of different types of societies. However, before we turn to a more detailed analysis of these types and the mechanisms responsible for their emergence, let us briefly return to the concept of community and the social bonds that constitute community's foundation.

### 3.3 Transformations of social bonds

In combination with previous findings, the above survey of processes fundamental for the "development of thinking" – which, as Tönnies argues, have contributed to the emergence of the "arbitrary will" from the "natural" one, and then

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125 This differentiation could be analyzed in many dimensions. However, taking into account the problems addressed here, the most promising path would be to adopt the differentiation introduced in the previous chapter, namely one between socialization as the acquiring of "technical" skills allowing for functioning effectively in a given society, and socialization as an emotional bond with the collective "We." Assuming those two modes of socialization as properties that individuals have either acquired or not, we are provided with a fourfold classification (introduction of an even minimal gradation would lead to its further expansion). Let us draw attention to the fact that sociology usually mixes those two types of socialization and exhibits a tendency to address mainly the two extreme poles of this classification, referring either to individuals socialized in the highest degree in both dimensions ("model" members of a given society), or those who are poorly socialized (representing the so-called margins). It is also worth mentioning that all analyzes of interactions would demand, within this approach, to account for three other typologically differentiated forms of sociality, which manifest in the differences in social organization. In particular cases, we might deal with contacts in which one individual is, for example, socialized in the "technical" dimension at the level of modern society and in the "social" dimension at the level of traditional society, while the other has technical skills at the level of postmodern society but remains entirely unsocialized in the dimension of the collective "We."

to the rise of the “reflexive” will analyzed by contemporary sociologists – leads to two more general conclusions worth explicating here.

First, the analysis of the circumstances in which the above “qualitative leaps” occurred in the evolution of particular carriers of culture, even if brief, clearly demonstrates that they had to be preceded by a radical change in social conditions. Writing existed in many forms long before it gave rise to the “language of reflection” in a specific socio-politico-economic regime of Ancient Greece. It took even more time to make this new type of language widespread. Science separated itself from religion already in the Middle Ages, but it was only at the onset of modernity that this led to the development of what could be called the modern scientific approach, while really ground-breaking advances in this domain were made even later. The beginnings of processes that Norbert Elias termed the “psychologization” of thought and behavior have their roots – as he demonstrates (2000, especially Chapter Four) – in the court culture of the late Middle Ages, but it was only in the twentieth century that they reached the stage we now call “reflexive.”

Obviously, one could explain these processes – as is often done – by referring to the innovativeness of individuals and the gradual dissemination of their “inventions.” However, as has been already pointed out, the “physical” emergence of particular innovations in itself did not suffice to make them influence the way people think. This is confirmed not only by the case of those original tribes that have survived to this day, and whose “hindered development” could be explained by their being cut away from communication with the mainstream of social changes around the world, but also by cases of such societies as the Chinese one, which slowed its development at a relatively early stage in history, or by cases of modernization failures suffered in the twentieth century, for example in African countries. Therefore, it is necessary to assume that, in order to change ways of thinking at a larger scale (population-wide), it is vital to transform not only the “peripheral devices” of the human mind but also the dominant forms of socializing processes. The latter – as we have shown in the previous chapter – constitute the basic mechanism of selecting outside influences, regardless of whether it is the natural environment or the sum of all products made with human hands and minds.

Second, if transformations of ways of thinking are – at least to a certain extent – a derivative of changes in dominant forms of sociality, it means that communal bonds have a unique status in comparison with two other types of relations and collectivities created by them (see fig. 3.2a.). As we demonstrate in the previous chapter, the basic factor explaining the phenomenon of sociality is the emotional bonding of people, which lies at the foundation of the sense of community and

resultant obligations to this particular social entity. Therefore, regardless of what form this sociality takes – be it traditional, modern, postmodern, or of any other, local type – its constitution must rely on some form of communality. In other words, the claim made by Tönnies, i.e. that arbitrary will develops from natural will, has to be given a much stronger sense than the one originally intended, both in terms of its temporal sequence and the “genetic” conditioning. The kind of attitude towards reality that corresponds to historically given manifestations of the arbitrary will would be dependent on historically given characteristics of the natural will, just like the properties of particular forms of “association” would depend on the properties of communities preceding them.

It can be easily observed that this conclusion alters the relationships between types of wills and types of communities, both those assumed by Tönnies, and those included in fig. 3.2a. which seeks to extend Tönnies’ typology so as to cover the current period. This conclusion implies that although changes in human thinking triggered by changes in basic carriers of culture influenced the constitution of more permanent bonds between people, there is no simple transition between the “development of thinking” and changes in the types of wills and in accompanying forms of collectivity. If so, it means that fig. 3.2a. mixes two orders: first, the historical one, which accounts for changes in forms of sociality and accompanying changes in ways of thinking (transition from societies in which communal bonds are dominant to societies in which network relations prevail; the transition from cultures of shame to cultures of authenticity); and second, the typological one, which accounts for the different forms of relations between people and the resulting different types of social relations.<sup>126</sup> The separation of these two threads could begin with the typological order, to which we now turn.

In light of the above considerations of community, its most characteristic feature seems to be the sense of unity. At the same time, however, we need to remember that this unity does not stem from everyone being identical, or taking identical actions; it rather has its roots in the fact that all members of community feel linked to something that exists above them, something that might not endure if it had not been for the constant co-presence and co-operation of its members. In this sense, a marching military unit is not a community, despite the fact that all soldiers act exactly the same way, whereas a family whose members focus on different tasks is a community or could be one under the condition that these tasks are subordinated to the supporting of the family’s existence. One

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126 As mentioned above (cf. footnote 12), mixing of these two issues can be also found in Tönnies’ theory.

could therefore say that bonds created within a community are characterized by a specific form of interdependence among individuals, rooted in the *complementary* character of their actions with regard to the higher “goal:” to support the community’s existence. These actions are not so much reflexive as primarily habitual, i.e. derived from the mutual “adapting” of people to each other within relations and in contacts with the environment, which creates customs and tradition. The complementary actions are accompanied by common preferences (sentiments)<sup>127</sup> and shared “knowledge” stemming from memories of living together. It is thanks to this and to the subordination of one’s actions to the good of the community that its members form a whole.

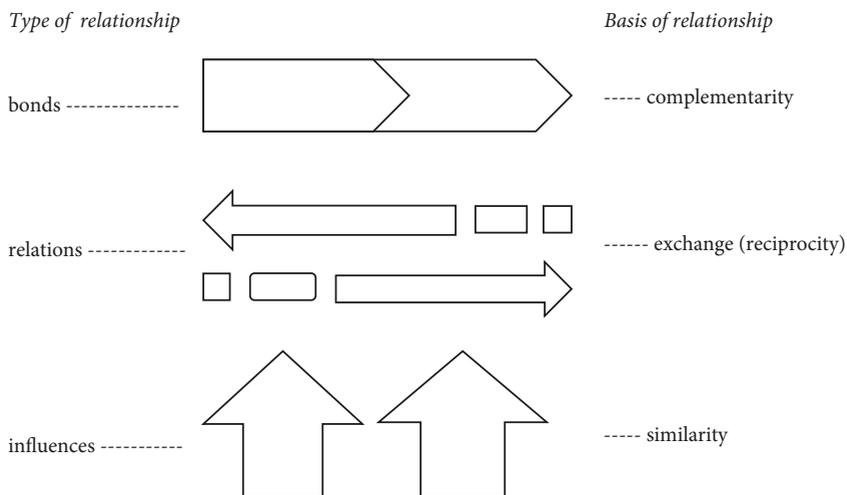
The complementary character of actions means that individuals create a whole of which they are part, and which “acts” jointly towards a unified goal. Let us emphasize here that such a complementarity simultaneously entails the diminishing of individual freedom (the autonomy of individuals with regard to the community), of equality (there is no ground for comparing individuals if each of them differently contributes to the life of the community), and of individual independence. It means that complementarity makes it difficult to preserve the principle of justice, i.e. ensure equal contribution to actions (costs) and equal participation in effects (benefits). Thus, complementarity is basically incommensurable at the level of its components.

Freedom, equality, independence and justice can emerge in cases of social relations constituted on the grounds of *exchange* – at least inasmuch as there do exist external, objective measures of value (e.g. in the shape of a market that sets the prices for wares).<sup>128</sup> Certainly, such ties, especially when given a more durable character, also establish a certain interdependence and necessitate mutual “adapting” among the people who establish them, but this process has a different mode and character. When selecting a gift for someone, we may try to “adapt” its value to that of gifts received from that person in the past, but this kind of interdependence, which occurs at the level of exchange, covers only a tiny aspect of our interactions and could even be connected with a complete lack

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127 This does not mean, however, that individuals need to love each other or share any other stronger feelings. What is rather at stake here is the similarity of attitudes towards outside events or objects; hence, these are shared rather than reciprocated feelings.

128 The lack of such measures might be one of the causes of problems in marriages based on “partnership,” where a “fair” division of duties is achieved by reducing the relationship to the level of an exchange of “services” between spouses. We shall return to this issue later.



**Fig. 3.2b:** Types of social interdependencies

of adaptation if, for example, the basis for action – its “goal” – is the subjective compulsion to reciprocate.

To put it differently, the kind of interdependence that is established at the level of exchange “binds” individuals much more weakly, not only because it has an aspectual character but also, or even primarily, because it demands reflection and necessitates forming on each occasion a subjective “goal,” which the reciprocation must serve.<sup>129</sup> In turn, achieving real complementarity demands switching off reflection and is related to taking-for-granted the “goal” that stands before members of the community.

To avoid misunderstanding, the concept of “bonds” is reserved here for ties based on complementarity, while ties established at the level of exchange shall be described as “relations.” As can be easily noticed, these two types of interdependence correspond to Tönnies’ division into community and society. However, since the question about the ways of coordinating human actions could be considered as crucial for his typology, we should point out here that there exists yet another type of interdependence among individuals, namely one based on similarity (cf. fig. 3.2b.).

<sup>129</sup> As Bourdieu has shown (1986), giving presents or exchanging favors is a real art that plays an important role in building social capital.

Coordination of actions does not have to be based on subjectively identified relations between individuals, although it does not preclude the possibility of their mutually influencing each other, or their actions “harmonizing” due to their “tuning,” achieved on the ground of similarity in tendencies to act. We deal with this kind of coordination for example during social events gathering people who do not know each other, at public demonstrations that attract occasional passers-by, or in situations when a crowd chooses to behave in some particular way.<sup>130</sup> Interdependencies created as a result of such actions usually have an ephemeral character, being limited to joint participation in a specific event. Even so, they may strongly affect individuals: in certain cases, they can become a springboard for establishing more permanent relations or even forming bonds. The latter usually involve a significant share of the emotional component, whereas the former – lack of broader obligations with regard to other participants.

Let us draw attention here to the specifically inclusive nature of the three distinguished types of social interdependence: bonds include both relations and influences found among individuals, whereas relations do not have to lead to formation of bonds but certainly cover influences, with the latter constituting an irreducible basis for the most rudimentary type of relationships.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, one might agree with Tönnies when he argues that there are no collectivities deprived of elements of both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, if we reduce those two terms to *relationships* based on complementarity and exchange. However, it is something completely different to claim that community-like *collectivities* (constituted

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130 It seems that Simmel’s “sociability” could be included in this category of relations (cf. Simmel 1950).

131 The dissimilarity of the three kinds of relations has been noticed in social sciences a long time ago, just like the dissimilarity of the influences they exert on individual actions. This is best visible in Merton’s theory of reference groups (1968). This theory usually distinguishes, first, normative reference groups, with which the individual has a strong emotional bond, and which rely on the acceptance of group norms and values; and second, comparative reference groups, established by individuals on the basis of more objective relations linking them to certain categories of people. Maria Łoś supplements this typology with the “audience reference group” (1976). The existence of such a group could be recognized by individuals despite a complete lack of any stronger bonds or relations linking them with people forming it and the subjectively perceived existence of such a group may affect individual behavior, which corresponds – in the classification adopted here – to relationships based on influence. Nevertheless, the theory of reference groups implicitly suggests that differences between groups correspond to differences in relationships, which contradicts the principle of inclusiveness adopted here.

through bonds) can include in themselves collectivities of the *Gesellschaft* type (constituted only through relations of exchange). It would entirely contradict both assumptions made within Tönnies' typology, and available data showing tribal communities as collectives that have not developed specialized subgroups organized around relations of exchange.

It rather ought to be assumed that the creation of distinct collectivities based solely on relations or influences is part of the historical order. That is why we should consider the process of their emergence in separation from the typological order. At the same time, however, it also ought to be assumed that this process did not entail the transition from communities to societies, or other forms of collective life, but rather relied on the production of new kinds of social groups, whose creation was accompanied not just by the disappearance of communities, but rather by in-depth transformation of communality as a specific social bond determining the framework of sociality.

It is not our aim to investigate the causes of this historical process here – they are analyzed in detail in subsequent chapters. However, let us draw attention to the fact that this process must have been combined with the intensification of contacts among individuals belonging to different communities, who were for that reason not tied with social bonds. It was only due to such contacts that “arbitrary will” could develop – the kind of thinking that we find at the foundation of societies, and thanks to which individual actions cease to be based on traditional habits and begin to be the subject of reasoning and goal-oriented decisions. On the other hand, it needs to be remembered that a sense of community – subjected to transformations – must have retained at least some features of *Gemeinschaft*, which is the model example of a community based on bonds. In other words, new forms of communality had to be still created through the natural will, resulting in the creation of such kinds of social relationships that allow individuals not only to feel related through a sense of belonging but also attached through faithfulness, thankfulness and loyalty, which transform individual emotions into moral sentiments, consequently turning obligations to some group into something natural, something that is not given special consideration or reflected upon. It is thanks to this that basically all members of the community carry the entire collective inside themselves (Gauchet 2000, 33). This also allows us to speak of socialization of human actions.

If we adopt this perspective to consider the consequences suffered by social bonds as a result of transformations induced by the historical process transforming social relations and dominant ways of thinking, it could be generally said that the direction of these changes is most often defined in terms of the

“cooling” or “dissolving” of this type of relationships between people. However, this statement demands further explanation.

The tribal community formed in the process of “foundational holism” combined two functions: it was a unit of both biological and social reproduction, or – to put it differently – it was both a group of families, and a total, socialized unit of adaptation to its surroundings. Although it is possible to differentiate between the two dimensions analytically, in reality they were tightly interwoven, while connections created in the course of being-shared-with-others would constitute a collectivity in which blood ties overlap with social bonds.

The emergence of new types of relationships between people, which occurred in the process of historical change, entailed the creation of additional social groupings between the level of family and that of the all-encompassing social system. On the one hand, this weakened relationships within the family, the basic group of origin; on the other, however, it imposed the necessity to incorporate such groupings into the overarching community. After all, if the entire social system were to retain its adaptive character, it had to support its ability to integrate all actions: not only those of particular individuals but also those of numerous and often antagonistic social groups created by those individuals; moreover, it had to be capable of generating actions meant to support its existence. In other words, it had to have the potential to create bonds, i.e. to emotionally bind people at a systemic level.<sup>132</sup>

Norbert Elias seems to have had this kind of processes in mind when he introduced the concept of “units of survival” (2001), enumerating the tribe, the state and humanity as basic systems of social integration, which have developed subsequently in the course of historical transformations. Adopting such a view of changes discernible in human history makes it possible to better understand the above claim regarding the “cooling” of social bonds. Although in the case of tribes, there would be no real difference between individual socialization, occurring within a family, and the socializing processes taking place on a

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132 As Stanisław Ossowski demonstrates in his excellent article “Więź społeczna i dziedzictwo krwi” [“Social bond and blood heritage”] (1966), one of the ways to reach this goal was to support a belief in shared ancestors. A belief in the “community of blood,” as well as the resulting strength of bonds and the permanence of obligations to community, are something that has not only survived to this day in the form of genealogical and ethnic (racial) myths but has also been transferred onto various “artificial” groups that are not based on common ancestors. In order to establish a “spiritual” community they often employ symbolic means and rituals, which offer a semblance of “blood ties.”

systemic level, social bonds created within systems based on the state undergo a kind of “diffusion” that disperses them among a plethora of various social groups before they conclude their passage from the level of family to the state-based level of integration.

It is worthwhile to draw attention here to the fact that it is only in the case of the first two “units of survival” that we can be sure about their creating distinct forms of social bonds. In the case of tribal communities, these were (and are) bonds based on common ancestors, while in the case of the state – bonds based on the concept of nation. Furthermore, it is only in the case of these two units that we can speak of the emergence of clear forms of social control, although instead of the above-mentioned division into cultures of shame and cultures of guilt (cf. fig. 3.2a.), a more sociologically adequate one seems to have been offered many years ago by David Riesman (1969), who has distinguished societies guided by tradition and “inner-directed” societies.<sup>133</sup> Were we to assume, following Elias, that today’s basic unit of survival is humanity – a frame of reference that fits perfectly both with findings about globalization processes and with Beck’s most famous claim about the globalization of risk (1992) – there arises the question as to what might give rise to a sense of community on that level and what forms of social control it could be based on. We shall return to this question in the last chapter.

Historical changes of basic units of survival are one of the two factors behind the process causing the “cooling” of social bonds. The second factor involves the above-mentioned transformations of human psychic apparatus resulting from the evolution of “the mind’s peripheral devices,” which, in turn, has influenced and shaped ways of thinking. The transition from natural to arbitrary and finally to the reflexive will entails not only the intensification of reflection on one’s actions but also, increasingly common, an analysis of the “natural” bonds that give rise to the community – ones essentially rooted in emotions and faith, not in reflection. They begin to be assessed in terms proper for society, i.e. with regard to such notions as justice, equality and independence – things that members

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133 This exchange may seem, at first glance, a purely formal move, because in the description of both kinds of societies Riesman refers to the distinction between “fear of shame” and a “feeling of guilt” as the main factors regulating the behavior of *individuals*. However, his analysis of mechanisms of social control proper to the two types of societies goes beyond an individual perspective, not to mention the fact that the typology he proposes also covers the current period. Riesman’s concept of “other-directed” society seems to have greater heuristic utility than the aforementioned concept of “culture of authenticity.”

of society have a right to. The ideology promoting “loyalty and faithfulness” – which assumes that obligations to the community originate in one’s “innate” feelings for the family and nation, or in other kinds of social relationships based on bonds – is supplanted by the ideology of “authenticity and pure relations,” which accentuates primarily obligations of individuals to themselves, or to their own development.

Such dissolving of old, and the developing of new forms of socializing human actions, is a process shaped entirely by objective factors. However, in order to elaborate on them further it becomes necessary to examine in greater detail processes found at the base of all social changes. First of all, it is paramount to establish the way in which we can understand the social system as a unit of reproduction and adaptation to its surroundings.

