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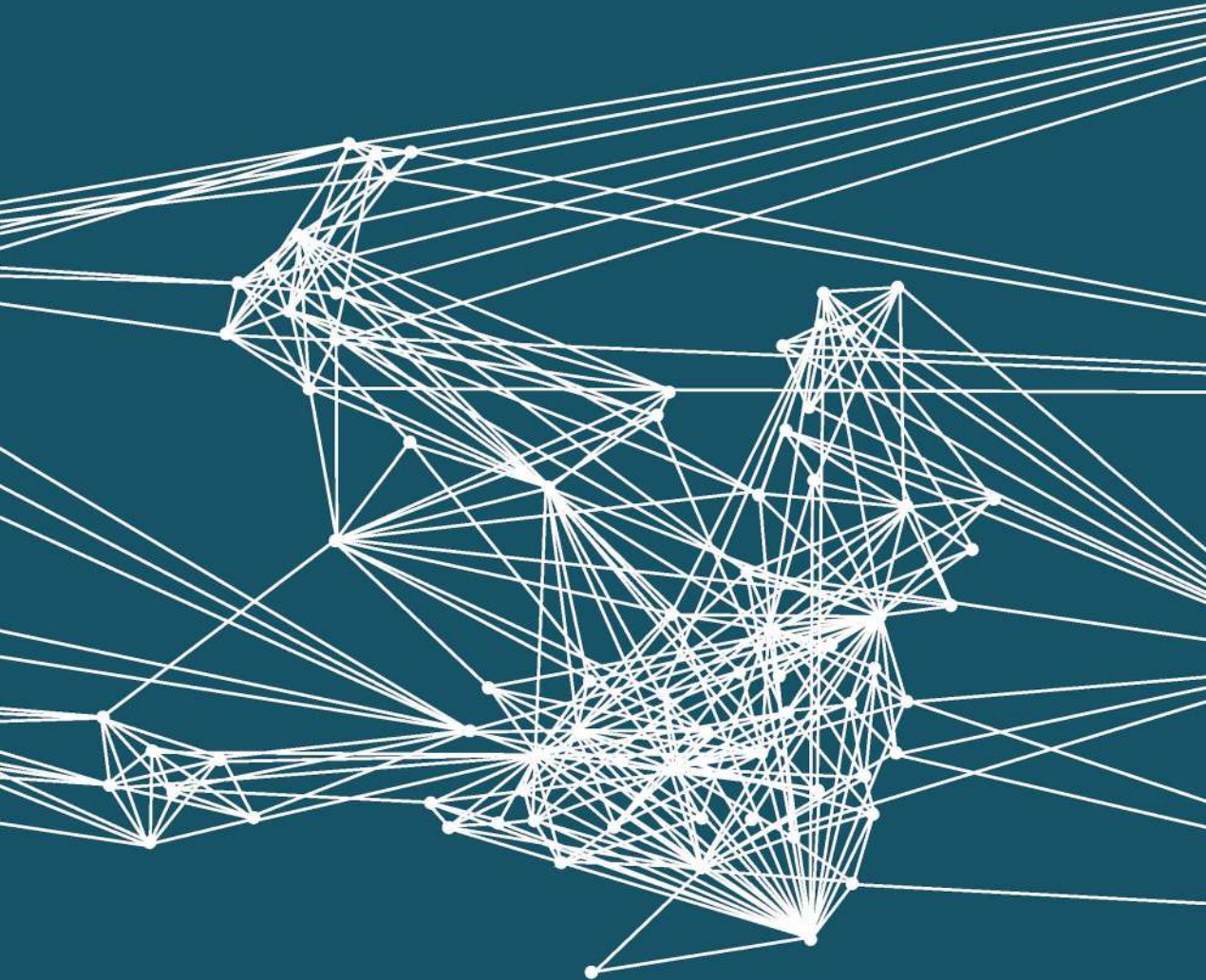


Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

Tomasz Burzyński

Between the Stage and the Text:

Agency and Structure in the Analysis of Cultural Change
from the Perspectives of Trust and Uncertainty



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Between the Stage and the Text:

**Agency and Structure in the Analysis of Cultural Change
from the Perspectives of Trust and Uncertainty**

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NR 3152

Tomasz Burzyński

Between the Stage and the Text:

**Agency and Structure in the Analysis of Cultural Change
from the Perspectives of Trust and Uncertainty**

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Contents

Foreword	7
Chapter One:	
The Concepts of Trust and Uncertainty: Intellectual Origins and a Scope of Theoretical Applications	13
Towards an Anti-Materialistic Approach	14
Theories of Trust and Their Methodological Origins	19
Trust: from a Psychological Disposition to a Cultural Construct	21
A Variety of Trust Theories and the Rip Van Winkle Effect	26
The Interplay Between Trust and Uncertainty: Two Theoretical Perspectives	30
Chapter Two:	
Agency and Structure in the Discourse of Cultural Studies	35
The Ontology of Human Subjectivity	36
The Theoretical Multiplicity within Cultural Studies	42
The Theoretical <i>Gestalt Switch</i>	49
Towards the Dialectic Ontology of Human Subjectivity and Socio-Cultural Reality	52
The <i>Habitus</i> and the Capitals. Dialectic Tendencies in Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice and Participation in Symbolic Culture	56
The Synthesis of Agency and Structure in Anthony Giddens's Theory of Structuration	59
The No Man's Land of Social Theory: The Third as a Space Between Agency and Structure	61
Chapter Three:	
Beyond the Logic of Rational Calculation. Trust and Uncertainty as the Elements of Culture	67
The Problem of Trust and a New Cultural Scenario for European Modernity	69
From <i>Homo Oeconomicus</i> to <i>Homo Reciprocus</i>	74

Towards the Notion of Trust: The Limits to Rationalisation	79
The Dualities of Culture and Trust	84
Uncertainty and Trust: Intangibles and Imponderables of Human Existence	89
Chapter Four:	
Between the Stage and the Text	95
The Text	97
The Stage	101
Actors and the Audience	106
The Performance. Towards the Culture of Trust	109
Chapter Five:	
Trust as a Structural Expectation	113
The Kula Ring	114
Memorization as a Form of Compulsion	123
Nature as a Guardian of the Textual	130
When Culture Precedes Territory: The Place as a Locale	136
Chapter Six:	
The Agency of Trust in the Framework of Reflexive Mod- ernization	141
Modernity and the Idea of Historical Discontinuity	142
Reflexive Modernization: Towards a Phenomenology of Late Moder- nity	148
Modernity as a Challenge to Trust Cultures	152
Time, Space and the Ontology of the Terminal Identity	158
The Reflexivity of Trust in the World of Counterfactuals	163
Conclusions	167
Bibliography	175
Streszczenie	187
Zusammenfassung	188

Foreword

“Society” is increasingly viewed and treated as a “network” rather than “structure” (let alone a solid “totality”): it is perceived and treated as a matrix of random connections and disconnections and of an essentially infinite volume of possible permutations.¹

If contemporary cultural studies and sociology are ruled by any structuring principles rendering order to otherwise nebular character of the disciplines, this may be the idea of fluidity permeating every possible field of social life and cultural production. A cognitively informed and intellectually dexterous observer may purport to immobilize a single, isolated snapshot of cultural reality but this action will result in providing an illusory, simplified representation. In this way, scholarly perception of culture emerges, as Chris Jenks declares, “from the noun ‘process,’ in the sense of nurture, growth and bringing into being.”² Ontologically speaking, both society and culture are processes *in statu nascendi* — their natures unveil themselves as the dynamics of social becoming.³ This statement, to put it otherwise, demonstrates that socio-cultural realities resemble constantly evolving networks of interpersonal phenomena chief among which are processes of interaction and communication undertaken by knowledgeable agents. Moreover, this inherent dynamism is also experienced as the dialectic of continuity and change which is typical of the supposedly static and systemic character of norms, values and signs of culture.

¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times. Living in the Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 3.

² Chris Jenks, *The Analytic Bases of Cultural Reproduction Theory*, in *Cultural Reproduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 3.

³ Piotr Sztompka, *Society in Action. The Theory of Social Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 95.

The principal aim of this work is to reflect upon the processes of socio-cultural change from the perspective of trust and uncertainty conceived as correlates to evolving forms of socio-cultural organisations. It is postulated that technological, economic and political transformations (as embodied by industrialisation, the spread of free markets and democratisation) are factors whose impact is instrumental as far as the development of interpersonal trust relations is concerned. In other words, modernisation paves the way for changes taking place in the selection of cultural elements (e.g. ideologies, values or discourses) which makes social reality appear as an organised, predictable and, therefore, trustworthy system. The same cultural repertoire of trust is applied to the collective process of coping with social traumas and uncertainties, such as the loss of domestication or the erosion of traditions, which come in the wake of technological, economic or political change.

Modernisation processes produce two distinct kinds of trust cultures, that is cultural systems sustaining and reinforcing personalised trust relations. The former is associated with the cultural "regime" of pre-modernity in which trusting is based upon structural resources, such as fixed role expectations, established interaction patterns and the unquestionable authority of tradition. This model of trust culture is best illustrated by the institution of the "Kula Ring" which denotes a system of ceremonial, ritual activities aiming at the exchange of symbolic artefacts among tribal, stateless communities of the Triobriand archipelago. The latter system is related to (late) modernity in which trusting is based upon the individual's personal reflexivity and agency, that is the ability to make informed choices under conditions of ideological, normative and axiological multiplicity. This latter model of trust culture is typical of informational networks in which reciprocity is a project in progress that needs to be negotiated and implemented by all parties engaged in online interactions.

The aforementioned argument is conceptually divided into six chapters. Four of them comprise methodological and theoretical problems referring to both uncertainty and trust as well as social ontology (the structure/agency dichotomy). The theoretical and methodological remarks are concluded by the model of "theoretical performance" which is introduced as an original methodological framework for cultural analysis. The remaining two chapters are interpretative projects aiming to analyse modernisation processes from the perspective of the applied methodological framework and its conceptual toolbox.

From a strictly theoretical point of view, the work is based upon a firm intellectual belief that the idea of trust may be defined as a phe-

nomenological coefficient to societal interactions with Other(ness). In this sense, trusting, as Piotr Sztompka observes, resembles a kind of “bet” placed upon contingent and chronically unpredictable actions performed by other individuals.⁴ In this way, trusting constitutes a core element of “ontological security,” a term coined in order to emphasise that contingency management is instrumental in coping with the reality inhabited by myriads of unpredictable Others equipped with diversified political and economic agendas.⁵ Consequently, the cultural discourse of trust is very often conceptualised as a vernacular of social productivity, a category whose intellectual origins can be traced as far back as to the legacy of political theories centred upon the notion of civil society and the related idea of civic culture. The discourse of trust becomes a vital tool enabling a more informed insight into the cultural significance of modern democratic and multicultural orders in which the political construct of civil society is founded upon the mechanisms of multilateral reciprocity and solidarity conceived as distinct forms of the public good.

When approached from a strictly methodological perspective, the work addresses the dichotomy of agency and structure which is conceived here as a starting point for synthetic conceptualisations, such as Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory, aiming to provide a more holistic outlook on the ontology of socio-cultural realities. These theories are applied to formulate an original methodological framework that sees socio-cultural processes in terms of iterative “theatrical performances.” In this context, modernization processes (and the transformation of trust cultures) can be subsumed within a cognitive model suggesting that cultural processes may be conceived as a specific form of “theatrical performances.” The theatrical performance is, thus, conceptualised as a constitutive element of socio-cultural ontology comprising the existence of the stage (the spatial and temporal dimensions of interpersonal interaction), the text (the totality of structural resources from which individuals draw during the performance), the principal actors granted dominant roles in the process of cultural reproduction and, last but not least, the audience which observes cultural processes but is not empowered to alter them.

In the context of the delineated theatrical framework, the realm of traditional, pre-modern community may be interpreted as a distinct form of trust culture in which networks of moral obligations are an-

⁴ Piotr Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 25.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 243.

chored in the structural (or textual) properties of dramaturgic events. Actors of the pre-modern cultural stage — as we learn from Bronislaw Malinowski's observations of the Kula Ring communities — are seen as being united by robust, non-negotiable social ties and fixed interpersonal relationships fostering durable trusting expectations. Thus formed trust culture is rooted in structural underpinnings of cultural reproduction, that is in the existence of stable textual devices (mythical texts) which create the common plane of morality and, therefore, foster the shared axiology of social interaction.

Modern socio-cultural orders are furrowed with entirely different mechanisms rendering the creation of trust cultures. Their distinctiveness is anchored in the "phenomenology of modernity"⁶ stressing the incredible impact of human agency which runs rampant in social organisations of the contemporary era. The realm of (late) modern culture is characterised by the demand for making relatively autonomous (agential) choices which function as an unavoidable coefficient of living in the times of individualisation. The era of individualisation connotes a model of social organisation in which structural constraints of social class, nationality or gender are becoming increasingly remote from the individual practice of making everyday life choices. Hence, the idea of individualisation, as Ulrich Beck proclaims, results in the demise of "standard," clear-cut biographies. Facing the lack of palliative and stabilising impact of solid structures (such as tradition, for instance), human identities resemble individual projects, agential narratives constructed, so to speak, *ab ovo*.⁷

In the era of individualisation, trust mechanisms also resemble projects that need to be completed in the process of interpersonal communication and negotiation with other actors. As opposed to the aforementioned order of traditional pre-modernity, in which trusting relations are deeply related to the stabilising authority of cultural texts, the emergent realm of modernity postulates the agency of trust which becomes anchored in individualised actors' competences. This is facilitated by processes of globalisation which, as the theatrical framework sees it, foster a new model of societal interaction uniting myriads of strangers who at the point of interpersonal communication remain absent and elusive. In this specific case, reciprocity in not

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 137.

⁷ Ulrich Beck, "The Reinvention of Politics: Toward a Theory of Reflexive Modernization," in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

granted by any reliable axiology of interaction but, on the contrary, is furrowed with uncertainties and perils inscribed in the chaotic nature of communication networks. This networked environment of trust gives rise to an essentially fragmented model of subjectivity which, as Scott Bukatman teaches us, may be defined in terms of the "terminal identity."⁸ Trusting relations are inscribed in the network of territorially distant and physically absent Others who remain shrouded in the aura of uncertainty since from the onset their interactions are simulated and mediated by hyperreal technologies of information processing. Online reciprocity constitutes the foundation for a novel form of trust which becomes vested in the abstract qualities of a system by which the very interaction becomes mediated.

⁸ Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity. The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham DC and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

Chapter One

The Concepts of Trust and Uncertainty: Intellectual Origins and a Scope of Theoretical Applications

This focus on the changing nature of trust in modernizing societies is indeed not surprising given the extraordinary importance of a universal basis of trust in modern, democratic societies. The emphasis in modern societies on consensus, the ideology of pragmatism, problem-solving, and technocratic expertise, as well as conflict management (as opposed to ideological fission), are all founded on an image of society based on interconnected networks of trust – among citizens, families, voluntary organizations, religious denominations, civic associations, and the like.¹

The concept of trust has won almost universal acclaim as a cognitive tool enabling a more informed insight into the cultural foundations of modern, multicultural societies. In this specific context, the notion can be applied as a shorthand for cultural productivity, a pragmatic strategy of existence in the mercurial reality inhabited by myriads of elusive Others. As a consequence, the idea of reciprocal trust runs parallel with the advent of scholarly interest in human agency: to trust is to place a phenomenological bet on the contingent and autonomous actions performed by other individuals. To vest trust, to put it otherwise, is to bracket off uncertainties and contingencies associated with the evasive presence of the Other.²

¹ Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 14.

² See Tadeusz Sławek, *U-bywać. Człowiek, świat, przyjaźń w twórczości Williama Blake'a* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2001), p. 126.

Much indebted to the language of societal interaction as it may be, the term is also endowed with a purely cultural significance stressing that the totality of axiological and normative elements of culture may enhance or, contrariwise, deplete the individual readiness to vest trust in other people. In this sense, the emergent idea of “trust culture” is tantamount to a realm of public sphere in which agents work in conjunction with one another in order to construct a relatively stable network of interpersonal ties and common axiological obligations. Hence, the idea of trust is often related with civic activism and cooperation taking place on arenas of contemporary civil societies. In this case, the concept of civil society is usually defined as a tissue of voluntary, non-profit associations which are relatively independent from state policymaking and the economic rationale of free markets. This autonomy, in turn, makes them being subjected to horizontal relationships based on trust, rather than vertical structures of political power or cost-benefit rationality. The discourse of trust, consequently, binds the notions of civil society and human agency with the potentiality of achieving collective objectives in spite of perceived uncertainties or contingencies.

The main aim of this chapter is to provide some introductory methodological remarks to the idea of trust as it is reflected within the spheres of cultural (cultural studies), sociological and political theories. Hence, the chapter makes an attempt to discuss the methodological and historico-intellectual origins of trust theories as well as to comment briefly on the range of contemporary academic discourses embracing the interplay between trust and uncertainty.

Towards an Anti-Materialistic Approach

The discourse of trust — to put it in a more methodological nomenclature — has paved the way for a new understanding of cultural productivity. It is a new idea suggesting that culture (predominantly its axiological and normative aspects) cannot be perceived only from the vantage point of economic relations and the concomitant inequalities in the distribution of financial assets as well as other utilities in societies. In this kind of methodology, culturally reinforced trusting relations are seen as being constructive as far as political and, even more importantly, economic foundations of the modern social order are concerned.³

³ See Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, eds. *Culture Matters. How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Book, 2000).

The productivity of trusting relations shows, as Robert D. Putnam and Francis Fukuyama observe, that culture cannot be reduced to matter of false consciousness in a way suggested and ideologically reinforced by Marxist theorists. Bonds of trust foster the development of axiological obligations, loyalties and shared solidarities that may enhance human performance (both individual as well as collective) with respect to political and economic spheres of life and production.⁴ In this way, contemporary trust theorists postulate an anti-materialistic methodology in which economic processes are rooted in shared values and norms constituting the cultural repertoire of interaction and cooperation.

To put it historically, a methodological foundation for this anti-materialistic approach can be found in the interpretative perspective on the nature of social and economic change developed by Max Weber. Having assumed an inherently individualistic approach to the ontology of socio-cultural reality, Weber tries to construct his sociology on the basis of human agency and action:⁵

Sociology [...] is a science which attempts the *interpretative understanding of social action* in order thereby to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects. In "action" is included all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it. [...] Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the *behaviour of others* and is thereby oriented in its course.⁶

The centrality of social action in the Weberian project of interpretative sociology can be attributed to the fact that the category of acting agents is used as a hermeneutic tool employed in analyses of collective (trans-personal) phenomena. Much systemic and structural as they may be, collectivities should not be conceived as prior to individual actions

⁴ See especially James S. Coleman, *The Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990); Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁵ Bert Adams, Rosalind A. Sydie, *Classical Sociological Theory* (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 77.

⁶ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1997), p. 88. Emphasis mine.

and autonomous acts of interpretation.⁷ Collective phenomena (social groups and classes, discursive formations or ideologies) are products of human interaction and emerge only as a result of the initial, formative awareness postulating that a number of interacting agents perceive themselves as sharing some kind of *modus vivendi*.

Collectively shared perceptions and actions are indicative of the formation of “status group,” a term employed to describe communities composed of individuals who are in a position to recognise the commonly shared axiology of social interaction. In this context, the central point in Weber’s anti-materialism is the fact that status groups are not necessarily created by means of having common economic interests beforehand. The initial criteria of a status group membership are arbitrary and cannot “be imposed by prior economic facts.”⁸ As a result, the formative rules of membership may be established by means of cultural attributes delineating such components of an individual’s identity as: gender, language, religion, race or lifestyle. In other words, and contrary to the mainstream of Marxist theory, it is the process of collective identity formation that explains the rise of a collective group interest which, in turn, may be re-defined in terms of economic opportunities or utilities.

Members of status groups share, to use Jürgen Habermas’s terminology, a form of communicative rationality that results in the creation of the “status honour,” a specific type of common axiology combined with a perception of a common *modus operandi*. In this inherently cultural understanding, axiological and normative elements of culture are not seen as illusory reflections fuelled by the uneven distribution of production means. On the contrary, culture – by creating the commonly shared axiology of societal interaction – provides individuals with cognitive, interpretative frameworks of their day-to-day routines as well as incentives to act. These cultural models of collective actions are, in turn, formative as far as the economic base is concerned. As Anthony King observes:

The economy does not precede status groups. On the contrary, *the economy itself is constituted in the first instance by a complex hierarchy of status groups interacting and competing with each other*. These groups are formed through interaction in which a particular kind of status honour is established.

⁷ George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), pp. 124–125.

⁸ Anthony King, *The Structure of Social Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 124.

[...] Crucially, the existence of status groups oriented to a particular status honour produces the material conditions in any era. [...] *The nature of these groups and their relationship to each other determines the character of the supposedly autonomous economic base.*⁹

Needless to say, this anti-materialistic approach is especially evident in Weber's seminal text on the formation of Western free market capitalism.¹⁰ In this specific case, the systemic nature of modern, free market capitalism is conceptualised, to cut a long story short, from the perspective of individual, value oriented actions which remain profoundly anchored in the common status honour conceived in terms of the protestant ethics.

The Weberian ideas of cultural effectiveness and productivity permeate the discourses of trust, uncertainty and risk. The concept of trust — as far as its applications to the spheres of economy and politics are concerned — teaches us that the common axiology of interpersonal relations may serve as a “lubricant that makes the running of any group or organization more efficient.”¹¹ In this sense, trusting relations, norms of solidarity and reciprocity may serve as a kind of cultural asset — a vital element of status honour, to use Weber's terminology one more time — which enhances human agency and renders possible the introduction of changes into the worlds of politics and economy.

The theory of trust predicts that individual and collective identities are forged in the course of interpersonal negotiations of norms and values within significant status groups and thus formed cultural templates of collective action are major resources in the dissemination various cultural assets (norms, values and symbols). These processes are especially evident in the global culture of the contemporary, multicultural world. As Samuel Huntington comments on the nature of exchange between actors performing on the arena of post-Cold War global society:

In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. [...] People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and

⁹ King, *The Structure of Social Theory*, p. 126. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 16.

institutions. [...] People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity.¹²

Consequently, the nature of global society is forged on the basis of cultural differences and similarities which are seen as resources enabling our survival in the uncertain reality of the global world stage on which a huge number of institutional and non-official actors compete in order to pursue their political and economic interests.

The contemporary discourses of uncertainty and risk are also based upon the dissolution of the base and superstructure dichotomy. From this particular perspective, the advent of the "risk society" becomes tantamount to the radical implosion of the orthodox premises of historical materialism. From the perspective of risk studies, the inherent dynamism of late modernity is not anchored in the economic rationale of class struggle, but in cultural responses to uncertainties and contingencies associated with the process of technological modernization. Thus, the central political issue of modernity is no longer associated with the legitimisation of economic inequalities inscribed in the model of class society but, contrariwise, with providing solid, discursive grounds for explaining and justifying the societal distribution of unintended consequences of technological development. Since, as Ulrich Beck postulates, "poverty is hierarchic, smog is democratic,"¹³ the social distribution of uncertainty and risk goes well beyond the industrial, inherently exclusive schemata of wealth distribution. In other words, the all-inclusive character of uncertainties in the age of risk society manifests itself as the inability of living without experiencing contingencies. Hence, human life resembles an incessant activity of risk selection which, as Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky teach us,¹⁴ is endowed with an inherently cultural dimension suggesting that uncertainty aversion is a function of possessed value orientations. Therefore, from the perspective of cultural theories of risk, culture one more time establishes its hegemony over the world of economy: as an element of modern economy, risk management is susceptible to such intangible phenomena as commonly shared expectations concerning moral order.

¹² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 21.

¹³ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity?* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 36.

¹⁴ This idea is more extensively discussed at the end of this chapter. See Mary Douglas, Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

Theories of Trust and Their Methodological Origins

The origins of contemporary trust theories can be traced as far back as to the advent of a new ontology of socio-cultural reality which is founded upon “soft variables,” that is explanatory tools facilitating a more detailed insight into cultural aspects of social systems. In this case, socio-cultural realities are conceptualised as dynamic matrixes consisting of interpersonal relationships and other mutually oriented actions fostering the purposeful exchange of cultural resources (such as signs, values and norms) which result in the collective construction of the inter-subjective universe, the *Lebenswelt* of cultural existence. As Piotr Sztompka puts it:

At the ontological level there is a turn away from “hard,” organic, holistic, or systemic images of society, toward the “soft” field image of social fabric seen as a fluid and constantly moving pattern, a matrix of human actions and interactions. At the epistemological level there is the corresponding turn away from structural explanations invoking “hard” variables — like class position, status, economic situation, demographic trends, settlement patterns, technological development, organisational forms — toward the cultural explanations focusing on “soft” intangibles like meanings, symbols, rules, values, norms, codes, frames, and forms of discourse.¹⁵

In the context of the aforementioned turn towards “soft variables,” the idea of trust remains deeply inscribed in the “second theory of action,”¹⁶ an idea postulating that human agency cannot be perceived through the objectified prism of technical or economic rationality delineating the figure of self-centred and overly utilitarian *homo oeconomicus* but, in a contrary manner, in the context of the interactive *homo reciprocus*, an individual who remains shrouded in the aura of reciprocal communication constituting a form of interpersonal rationality of cultural descent.

At the ontological level there is a shift from the image of action seen as purely rational, constantly calculating, consistently

¹⁵ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–2.

¹⁶ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*.

maximising profit and minimising cost (*homo oeconomicus*), toward the richer picture including also emotional, traditional, normative, cultural components: value orientations, social bonds, attachments, loyalties, solidarities, identities.¹⁷

The discourse of trust refers to axiological and normative bonds and shared perceptions of reality. It stresses the development of relatively stable “imagined communities” as Benedict Anderson aptly calls the phenomenological sense of attachment to a social grouping which is expressed by the subjective affirmation of its inner axiology and other elements of group culture (ideology, beliefs, habits).¹⁸

Moreover, the idea of trust gestures towards the concept of “moral community.” As opposed to more institutionalised forms of sociality, in which interpersonal cohesion and societal bonds are attained due to the existence of inner regulatory bodies, moral communities are far less formalised and depend upon the existence of reciprocal moral obligations as well as ethical habits which are not enforced by a formally empowered defined party (the state or other regulatory bodies).¹⁹ As Bronisław Misztal concludes:

This idea of society has less to do with formal organisation than with a sense of belonging, trust and responsibility, and duties towards others who share our values, interests and goals.²⁰

In a way, moral communities could be conceptualised in terms of specific “imagined communities” consisting of mutual and multilateral trust relations since from the very onset they are founded upon a generalised expectation that confidence vested in contingent actions of the Other should be reciprocated. The idea is, nevertheless, firmly embedded within the humanities. One may recall Alexis de Tocqueville’s idea of “the habits of the heart” referring to the ideological and cultural underpinnings of complex social and political systems.²¹

¹⁷ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*.

¹⁸ See Benedict Anderson, *Wspólnoty wyobrażone: rozważania o źródłach i rozprzestrzenianiu się nacjonalizmu*, trans. S. Amsterdamski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1997).

¹⁹ Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 7.

²⁰ Bronisław Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), pp. 206–207.

²¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II (New York: Knopf, 1945), p. 8.

Trust: From a Psychological Disposition to a Cultural Construct

The concept of trust, as far as its academic understanding is concerned, is by no means easy to define. From the perspective of humanist methodologies, the notion has undergone a process of change from its psychological understanding as an individualised orientation towards a cultural conceptualisation as a networked and profoundly trans-personal phenomenon. This methodological transformation renders perceiving trust as a kind of generalised expectation deeply inscribed in the cultural repertoire of norms and values which characterise social groups, local communities or societies. This change of our own understanding of trusting relations is, moreover, intrinsically related to historical transformations in socio-cultural systems. It seems, as Barbara Misztal observes, that “the present ‘discovery of trust’ [...] seems to be a classic case of Minerva taking flight at dusk.”²² In other words, the contemporary problems with social individualisation have facilitated the development of academic interest in systemic and cultural aspects of trust.

The individualistic approach to the problem of trust is quite similar to a commonsensical view on this matter suggesting that the term represents a kind of goodwill based upon mutual understanding and respect. Indeed, the psychology of individualised trusting dispositions is formed upon a claim that trust can be perceived in terms of a personality feature representing an individual’s general orientation (or an attitude) towards the external social world. The psychological understanding of the problem postulates that the term may be conceived as “the mutual confidence that no party to an exchange will exploit another’s vulnerability.”²³ Consequently, trusting becomes related to situations of unpredictability and risk in which an actor cannot entirely predict, let alone calculate, the Other’s response.

On the other hand, the cultural approach to the issue of trust is based upon a firm conviction that trusting dispositions are in fact “path dependent,” which means that they are rooted in the common cultural heritage, the shared reservoir of norms and values adopted by

²² Barbara Misztal, “Trust and Cooperation: the Democratic Public Sphere,” *Journal of Sociology, The Australian Sociological Association* 37, no. 4 (2000), p. 371.

²³ Charles F. Sabel, “Studied Trust: Building New Forms of Cooperation in a Volatile Economy,” *Human Relations* 43 (1993), p. 1133.

a community as its prescribed code of conduct.²⁴ In this context, trust is perceived in terms of a generalised cultural expectation, a normatively formulated imperative stating the generally accepted cultural code of interpersonal exchange and postulating norms of reciprocity. The path dependency postulate, in turn, opens a possibility of debating upon the idea of “trust culture” conceived as a conglomerate of cultural and macro-social phenomena on which agents may formulate their individual bets of trust.²⁵

This cultural understanding of trust – historically speaking – may become subsumed within a more general, diachronic debate referring to the “grand transition” from the pre-modern (the realm of pre-industrial and traditional social organisations) towards highly complex social systems of industrialised modernity.²⁶ In this specific context, the ideas of trusting and reciprocity have been extensively discussed with reference to four dominant themes illustrating the turmoil of cultural crisis associated with the aforementioned transition. These discourses comprise: (1) the concept of “lonely crowd,” (2) the “iron cage” of rationality theme, (3) the discourse of axiological anomie, (4) and the “revolt of masses” theme. The concept of trust culture has evolved on the critical background of these themes in which it serves as a kind of cultural remedy providing a new equilibrium to the otherwise chaotic nature of the transformation towards industrialised modernity.²⁷ Let us discuss these theoretical applications in greater detail.

David Riesman’s lonely crowd theme is founded upon the idea of atrophy inflicting traditional moral communities in the wake of modernisation and the rise of mass social organisations.²⁸ This concept gestures towards the theoretical legacy of Ferdinand Tönnies’s formative distinction between emotionally based community (*Gemeinschaft*) and economically rational society (*Gesellschaft*) which serves as a paradigm of social changes resulting in the development of modern social orders. This social transformation, to put it synthetically, works as a kind of automatic dissolution emotionally-based interpersonal relationships (typical of the pre-modern *Gemeinschaft*) and the resultant rise of individualised society of atomised and interest seeking agents

²⁴ See Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 88; Barbara Misztal, *Trust and Cooperation*, p. 373.

²⁵ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, p. 119.

²⁶ Marek S. Szczepański and Kazimierz Krzysztofek, *Zrozumieć rozwój: od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2002), pp. 33–39.

²⁷ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, pp. 3–7.

²⁸ David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

(the *Gesellschaft*) which takes place as a consequence of modernisation processes.²⁹

In the era of lonely crowds, modern social organisations increase — which is discussed in the last chapter — demands for civic trust whose existence is actualised in the public sphere of voluntary associations. In this context, bonds of spontaneous sociability and multilateral cooperation function as a vivid source of emotional self-organisation, a new *Gemeinschaft*. The role of civil society is especially important in post-traditional social orders in which the implosion of old interpersonal bonds is in league with the rise of human reflexivity designating the ability to form one's identity, as it were, single-handedly out of the potentially infinite range of possible life scenarios.

The "iron cage" theme occupies a vast intellectual territory stretching from Max Weber's insights into the nature of modern bureaucracy to Zygmunt Bauman's elaboration of reification conceived as an unavoidable coefficient to technological modernization. The term depicts the processes of instrumentalization of interpersonal relationships that pave the way for a culture which is based upon the destruction of human agency and, by extension, human dignity.³⁰ The metaphor brings about a dystopian (perhaps even an Orwellian) theme of a terrorised Self facing the overtly and overly developed machine of modern institutions. This idea was aptly reproduced by Anthony Giddens who speaks about the "juggernaut of modernity":

For these images I suggest we should substitute that of the juggernaut — a runaway engine of enormous power which, collectively as human beings, we can drive to some extent but which also threatens to rush out of control and which rends itself asunder. [...] The juggernaut of modernity is not all of one piece, and here the imagery lapses, as does any talk of a single path which it runs. It is not an engine made up of integrated machinery, but one in which there is a tensionful, contradictory, push-and-pull of different influences. Any attempt to capture the experience of modernity must begin from this view.³¹

²⁹ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Association* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).

³⁰ Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1997); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

³¹ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 139.

The image of a runaway engine seems to mingle the opportunity and risk sides of modern civilisation. It designates the socio-cultural formation that intertwines the unprecedented pace of technological development with the unpredictable scope of potential catastrophic consequences. The ubiquity of risks gives rise to a new kind of trusting expectations which, unlike those inscribed in the realm of traditional cultures, originate from the proximity of abstract system constituting the “iron cage” of (late)modern social systems. Furthermore, this type of criticism stresses the importance of trusting relations conceived as a form of social relationships that goes far beyond the bureaucratised rationale of formal institutions. In this sense, the grammar of trust is vital to the cooperation with strangers and Others taking place within non-institutionalised settings with few formal rules and regulations of conduct.

The discourse of normative and axiological anomie — founded by the formative text *Suicide* written by Émile Durkheim — subsumes modernity within the idea of moral chaos, the critical loss of equilibrium leading to the culture in which common axiology is not complementary with accessible means of achieving individual and collective goals.³² The very idea of anomie, consequently, indicates the essential lack of commonly shared moral beliefs. From this perspective, trusting relations are seen as being left in a moral no man’s land: relatively stable communities undergo a process of dissolution and individuals perceive themselves as being placed in an environment that is totally at odds with their preconceived ideas, accustomed habits or viewpoints.

Last but not least, there is the theme of the “revolt of the masses,” which was initiated by José Ortega y Gasset and later developed by Dwight Macdonald. This discourse stresses the negative effect of massive urbanisation, industrialisation and the concomitant rise of mass society and culture. As a consequence, the rise of mass society seems to be tantamount to the demise of sociality and robust trusting relations. As Macdonald remarks:

For the masses are in historical time what a crowd is in space: large quantity of people unable to express themselves as human beings because they are related to one another neither as individuals nor as members of communities — indeed, they are not related to each other at all, but only to something distant, abstract, nonhuman: a football game or

³² Émile Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*, trans. J.A. Spaulding (London: Routledge, 1951).

bargain sale in the case of the crowd, a system of industrial production, a party or a State in the case of the masses. The mass man is a solitary atom, uniform with and undifferentiated form thousands and millions of other atoms who go and make up "the lonely crowd," as David Riesman well calls American society.³³

Indeed, the concept of mass culture denotes processes in which sociality implodes, as Jean Baudrillard aptly concludes, into the inert and empty void of mass society.³⁴ Here, mass society represents an aggregate of atomised individuals who become united and socially tied only in the framework of media simulation which captures them in opinion polls as a politically coherent electorate possibly capable of a constructive action. In this specific context, trusting relations — as scholars elaborating on the idea of social capital observe — also implode into the network of relations taking place among socially absent individuals interested only in mass media events.

The legacy of aforementioned discourses has paved the way for a theoretical frameworks and models aiming to delineate stable foundations of trusting relations conceived in terms of all-encompassing moral obligations of cultural descent. Hence, trust cultures are seen as systemic phenomena comprising of five interrelated social and cultural processes.³⁵ First of all, this is the normative coherence which — after the fashion of Durkheimian studies on anomie — depicts a feeling of existential security experienced as a consequence of expectations that other people would follow pre-existent norms or orientate themselves at well-known values. The second factor contributing to the rise of positive trust cultures is the stability of socio-cultural systems which is experienced when "the network of groups, associations, institutions, organisations, and regimes is long-lasting, persistent, and continuous."³⁶ The counterpoint here is the notion of insecurity associated with a radical and traumatic change which destabilises many sectors of society, disrupting daily routines and making life less predictable. The third factor is related to the transparency of cultural institutions. In order to vest trust in other actors, individuals must rely on information

³³ Dwight Macdonald, *A Theory of Mass Culture*, in *Critical Theory and Popular Culture*, ed. J. Storey (London: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 32.

³⁴ See J.S. Epstein and M.J. Epstein, *Fatal Forms: Toward a (Neo)Formal Sociological Theory of Media Culture in Baudrillard. A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Kellner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 140–142.

³⁵ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, pp. 122–125.

³⁶ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, p. 122.

concerning their cultural habitat — they need to understand the cultural meaningfulness of supposedly naturalised and obvious actions or ritual interactions. The fourth dimension refers to the familiarity of social world: in the mass society of solitary strangers, in the urban sea of indifferent strangers, it is difficult to place well-informed bets of trust. The last factor gestures towards the accountability of other people and institutions — distrust becomes a logical response to situations in which others' actions are perceived as arbitrary and completely coincidental.

A Variety of Trust Theories and the Rip Van Winkle Effect

Philosophically speaking, modern conceptualisations of trust seem to spring from criticisms directed against the Hobbesian conceptualisation of human nature and his idea on the origins of sociality and political organisations. As early as in the era of the Enlightenment, the philosophical circle of the Scottish Moralists predicted that the productivity of post-feudal social organisations could not only be anchored in the panoptical authority of the state conceived as the ultimate regulator of social life. The emergent philosophical and political discourses of European modernity — as the second chapter of this thesis wishes to elaborate upon — attempt to delineate social orders of modernity in terms of aggregated networks of civic engagement regulated by the virtue of “mutual benevolence” constituting, as it were, a moral equivalent of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” of free market capitalism. The quality of mutual benevolence, in turn, was conceived as a moral virtue which is similar to the contemporary conceptualisation of interpersonal trust conceived as the core value of civic culture and a factor taking part in the creation democratic regimes. From this perspective, theories of trust are vital for academic discourses attempting to “convert the Hobbesian state of nature from something that is nasty, brutish, and short, into something that is more pleasant, more efficient, and altogether more peaceful.”³⁷

The idea of trust, as far as contemporary academic discourses are concerned, should be regarded in terms of a nebular field of interrelated

³⁷ Kenneth Newton, “Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy,” *International Political Science Review* 22, no. 2 (2001), p. 202.

and intersecting paradigms. This concept has permeated diverse disciplines in the humanities in which it serves as a conceptual category facilitating our understanding of dilemmas referring to the intrinsic mechanisms governing the social order in modern, multicultural democracies. In this specific context, the variety of theories of trust may be represented by three closely intertwined discourses: (1) the concept of civic culture, (2) the idea of civil society, (3) economic and sociological studies concerning social capital.³⁸

The theoretical perspectives on the notion of trust are related to the cultural conceptualisation of democratic regimes conceived in terms of civic agency and citizenship. Trusting relations (as well as the whole constellation of related terms including such concepts as mutuality, empathy, reciprocity, solidarity, toleration and fraternity) are very often subsumed within the discourse of civic activism.³⁹ Consequently, the notions of civic culture and civil society have been coined in order to provide conceptualisations of cultural underpinnings of contemporary democratic orders. A fully fledged democracy, as Giddens observes, depends on “the fostering of a strong civic culture which emphasises trust, mutual obligation, equal worth and responsibility.”⁴⁰ In this specific context, the idea of policymaking is not only represented by the matrix of institutional and systemic phenomena — such as legal-rational mechanisms of state bureaucracies — but, first and foremost, by the agential commitment to common values indicating moral perimeters of trust among citizens participating in the construction of democratic order.⁴¹

From this perspective, the concepts of civic culture and civil society have gained universal acclaim in the wake of pro-democratic movements as well as anti-communist revolutions that permeated Eastern and Central Europe. What was glimpsed after the collapse of communist systems (and the concomitant “Soviet Bloc mentalities”) was a need for the re-creation of cultural foundations of democracy. The idea standing behind this assumption stressed the impossibility of implementing a fully-fledged democratic order only by means of promoting changes in political institutions, without introducing elements of a robust civic culture. It means that virtues of democracy cannot be left behind in a societal no man’s land: their functioning depends on the creation of a peculiar arena of interpersonal discourse which

³⁸ Cf. Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, pp. 7–9.

³⁹ See Newton, “Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy,” p. 203.

⁴⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Runaway World* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 95.

⁴¹ Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965).

is relatively independent from state institutions and free markets. As a consequence, the concept of trust was subsumed under the notion of civil society conceived as a moral tissue of mutually reciprocated solidarity, an area of civic learning where cultural values of democratic regime may flourish. As Jeffrey C. Alexander comments on the moral aspect of civil society:

Civil society is the arena of social solidarity that is defined in universalistic terms. It is the we-ness of a national community, the feeling of connectedness to one another that transcends particular commitments, loyalties, and interests and allows there to emerge a single thread of identity among otherwise disparate people.⁴²

In this sense, trust emerges as a moral resource as well as a remedy for cultural problems (riddles of collective policymaking) associated with the implementation (and reproduction) of axiological foundations of democratic orders. Consequently, trust remains a vital element of civic culture: it is perceived as a kind of moral resource facilitating the creation of the public good and minimising the risk of free riding. Since public goods are, by definition, collective utilities beneficial to all citizens, their accumulation requires robust trusting expectations stating that no individual would restrain themselves from participating in this corporate endeavour.

The idea of trust becomes central to various studies dedicated to the concept of social capital. The term denotes the productivity — both economic and political — of interpersonal social ties and reciprocal obligations. Moreover, the theory of social capital has helped to bridge the gap between individual, subjectively assessed perception of self-interest as well as the collective objectives significant for the development of a whole community. The ability to present oneself as a trustworthy person is constructive and productive as far as networks of social interactions are concerned: it promotes the culture of generalised reciprocity whose stocks can be accumulated in a similar fashion to economic capital on the marketplace.⁴³ The theory of social capital, to put it otherwise, indicates that trusting relations and robust trust cultures are not only purely axiological, moral phenomena. On the contrary, they represent hard-working and active forces engaged in

⁴² Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society," in *Cultivating Differences*, eds. M. Lamont, M. Fournier (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 2.

⁴³ See John Field, *Social Capital* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

shaping political, economic, and technological environments. As James S. Coleman comments on the practical and collective value of social capital:

Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. [...] Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production.⁴⁴

The accumulation of social capital is, therefore, deeply inscribed in the propensity of a culture to produce long-lasting and mutual bonds of solidarity and reciprocity. In other words, stocks of social capital are anchored in trust cultures as the generalised potentiality to vest trust in the Other. As a consequence, the theory of social capital seems to debunk the Marxist assumption concerning the formative character of the economic base over the cultural superstructure. It is the cultural propensity of trusting that function as a factor determining the structure of economic relations.

The discourse of trust is indicative of a whole array of processes and phenomena associated with the development of modern democracies which could be conceived as moral communities founded upon the existence of horizontal social ties representing implicit reservoirs of interpersonal solidarity and loyalty. However, a democratic order is, first and foremost, forged by civic activism, the ability of self-governance and self-regulation typical of a community united by a shared perimeter of values. This is especially postulated by the tradition of "civic republicanism" which "underscores the idea of citizenship as a mode of social agency within the context of pluralistic interests."⁴⁵ In this context, robust trust cultures and emergent social capitals become transformed into the potential of undertaking collective actions aiming at the revival of public sphere and the renewal of political institutions.

Let us take a closer look at the springy resilience with which American communities of the Early National and Revolutionary Period bounced back from the inertia of the bygone colonial years. What became significant of that times was the unparalleled ability of societal self-organisation and social activism combined with the qual-

⁴⁴ James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (supplement) (1988), p. 98.

⁴⁵ Peter Dahlgren, "Doing Citizenship. The Cultural Origins of Civic Agency in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (2006), p. 269.

ity of moral revival rendering axiological coherence to an aggregate of otherwise disinterested and indifferent individuals. This “Rip Van Winkle” effect — to put it in nomenclatures of contemporary theories — becomes related to the creation of stable trust cultures: passive subjects of the Queen began to recognise themselves in terms of active citizens, autonomous agents whose multilateral cooperation (reinforced by norms of reciprocity) paved the way for a new social order as well as a new nation.⁴⁶ In this sense, the process can be perceived in terms of a spontaneous outburst of civic agency in which active citizens are the primary cultural actors performing their roles on the stage of deliberative policymaking. As Peter Dahlgren observes:

While nobody anticipates that all citizens will become embodiments of republican virtues, there are no doubt different levels of anticipation as well as different notions as to what portion of citizenry needs to manifest such virtues in order to constitute a critical mass — in different societies and at various points in history.⁴⁷

This spontaneous cascade of civic activism — the “Rip Van Winkle effect” — represents the reservoir of social agency which is constructive as far as social change is concerned. In this sense, networks of civic cooperation and solidarity constitute a powerful moral resource which acts as a bottom-up process of cultural change. The virtues of citizenship, to put it otherwise, constitute a critical mass of civic agency manifesting itself as a major factor of history-making.

The Interplay Between Trust and Uncertainty: Two Theoretical Perspectives

The theory of trust remains closely related to diverse discourses of uncertainty and risk. From this perspective, the social effectiveness of trusting relations is determined by the ability to provide specific solu-

⁴⁶ Washington Irving, *Rip Van Winkle*, in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, eds. N. Baym, W. Franklin (New York: Norton and Company, 1994), pp. 897–909.

⁴⁷ Dahlgren, “Doing Citizenship. The Cultural Origins of Civic Agency in the Public Sphere,” p. 270.

tions concerning problems of uncertainty encountered in daily routines of individuals.⁴⁸ The attitude of trust fulfils its palliative function with reference to the observed complexity and unpredictability of external world. To trust means, consequently, to bracket off risks and contingencies of everyday life. As Deborah Lupton observes:

Trust presupposes awareness of risk, offering reliability in the face of contingent outcomes and thereby serving to minimise concern about possible risk.⁴⁹

This explanatory relation between trust as well as uncertainty constitutes the common denominator of cultural and sociological approaches purporting to conceptualise risk awareness from the perspective of humanist methodologies. Discourses on uncertainty can be conceptually divided into two dominant theoretical frameworks: 1) the cultural perspective represented first and foremost of a cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas, and 2) macro-sociological theories devised by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens.⁵⁰

The central idea of the cultural perspective on uncertainty suggests that risk perception could be perceived as a cultural mechanism fostering axiological orders by means of delineating conceptual, normative and axiological boundaries between the realms of Sameness and Otherness. From this essentially functionalist perspective, moral distinctions are perceived as being derived from the boundary between human body and the world of external objects. In other words, Douglas' cultural standpoint is based upon seeing the body as a model of any social system, including a body politic:

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The function of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures.⁵¹

⁴⁸ See especially Niklas Luhmann, "Familiarity, confidence, trust: problems and alternatives," in *Trust: Making and Breaking Corporate Relations*, ed. D. Gambetta (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*; Niklas Luhmann, *Risk. A Sociological Theory* (New Brunswick and London: Aldine Transaction Publishers, 2005).

⁴⁹ Deborah Lupton, *Risk* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 78.

⁵⁰ Lupton, *Risk*, pp. 24–25.

⁵¹ See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 115.

In this sense, uncertainty, risk and danger are basic elements of the human experience as well as individuals' preoccupation with the integrity of their bodies and personalities. Problems of risk, by means of analogy, permeate social systems which are also regarded as being threatened by external dangers inflicting their moral (probably also functional) integrity. Much traditional as it may sound, this type of rationality is also typical of the contemporary cultural lexicon whose main function is to re-invent and re-define traditional concepts of taboo morality and represent them in a forensic discourse linking technological hazards with moral blame.

The idea of risk could have been custom-made. Its universalising terminology, its abstractness, its power condensation, its scientificity, its connection with objective analysis, make it perfect. Above all, its forensic uses fit the tool to the task of building a culture that supports a modern industrial society.⁵²

The aforementioned forensic use of technological hazards makes uncertainty a powerful tool of social and political criticism oriented at contemporary corporate cultures. In this context, the cultural theory of risk predicts the emergence of "green political movements" and the associated ecological discourse which uses the concept of uncertainty in order to wage an ideological war against entrepreneurs and government regulatory bodies responsible for the devastation of natural resources.⁵³ Consequently, members of environmentalist movements consider corporations and hierarchies of political authority in terms of the Other whose immoral, irresponsible behaviour causes that "risks unleashed by the fathers are visited on the heads of their children, even to the *n*th generation."⁵⁴ Risk awareness becomes perceived as a strategy of achieving moral cohesion and solidarity among environmentalist communities whose integrity becomes safeguarded by the forensic mechanism of blaming the Other.

The cultural perspective on risk brings the theory of uncertainty and the discourse of trust (conceived here as a root of political activism) within one interpretative horizon. Social experience of uncertainty

⁵² Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame. Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 15.

⁵³ Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Environmental and Technological Dangers* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

⁵⁴ Douglas, *Risk and Blame*, p. 26.

becomes a way of legitimising moral and political principles typical of a given community. What follows is a form of a cultural feedback loop: norms of solidarity and reciprocity are crystallised around commonly shared political objectives which, in turn, arise from the perception that actions triggered by the Other may destabilise cultural axiology inherent in a particular community.

The European perspective on uncertainty — developed almost simultaneously by Beck and Giddens — is concerned with the macro-structural as systemic nature of social change, rather than micro-structural and meso-structural processes of political activism. The theoretical scope of this approach refers to both trust and uncertainty as experiential correlates to the great transition that is currently taking place within the established orders of Western modernity. The categories are automatically subsumed within the purely evaluative reflection on modernisation and its consequences for agents conceived both collectively (societies, nation states, corporations) or individually. The main aim of these theories is, then, to provide a conceptual framework for — or its phenomenology, as Giddens postulates — the late industrial era in which risk is seen in terms of the globalisation and overt institutionalisation of negative consequences of the enlightened discourse of modernity. Hence, risk, as Beck proclaims, becomes:

[A] systemic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself. Risks, as opposed to older dangers, are consequences which relate to the threatening force of modernisation and to its globalisation of doubt. They are politically reflexive.⁵⁵

This concept, consequently, is related to the notion of “reflexive modernisation” stressing political and discursive mechanisms which conceptualise uncertainties and contingencies as side products of social development, negative consequences of naïve optimism vested in the postulates of scientific objectivism and imperative of progress.

Furthermore, Beck and Giddens purport to conceptualise the era of late modernity in terms of individualisation processes resulting in the creation of a new model of “reflexive biography” responding to processes of uprooting traditional, structural constraints of human agency. The individualisation process gives rise to “the disintegration of certainties of industrial society as well as the compulsion to find

⁵⁵ Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 21.

and invent new certainties for oneself and others without them.”⁵⁶ The advent of late modernity — to put it otherwise — gives rise to a condition of “cultural disembeddedness” in which an acting agent becomes deprived of existential support rendered by collective cultural phenomena. As opposed to the pre-modern social order, in which agents are reflexively entangled within pre-existent requirements of culture, the cultural order of late modernity paves the way for the agential conceptualisation of human biographies. As a result — as it is stressed later in this dissertation — it is tantamount to the demise of standardised identities which were crystallised around class, gender or race commitments:

Seen from one angle it means freedom to choose, and from another pressure to conform to internalised demands, on the one hand being responsible for yourself and on the other being dependent on conditions which completely elude your grasp.⁵⁷

As a consequence, the process of individualisation postulates the re-construction of human biographies on the foundations of relatively free choice and agential reflexivity. However, on the other hand, the process is related with new forms of psychological vulnerability.

The theoretical multiplicity of uncertainty and trust theories — to conclude these introductory remarks — is inscribed in the functional complexity of modern societies in which problems of multicultural policymaking are in league with the increased societal sensitiveness to uncertainties of everyday life. Hence, trusting relations are usually perceived as functional elements of civil societies in which they may serve as a vital component of social capital facilitating collective actions and civic activism. A positive culture of trust is, in turn, indicative of the “Rip Van Winkle effect” describing a cascade of civic agency facilitating the re-construction of public spheres.

⁵⁶ Beck, “The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernisation,” in *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 14.

⁵⁷ Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 7.

Chapter Two

Agency and Structure in the Discourse of Cultural Studies

Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain;
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
The last temptation is the greatest treason:
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.¹

The problem of human autonomy is far and away one of the most inspiring issues within the humanities. Not only does it constitute an organising principle within a number of taxonomies referring to social and cultural theories, but it also provides scholars with an opportunity to leave behind well-entrenched dilemmas of ontology as well as epistemology for the sake of insights into the ethics of human subjectivity. The array of moral considerations referring to the notion of autonomous and knowledgeable choices can be subsumed within the binary opposition between agency and structure designating contradictory processes of morphogenesis and structural determination. Individuals, therefore, are perceived as fragile and wavering entities whose agency seems to reside the “no man’s land” between the realm of social as well as cultural constraints and, on the other hand, their innate willingness to take action.

In this context, the potential to “do the right deed for the wrong reason” seems, as Thomas Stearns Eliot teaches us, to be profoundly intertwined within the basic construction of human selfhood in which agential drives to act are faced with structurally defined constraints and necessities. As opposed to commonsensical views on the matter, the emergent cultural theory of morality is not anchored in the sphere of external moral constraints and the concomitant mechanisms

¹ Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 47.

of structural determination of human action. Morality remains deeply rooted in the faculty of an actor's agency as well as reflexivity. It springs from the subjective motivation and applied hermeneutic strategies (or heuristics) facilitating the interpretation of ethical prerogatives. As a consequence, the initial act of commitment to values becomes a necessary but not sufficient condition of moral actions. What is more crucial is the motivation to comply with the interpersonal sphere of axiological regulations as well as an initial act of reflection about commonly shared norms and values.

Hence, the resultant "ethics of motivation" revolves around a premise designating human agency as being endowed with the capability of transgressing the boundaries of structurally reinforced morality by means of undermining or subverting imperatives implicit in pre-existent axiological and normative structures. In other words, the initial act of subordinating oneself to the external imperatives of ethical descent may turn morally ambiguous since it is the agential suspension of obedience² with reference to the structural that actualises or, contrariwise, subverts the pre-existent axiological imperatives. To put it still otherwise, complying with the structural must run parallel with the faculty of free will in order not to leave an individual marooned in the ethical void.

The aim of this purely methodological chapter is to observe the theoretical legacies of sociology and cultural studies from the perspective of an interplay between theories accentuating relative autonomy of human agency as well as conceptualisations based upon the postulate of structural determinism. Furthermore, in order to search for a more holistic ontology of human subjectivity, the chapter will refer to methodologies attempting to reconcile structuralism (and functionalism) as well as culturalism under the common denominator of contemporary sociological theories stressing the agential-structural duality.

The Ontology of Human Subjectivity

Theses attempting to delineate the ontology of socio-cultural realities presuppose anthropological and ethical postulates concerning both the origins of human subjectivity as well as its relation to Other(ness). It is

² See Sławek, *U-Bywać. Człowiek, świat, przyjaźń w twórczości Williama Blake'a* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2001), p. 126.

discernible in a great number of discourses purporting to combine social ontology with the concepts of free will and responsibility. Needless to say, theoretical insights into social realities cannot be perceived as being totally neutral as far as their ethical and social ramifications are concerned. In this particular context, methodologies of the empirical humanities seem to be subjected to the rule of indeterminacy which, as Werner Heisenberg postulates, dissolves the rational confidence in a research worker as an unbiased spectator endowed with a comfortable vantage point from which the scrutinised reality could be observed and assessed without a risk of subjective short-sightedness.³ As opposed to the exact sciences, in which the indeterminacy principle is assumed as an epistemological premise, the humanities remain indebted to its basic postulates in statements referring to the ontology of the constructed, socio-cultural world. In the latter context, the very idea of indeterminacy seems to diffuse the ontological grounds for the most cherished premise of positivist methodologies — the subject-object dichotomy. Not only does the presence of a scholar pose a threat to the objectivity of research procedures, but it also affects the reality which is being studied. By the same token, individuals assuming roles of the target objects of observation and theoretical exploration always remain responsive and reflexively entangled within the very process of cognition. Scholars, thus, are no longer comfortably withdrawn from the object of studies: their work becomes reciprocated and reflected by the socio-cultural reality. In other words, the very ability to understand the socio-cultural world remains susceptible to the formative, structuring presence of the Other; it is dependable upon the existence of “phenomena which are already constituted as meaningful.”⁴

Cognitive processes indicated by the introduction of Heisenberg’s postulate seem to intersect with the repudiation of the Cartesian *cogito* conceptualised in terms of a detached observer (and a creator) of the external reality. In this specific context, contemporary debates over the enigma of the subject stem from the legacy of critical conceptualisations referring to the Cartesian model of human subjectivity.⁵ Many critical theories have aimed to re-conceptualise, to use Max Weber’s

³ Werner Heisenberg, *The Physical Principles of the Quantum Theory* (New York: Dover Publications, 1949); see also Stanisław Ossowski, *O osobliwościach nauk społecznych* (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), pp. 183–185.

⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 284.

⁵ Wojciech Kalaga, *Nebulae of Discourse. Interpretation, Textuality and the Subject* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 157–159.

terminology, the “ideal type” of a solipsistic and coherent agent whom cognitive capacities situate in a position of antecedence with regard to the external reality:

[T]he subject is constituted in the *Cogito ergo sum*, where *sum* renders a being anterior to the reality perceived and thought by it, a reified individual, an origin and sole source of its own conscious action, complete in its unity and coherence.⁶

Interestingly enough, the pristine formula of Cartesian subjectivity seems to pay its theoretical debts to the medieval concepts of homunculi perceived in terms of idealised representations of human agents by followers of the alchemy.⁷ Such abstract marionettes, however, are not placed in the flow of social experiences. Consequently, they become deprived of their own identities as well as biographies, and do not possess any conceivable mode of existence than the experimental situations conceived entirely by an alchemist who has previously brought them to life.

This dissolution or displacement of the Cartesian conceptualisation of human subjectivity (or agency) implies, first and foremost, that the inherently human potentiality of self-perfection and completion becomes actualised due to the formative, structuring presence of the Other. An agent becomes subdued to a “decentring and communicative vision in which the self becomes completed and perfected through the process of intersubjectivity, that is through ‘social relationship of communion and reciprocity.’”⁸ In a way, the solipsistic *cogito* remains somehow disabled; it represents a shadow of a man, rather than a living person. This implies that the individual cannot possibly exist beyond bonds of the interpersonal. The egocentric consciousness of the Cartesian subject becomes socialised and, as it were, returned to the field of the interpersonal and the dialogical which is fraught with the multiplicity of voices as well as cognitive perspectives. In this sense, to come back to Heisenberg’s ideas one more time, an act of observing the Other becomes instantaneously reciprocated by the Other’s responsive and formative counter-gaze. Such an essentially humanistic perspective on the ontology of human subjectivity implies the critical premise that, to recall Paul Ricoeur’s words, “the selfhood of oneself implies other-

⁶ Kalaga, *Nebulae of Discourse*, p. 157.

⁷ Alfred Schütz, *Collected Papers: The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 59.

⁸ Ewa Borkowska, *At the Threshold of Mystery. Poetic Encounters with Other(ness)* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 57.

ness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought without the other."⁹

The process of dissolving the abstract unity of the Cartesian subject may be perceived through the lenses of symbolic-interactive theories whose intellectual background renders making a leap towards the dichotomy of structure and agency possible. In this context, the centre of cognitive gravity may be attributed to systematic inquiries into the origins of human subjectivity which itself is conceived as an element entangled within the communicative structures of societal interaction. Hence, the aforementioned ideas of perfection and completion suggest a dynamic model of the Self which finds its actualisation in the sphere of interactive processes. Having assumed a cognitive, inherently symbolic nature of the Self, George Herbert Mead asserts that attempts at abstracting the Ego from the field of the Other would imply the construction of hypostases as untenable as squaring of the circle:

The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are object to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved.¹⁰

From the perspective of symbolic-interactive theories, an autonomous, reflective agent becomes simultaneously reflexive, that is responsive to the structuring presence of the Other. The act of self-cognition logically presupposes the figure of the Other whose presence is formative as far as an agent's self-knowledge is concerned. In this context, consequently, the Self is conceived as a cognitive capability existing *in statu nascendi*, in the inter-subjective process consisting of relations of interpersonal communication and reciprocity. The Self can be represented as a series of symbolic processes assuming the relation between an active,

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 3.

¹⁰ George Herbert Mead, "The Self, the I and the Me," in *Social Theory. The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, ed. C. Lemert (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), p. 221.

perceptually oriented as well as reflective agent and the socialised looking-glass of the Other. Needless to say, such a dialogical construction undermines the initial conceptualisation of the subject (the *cogito*) which — to follow contemporary attempts at dismantling the Cartesian subject — becomes debunked by the fact that “the idea of myself appears profoundly transformed, due to my recognizing this Other, who causes the presence in me of its own representation.”¹¹

The idea suggesting that an agent and agency are completed in the processes of societal interaction is deeply rooted in the history of philosophy. Its origins can be traced as far back as to the Aristotelian concept of *zoon politikon* — the resident of the interpersonal whose emotional, cognitive and personal development is determined by a pre-existent social surrounding.¹² Such a relation of societal determination, to express its significance in the nomenclature typical of the symbolic-interactive theories, rests upon the presence of myriads of “significant others” who inscribe themselves upon a personality interacting with them. However, the role of personality-formation can be realised by the sphere of cultural phenomena and products which, as Roman Ingarden observes, retain the capability to mould individuals who are regarded as participants in culture.¹³

Such a post-Cartesian conceptualisation, nevertheless, seems to bear traces of generic relatedness to the contemporary attempts at dismantling the internal coherence of the Self which becomes either dissolved in the field of the Other or is perceived as an internally diversified entity whose coherence implodes into the multiplicity of symbolic references constituting “[the] immense dictionary from which he draws.”¹⁴ These radical (post)structuralist or post-modern viewpoints have permeated the field of cultural studies and evoked the profound incredulity in human subjectivity conceived as the major source of agential drives. The standpoint is best represented by Catherine Belsey’s definition of human subjectivity:

“Identity,” subjectivity is thus a matrix of subject positions, which may be inconsistent or even in contradiction with one another. Subjectivity, then, is linguistically and discursively constructed and displaced across the range of discourses in

¹¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 9.

¹² Jerzy Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej* (Warszawa: PWN, 2004), pp. 28–29.

¹³ Roman Ingarden, *Książeczka o człowieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972), p. 37.

¹⁴ See Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. D. Lodge (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 170.

which the concrete individual participates. [...] The subject is constructed in language and discourse and, since the symbolic order in its discursive use is closely related to ideology, in ideology.¹⁵

Although the idea of disintegration is also evoked in symbolic-interactive theories, its realisation does not seem to postulate the ultimate dissolution of human subjectivity. Paradoxically enough, Mead's notion of the Self seems to enable the reconciliation of agency (and human subjectivity) with the structural. It is possible due to the assumption postulating that the Ego is actually constituted in the process of multilateral interpersonal interactions in which it may assume a form of a great collection of elements constituting the multiple personality (*homo multiplex*). This internalised disorder of human personality, to put the idea in a more philological manner, manifests itself as two intelligible substrata of human personality that become represented in language by the subject pronoun "I" and the object pronoun "Me."¹⁶ From this perspective, the subjective "I-self" retains the essential qualities of reflexivity as well as self-consciousness and can be represented, to use the language of contemporary psychology, as an ability to gaze into the internal universe of innermost experiences. The socially objectified "Me-self," in turn, represents the structuring presence of the Other which actualises itself as an ability to apprehend oneself from the perspective of different individuals. Nevertheless, a similar idea is conveyed by the concept of "the looking-glass self" developed by Charles Horton Cooley:

In a very large and interesting class of cases, the social reference takes the form of a somewhat definite imagination of how one's self — that is any idea he appropriates — appears in a particular mind, and the kind of self-feeling one has is determined by the attitude toward that other mind. A social self of this sort might be called the reflected or looking-glass self.¹⁷

¹⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980), p. 61. Quoted after W. Kalaga, "Culture and Signification," in *Britishness and Cultural Studies. Continuity and Change in Narrating the Nation*, eds. K. Knauer, S. Murray (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2000), p. 65.

¹⁶ Mead, "The Self, the I and the Me," pp. 224–225.

¹⁷ Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1930). Quoted after C. Lemert, ed. *Social Theory. The Multicultural and Classic Readings* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), p. 185.

This formative encounter with Other(ness) conveys an idea that reaches further into the abstract, than the process of assuming relations with different, personalised individuals. The Other seldom reveals itself as a tangible, individualised person. Its influence is experienced indirectly as an impact of collective social aggregates, such as overwhelming social masses, social and linguistic structures, and institutionalised apparatuses. The same, however, is true for the Self: one may refer to signs and traces of the Ego which are communicated towards the sphere of the Other, such as particular acts of creative agency, actions or thoughts. Being a variation of the traditional dichotomy separating the internal from the external, the opposition between the Self and the Other can be represented as the antinomy between agency and structure.

Much central to the discourse of the contemporary cultural studies as it may be,¹⁸ the binary opposition of structure-agency does not pose a new dilemma in the humanities. It stems from the dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity that finds its direct predecessors, as far as the theoretical legacy of cultural studies is concerned, in the Durkheimian and de Saussurean traditions of structuralism and the Husserlean and Weberian schools of historicism and hermeneutic.¹⁹ Approached from a different perspective, the antinomy may be translated into two different methodological options.²⁰ First of all, this is a model that explains individual actions and social practices by means of structural conditions of their occurrence. The second possibility, contrariwise, refers to socio-cultural structures as enigmatic and obscure entities which can be explained due to the systematic analysis of human actions.

The Theoretical Multiplicity within Cultural Studies

When approached from a perspective of traditional methodologies, cultural studies are often regarded as an eclectic and nebular field comprising a number of intersecting paradigms, viewpoints and political interests, rather than a unified and homogeneous theory. This

¹⁸ See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," in *Media, Culture and Society. A Critical Reader*, eds. R. Collins et al. (London: Sage Publications, 1986), pp. 33–48.

¹⁹ Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory. An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 22–24.

²⁰ Sztompka, *Society in Action. The Theory of Social Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 3–4.

evident heteroglossia implicit in the British and American cultural studies seems to emanate from the post-modern penchant for the institutionalised plurality as well as deregulation which, in turn, gives rise to methodological pursuits enabling the transgression of established academic discourses.²¹ In a way, the discipline becomes indicative of the “decentralised concentration,” to use Manuel Castells’s apt, yet oxymoronic phrase denoting the model of social organisation and its dominant mode of production in the age of information society.²²

The rhizome-like, essentially deregulated and heterogeneous character of cultural studies seems to spring from the structural conditions embodied in the framework of the networked society. From a methodological point of view, the discipline remains devoid of its epistemological centre of gravity and rests upon the possibility of amalgamating diverse discourses (each founded upon dissimilar methodologies and theoretical premises) under the label of the shared subject matter. Consequently, the condition of academic knowledge in the reality of information society gives rise to “baggy monsters”²³ – networked and fluid discursive formations that know no sense of hierarchy since from the onset are designed as constellations of cognitive tools which seem equally valid in the process of unveiling socio-cultural realities. In this context, the realm of cultural studies could be subsumed within the possibility of constructing an intelligible “discourse about discourses,” to recall Michel Foucault’s phrase.²⁴

Despite the epistemological polyphony of cultural studies, it is still possible to delineate its internal structure. Cultural studies are defined as “the social science of the study of the production, distribution, exchange and reception of textualised meanings.”²⁵ From the perspective of the definition cited above, there is little doubt that the discipline has been designed to cope with problems constituted at the intersection of culture, social systems and politics. In this way, cultural studies respond to a broad spectrum of issues referring both the functioning of

²¹ Frederick Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, ed. F. Jameson (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 2–3.

²² Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 502.

²³ See Claire Hobbs, “Perspectives on Culture and Cultural Studies,” in *Britishness and Cultural Studies. Continuity and Change in Narrating the Nation*, eds. K. Knauer, S. Murray (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2000), p. 47.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Tavistock, 1974), p. 205.

²⁵ Andrew Milner, *Re-Imagining Cultural Studies: The Promise of Cultural Materialism* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 5.

social institutions (mass media broadcasters, political regulatory bodies, public and private education) as well as problems addressing the construction of knowledge by means of interpersonal communication and practices of signification. In other words, cultural studies reflect socio-cognitive processes through which individuals make sense of their social reality by way of constructing textual devices.

When approached from a methodological point of view, cultural studies are divided into two dominant modes of explanation (the structuralist and the culturalist) which, in turn, translate themselves into the agency-structure dichotomy. It means that the discipline is susceptible to bi-polar distinctions between inquires oscillating around the problems of structural determination of human activities in the field of discursive formations (or in language) as well as issues referring to individual and social *praxes* that manifest themselves as processes of interpersonal communication, societal negotiation of norms and values and, last but not least, conflicts over power and authority. The dominating paradigms within cultural studies, as Hall declares, reflect concern with agency and structure and the roles which these notions play in diverse studies of socio-cultural reality.²⁶ Moreover, these two conceptual models offer solutions concerning, first and foremost, the ontology of socio-cultural world, the role of actions undertaken by individuals in its duration and the ultimate significance attached to the notion of human subjectivity.

The culturalist paradigm is based upon an idea postulating that the category of sensuous human activity becomes indispensable in order to understand the overall scope of cultural reproduction. In this sense, culture is regarded as a manifestation of human creative energy which is interwoven with the totality of human practices; it is a sphere in which human agency actualises itself in the course of deploying signs in order to provide the external reality with significance.²⁷ Such a conception, to put it in a more philological manner, is etymologically intelligible since the Latin origin of the word "culture" suggests its essentially agential character as "the tending of something, basically crops or animals."²⁸ This particular viewpoint paved the way for modern conceptualisations perceiving culture as a field of mental and spiritual perfection (*cultura animi*).²⁹ Such idealist and evaluative perspectives on culture convey

²⁶ Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," in *Media, Culture and Society. A Critical Reader*, eds. R. Collins et al. (London: Sage Publications, 1986).

²⁷ Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," pp. 36–39.

²⁸ Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 87.

²⁹ Antonina Kłosowska, *Kultura masowa. Krytyka i obrona* (Warszawa: PWN, 1980), pp. 9–13.

agential ideas of self-perfection best rendered by Matthew Arnold's statement addressing cultural production as "absorption in the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time."³⁰ In this context, the concept of spiritual development refers to the Romantic distinction between culture and civilisation. Whereas the former was perceived as drives towards "the sweetness and light," the latter referred to activities oriented at tending of economic welfare and was seen as a totality of actions which are functional as far as human labour and production are concerned.³¹

Although the culturalist paradigm dispenses with the evaluative tendencies of former definitions and sees culture in essentially non-evaluative terms, it is still founded upon an idea that culture should be perceived as a sphere of manifestation of agential dispositions, a realm constructed by intelligible actions undertaken by individuals conceived as *homo creator*. As a consequence, the notions of culture and civilisation are subsumed within the doctrine of all-pervading cultural production which relates issues of symbolic culture to the material context of social existence. This theory aims at conceptualising the general field of cultural production regarded as a province of social practices which — in spite of being anchored in the socio-economic inequalities typical of modern, class-ridden societies — are perceived under the common denominator of social *praxis*. One may recall Hall's observations referring to this theoretical viewpoint:

In its different ways, it conceptualises culture as interwoven with all social practices; and those practices, in turn, as a common form of human activity: sensuous human praxis, the activity thorough which men and women make history. [...] The experiential pull in this paradigm, and the emphasis on the *creative and on historical agency*, constitutes the two elements in the humanism of the position outlined.³²

This essentially humanistic model of reasoning puts the onus on the historical agency or the processes of "historicity" — as Alain Touraine³³ defines shaping of socio-cultural realities by human ac-

³⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. S. Lipman (Michigan: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 48.

³¹ Such a conceptualization is also typical of German philosophy. Cf. F. Schiller, "On the Aesthetic Education of Man," in *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization*, eds. J. Rundell, S. Mennell (London and New York: 1998), pp. 85–94.

³² Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," p. 39. Emphasis added.

³³ See Alain Touraine, *The Voice and the Eye. An Analysis of Social Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 9.

tion — and may be inscribed within the historico-hermeneutic tradition of humanistic interrogation represented by Max Weber. Weber's hermeneutic sociology gave rise to the inherently humanistic strategy of constructing theories whose centre of gravity is attributed to the category of a sensuous and knowledgeable social action. History, and by the same token society and culture, constitutes an immense cosmos of subjectively intelligible actions undertaken by reflective individuals who are driven by dissimilar motivations of teleological, axiological, affective and traditional descents. Hence, it is impossible to deploy the mechanistic methodology of exact sciences in order to explore socio-cultural realities. The most appropriate form of cognition must entail empathy which is combined with interpretative understanding (*Verstehen*)³⁴ in order to signal that social as well as cultural phenomena are deeply rooted in the phenomenology of human experience.

In the light of Weber's theory, complex social and economic systems, such as capitalism or legal-rational bureaucracy, become deprived of their autonomous ontological status and are perceived in terms of social actions.³⁵ As a result, methodologies should be based upon statements addressing processes of social and cultural "morphogenesis," that is the emergence of structures from the realm of consciousness and human actions.³⁶ Cultural artefacts, such as ideologies or discursive formations, are never "given" or pre-existent. Such entities are seen as consequences of informed human actions intelligible as far as one's values, attitudes, or motivations are concerned. Structures, consequently, are perceived as being obscure or elusive and their significance can be unveiled due to a study of diverse agential processes that have paved the way for their constitution.

The tradition of structural thought, on the contrary, postulates an entirely different perspective on social and cultural realities. In this respect, it seems to follow the Platonic scepticism towards the reality of everyday experiences which "would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images."³⁷ The rigorous distinction between the essence

³⁴ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. G. Roth, C. Wittich, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 4.

³⁵ The most challenging and intellectually inspiring analysis of the origins socio-economic structure from the perspective of value-oriented actions is conveyed in the classical treaty *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

³⁶ Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: the Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 166.

³⁷ Plato, *The Republic* in *The Portable Plato*, ed. S. Buchanan (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 547.

and shadowy appearances gives rise to the structuralist thinking representing the subject which remains marooned in the world of deceptive images, ideologies and false consciousness. From this perspective, the underlying theoretical structure of structuralism can be regarded as consisting of five constitutive elements: positivism, anti-historicism, the politics of demystification, theoreticism, anti-humanism.³⁸

Structuralism revolves around a positivistic idea suggesting that socio-cultural reality is endowed with a set of underlying, objective principles which organizes human consciousness, nature, cognition and all forms of taking part in social life. Therefore, individuals become deprived of autonomy; their agency remains elusive and uncertain. People are compelled to exist in the universe of pre-conceived ideas, cause-and-effect relationships and objective facts. In this context, structuralism offers a complete contradiction of the Weberian culturalism: if the latter regards structural properties of socio-cultural reality as a kind of “theoretical surplus,” the former sees human consciousness as a counterproductive phenomenon driving people astray.³⁹

The anti-humanist dissipation of human agency is a result of conceptualising socio-cultural reality as an entity *sui generis*, that is, endowed with a specific mode of existence rendering its relative autonomy from human actions possible. Having defined sociology as “the science of institutions, of their genesis and their functioning,” Durkheim (Ferdinand de Saussure’s academic mentor) proceeds straight forward to the first purely structuralist claim postulating that “the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of individual consciousness.”⁴⁰ In this context, an appropriate approach to methodological problems should repudiate all idiosyncrasies or irregularities for the sake of constructing meticulous models capturing objective, repeatable relationships between a number of empirical facts.⁴¹ Hence, society and culture are perceived as “living

³⁸ Milner, Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory*, pp. 96–98.

³⁹ Tomasz Burzyński, *The Surplus of Structure: Towards the Morphogenetic Approach to Cultural Studies*, in *The Surplus of Culture. Sense, Common-sense, Non-sense*, eds. E. Borkowska, T. Burzyński (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 235–244.

⁴⁰ Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. S.A. Solovay, J.H. Mueller (New York: Free Press, 1938), pp. lvii, 110. Quoted after B.N. Adams, R.A. Sydie, *Classical Sociological Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 96–97. Emphasis mine.

⁴¹ In the context of structural methodology, inherently personal deeds, such as attempts to commit suicide for instance, are perceived as consequences of external organization of society, not the internal arrangement of psychic dispositions. See Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1951).

organisms" whose development resembles a process in which their hidden structural construction unveils further possibilities of change.

The legacy of Durkheimian structuralism indicates that society and culture may become conceptualised as two forms of autopoietic structures, that is systems whose internal coherence is attained due to the structuring principle of self-reference.⁴² Needless to say, the ontological as well as methodological logic that paves the way for the idea of autopoiesis remains contradictory with reference to the postulate of human agency. Both society and culture are conceived in terms of internally organised structures whose existence organises human life, as it were, from the outside. It seems that the most straightforward application of such a positivistic rationale, deeply rooted in the domains of biology and exact sciences, is the model of linguistic system as it is conceived by de Saussure.⁴³ As Durkheim's disciple, de Saussure postulates that symbolic culture constitutes a realm *sui generis*. This manifests itself as the internal organisation of *langue*, a term designating an abstract, ideal system composed entirely of negative relations in which the meaning of a particular element is to be understood from the vantage point of the whole linguistic structure regarded as a coherent totality. From this perspective, the agential potentiality implicit in acts of making concrete linguistic utterances (the *parole*) is seen as a mere reflection, an ephemeral entity deprived of any mode of existence remaining independent of the pre-established system of collective experiences.

The main tenets of structuralism are outlined in the formative and seminal text, *Primitive Classifications and Social Knowledge* (1903), in which Durkheim and Marcel Mauss draw a pervasive sketch of the structural determination of social actions:

Society was not simply a model which classificatory thought followed; it was its own divisions which served as divisions for the system of classification. The first logical categories were social categories; the first classes of things were classes

⁴² Francisco Varela, *Principles of Biological Autonomy* (New York: North Holland Press, 1979). After P. Frelik, *Wild(er)ness of Technology*, in *The Wild and the Tame. Essays in Cultural Practice*, eds. W. Kalaga, T. Rachwał (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1997), p. 114. The term "autopoiesis" has emerged as a popular expression adopted by new functionalist-structural discourses. See also N. Luhmann, *The Autopoiesis of Social Systems*, in *Essays of Self-Reference*, ed. N. Luhmann (New York: 1990), pp. 1–20.

⁴³ Ferdinand de Saussure, *The Nature of Linguistic Sign*, in *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism. An Anthology*, ed. D. Lodge (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 10–14.

of men, into which these things were integrated. [...] Thus, logical hierarchy is only another aspect of social hierarchy, and the unity of knowledge is nothing else than the very unity of collectivity, extended to the universe.⁴⁴

The extra-personal organisation of social facts, thus, accounts for the intra-personal universe of human cognition. In other words, individuals are perceived as running in the structuralist treadmill. Since their cognitive capabilities constitute a reflection of the pre-existent, objective *status quo*, the resultant actions, consequently, have no other conceivable impact upon the reality than reproducing the given structures.

The Durkheimian structuralism, thus, is a logical system of explanation whose centre of gravity can be attributed to the strategy of displacing human agency. Social facts are constructed by means of their relative position in the social system which, in turn, provides a conceptual matrix for individuals who act within its boundaries. In this sense, the dichotomous classification of appearance/essence is reconstructed in a novel theoretical guise — the commonsensical assumption that individuals are masters of their own deeds becomes automatically dispelled as an illusion or simulacrum produced by reified minds.

The Theoretical *Gestalt Switch*

If their extreme or orthodox readings are assumed, the two aforementioned paradigms fall victim to theoretical hypostases restraining us from getting a clear perspective on the ontology of the socio-cultural reality as well as the nature of human agency.⁴⁵ It seems that a critical examination the paradigms reveals a critical mass of methodological irregularities, a vexing presence of “a persistent and recognised anomaly,” to use Thomas Kuhn’s terminology. Needless to say, the departure from the paradigms bears signs of a theoretical *Gestalt switch* and constitutes a radical process in which the well-trodden paths of humanistic interrogation become falsified.

⁴⁴ Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification and Social Knowledge*, in *Social Theory. The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, ed. C. Lemert (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), pp. 87–88.

⁴⁵ See especially Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 2; Sztompka, *Society in Action*, pp. 92–93.

Since, as Hall observes, "neither 'culturalism' nor 'structuralism' is, in its present manifestation, adequate to the task of constructing the theory of culture as a conceptually clarified and theoretically informed domain of study,"⁴⁶ the development of conceptual as well as methodological apparatuses of cultural studies seems to run parallel to the model of non-cumulative science. What is needed, hence, is a theoretical about-face that will provide a combination of the formerly introduced assumptions, so that a novel "middle-of-the-road ontology of the constructed, constructing and historical world"⁴⁷ may emerge.

The assumption of interpretative perspectives associated with culturalism may give rise to a methodological simplification in which the stress is laid on the dimension of human actions and subjective experience. This, at the same time, provokes the displacement of problems concerning emergent structural properties to the hinterlands of theoretical discourses. Such a standpoint, nevertheless, promotes an idea that socio-cultural reality is generally disorganised, deprived of its solid structural core: "[T]he overall outcome of such revisions is a vision of a fluid, changeable social setting, kept in motion by interaction of plurality of autonomous and uncoordinated agents."⁴⁸ In the context of cultural studies, this kind of reasoning evokes the "illusion of egocentrism" which is caused by a malady of short-sightedness with reference to structural determinants of human actions.

Although some scholars are keen on by-passing this shortcoming by means of perceiving cultural production from the perspective of economic inequalities implicit in the class structure of industrial and post-industrial societies, their insight is limited to the material conditions of human existence.⁴⁹ Such an overly materialistic perspective remains elusive as far as the ultimate character of cultural production is concerned: it refers to culture as an entity which remains reflexive of the pre-established structures of socio-economic opportunities. As a consequence, other structural determinants of social as well as cultural *praxis* are left behind as somewhat under-theorised notions. This is particularly true of non-material conditions of cultural reproduction (and social actions in general), namely the pre-existent

⁴⁶ Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," p. 43.

⁴⁷ Sztompka, *Society in Action*, p. 53.

⁴⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, "Sociological Responses to Postmodernity," in *Moderno et Postmoderno*, eds. C. Mongradini, M.L. Manisaclo (Rome: Bulzoni, 1989), p. 142. Quoted after P. Sztompka, *Society in Action*, p. 18.

⁴⁹ This is especially true of theories postulated by Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart.

axiological, normative, ideological and interactive structures.⁵⁰ Hence, the methodology of cultural materialism does not take into account such problems as pre-existent discursive formations, norms and values implicit in the cultural traditions as well as the structurally defined interactive options which diverse social groups are equipped with. These determinants constitute an overall basis for actions undertaken by individuals: agency is always anchored in axiological and normative constraints, economic incentives and disincentives, societal reservoirs of knowledge and, last but not least, in prospects of gaining support from other actors.

On the other hand, the discourse of structuralism gives rise to the fallacy of “collectivistic epiphenomenalism” which provides us with an equally deceptive image of an “oversocialised conception of man,”⁵¹ a concept postulating that individuals do not resemble active subjects but, contrariwise, bearers of diverse linguistic and social structures that “speak” them and “place” them in the pre-conceived, structural and autopoietic order. From this perspective, social norms, values, discursive formations and economic opportunities are perceived as internalised structural imperatives that force an individual to act in ways which are functional with reference to the socio-cultural system conceived as a coherent totality existing in the state of more or less settled equilibrium. As a result, such a conceptualisation provides little theoretical space for unexpected and spontaneous changes. It does not seem to reserve space for the fact that individuals “could have acted otherwise,” to use a phrase coined by Giddens.

The aforementioned theoretical *Gestalt switch* aims to repudiate the well-entrenched discourse of binary oppositions: the conventional distinction between individualistic and structural methodologies is perceived from a new perspective in which the old viewpoints collapse and give rise to a novel insight into the nature of socio-cultural reality. The emergent theories, in turn, are founded upon a firm belief that the dimensions of agency and structure may become synthesised in a form of a dialectic and holistic ontology.

⁵⁰ Sztompka, *Society in Action*, pp. 124–125.

⁵¹ See Denis H. Wrong, “The Oversocialised Conception of Man in Modern Sociology,” *American Sociological Review*, no. 2 (1961), pp. 183–193.

Towards the Dialectic Ontology of Human Subjectivity and Socio-Cultural Reality

If the contemporary social theory is ruled by any dominating tendencies in methodology, this is the idea that the binary opposition between structure and agency can be overcome for the sake of constructing more holistic hypotheses referring to the realm of the social and the cultural. The dichotomy itself (as it was delineated at the beginning of this chapter) may be derived from philosophical considerations concerning the relations occurring between the Self and the Other. From this perspective, both the Cartesian conceptualisation of human subjectivity as well as theoretical stratagems attempting at dissecting and dismantling its coherence may be represented as the agency-structure dichotomy. A similar problematic will be evoked as a point of departure in the quest for a synthetic, dialectic ontology of the constructed world.

When perceived through the prism of either the Cartesian conceptualisation of human subjectivity or theories contradicting it, the structure-agency antinomy seems to be fallacious in the light of novel ontologies of the human subjectivity. In this sense, attempts at constructing univocal representations of the Self and society seem illusory. This is especially true of theories referring to the Self as an entity either remaining totally reflexive of the external environment or, conversely, being totally anterior to society and culture. As Wojciech Kalaga observes:

In the last instance, however, the actual being of the subject is rooted in its own interpretative activity: it is here that both meanings of interpretation — epistemological and ontological — come together and undergo a synthesis in the being-becoming of the subject. The subject is a self-interpreting subject in the very strong sense of that term: both with regard to its existential and its qualitative constitution.⁵²

In the light of the paragraph quoted above, it becomes evident that the human subjectivity constructs itself in the course of acts of self-interpretation. Individuality is tantamount to the ability to refer to oneself in terms of a self-conscious, informed user of signification tools. Such a conceptualisation is also intelligible as far as psychological insights into human personality are concerned. In the latter context, the

⁵² Kalaga, *Nebulae of Discourse*, p. 177.

Self is regarded as the core element of personality and manifests itself as a cognitive process of gazing into the universe of our innermost experiences. However, the human constitution as *zoon politikon* does not allow for a theory which would totally place the origins of human subjectivity beyond the field of the social, the Other. In this sense, as Kalaga observes, agents may exist discursively even before the act of their birth as narratives constructed by others for whom they constitute significant persons. To conclude, one may refer to the Self in terms of an entity which oscillates between two universes: the internal realm of self-interpretation and the external sphere of discourse formation.

A comparable theoretical situation is delineated by the Heideggerian category of *Dasein* which expresses this dualistic ontology of human subjectivity in onto-hermeneutic terms.⁵³ The subject is characterised by an inherent, agential drive towards interpretation and reflectively refers to itself as being placed in the reality that has previously been interpreted by others. From this specific perspective, subjects are seen as peculiar amalgamates of the Self and the Other, matrixes interpolating the internal or agential dispositions to act with the external or structural conditions associated with the formative presence of other individuals. The reflexive agents, therefore, are structured by their significant relations with the Other, yet at the same time may re-create, re-interpret themselves by means of knowledge elicited from past experiences. A similar problem, to put it still otherwise, is signalled by "the concept of reversibility according to which the one that sees is also seen."⁵⁴ As a result, agents are ontologically positioned in the middle of the road between their own perceptions and the impressions induced by the formative influence of the social. This way of thinking also binds the ontological with the epistemological: to exist means to be reflectively aware that the Other is, so to speak, on the watch.

The discussion referring to the ontological status of human subjectivity constitutes a comfortable point of departure towards the debate concerning the dissolution of the agency-structure dichotomy in the methodological context of cultural studies. From this perspective, the ontological continuity between agency (the individual) and structure (the social, trans-personal) is postulated. Various signs and traces of this reasoning can be found in diverse theoretical endeavours. In this sense, to recall Cooley's words, "[S]elf and society are twin-born, we know one as immediately as we know the other, and the notion of separate

⁵³ Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Kłopoty z przygodnością: powrót historyzmu*, pp. 28–29.

⁵⁴ Borkowska, *At the Threshold*, p. 58.

and independent ego is an illusion."⁵⁵ In the light of this citation the levels of agency and structure become profoundly intertwined — the basic construction of socio-cultural reality seems to resemble a joint product of the two perspectives.

The synthesis of agency and structure rests upon five interrelated ontological premises: (1) structuralism, (2) creativism, (3) processualism, (4) possibilism, and (5) reflexiveness.⁵⁶ In the light of cultural studies, these tenets (being essentially the pillars of post-functionalist sociologies) constitute a basis for implementing a creative amalgamation of structuralism in its original Durkheimian and de Saussurean senses, and culturalism as it is postulated by Weber and the British tradition of cultural studies. The overall summary of the new dialectic theory is provided by Sztompka who argues that:

It is a world in which reflexive individuals are seen as creatures and creators at the same time, social wholes as fluid relational networks humanly made, but also affecting people, and historical processes as the stream of incessant interplay of emergence and determination, in the course of which both individuals and society undergo cumulative transformations.⁵⁷

The first premise rests upon a new interpretation of structuralism which postulates the necessity of perceiving socio-cultural realities in terms of structures unveiling themselves as patterns (or regularities) that may be observed within diverse empirical phenomena (such as actions, interactions, communication channels). Structures are deprived of their objective nature *sui generis* and, consequently, are conceptualised in terms of aggregates comprising organised social actions. Consequently, culture does not consist of structures — it only displays some regular patterns of symbolic actions which are undertaken in a relatively conscious manner. Methodologies should be concerned, first and foremost, with observing regularities in the socio-cultural reality without granting them any mode of operation which is pre-existent with reference to actions undertaken by agents. This line of explanation, consequently, follows from the dimension of human action towards the realm of emergent socio-cultural structures.

⁵⁵ Charles H. Cooley, *Social Organization* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 5.

⁵⁶ See Sztompka, *Society in Action*, pp. 51–86.

⁵⁷ In this case, the notion of “structuralism” is not in league with the original, derived from Durkheim and de Saussure, understanding of the term. Sztompka, *Society in Action*, p. 86.

The next premise refers to the dimension of creative drives implicit in agents perceived as participants in the socio-cultural environments. Individuals are inherently endowed with an impulse to act, with an energy to initiate actions, yet they encounter the external reality as a sphere of incentives and disincentives facilitating or restraining undertaken actions. In other words, people are, to a certain extent, constituted and constructed within social and linguistic structures. These systems, however, function as the main vehicles of intentional, reflective creativity typical of human beings. From this perspective, an individual resembles the *homo creator*, an entity that uses encountered circumstances or objects in order to produce innovations. Consequently, in the context of operating agents, any form of creation done *ex nihilo* constitutes an illusory idea.

The premise of processualism refers to the nature of changes taking place within society and culture. As a product of human action, history is conceived in terms of unpredictable social actions and, consequently, is deprived of its final objective. Nevertheless, historical changeability does not constitute a chaotic universe of phenomena that manifest themselves in a purely accidental manner. It can be characterised by a number of rules constituting its sequential logic. In this context, for instance, the rise of mass culture is logically necessitated by the development of great urban districts and the industrial organisation of production which, in turn, are determined by the advancement of agricultural technologies taking place in the times of late agrarian societies. Yet, the stages of modernisation are not endowed with the final objective, the Hegelian end of history. In other words, despite hopes expressed by enlightened Western intellectuals, the underdeveloped countries face plenty of possible routes towards modernisation, not only the one that has been conceived *ex post*, on the basis of historical experiences of the West. Concurrently, the notions of "multiple modernities" and "reflexive modernisation"⁵⁸ have been coined in order to put an emphasis on the non-linear, non-teleological process of socio-cultural development.

The premise of possibilism is based upon an assumption that actions participating in the re-production of the common socio-cultural and historical habitat are simultaneously determined by their external circumstances. In a way, the assumption is a logical ramification of the aforementioned theses: individuals are creators of the external socio-cultural environment, their agential potentialities become accumulated

⁵⁸ See Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash, eds., *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

as patterns of historical changeability, yet history provides structural circumstances for human actions.

Selected elements of the aforementioned theses are evident in theoretical projects represented in French, British and Polish intellectual traditions respectively by works of Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens and Piotr Sztompka. Their theoretical interrogation may shed further light on the enigma of cultural production as it is presented within the legacy of the British and American cultural studies. Moreover, these theories can provide us with innovative insights into the nature of cultural change, individual as well as collective identities and mechanisms of interpolating cultural production with authority and political power. The proposed theoretical perspectives constitute, nevertheless, a limited venture to construct a selection of the most conspicuous discourses embracing attempts at synthesising the dimensions of agency and structure into a coherent theorem.⁵⁹

The *Habitus* and the Capitals Dialectic Tendencies in Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Social Practice and Participation in Symbolic Culture

Problems referring to the dimensions of agency and structure are evoked in diverse analyses concerning relations taking place between and social inequalities and the participation in symbolic culture. In this kind of conceptualisation, class affiliations are perceived as outcomes of actions undertaken with reference to cultural resources, such as values, norms (including norms of aesthetic judgement) and discourses. This particular methodology becomes indicative of Pierre Bourdieu's theory which amalgamates the agential dimension of participation in symbolic culture with the structural aspect of social inequalities as they are observed within the boundaries of (post)modern capitalist societies. Consequently, the theory, as Milner and Browitt observe,⁶⁰ assumes the paradigm of sociology of culture as a starting point and arrives at the realm of critical theory that bears marks of generic resemblance with the legacy of the Frankfurt school.

⁵⁹ This line of constructing theories is indicative of perspectives postulated by such scholars as: Walter Buckley, Amitai Etzioni, Alain Touraine, Margaret Archer, Norbert Elias and Charles Tilly.

⁶⁰ Milner, Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory*, p. 86.

Bourdieu's theory utilises a conceptualisation of social structure as a system of unequal social positions which are distinguished by means of evaluating an individual's access to economic assets, education, political power and social prestige. When perceived from a more cultural point of view, social positions are instrumental as far as patterns of participation in culture are concerned. The latter term, as Wojciech Świątkiewicz puts it, refers to the overall plane of human agency with reference to cultural products. Therefore, it originates in internalising the most fundamental values, norms and discourses which are typical of a given cultural heritage.⁶¹ The analytical category of participation in culture, thus, refers to the mechanisms through which individuals make sense of their social environment and express their thoughts in symbolic manners.

Having assumed the dimension of social structures and social inequalities as the starting point of his theory, Bourdieu conceptualises participation in culture in terms of an outcome of symbolic-oriented actions undertaken by individuals who act within sets of values and cognitive styles conceived here as the *habitus*. The term, to put it otherwise, designates the sphere of axiological, normative and symbolic devices that enable (or restrain) individuals in the course of their attempts to gain positions within social structures. The concept of *habitus* represents a system of durable dispositions of socio-cultural descent, an internalised objectivity, structuring individuals who enter the arena of cultural production. Frequently, Bourdieu uses the term "class *habitus*" in order to point out that members of the same social class tend to share the same repertoire of cultural competences and abilities to deal with the symbolic. In this way, the ultimate outcome of human actions undertaken in the field of the symbolic (for instance, within the realm of institutionalised education) depends on an individual's ability to convert the advantage of social position (the class *habitus*) into a form of cultural currency constituting a valuable asset in a given institutional setting.

At the first glance, Bourdieu's theory seems to reproduce the classical Marxist-structuralist schemata in which an economically defined class position is the main determinant of actions taking place in the symbolic. Yet, this theory goes beyond the notion of economic determinism and provides a conceptual space for referring to individuals as informed performers of meaningful actions resulting in the reproduc-

⁶¹ Wojciech Świątkiewicz, *Uczestnictwo w kulturze*, in *Encyklopedia Socjologii. Suplement* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2005), p. 362; see also Wojciech Świątkiewicz, *Zróżnicowanie społeczne a uczestnictwo w kulturze* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1984), pp. 45–50.

tion of axiological, normative and symbolic imperatives inscribed in the very idea of the *habitus*:

The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectual idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, *the habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions.⁶²

In this sense, the category bridges the gap between objective structures and subjective agency. In the light of Bourdieu's theorem, the category of the *habitus* is regarded as being simultaneously structured and structuring. It provides the axiological and symbolic anchorage for human activities (structural determination) which needs to be reproduced by individual or collective actions (human agency). The operation of perceiving the *habitus* in terms of a methodological tool aiming at the synthesis of subjective agency and structural determination becomes possible as a result of referring to patterns of participation in cultural production as forms of cultural resources which must be mobilised by individuals' actions in order to gain access to diverse positions in social structures. In other words, the category relates objectivism to subjectivism: it designates the sphere of potentialities, rather than structurally intelligible constraints or necessities.

Such a non-deterministic interpretation of the concept becomes emphasised by the notion of "cultural capital" indicating that the agential ability to participate in culture is an asset used by actors operating on arenas of modern societies. In this sense, the return which individuals gain from investing cultural capital is unequally distributed and is determined by the factor of human agency, not only by the influence of class position.⁶³ In a number of cases, for instance, the reproduction of cultural capital depends on the capacity to engage in various forms of social networks (fraternities, occupational organisations, tertiary organisations, etc.). Hence, the return which agents gain from investing cultural capital is seen as a function of the willingness to accumulate social capital by means of participating in social networks constituting

⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 52. Emphasis mine.

⁶³ See Pierre Bourdieu, "Le capital social: notes provisoires," in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (1980), p. 2. After J. Field, *Social Capital* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 16.

a kind of a support community for individuals in their plight for more privileged positions within social structures.

The concept of the structuring and structured *habitus* provides us with a first theoretical attempt to dismantle the illusory opposition of agency and structure. Bourdieu's discourse, however, is narrated from the perspective of structural determinants which constitute a preparatory field of assets that become actualised by the creative powers of individual agency. This idea, as it is delineated in the next point, becomes criticised by Giddens whose attempts at synthesizing agency and structure assume an idea of a knowledgeable and reflexive individual as a starting point of his discourse.

The Synthesis of Agency and Structure in Anthony Giddens's Theory of Structuration

Notwithstanding his apparent gift for eclecticism, the structure of Giddens's theoretical output revolves around the axis of harsh criticism targeted at positivistic methodologies conceptualising both society and culture in terms of organisms comprising pre-established, structures that determine (and automatically dissolve) individual agency. At the same time, however, his thought remains persistently indifferent to diverse possibilities of perceiving subjects who — following the Cartesian model of human subjectivity — retain the role of sole creators and constructors of the external socio-cultural reality. What becomes contested, consequently, is the will to subordinate the external reality by means of delineating a totalising discourse promoting an univocal but angled viewpoint.

The centre of gravity of the theory can be attributed to a strategy aiming at diluting binary oppositions that conceptually organise human cognition in general and social theory in particular. In this context, Giddens's project binds subjective agency and objective structure into an inseparable discourse developed under the label of the "theory of structuration."

The theory of structuration was worked out as an attempt to transcend, without discarding altogether, three prominent traditions of thought in social theory and philosophy: hermeneutics or "interpretative sociologies," functionalism and structuralism. Each of these traditions, in my view,

incorporates distinctive and valuable contributions to social analysis — while each has tended to suffer from a number of defined limitations.⁶⁴

The ontology of socio-cultural reality resembles, as Giddens teaches us, a twofold, two-dimensional alloy of agency and structure which becomes conceptualised in terms of the “duality of structure.”⁶⁵ As opposed to the legacy of classical structural and functional theories, which refer to socio-cultural (linguistic) structures in terms of objective, self-referential entities, this viewpoint proclaims that structures cannot possibly exist beyond the dimension of human action. It means that structure is “the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction.”⁶⁶ As a result, the methodology dispels the “imperialism of the object” by means of referring to social and cultural structures as organised patterns of human action:

Social structures seem to have a fixed, object-like character only as long as we observe them from the point of view which leaves aside the dynamic processes of action in and through which structures are continuously sustained and recreated.⁶⁷

By the same token, social actors are also perceived in an overtly dualistic manner. Individuals are socially conditioned and structured which becomes manifested by the fact of their entanglement within a number of structured environments or networks. These may be economic, cultural or political systems and institutions constraining human actions by means of imprinting their own rules and regulations upon human action and interaction. Yet, at the same time, the constraining structures are perceived as regular action patterns, which dispels their objective, superintended character. In this type of analysis structural properties are dependable upon human agency. Structures of capitalist market (e.g. the stock exchange) would collapse if it was not for the daily exercise of activities performed with respect to rules and

⁶⁴ Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (London: McMillan, 1981), p. 26.

⁶⁵ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, pp. XX—XXI.

⁶⁶ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 374.

⁶⁷ See E.C. Cuff, W.W. Sharrock, and D.W. Francis, *Perspectives in Sociology* (London and New York: Routledge 2002), p. 318.

regulations inscribed in the rationale of free-market economy. In other words, the structuration theory postulates that human engagement is instrumental as far as the (re)production of the common social and cultural environment is concerned.

Such a perspective on the societal world rests upon a premise postulating that socio-cultural structures simultaneously constrain and enable human activity which, as regards the theory of structuration, becomes represented as a bi-polar classification of rules and resources. In this context, rules define actions in axiological and normative terminologies and are seen as normative elements playing pivotal role in the emergence of social practices. Resources, on the other hand, account for the overall agential potentiality of human action and can be perceived as "structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of their interaction."⁶⁸ Resources, to put it briefly, constitute the aspect of humanly created structures which enable individuals in their operations by means of granting them power as well as capacity to act within axiologically and normatively regulated environment.

The No Man's Land of Social Theory: The Third as a Space Between Agency and Structure

The dichotomy of structure and agency, as it is claimed in the first point of this chapter, stems from the dialectic of the Self and the Other. From this ontological perspective, human agency may be juxtaposed to social and cultural structures which can be represented as the category of otherness. Hence, the theoretical legacy of social theory as well as cultural studies can be perceived from the vantage point of debates between the discourses of agency and structure conceived in terms of cognitive, methodological tools aiming to explore socio-cultural realities. However, novel insights into the ontology of the constructed world seem to undermine this well-entrenched dichotomy and provide a theoretical scope for in-depth syntheses of the aforementioned dimensions. In this context, the conceptual apparatus based upon the juxtaposition of the Self (or Agency) and the Other (or Structure) is compelled to oblivion. The antinomy constituting its cornerstone becomes displaced by the introduction of a discourse which binds agency and

⁶⁸ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 15.

structure into an alloy whose components can hardly be separated. As a consequence, the true ontology of the socio-cultural reality is to be found within the space of the Third:

The tissue of the Third never ceases to grow through sameness and alterity. Reified as presence, as the Other of the Other, gaze, friendship, memory, partner, judge, etc. or dissimulated as difference, synthesis, conflict, absence, context or void, the Third inhabits the in-between of binarity.⁶⁹

The tissue of the Third, as the passage above teaches us, manifests itself as an area assuming the guise of a synthesis combining sameness and alterity. Within the fields of social theory and cultural studies, as we learn from Piotr Sztompka's theory of social becoming, the Third manifests itself as a methodological and ontological space in which the traditional oppositions of the humanities implode into an amalgamation of the individual and the structural. In this specific context, the ontology of the constructed world resembles an inseparable fusion of the individual and the collective, the agential and the structural, the autonomous and the dependent.

The theory, as a consequence, opposes the commonsensical point of view suggesting that society is a mere aggregate of individuals and their personalities; culture, in turn, is an umbrella term for the total sum of signifying practices and acts of communication that have been recorded within the boundaries of a social organisation. The standpoint, however, debunks also the exact opposite of the aforementioned methodological claim according to which society and culture are endowed with some objective, trans-personal properties that cannot possibly become reduced to the level of operating individuals.

The synthetic paradigm delineated by Sztompka opts for the third solution to the ontology of socio-cultural environment:

In the model of social becoming, the levels of structure in operation and of agents in actions will be treated neither as analytically separable nor as mutually reducible. Instead a third, intermediate level will be postulated, and it will be claimed that it represents the only true substance of social reality, the specific social fabric. If we think of any empirical event or phenomenon in a society, anything that is actually happening, is it not always, without exception, a fusion of

⁶⁹ Wojciech Kalaga, "Introduction. Between the Same and the Other," in *The Same, the Other, the Third*, ed. W. Kalaga (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2004), p. 10.

structures and agents, of operation and action? Show me an agent who is not enmeshed in some structure. Show me a structure which exists apart from individuals. Show me an action which does not participate in societal operation. Show me societal operation not resolving into action. There are neither structureless agents nor agentless structures.⁷⁰

The only entity which purports to be a theoretically plausible phenomenon is neither of individual nor structural descent. It is "the unified socio-individual field,"⁷¹ the third level of reality which seems to occupy the unexplored no man's land of traditional sociology, the theoretically heterodox in-betweenness of the totality and the individuality.

Since the category of the unified socio-individual field provides an alternative with reference to the classical discussion between agency and structure, it also dissolves the "illusions of egocentrism and reification" which are salient as far as our understanding of the traditional humanities is concerned. In this context, the illusion of egocentrism is perceived as a firmly established and institutionalised hypostasis referring to individuals in terms of omnipotent constructors of social and cultural realities. Human cognitive capabilities structure us and make us think of ourselves as independent, integral and self-contained entities who possess an existence which remains independent of other people. However, this assumption is liable to crumble. This problem, to analyse it from a historical perspective, is indicative of the Freudian threefold model of human personality which leaves little doubt as far as the empirical validity of separating the Id, the Ego and the Superego in the course of human actions is concerned. Thus, delineating a pristine model of human behaviour is simply impossible, since every human action presupposes a joint influence of the unconscious and the social exerted upon the Self. A similar dilemma has been posed by behavioural genetics, a branch of contemporary psychology attempting to provide models of human ontogenesis in order to classify the impacts of heredity and environment upon the development of an individual. It is claimed that there is no technical, methodological possibility to separate human agency from the influences of heredity and environment in the constitution of psychological dispositions measured for a single individual.⁷² As a consequence, the classical dilemma, conveyed by the

⁷⁰ Sztompka, *Society in Action*, pp. 91–92.

⁷¹ Sztompka, *Society in Action*, p. 94.

⁷² See Jan Strelau, „Różnice indywidualne: opis, determinanty i aspekt społeczny,” in *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki: Psychologia ogólna*, ed. J. Strelau (Gdańsk: GWP, 2000), pp. 662–667.

binary opposition of nature and nurture,⁷³ remains debunked and displaced. From this perspective, the construction of human subjectivity is seen as a joint product of actions undertaken by individuals within the field of heredity as well as environmental or social dispositions. Nevertheless, a similar claim was made by Cooley who succeeded in expressing the formulae of behavioural genetics in a more humanistic manner:

The individual is not separable from the human whole, but a living member of it [...] as if men were literally one body.⁷⁴

The illusion of reification is also substantial as far as the progress of social thought is concerned. The legacies of structural and functional theories make us think of collective entities in terms of great, supra-individual systems towering above us and often assuming oppressive attitudes towards agents. However, such entities as bureaucratic apparatuses, states, socio-economic formations are nothing else than aggregates of organised social actions that take place within the interpersonal sphere between operating individuals. The reality *sui generis* exists only in the eye of the beholder: both society and culture are humanly created, they actualise themselves in human actions and by acts of behaviour. Linguistic systems can be described as self-referential systems endowed with an unnerving tendency to refer to nothing else than to themselves. Yet, this social institution has no other mode of existence than through concrete utterances made by men and women and conveyed to other people via face to face interactions or by any other conceivable way of communication. If it was not for the *parole*, the dimension of *langue* – which is the primary concern of the structural linguistics – would be left behind in the societal void.

The theory of social becoming is founded upon distrust towards the aforementioned ways of conceptualising human subjectivity. The subject does not implode into the multiplicity of external structures, yet, on the other hand, is not anterior to the social and the cultural either. Its ontological status is, then, situated in the space of thirdness rendering keeping balance between the structural and the agential possible. As a result, human action is always subjected to a twofold

⁷³ The dilemma refers to the work *Hereditary Genius. An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences*, which was published by Sir Francis Galton in 1869. The publication has gained a substantial recognition as the first empirical study concerning the process of inheriting of complex cognitive dispositions.

⁷⁴ Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 35.

determination: it becomes regulated "from above" by influences of the environment and is subjected to control exerted over it "from inside" by the intra-personal potentiality of understanding and self-interpretation. Yet, the dimensions of the external and the internal are not structurally incorporated into the subjectivity. Rather manifest themselves as historical processes in which humanly constructed structures gain the trans-personal mode of existence and constitute the foundation for a second wave of *praxis*.

To conclude, the distinction between structure and agency constitutes a basic axis of differentiation rendering possible a more informed insight into methodologies of cultural studies. Its functioning, to put it briefly, unveils two distinct strategies applied in order to conceptualise human subjectivity as it operates within the systemic and structural qualities of the socio-cultural reality. From these two perspectives, an individual may be perceived as a reified object of structural determination or, contrariwise, an active subject whose actions manifest themselves as moments of agency, elements taking part in constructive processes of cultural morphogenesis. The synthesis of the contradictory methodological views results in novel ontologies of cultural reality in which creative agents are actively engaged in the re-production of axiological, normative, economic and discursive structures. Cultural systems, in turn, may be conceived as rules and resources facilitating or restraining human agency. This synthetic viewpoint, as the next chapter wishes to unveil, is productive as far as theories of trust are concerned: in this sense, trusting relations are seen as being placed in the middle of the road between individual agency of vesting trust and inter-personal structures consisting of persistent and normatively regulated networks of reciprocity and mutual confidence.

Chapter Three

Beyond the Logic of Rational Calculation Trust and Uncertainty as the Elements of Culture

This was fascinating to Henry. He poked about with a bit of a stick, that itself was wave-worn and whitened and a vagrant, and tried to control the motions of the scavengers. He made little runnels that tide filled and tried to crowd them with creatures. He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things. He talked to them, urging them, ordering them.¹

What saves us is efficiency — the devotion to efficiency.²

Our understanding of trust and uncertainty seems to be greatly indebted to a methodology facilitating the dissolution of the bipolar distinction between agency and structure. Any act of entrustment the Other cannot be seen as floating free within the societal (or structural) void. The agency of interpersonal trusting relations rests upon the existence of relatively stable axiological and normative structures constituting the cultural reservoir of reciprocity. On the other hand, when the structural coefficient to interpersonal relations seems to be fragile and wavering, the initial act of granting or reciprocating trust is fraught with uncertainty associated with intangible and essentially elusive presence of the Other.

The ideas of efficiency and rationality are usually subsumed within the notion of modernity and become conceived in terms of social as well as technological progress. In this context, the evolution of modern

¹ William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 65.

² Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Wrocław: KOG, 2003), p. 14.

socio-cultural systems is usually regarded as an outcome of scientific progress and the dissemination of empirical expertise. Modern civilisations are, thus, perceived through essentially Weberian lenses as the provinces of technical and bureaucratic self-perfection, the realms in which human actions are evaluated and, to a certain extent, appropriated by the ideals inscribed in the rationalised logic of *techne*.³

The concepts of efficiency and rationality are often applied to the sphere of interpersonal relations and cultural norms or values that sustain their societal productivity. From this particular perspective, however, the devotion to efficiency and rationality cannot be expressed in terms of technological proficiency in which human cognitive capabilities constitute a comfortable vantage point from which the world of inanimate object can be scrutinised and evaluated. The rationality implicit in the societal world, as Zygmunt Bauman observes, cannot assume an impersonally sophisticated form of technical formulas.⁴ Hence, theories gesturing towards the notion of trust seem to propose a new idea of efficiency which becomes rooted in Jürgen Habermas's project of "communicative rationality," the consensus-keeping mechanism allowing for the construction of a stable world of horizontal interpersonal ties.

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the notions of trust as well as uncertainty conceived as cultural resources and indispensable existential coefficients to the personalised encounters with Other(ness). Vesting trust in the Other becomes regarded as an intelligible existential strategy, a cognitive mechanism enabling bracketing off risks and contingencies of everyday life and, consequently, facilitating living on the cultural arena of civil society. Trust cultures are, thus, perceived as moral resources making possible the construction of interpersonal and dialogic relations without a need for panoptical scrutiny on behalf of terrorizing structures of political authority. In this sense, the discourse of trust constitutes a solution to the dilemmas of contemporary multicultural society. It is a remedy for the general indeterminacy of social encounters with the Other taking place within the realm of the public debate in which horizontal social ties gain the upper hand over the languages of political hierarchies and the economic rationale of free markets.

³ See Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth, C. Wright Millis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 196–198.

⁴ Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

The Problem of Trust and a New Cultural Scenario for European Modernity

Looking backward in history, one can observe that the discourse of trust constitutes an issue which has always remained profoundly intertwined within the intellectual panorama of modernity. Its origins can be traced as far back as to the European Enlightenment and its philosophical enquires into the coming of a new social order from the turmoil of crisis that disturbed calcified structures of medieval feudalism. From the perspective of ongoing cultural as well as political changes, the discourse of trust was conceptualised under the label of civil society which was seen as a remedy for the disintegration of well-settled structures of feudalism with the concomitant decline of confidence in the Church conceived as the supreme guarantee of moral order. At the onset of the European modernity (perhaps also at the very beginning of a new European identity⁵), the ideas of solidarity and interpersonal reciprocity were subsumed within a model of the citizens' civil society founded upon social commitment as well as voluntary cooperation of relatively autonomous, knowledgeable agents, rather than the absolute and panoptically organised mechanisms of surveillance and coercion.

The problems of reciprocity as well as trust emerge as conceptual sub-categories of a cultural debate concerning the construction of modern order conceived as a social project *in statu nascendi*. As Adam B. Seligman observes:

However, the sense remains that trust, or at least its perception, is indeed very modern. It is articulated in early modern political theory, both by proponents of modern natural law (Grotius, Puffendorf, Locke) and by its detractors (Hume, Smith).⁶

In the context of enlightened political philosophies, the discourse of trust becomes almost automatically subsumed within a broader conceptual category of civil society which constitutes an alternative in contradistinction to the political proposition formulated by adherents

⁵ The European Enlightenment aimed at the establishment of a new political discourse that could provide a common moral denominator for the bricolage of national states which had been socially disintegrated after years of religious warfare. See N. Davies, *Europe. A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 7.

⁶ Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 31.

of the European absolutism. These two competing proposals are based upon dissimilar premises of John Locke's and Thomas Hobbes's philosophies concerning the ontological status of an individual.

Firstly and perhaps most importantly, the notions of trust and civil society are greatly indebted to the discourse of the Other. In this theoretical framework, the concepts become associated with inter-personality and inter-subjectivity, the emphatic and communicative attitude towards the humanly-created world that exists beyond the boundaries of the reasoning Self. Thus, the axiological foundations of civil societies are based upon the critical recognition that the Other is granted similar laws and responsibilities as the Self, which makes both of them being endowed with an identical predilection for impressing will upon the collectively constructed habitat. As a result, interpersonal relations between individuals are horizontal as well as symmetrical: their participants are obliged to trust the Other since from the onset they all exist in the shared axiological and normative reality.

Such a perspective is in league with the early modern inquires into the sphere of bilateral relations between the Self and the Other which were conceptualised under the common denominator of "moral sentiments" or "natural benevolence." What was glimpsed at the end of the feudal era is an idea concerning the productive nature of civil society. It means that highly effective political organisations need not be based upon the rationale of vertical, petrified structures that are typical of aristocratic courts. Moreover, societal progress can be fostered by the development of horizontal interpersonal ties binding individuals regardless of their position within institutionalised structures of authority, political power or economy.

The Scottish thinkers of the eighteenth century predicted the very existence of society on something very close to what we have been defining as trust (though to be sure in Samuel Johnson's dictionary of the eighteenth century there is no clear distinction between trust and confidence, which are treated as virtual synonyms).⁷

The aforementioned argument is far from maintaining that civilisations cannot entirely be founded upon panoptical structures of coercion towering above an oppressed and reified individual. A structure of authoritarian domination, as we learn from the history of mediaeval

⁷ Peter Johnson, *Frames of Deceit: A Study of the Loss and Recovery of Public and Private Trust* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994). Quoted after Seligman, *The Problem*, p. 31.

Europe, purports to constitute a plausible model of societal organisation. However, the evolution of political as well as economic structures of modern Europe can be seen as a result of the development within the cultural imperatives, such as solidarity and trust, that are indicative of civil society.⁸

The concept of civil society remains greatly indebted to the legacy of Locke's insights into the progress from the realm of the natural towards the reign of the social. The philosophy positioning society in terms of an evolutionary necessity rendering the departure from the immoral disorder of nature possible, constitutes the salient element of post-Renaissance speculations concerning the idea of general order and belongs to the *avant-garde* of the rationalist pursuit of structuring principles in the societal universe. The profound feeling of certitude associated with the notion of lawfulness as well as tireless attempts at finding a golden means that could facilitate keeping balance between human natural dispositions and social (or civil duties) might be regarded as crucial cultural factors that contributed to the rise of interest in reciprocity and trust conceived as general axioms of human behaviour.

Despite the fact that the philosophical discourse of modernity seems to be greatly indebted to the ideas associated with the transgression of the natural for the sake of the social, one must observe that this civilising process cannot be proved by historical or socio-anthropological evidence. Therefore, Locke's and Hobbes's philosophies purport to be a cognitive or intellectual experiments aiming at providing stable foundations for two dissimilar conceptions of state and authority.⁹ Furthermore, these theories resemble meticulously constructed stratagems attempting at separating society from its political subsystem. Hence, on the one hand, the models provide us with an intriguing postulate suggesting the precedence of sociality over the political organisation. However, on the other hand, this intellectual subterfuge has a strictly political objective that remains veiled behind its philosophical façade: its fundamental aim is to outline such social origins of political authority that are not derived from politics itself. Thus, such an operation non-plusses Hobbes's and Locke's readership by its theoretical subterfuges and simultaneously constitutes the pivotal element of propaganda that paved the way for the calcification of either absolutist regimes (Hobbes)

⁸ The hypothesis has been empirically verified by scholars constructing modern theories of social capital. See especially Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Fukuyama, *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free Press, 1995.

⁹ Jerzy Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej* (Warszawa: PWN, 2006), pp. 60–63.

or the emergence of liberal authority realised under a sign of civil society (Locke).

From the perspective of Locke's political philosophy, the cause-and-effect relation between human natural dispositions as well as the innate willingness to participate in social organisation constitutes the cornerstone upon which a theory of liberal democracy has been built. That assumption, moreover, constituted an important political gesture aiming to criticise Hobbes who, to put it succinctly, laid stress upon the concept of supreme force, the commanding *primus inter pares* aspiring to the rank of an omnipotent donator and manager of laws and norms of culture. In Hobbes's view, social compact paves the way for the election of the *Leviathan*, an authoritarian force rendering social order by the virtue of subordination. Society, in turn, is regarded as a fragile construction which otherwise would fall apart because of the inner tension of human wickedness.¹⁰ If Hobbes's society is ruled by any structuring principle, this is the imperative of obedience to the unquestionable will of a sovereign: any attempt to undermine his authority constitutes, in this kind of discourse, a step taken towards the abominable rule of nature.

The concept of a state assuming the form of an absolute authority towering above a single individual remains emphasised by the very iconic representation of the *Leviathan* as an artificial man comprising myriads of Liliputian, human-like figures.¹¹ This symbolism suggests that a sovereign's body constitutes the framework of all existence that is conceivable within the boundaries of a state. Such a metaphor, moreover, clearly gestures towards the rationale of absolutist monarchy in which the centralised body politic, as it were, single-handedly coordinates actions undertaken by other parts of the societal tissue. This particular insight into the theory of the modern political regime, much ideologically backward as it may sound, can be seen as a forerunner of the totalitarian conceptions of national state which stress mechanisms of coercion used in order to attain perfect homogeneity and complete moral equilibrium. In a very Hobbesian manner, Bauman outlines the constitutive axiological as well as normative components of a totalitarian state:

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of this issue, please refer to: Claire Hobbes, *Hobbes and the Body Politic*, in *Word, Subject, Nature. Studies in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Culture*, eds. T. Rachwał, T. Sławek (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1996), pp. 106–115.

They [national states – T.B.] laud and enforce ethnic, religious, cultural homogeneity. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of shared attitudes. They construct joint historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories as cannot be squeezed into shared tradition. They preach the sense of common mission, common fate, common destiny. They breed, or at least legitimise and give tacit support to animosity towards everyone standing outside the holy union.¹²

Consequently, Hobbes's point of view seems to provide a simplified representation of society conceived in terms of homogeneous aggregates that head towards complete unification and standardization. The reign of the *Leviathan* becomes indicative of a society that remains composed of reified individuals whose agency becomes dissolved due to the all-pervading influence of a sovereign. Moreover, this specific model does not allow for the possibility of regarding nations as communities of Others who are granted comparable discursive positions in public debates.

Contrary to Hobbes's postulates, the idea political agency stands at the fountainhead of Locke's philosophy concerning diverse problems of law, lawfulness and authority in the uncertain, heterogeneous reality constructed by individuals who are driven by dissimilar interests. The general outline of Locke's political *Weltanschauung* becomes founded upon the virtue of profound belief suggesting that the state of nature is in fact the state of the social which manifests itself by the inborn predilection for socialization (*appetites societatis*). Such a conceptualisation, to put it otherwise, bears traces of generic relatedness to Aristotle's good faith in an individual conceived as the *zoon politikon* – a person whose psychic dispositions may become actualised only in his/her relation to a *polis*, a trans-individual, political entity.¹³ The state of nature, as a result, does not convey the idea of the ever-present interpersonal disharmony, the *bellum omnia contra omnes*, that is nevertheless indicative of Hobbes's conceptualisation. Thus, this particular philosophical model may be attributed to a postulate that the state of nature may be characterised with the existence of social bonds in their rudimentary forms. In this way, Locke's philosophical

¹² Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, in *Global Culture, Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. M. Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 154.

¹³ Arystoteles, *Etyka nikomachejska*, trans. D. Gromska (Warszawa: PWN, 1956), pp. IX, 9, 1169b and I, 7, 1097b.

model leads to the establishment of a more liberal and democratic political order. Since human beings are naturally benevolent, it is, logically speaking, unnecessary to detain them in the “iron cage” of authoritarianism or absolutism.

Such an essentially optimistic perspective on the natural state of mankind becomes emphasised, to conclude this argument, by Locke’s profound belief in the utilitarian conception of man — an individual is endowed with a cooperative, perhaps benevolent, personality and is eager to work in conjunction with the Other as soon as it goes hand in hand with a profit/loss calculation. Hence, moral virtues are deeply rooted in a specifically human aptitude for rationalisation, the talent whose significance has given rise to the idea of *homo oeconomicus*. This line of thinking, however, is endowed with certain limitations which the following paragraphs seek to unveil.

From Homo Oeconomicus to Homo Reciprocus

Locke’s considerations paved the way for Adam Smith’s early liberal doctrine. In the latter context, the notion of innate interpersonal sympathy is a function of self-interest and is subsumed within the boundaries of so-called “propriety,” an essential element of civic virtue. This characteristic has its origins in the figure of the Third whose presence is a source of internalised morality capable of structuring relationships between the Self and the Other. As Smith teaches us:

We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If, upon placing themselves in his situation, we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives which influenced it, we approve of it, by sympathy with the approbation of his supposed equitable judge. If otherwise, we enter into his disapprobation and condemn it.¹⁴

The idea of “impartial spectator” is derived from Smith’s theory of the free market and constitutes, needless to say, a predecessor with reference to the concepts of the “looking-glass self” and the “me-self”

¹⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982), p. 110.

developed respectively by Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead. Similarly to economic rationality of the “invisible hand,” the realm of civil society depends on the authority of a generalised “spectator” who scrutinises interpersonal relations and renders obligation-fulfilment and cooperation possible.

Before we make any proper comparison of opposing interests, we must change our position. We must view them from neither our own place nor yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from the place and with the eyes of *the third person*, who has no particular connection with either, and who *judges impartially* between us.¹⁵

The impartial spectator does not have to assume a form of real public or an institution scrutinising one’s deeds performed on the arena of the social. The discourse of civil society conveys a revolutionary representation of a political commonwealth which is governed and structured by the rationale of internalised morality that steers individuals towards public good. Smith’s philosophy, to conclude, gestures towards the interpersonal construction of a common axiology of social exchange which, as the organisation of free markets teaches us, structure individuals without the necessity of institutionalised control.

The conception of civil society conceived as a means of restoring social order without introducing the figure of the *Leviathan* gestures towards dilemmas of a public good accumulation illustrating diverse inter-personal conflicts restraining the cooperative attainment of socially productive objectives. Locke’s and Smith’s considerations paved the way for a whole array of theories attempting to provide an answer to the most challenging entrapment hidden in the otherwise progressive concept of civil society. The problem is purely practical and concerns the measures to be taken in order to motivate autonomous individuals to repudiate their own portion of political freedom for the sake of the community and its overall prosperity. In the context of civil society, the duration of social order is to a large extent a function of individuals’ willingness to participate in all sorts of collaborative enterprises that do not seem to convey direct profits for particular partakers, but are indispensable for the survival of a community conceived as a coherent trans-personal entity. The dilemma gestures towards investing in public goods which constitute societal resources that do not belong to any particular agent contributing to their ac-

¹⁵ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 135. Emphasis mine.

cumulation, but, at the same time, are beneficial as far as a given community is concerned.¹⁶

As far as civil society is concerned, the theory of public goods must be based upon insights into the nature and dynamics of collective action. At this point, collective endeavours are conceptualised in terms of theoretical premises referring to cultural conditions under which autonomous individuals become willing to work in conjunction with one another (the transgression of self-interest) without the necessity of establishing a terrorizing “third party” — the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of collective action are furrowed with at least two kinds of perils. The participation in the creation of a public good is often endangered by “free-riding”: the subjective perception of self-interest motivates egoistically rational individuals to benefit from actions undertaken by others. Another dilemma illustrates a situation when cooperation cannot become actualised due to the lack of mutual reciprocity as well as trust. While quoting from David Hume’s work, Robert D. Putnam recalls the following words:

Your corn is ripe today: mine will be so tomorrow. Thus profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow. I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of a return, I know I should be disappointed, and that I should in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone. You treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvest for want of mutual confidence and security.¹⁷

The parable suggests that human autonomy (and agency) does not necessarily transfer itself into well-organised structures of collaborative actions. Human inborn predilection for rationality often causes distrust towards the Other who is conceived in terms of a self-centred *homo oeconomicus*. In this specific context, collective actions resemble a kind of entrapment set against rational actors. As Putnam comments on the

¹⁶ See James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 315–318.

¹⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, quoted after R. Putnam, “The Prosperous Community. Social Capital and Public Life,” *The American Prospect Online* 30 (Nov. 2002), p. 1. Available at: www.prospect.org/web/printfriendly-view?id=5175.

situation delineated by Hume: “failure to cooperate for mutual benefit does not necessarily signal ignorance or irrationality or even malevolence, as philosophers since Hobbes have underscored. Hume’s farmers were not dumb, or crazy or evil; they were trapped.”¹⁸ A remedy for this kind of entrapment is related to the development of robust structures of mutual reciprocity, solidarity as well as trust. This viewpoint signals, to put it otherwise, that instrumental rationality has its own limitations and the process of cooperation depends upon such intangibles as trust and reciprocity. Hence, the shift of paradigm associated with the rise of academic interest in trust may be represented by the assumption of the personality model of, to use Howard Becker’s illustrative notion,¹⁹ *homo reciprocus*, rather than the utilitarian, classical understanding of an individual as the *homo oeconomicus*.

From the perspective of the tragedy of the commons, the discourse of civil society becomes, first and foremost, an ethical edifice. As a socio-political category, this term is endowed with cultural connotations and, as Seligman observes, “it was this moral sense that assured mutuality, compassion, empathy, and so a basis for human interaction beyond the calculus of pure exchange.”²⁰ Consequently, the notion of civil society has become associated with diverse forms of horizontal societal ties — such as public spheres and the robust tissue of associational life — that form and reproduce themselves in a certain distance from the strict, vertical order of bureaucratic hierarchies and the economic calculus of free markets. In this sense, civil society is widely discussed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the emergence of modern, democratic societies. This observation can be traced as far back as to the work of Alexis de Tocqueville who was among the first scholars to recognize that the vivid associational life constitutes an unparalleled arena for civic learning.

In their political associations the Americans, of all conditions, minds, and ages, daily acquire a general taste for association and grow accustomed to the use of it. There they meet together in large numbers, they converse, they listen to one another, and they are mutually stimulated to all sorts of undertakings. They afterwards transfer to civil life the notions they have thus acquired and make them subservient to a thousand purposes.²¹

¹⁸ Putnam, “The Prosperous Community,” p. 1.

¹⁹ See Howard Becker, *Man in Reciprocity* (New York, 1956), p. 1.

²⁰ Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, p. 110.

²¹ de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Book 2, Ch. VII.

In the light of the passage quoted above, reciprocity and trust must be structurally institutionalised in order not to become meaningless terms whose analytical significance may be valid only at the level of theory. The tissue of associational life is seen in terms of the crucial condition for the construction of trust cultures.

The discourse of civil society, consequently, unveils its dissimilarity with reference to the languages of political hierarchies and free markets. The latter is based upon the all-pervasive reign of self-interest and the rational, often numerical, calculus which is best conveyed by Smith's ideas concerning the rational nature of social bond within the framework of advanced societal division of power: "[I]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but their regard to their own interest."²² Yet, at the same time, the structuring principles of civil societies are different from the rationale of institutionalised political hierarchies where this economic rationale is somehow reproduced and becomes transformed into the sphere of interpersonal relations. This observation is especially evident in the case of the courtly culture where, as Norbert Elias teaches us, the competitive, quasi-economic calculation gains the upper hand over disinterested reciprocity as well as trust. Let us adduce his remarks *in extenso*:

The court was a kind of stock exchange; as in every good society, an estimate of the "value" of each individual is continually being formed. But here his value has its real function not in the wealth or even the achievements of ability of the individual, but in the favour he enjoys with the king, the influence he has with other mighty ones, his importance in the play of courtly cliques. All this, favour, influence, importance, this whole complex and dangerous game in which physical force and direct affective outbursts are prohibited and a threat to existence, demands of each participant constant foresight and exact knowledge of every other, of his position and value in the network of courtly opinion; it exacts precise atonement of his own behaviour to this value. Every mistake, every careless step depresses the value of its perpetrator in courtly opinion; it may threaten his whole position at court.²³

²² Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Everyman's Library, 1991), p. 13.

²³ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 476.

This peculiar position of civil society, its thirdness with reference to the discourses of markets and institutionalised hierarchies suggests, to conclude this sub-chapter, that this particular form of societal organisation is founded upon a distinct type of cultural currency. If the two other institutional settings depend on an economic or legal-rational rationalisation, the realm of civil society tends to be founded upon multilateral moral commitments. As a consequence, the devotion to efficiency becomes replaced by the attachment to values of purely communicative or dialogical origin.

Towards the Notion of Trust: The Limits to Rationalisation

The realm of civil society is furrowed with uncertainty as to other people's willingness to cooperate for a community's sake. This is, in the main, related to the absence of straightforward economic incentives facilitating interpersonal cooperation as well as strict, calcified in a form of legal-rational hierarchies, structures of authority. The autonomous and rational character of individuals entering the arena of civil society, as demonstrated in Locke's political philosophy, proves that norms and values ensuring the effective collaboration for the sake of the public good accumulation seem to convey problems and dilemmas as untenable as squaring of the circle. In the context of collective as well as communicative action, the sphere of civil society resembles a fragile construction which is liable to crumble as a result of individuals' unwillingness to act for the sake of a community.

Contemporary sociology and social psychology have developed a series of experimental situations purporting to convey cognitive models illustrating perils of cooperate actions as they tend to manifest themselves in the practice day-to-day life. The thing which these models have in common is attempts to delineate the rationale of interpersonal cooperation, especially with reference to situations in which the overall result depends on the participants' readiness to take part in the collective endeavour in spite of experienced uncertainty as to actions performed by the Other. The most common experimental situation has been conceptualised as the "prisoners' dilemma game" and constitutes an attempt to delineate the limits to human rationality as it is manifested in interpersonal as well as communicative events. From this specific perspective, "the prisoners' dilemma game," as Douglas D. Heckathorne

aptly concludes, “has become a paradigm for the cases where collectively irrational outcomes result from individually rational actions.”²⁴ Despite its off-putting logical and mathematical interpretations, this cognitive model is of great value as far as the progress of knowledge in the humanities is concerned. Its elucidation provides us with some practical insights into the idiosyncrasies of encounters with the Other that cannot be subsumed within the boundaries of purely instrumental rationality.

This mind-game provides us with an extreme situation of two prisoners detained in separate prison cells and deprived of any possibilities to communicate with each other. The isolated individuals are charged with a serious felony but the prosecutor has obtained only evidence enabling to launch a lawsuit for committing a petty crime. As a result, the authorities decide to mock the detainees by granting them an opportunity to regain freedom in return for providing a testimony entirely incriminating the other defendant. At the same time, the individuals are fully aware of the fact that the person who remains silent, while the other decides to cooperate with the authorities, will suffer from a severe punishment. A slightly less negative outcome is experienced when the two defendants simultaneously decide to plead guilty. However, on the other hand, if they remain silent, the punishment will be minimal due to the light weight of collected evidence.²⁵ Although the model predicts that vesting trust in the Other (and remaining silent) is the most successful strategy of dealing with this sort of situation, the partakers become defeated by the feeling of uncertainty as to the inmate’s behaviour and, consequently, lose the game. Needless to say, the situation reconstructed by the “prisoners’ dilemma game” is in league with the problem conveyed by Hume’s rustic parable: in both cases rationally thinking individuals are entrapped by the very ability to think in a supposedly logical and reasoned manner.

Pathological and penitentiary as the mind-game may be, its interpretation shows that within the realm of inter-personality, where a single individual’s fate depends on the Other’s decisions as well as actions, the overall success is related to the willingness to assume an attitude of trust towards other individuals. The prisoners would achieve more if they vested a great deal of mutually held trust and decided to remain silent. Yet, this situation provides us with a yet another, and far more crucial as far as the problem of trusting is concerned, insight into the nature of human cooperation in interpersonal situations. The traditionally conceived rationality often leads us astray and trust

²⁴ Douglas D. Heckathorne, “Collective Sanctions and the Creation of Prisoner’s Dilemma Norms,” *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 3 (1988), p. 539.

²⁵ See John Field, *Social Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 21.

seems to be the only possible solution to dilemmas occurring when public goods are being accumulated. Although the model delineates an extreme situation of physical isolation, its interpretations remain valid also in real life: risks inscribed in encounters with Otherness are consequences of the impossibility to obtain knowledge referring to other individuals — we are often forced to act in the circumstances of psychological estrangement.

The “prisoners’ dilemma game” offers a coherent conceptual framework for a variety of situations where trusting becomes a remedy for uncertainty and risk associated with the elusive presence of the Other. From this specific perspective, it is illustrative of a variety of cases in which, as David Lewis and Andrew J. Weigert’s telling phrase asserts us, “trust begins where prediction ends.”²⁶ In this context, trusting seems to gain the upper hand over the virtue of rational calculation — vesting trust allows for taking diverse imponderables as well as intangibles into account which, by their very nature, remain resistant to attempts at quantifying them. In this sense, the discourse of trust must be based upon a different conception of an agent than the conceptualisation adopted within the classical liberal economy.

The discourse of trust, consequently, is greatly indebted to a dialogical, post-Cartesian conceptualisation of an individual who always remains shrouded in reciprocity and communication. The act of vesting trust seems to give rise to an agent who places oneself in a realm of multilateral relations in which trusting, as Ihab Hassan observes, “requires dispassion, empathy, attention to others and to the created world, to something not in ourselves.”²⁷ This kind of readiness to enter dialogical relations is, nevertheless, counterproductive within the spheres of market and legal-rational hierarchies where an individual succumbs oneself to the ability of calculation and making use of the Other’s mistakes for one’s subjective objectives. That is why the virtue of trust best actualises itself in communicative and dialogical relations typical of the arena of civil society.

In order to gain better, more detailed understanding of the significance of trust in the framework of civil society, one has to assume Habermas’s dichotomous distinction between instrumental as well as communicative rationalities.²⁸ The sphere of economy and human

²⁶ David Lewis and Andrew J. Weigert, “Trust as Social Reality,” in *Social Forces*, no. 4 (1985), p. 976.

²⁷ Ihab Hassan, “Beyond Postmodernism: Toward the Aesthetic of Trust,” *Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, no. 1 (2003), p. 7.

²⁸ See Jürgen Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego. Racjonalność działania a racjonalność społeczna* (Warszawa: PWN, 1999); Habermas, “Technika i nauka

labour is determined by economically legitimised values of technical efficiency that are founded upon the necessity of facilitating human performance with respect to the world of inanimate objects. Consequently, the worlds of technology and labour become dominated by the subject-object relation according to which a knowledgeable agent exerts power and authority over the sphere of inanimate, non-human artefacts. This kind of rationality aims at, to use the Heideggerian nomenclature, “enframing” the outside world. Such an appropriative attitude enables human beings to adopt a “transcendental vantage point” which allows to gaze into the nature of the external reality with the detached objectivity of a scientist.²⁹

This opposition between the reasoning subject and the natural or technical object becomes, as Ulrich Beck proclaims, dissolved with the advent of the risk society. What was glimpsed towards the end of twentieth century was the fact that the world of human-made artefacts does not resemble an isolated realm which remains totally subordinated to the powers of human creativity but, contrariwise, it may reflexively re-organise the world of human relations.³⁰ In this sense, technological risks are currently becoming important factors of social and political mobilisation resulting in the redefinition of social inequalities and the rise of a new model of social stratification based upon the distribution of undesired outcomes of technological progress.

According to Habermas, the realm of human interactions constitutes a province of rationality which is devoid of the objective, instrumental logic and consists of values that refer to interpersonal agreement, responsibility as well as reciprocity which can be attained in the course of communicative, dialogical situations.³¹ Therefore, their structuring principles can be subsumed within the sphere of symbolic communication taking place in a reality of everyday interpersonal interaction. Hence, the communicative rationality postulates the establishment of “ideal speech situations” whose basis is the stable, symmetrical universe of interpersonal relations which is founded on the reciprocal comprehension of inter-subjective reality. Let us listen to Habermas’s point of view:

Pure intersubjectivity is determined by a symmetrical relation between I and You (We and You), I and He (We

jako ideologia,” in *Czy kryzys socjologii?* ed. Szacki (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1977), pp. 342–395.

²⁹ Habermas, *Kłopoty z przygodnością: powrót historyzmu*, pp. 14–15.

³⁰ See Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

³¹ Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego*, pp. 639–640.

and They). An unlimited interchangeability of dialogue roles demands that no side be *privileged in the performance* of these roles: pure intersubjectivity exists only when there is complete *symmetry* in the distribution of assertion and disputation, revelation and hiding, prescription and following among the partners of communication.³²

As the quotation above teaches us, the realm of communicative rationality is devoid of the subject-object dialectic that is typical of the worlds of economy as well as mechanical labour. In the reality constructed and structured by meaningful relations with the Other, the subject cannot be regarded as an isolated or detached *homo faber* (the rationalised constructor, appropriator, and creator of the external reality) but it resembles the interactive Self, the *homo reciprocus* who, at every moment of their own existence, is reflexively entangled within numerous networks of interpersonal communication.

Much ideal or theoretical as it may be, the category of ideal speech situation becomes indicative of horizontal social ties that constitute the societal tissue of civil societies. This particular realm, consequently, is founded upon the existence of iterative dialogical situations, each resting possibilities of reaching interpersonal agreements with reference to norms and values that regulate social interactions as well as communicative actions implicit in them.³³ As opposed to the instrumental rationality — whose laws may be subsumed within a schemata of objective, empirical knowledge — the realm of interpersonal communication is structured by cultural norms and values whose meaning is a matter of social consent. As a consequence, communicative rationality constitutes the province of hermeneutic rationality; its productivity is a matter of social negotiation in which common interpretative frameworks are being constructed. Thus, this hermeneutic model assumes that communication processes imply the voluntary acceptance of symbolic devices, or discourses, used by agents operating in shared axiological and normative contexts.³⁴

The idea of communicative rationality clearly refers to the existence of interpersonal structures of dialogic communication. In this sense, the mechanism of communicative rationality seems to give rise to the

³² Jürgen Habermas, *Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence*, in *Recent Sociology: Patterns of Communicative Behaviour*, ed. H.P. Dreitzel (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1970), p. 143. Emphasis mine.

³³ Habermas, *Technika i nauka*, pp. 354–355.

³⁴ Habermas, *Kłopoty z przygodnością*, p. 31; Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego*, p. 637.

duality of trust culture. The initial act of entrustment is substantial as far as the evolution of communication structures is concerned. Yet, at the same time, these trans-personal phenomena recursively structure the very willingness to grant trust.

The Dualities of Culture and Trust

In the context of communicative rationality, the interpersonal dialogue resembles an exchange of testimonies held by particular agents entering the arena of communication. The realm of civil society is, therefore, a sphere where knowledgeable agents (both individual and collective) compete in order to gain the upper hand in the process of constructing shared narratives about collective identity as well as history.³⁵ From this perspective, as Paul Ricoeur remarks, trusting becomes the salient societal resource fostering the development of dialogical processes:

In the final analysis, however, we must emphasise the role of “trust.” When I testify something I am asking the other to trust that what I am saying is true. To share a testimony is an exchange of trust. Beyond this we cannot go. Most institutions rely fundamentally on the trust they place in the word of the other.³⁶

The structured narratives of culture (shared histories, discourses and cultural representations, norms as well as values) all constitute elements of the public good. In a democratic state, to put it crudely, no one owns culture and history, so their emergence (or social becoming of axiological, normative and symbolic structures) resembles a series of iterative “prisoners’ dilemma games” that call for trust and reciprocity in order to be accomplished.

The problem of trust, however, is of far greater importance than its role within civil society may suggest. The notion of trust — and let this be a place of departure for the next point of this chapter — becomes profoundly interwoven into the fabric of societal and cultural reality

³⁵ See Paul Ricoeur, “Imagination, Testimony and Trust. A Dialogue with Paul Ricoeur,” in *Questioning Ethics. Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, eds. R. Kearney, M. Dooley (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 12–17.

³⁶ Ricoeur, “Imagination, Testimony and Trust,” p. 17.

manifesting itself as an interpersonal realm, functioning in the frameworks of signifying practices as well as communicative actions, and the sphere saturated with inter-subjectively intelligible meanings which actualise themselves within consciousnesses of agents who are capable of interpretation. In this context, the problem of trust is, as it were, entangled within the sphere of culture in a twofold manner. Firstly, as the aforementioned relation between testimony and trust teaches us, trusting the Other becomes constitutive of creating a common cultural habitat consisting of shared discursive devices. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, these cultural phenomena and processes may reflexively and recursively re-shape individuals' willingness to vest trust in the Other. In this sense, we may observe a peculiar duality of trust, a term derived from the duality of agency and structure. Hence, trusting may actualise itself on the arena of the social as a resource facilitating action taking and a kind of structural phenomenon that comprises of networks of reciprocity as well as solidarity facilitating vesting trust in the Other. This particular phenomenon, to put it otherwise, belongs to the world of human agency, but at the same time depends on the existence of some kind of structure rendering being trustworthy possible. The structural and agential aspects of trust are discussed in the following points of this chapter. These paragraphs are also devoted to the duality of culture which is the cornerstone of the duality of trust.

Trust is a constitutive correlate with reference to culture conceived in terms of the dialectic of the individual and the social. This process may be perceived as a sequence of actions comprising cultural production (externalisation), interpersonal symbolic exchange via shared communication means (social objectivisation) and creative interpretation (internalisation).³⁷ The world of culture, hence, is the realm of inter-subjectivity as well as communication. It rests upon the agential ability to produce meaning, to express it by means of shared, linguistic systems of information exchange and to internalise the resultant messages in order to assume them as premises of intelligible actions. Consequently, individuals become, as it were, detained in a space between the subjectivity of one's thoughts and the objectivity of their consequences, or, to put it still otherwise, between the intra-personality (or psychology) of action and motivation, as well as the inter-personality (sociology or cultural studies) of social and cultural structures.

The significance of the aforementioned triadic sequence, to express it in a different nomenclature, oscillates around the constitutive episte-

³⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 79.

mological premises of social phenomenology whose major tenets refer to human reality as an agential construction being (re)produced by active agents in the course of intentional acts of their consciousness and undertaken actions. As a result, a new humanistic, anti-structural ontology of social life becomes postulated: patterns of understanding society as well as culture and forms of taking part in their manifestations are regarded as being inseparable.³⁸ Such a viewpoint is, needless to say, founded upon a critical assumption postulating that individuals resemble cognitively active subjects who construct their socio-cultural environment, rather than accept it as something moulded or structured by forces independent of human will.

This conceptualisation is indicative of Florian Znaniecki's methodology of "the humanistic coefficient" which proclaims that socio-cultural reality has no other mode of existence than as an array of cognitive representations which are filtered through human experience.³⁹ In other words, people intend various aspects of participation in society and culture. For instance, individuals belong to a particular form of social group or community because they experience a particular type of emotional and cognitive affiliation. Therefore, the principle excludes the possibility of regarding social reality in terms of a pure and structurally constructed objectivity which exists beyond human cognition and functions without the psychological engagement or commitment of individuals.

Having an ontological status of a constructed phenomenon, social reality cannot be defined as being objective. However, as a result of collective actions and acts of interpretation, it cannot be regarded as a sheer subjectivity either. Therefore, both society and culture seem to transgress the dichotomy and constitute "inter-subjective" phenomena. Processes of social construction of reality result in the creation of the *Lebenswelt*, that is the universe of human immediate experiences which is, on the one hand, an aggregation of individuals subjectivities and, on the other, the realm shaped by the influence of socio-cultural structures as well as acts of symbolic communication. Being expressed by the triadic sequence of externalisation, objectivisation and externalisation, the duality of culture signals that subjectively constructed meanings may produce objectively or inter-subjectively experienced consequences which, in turn, structure ways of perceiving reality by operating individuals. A similar idea, however expressed in a different terminology, is indicative of Sztompka's viewpoint:

³⁸ Zbigniew Krasnodębski, *Fenomenologia i socjologia* (Warszawa: PWN, 1989), pp. 18–19.

³⁹ Florian Znaniecki, *Wstęp do socjologii* (Warszawa: PWN, 1988), pp. 24–25.

[I]t may be said that from the vantage point of action there exists a parallel “duality of culture.” On the one hand culture provides a pool of resources of action that draws from it the values to set its goals, the norms to specify the means, the symbols to furnish it with meaning, the codes to express its cognitive content, the frames to order its components, the rituals to provide it with continuity and sequence and so forth. In brief culture supplies action with axiological, normative and cognitive orientation. In this way it becomes a strong determining force, releasing, facilitating, enabling, or, as the case might be, arresting, constraining, or preventing action. On the other hand, action is at the same time creatively shaping and reshaping culture, which is not God-given, constant, but rather must be seen as an accumulated product, or preserved sediment of earlier individual and collective action.⁴⁰

In this sense, individuals are granted subjective agency with reference to producing their own testimonies reflecting individualised streams of their lived experiences. Yet, the ontological construction of cultural reality, so to speak, “arrests” their testimonies in the collective stream of human experiences constituting the inter-subjectivity of culture. As a consequence, a constructor of society and culture may become enabled or, contrariwise, disabled by the very nature of socio-cultural setting in which he or she produces testimonies.

The problem of trust seems to play a pivotal role within the sphere of inter-subjective reality of cultural origin. Since all individuals live in the world which, to a large extent, constitutes an amalgamation of socio-cultural constructs produced during acts of symbolic communication, a successful existence in this peculiar reality depends on the feeling of trust that other social actors follow similar interpretative strategies as we normally do in the course of our daily routine.⁴¹ In this specific sense, trusting may assume a form of phenomenological reduction: we are culturally predisposed to “bracket off” actions which, to our eyes, transgress the established patterns of rituals or routines that are typical of a given interpersonal situation. This mechanism rests at heart of our conception of “ontological security”:

⁴⁰ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 3–4.

⁴¹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 36–40.

The notion of ontological security ties in closely to the tacit character of practical consciousness — or, in phenomenological terms, to the “bracketings” presumed by the “natural attitude” in everyday life. On the other side of what might appear to be quite trivial aspects of day-to-day action and discourse, chaos lurks. And this chaos is not just disorientation, but the loss of a sense of the very reality of things and of other persons. [...] To answer even the simplest everyday query, or respond to the most cursory remark, demands the bracketing of a potentially almost infinite range of possibilities open to an individual. What makes a given response “appropriate” or “acceptable” necessitates a shared — but unproven and improvable — framework of reality. A sense of the shared reality of people and things is simultaneously sturdy and fragile.⁴²

In this peculiar context, the act of entrustment is closely related to the aforementioned feeling of ontological security. In order to be, so to speak, on the safe side, individuals are forced to believe that the Other will not breach culturally legitimised rules. This is, to put it still otherwise, the most crucial foundation of social order: existing in the reality structured by the formative presence of the Other depends on faith that “the underlying framework of reality” will not crumble, that human actions will remain predictable.

The foundations of ontological security rest upon the belief that members of the shared social context have a stable, repeatable tendency to interpret signs in mutually accepted manners. In other words, the participation in the constructed reality requires knowledge that other individuals use similar signifying practices for comparable objectives as we habitually do. Otherwise, if that knowledge fails, we are compelled to live in an isolation, in the sphere which is situated beyond society and, therefore, outside any regime of signification.

It seems, to conclude this part of argument, that the notion of trust transgresses the polysemic reality of language, the situation defined by the excess of signs and the multiplicity of discourses. From this perspective, trust could be related to the essential belief that, despite the proliferation of signs, people may depend on the common signifying practices, on the shared patterns of interpretation. Perhaps, the answer to this problem may be found in the notion of “cultural integration” which provides agents with a sense of hierarchy, thus, structuring their

⁴² Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 36.

actions on the basis of commonly shared values, norms and symbols.⁴³ Therefore, it constitutes a framework granting individuals a feeling of relatively stable ontological security which renders our interpretations predictable to social actors and, accordingly, worth being trusted.

Uncertainty and Trust: Intangibles and Imponderables of Human Existence

The idea of trust stems from the essential feeling of uncertainty attributed to the general indeterminacy of encounters between the Self and the Other. Vesting trust in others constitutes an attempt at sustaining one's sense of ontological security. It also resembles a remedy enabling an individual to bracket off risks caused by unpredictable as well as contingent actions. To trust, consequently, means to approach the Other who always remains elusive and shrouded in the aura of uncertainty; to encounter other individuals without possessing detailed knowledge concerning their response beforehand. It is, therefore, a specific act of faith which becomes vested in spite of the fundamental indeterminacy of interpersonal relationships.

On the most general and abstract level it can be stated that the need for stable, and universally recognised structures of trust is rooted in the fundamental indeterminacy of social interaction. This indeterminacy, between social actors, between social actors and their goals, and between social actors and resources results in a basic unpredictability of social life notwithstanding the universality of human interdependence. Consequently, any long-range attempt at constructing a social order and continuity of social frameworks of interaction must be predicted on the development of stable relation of mutual trust between social actors.⁴⁴

What is indicative of the aforementioned conceptualisation is the idea that the realm of inter-subjectivity always remains veiled in the multiplicity of discourses that know no sense of hierarchy or structure

⁴³ See Wojciech Świątkiewicz, *Integracja kulturowa i jej społeczne uwarunkowania* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1987), pp. 31–51.

⁴⁴ Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, p. 13.

since from the onset are articulated as equally valid voices of public debates. Consequently, interpersonal trust, as we learn from Ricoeur, assumes a kind of palliative function with reference to the complexity of socio-cultural organisation.

The discourse of trusting remains greatly indebted to the language of agential autonomy and freedom that is indicative of the cultural theory of civil society. Therefore, in this specific context, relations of reciprocity and trust presuppose the ontological freedom of an individual. As Seligman puts it:

[T]he obligation to be trustworthy, and so to fulfil promises, arises from the moral agency and autonomy, from the freedom and responsibility, of the participants to the interaction. Moreover, without the prior existence of these conditions, rights really — to freedom, autonomy and responsibility, the moral dimension of promise-keeping, and hence of trustworthiness — cannot be adequately explained.⁴⁵

Within a system of surveillance and control (and let Jeremy Bentham's idea of *Panopticon* be a paradigm for such cases) trusting is left behind in the social as well as political void as a dispensable cultural resource. In such cases, it becomes automatically replaced by the confidence vested in the authority of a supervisor who enforces his/her will upon subordinated individuals. Consequently, the discourse of trust is valid in institutions based upon some sort of voluntary participation in which human interactions are not supervised by an agent endowed with means of oppression. Hence, the cultural significance of trust is discussed with reference to social organisations of modernity where the rapid development of the "third sector" (a societal tissue comprising local communities and grass-roots organisations) is regarded as the pivotal factor rendering the progress of politics and economy possible. Hence, within structural conditions of modernity, trusting becomes institutionalised and, as it were, networked as a long-lasting subsystem of social and political life.

From the perspective of aforementioned statements, it can be postulated that the cultural reality of a panoptical, totalitarian regime is founded, first and foremost, upon the politically and ideologically legitimised destruction of trust.⁴⁶ Its cultural rationale, therefore, pro-

⁴⁵ Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ These mechanisms are explored by George Orwell who elaborated on the decomposition of interpersonal relations in terms of an intelligible strategy of power reproduction. In this context, the totalitarian regime curbs grassroots rela-

claims that trust-based interpersonal relationships are automatically dismissed as abnormal or threatening to the authority of the supervising power. The relationship between the Self and the Other, to put it otherwise, ceases to be direct and intimate: it becomes mediated as well as authorised by the state. Consequently, horizontal social ties are replaced by vertical relationships between the individual and the political which, as it were, trespasses the intimacy of relation between the Self and the Other. In the realm of civil societies, in turn, trusting represents a kind of “generalised expectation that the other will handle his freedom, his disturbing potential for diverse action, in keeping with personality — or, rather, in keeping with the personality which he has presented and made socially visible.”⁴⁷ In this sense, such relations have no other conceivable mode of existence than between two, or more, knowledgeable, autonomous agents who participate in symmetrical discursive or dialogical situations.

The distinction between trust and confidence seems to constitute a pivotal point in the discussion concerning the cultural relevance of trust with reference to relations between the Self and the Other. From the perspective of Niklas Luhmann’s sociological output, the notions are distinguished on a basis of making a formative differentiation between individuals (or agents) on the one hand and collective bodies, such as social institutions and networked systems on the other.⁴⁸ In this context, trusting becomes exclusively reserved for personalised relations and encounters with Otherness:

Trust remains vital in interpersonal relations, but participation in functional systems like the economy or politics is no longer a matter of personal relations. It requires confidence, but not trust.⁴⁹

In order to provide a better, more comprehensible classification between the two ideas, Luhmann refers to the distinction between danger and

tions or organisations as being potential germs of anti-state activities. Cf. George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

⁴⁷ Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power*, trans. H. Davis, J. Raffan, and K. Rooney (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), p. 39.

⁴⁸ In the light of a theory that binds agency and structure, such a classification is nevertheless dispensable. As long as systems and institutions are viewed as aggregates of actions, we may speak of trust with reference to both kinds of phenomena. This is indicative of Giddens’s output. Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 114.

⁴⁹ Niklas Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” in *Trust. Making and Breaking Corporate Relations*, ed. D. Gambetta (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 102.

risk. The latter is conceived as the unpredictability of loss which is human-made. It constitutes a function of actions undertaken by individual or collective agents. Danger, contrariwise, is regarded as a consequence of a malfunction or a failure which is, as it were, in-built in a system or an institution.⁵⁰ From this perspective, the argument creates an unavoidable connection between uncertainty, risk as well as trust, the connection that seems to legitimise the statement postulating that “trust is a solution for specific problems of risk.”⁵¹

The notion of trust, hence, is postulated to constitute a remedy for a wide array of situations in which an individual faces some degree of unpredictability as to the Other’s intentions. In this sense, it constitutes a specific kind of a “moral resource,” to use Francis Fukuyama’s telling notion,⁵² facilitating acting on the arena of the social which is furrowed with the encounters with Otherness. Thus, trusting, to a certain extent, resembles gambling: it is an intelligible strategy of coping with uncertainty attributed to the realm of interpersonal interaction. Trusting, as Sztompka observes, may become defined in terms of a “bet about the future contingent actions of others.”⁵³ A similar point of view is indicative of Diego Gambetta’s conceptualisation: “[T]rust is particularly relevant in conditions of ignorance or uncertainty with respect to unknown or unknowable actions of others.”⁵⁴

The relatedness of trusting relations to the feelings of uncertainty and risk can be regarded in terms of an “emotional inoculation”⁵⁵ against threats of the future life. This type of rationale implies that trust is simply indispensable as far as human ontogenetic development is concerned. Its significance arises from the very construction of the socio-cultural reality in which an individual faces the necessity of depending upon the Other and his/her actions. This is particularly true of complex social systems of modernity: in this specific context, trusting becomes the pivotal strategy of approaching societal reality whose interdependent, network-based structure facilitates the escalation of self-manifestation opportunities for individuals who are granted the privilege of always “acting otherwise,” to quote Giddens’s apt phrase.

⁵⁰ Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” pp. 99–101.

⁵¹ Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” p. 95.

⁵² See Fukuyama, *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁵³ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, p. 25.

⁵⁴ Diego Gambetta, “Can We Trust Trust?” in *Trust. Making and Breaking Corporate Relations*, ed. D. Gambetta (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 218.

⁵⁵ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 39.

As opposed to the traditional society, whose structural cohesion is achieved due to strict mechanisms of assigning roles to individuals, modern society unveils itself as a structure facilitating human agency which actualises itself within a variety of interdependent spheres including global markets, politics, economy and cultural production. The existence of interdependent networks, which are systems of actions organized in opaque and abstract ways, increases the demands for trusting which becomes the crucial asset (perhaps a cultural competence) to be mobilised in the process of acting. Furthermore, trusting becomes the salient resource in the reality marked by the impersonality of life in great urban districts as well as the increasing presence of strangers. From this perspective, such intangibles and imponderables as reciprocity, trust, and willingness to fulfil mutual obligations, bridge the gap left by the polyphony and ambiguity of the contemporary socio-cultural reality. In this context, the act of vesting trust is inevitably related to bracketing off risks, since, as Russell Hardin remarks, “[W]ith a complete absence of trust one must be a catatonic, one could not even get up in the morning.”⁵⁶

With the onset of modern times, trusting other individuals seems to be faced with a greater proportion of risk than in the pre-modern era. The advent of mass, atomised society poses a threat to our ontological security: people become strangers to one another, isolated particulars which are lost in massive social aggregates of modernity. The lack of familiarity ties that bind people into coherent, well-known, comprehensible groups forces individuals to adopt a strategy of gambler each time they enter the stage of sociality.⁵⁷ In this context, individuals are compelled to treat others as potential competitors who hide their true identities behind the façade of gestures, appearances of courtesy or symbolic embellishments of social status, such as fashion for instance. Therefore, modern as well as post-modern gamblers need to adopt a skill of distinguishing between the essence and mere appearances — the ability that is contested by the contextual and pragmatic philosophies which are indulged in contingencies of the world deprived of the unifying purpose or structuring principles.

The cultural perspective on trust — to conclude this chapter — remains greatly indebted to the conceptualisation of individuals conceived as the *homo reciprocus*, informed agents who encounter multiple riddles of collective actions and the concomitant dilemmas of public

⁵⁶ Russell Hardin, “The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust,” *Politics and Society*, no. 4 (1993), p. 519.

⁵⁷ Zygmunt Bauman ed., “Ponowoczesne wzory osobowe,” in *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej* (Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, 1994), pp. 33–37.

good accumulation. Trusting relations are vital to a new cultural scenario for the European modernity in which panoptical structures of coercion were replaced by the arena of civil society assuming a form of deliberative sphere of interpersonal dialogue. Trust may be conceived as a major cultural force taking part in the creation of discursive arenas. Sharing discourses, viewpoints (or testimonies in Ricoeur's nomenclature) requires norms of reciprocity and responsibility for the Other. At the same time, this cultural repertoire functions as a form of the public good and may reflexively re-organise individual, agential disposition to vest trust in other individuals.

This duality of trust opens possibilities for a new line of argumentation in which trust cultures are defined in terms of theatrical performances relating problems of structural determinism to diverse forms of agential creativity. The metaphor of dramaturgic event, to put it otherwise, enables a more holistic outlook on the idea of trust and delineates the social becoming of trust cultures in terms of cultural processes taking place in interpersonal spheres comprising actors, performed actions (and their interactions with others) as well as the pre-existent structural resources of commonly shared axiology.

Chapter Four

Between the Stage and the Text

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his times plays many parts.¹

The discourses of agency and structure constitute two dissimilar methodological strategies facilitating the conceptualisation of society and culture in the theoretical frameworks of sociology and cultural studies. Their synthesis has given a new impetus to variegated insights into the ontology of socio-cultural reality. New theoretical projects have fructified with innovative conceptualisations of actors who remain shrouded in duality, rather than dualism. Knowledgeable agents are neither reified particulars driven by the superintended forces of social as well as cultural structures, nor do they resemble the abstract figure of the Cartesian subject. Therefore, the legacy of the synthetic methodologies – such as the theory of structuration – renders a novel strategy of research. Effective scholars must devote as much attention to structural determinants of human actions as to agential conditions of structural elaboration. The statement, to put it otherwise, postulates that discourses should follow synthetic, rather than analytic procedures in order to provide a more generalised perspective on society and culture.

The following chapter wishes to delineate a distinct methodological conceptualisation postulating that the synthesis of the agential and the structural may assume a form of “theatrical performances” combining agents (actors) and socio-cultural underpinnings of their actions (the text). This metaphor, furthermore, is indicative of a new interpretative formula seeking to unveil cultural mechanisms of trust cultures that

¹ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. Act 2, Scene 7, in *History of English Literature. An Anthology for Students*, ed. K. Fordoński (Poznań: Rebis, 2005), p. 310.

are typical of pre-modern and modern forms of social organisation. The general outline of the proposed paradigm pays its theoretical debts to three distinct discourses within the realm of theoretical humanities: (1) Erving Goffman's dramaturgic perspective, (2) the concept of arena policies and, last but not least, (3) the theory of structuration.

The legacy of Goffman's dramaturgic perspective paves the way for a conceptualisation of human reality in terms of iterated dramaturgic events in which individuals are actively engaged in the construction of their social personalities. Consequently, the dramaturgic perspective puts special emphasis on the role of the Other (or the audience) who assumes an attitude of vigilant observation towards actions undertaken by principal actors on a stage.²

The Self [...] is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die: it is a *dramaturgic effect* arising diffusely from a scene that is presented.³

From this perspective, an actor's self is not a static entity, but rather a product of one's agential drive towards self-presentation performed under the sceptical gaze of the Other. By the same token, the scrutiny of the Other becomes, as it were, reciprocated or incorporated within the rationale of an actor's performance. The approach, furthermore, is based upon the firm conviction that interpersonal encounters do not occur in spatial and temporal void. On the contrary, dramaturgic events are placed within a specific locale (the stage) which bridges the gap between the communicative universe of interpersonal dialogue and its spatial as well as temporal *milieu*.

The concept of arena policies delineates the totality of mechanisms that participate in the creation of policies by means of societal mobilisation and conflict resolution.⁴ The notion can be regarded as a conceptual tool facilitating our understanding of the nature of cultural reproduction which is conceived as a series of collective actions directed at the reinforcement or, contrariwise, the transformation of pre-existing structures of cultural hegemony. Hence, arenas seem to illuminate the rationale as well as mechanisms of cultural policy

² Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

³ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, pp. 252–253. Emphasis mine.

⁴ Stephen Hilgartner and Charles L. Bosk, "The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model," in *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 94 (1988), pp. 53–75.

implementation.⁵ In this particular respect, cultural stages purport to constitute arenas on which social groups (individual and collective actors representing different class, gender and race affiliations) compete in order to gain cultural hegemony conceived as an authority to legitimise existing elements of symbolic culture, such as representations, norms and, above all, values. In this specific context, arenas resemble institutionalised domains of societal construction of knowledge comprising actors actively engaged in organised cultural practices.⁶ Consequently, knowledge remains neither subjective nor objective: it is a sphere of social constructs deeply rooted in the inter-subjectivity of everyday *praxis* — the dialectic of subjective intensions and objective consequences of action.⁷

The theory of structuration⁸ provides an underlying ontological framework for the theatrical metaphor of cultural production. The major premise here is a notion that social and cultural structures do not possess a hard or organic objectivity *sui generis*, but, contrariwise, are regarded as inter-subjective consequences of human actions: they resemble entities that are being reproduced in the course of social practices undertaken by knowledgeable agents.⁹ The emphasis put on the synthetic properties of “duality of structure,” rather than structural dualism, paves the way for an ontology of the socio-cultural world that refers to dramaturgic events, or performances, as the constitutive elements of socio-cultural realities.

The Text

An individual's agency is deeply anchored in the pre-given, structural reality of the text. From the perspective of structural determination of human activity, actors are conditioned (both constrained and enabled) by the existing panorama of textual references comprising of values, norms, signs and discourses of culture. The egocentric freedom of the

⁵ See Glen Jordon and Chris Weedon, *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

⁶ Jordon and Weedon, *Cultural Politics*, p. 13.

⁷ See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 59–61.

⁸ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*.

⁹ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, pp. 25–26.

Cartesian model of human subjectivity constitutes an illusion — actors are compelled to articulate the pre-given lines, to perform conventional gestures. This imperative of repetition becomes a crucial element of the theatrical role. It is the repetitive character of roles that implies the compulsion of remembering, recollecting past memory traces and inscribing one's self in the matrix of the cultural. The role, to put it otherwise, provides an actor with a secure harbour, a haven of ontological security. Repeated textual references constitute, to use Bourdieu's concept, the "cultural capital," a totality of cultural resources acquired by means of socialization and education from which individuals draw throughout their life.¹⁰ In this sense, human activities remain rooted in the legacy of the past: steps taken forward require attention to the totality of bygone, yet still pervasive and formative phenomena.

However, the legacy of the past cannot establish the complete hegemony over the actuality of the present day and the potentiality of the future. An actor does not resemble a passive entity which is totally moulded by the semio-spaces of culture. Consequently, human existence does not resemble a mirror image of texts that have paved the way for it: actors are not compelled to repeat the lines unreflectively, without an element of creative interpretation. In this sense, the nature of memory cannot be conceived as a mode of pure representation, but rather a means of alternation of the past. This agential aspect of remembering, as Robert Lowell teaches us, situates an actor within a nebular field of fluidity in which "the past changes more than the present."¹¹ As a consequence, the faculty of remembering implies the dialectic of reconstructive and constructive imagination; the fusion of mere repetition and alternative interpretation constituting the construction of human identity.

In spite of their reliance on the legacy of the past, individuals retain their possibility of self-interpretation: their agency is rooted in the hermeneutic potential of *homo textualis*, an agent who remains active and constituted by the textual exterior.

By interpreting both the exterior and itself — and as a sign
it cannot escape self-interpretation — the subject as much

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 124–125.

¹¹ See Allan Johnston, "Modes of Return: Memory and Remembering in the Poetry of Robert Lowell," *Twentieth Century Literature* 36, no. 1 (1990), p. 73. Quoted after Borkowska, "Memory as a Mode of Return," in *Memory and Forgetfulness. Essays in Cultural Practice*, eds. W. Kalaga, T. Rachwał (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1999), p. 34.

constitutes (or constructs) itself as it is constituted (or constructed) by discourses; it is as much offered subject positions as it co-creates those positions via appropriation and interpretation.¹²

In the postulated framework, texts refer to the totality of structural devices (e.g. ideologies, discourses, symbols) that are used by knowledgeable actors in the process of interacting on stages of the cultural. In this context, texts are deprived of their objective and autopoietic character and can be seen as rules and resources rendering acting on a particular stage possible. The agential, action-based aspect of cultural structures is rooted in the faculty of memory conceived as an interpretative mode of return. In this context, an actor's performance is perceived as taking place within a particular time-space dimension. It concerns a moment in time which is located between the past that cannot be undone and the future that always remains open for possible action and re-interpretations. As a consequence, actions (and agents) are both conditioned by pre-existing imperatives of culture and simultaneously participate in their reproduction, change or elaboration. Textual devices, therefore, are not equipped with an objective significance but exist only virtually as streams of lived experiences within an individual's memory. To listen to Giddens:

To say that structure is a "virtual order" of transformative relations means that social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have "structures" but rather exhibit "structural properties" and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as *memory traces* orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents.¹³

Giddens seems to be postulating, as it were, a peculiar "phenomenology of socio-cultural structures," an alternative solution of the problem of structural determinants of human action. Textual circumstances of human action are in-built in the hermeneutic processes in the course of which the recollected past (structural properties) becomes, so to speak, invented or reproduced in order to provide novel conditionings of action. Needless to say, the postulated interpretation of socio-cultural

¹² Kalaga, *Nebulae of Discourse. Interpretation, Textuality, and the Subject* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 179.

¹³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 17. Emphasis mine.

structures renders the conceptualisation of an actor as the *homo textualis*: texts exist as interpretative events collected in an individual's memory.

An actor's role is conceived as the flow of interpretative events assuming the dialectic of repetition and interpretation and may be seen as being tantamount to an individual's self-identity. In this specific context, the issue of human identity becomes conceptualised, in a textual (or cultural) manner, in terms of a relatively continuous flow of biographical self-narration.¹⁴ Yet, the textual character of identity involves also its "emplotment," the introduction to a chain of events narrated by the Other.

The category of character is therefore a narrative category as well, and its role in the narrative involves the same narrative understanding as the plot itself.¹⁵

From this perspective, the spatio-temporal character of an actor's identity is subjected to the process of discursive categorisation undertaken in terms of the dialectic of difference and sameness. An individual constructs coherent self-narrations on the basis of difference from other actors whose performance entails taking part on distinct (isolated geographically, temporarily or symbolically) stages.¹⁶ Less evident is the other side of the coin: an actor's identity is also anchored in the continuity of the sameness: our biographical narrations are subjected to the never-ending process of axiological verification with regard to different individuals who, in our eyes, belong to the same, trustworthy perimeter of values, norms and texts of culture.¹⁷ Cultural identity, to put it otherwise, implies the existence of a particular radius of trust¹⁸ stressing that we tend to trust those who are anchored in similar textual heritage, those who act within the shared perimeter of norms and values.

Trustworthy actors — to conclude this part of argument — tend to read cultural texts in a comparable fashion. They are embedded

¹⁴ See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 76.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 143.

¹⁶ Wojciech Kalaga, "Culture and Signification," in *Britishness and Cultural Studies. Continuity and Change in Narrating the Nation*, eds. K. Knauer, S. Murray (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 2000), p. 65.

¹⁷ Zbigniew Boksański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe* (Warszawa: PWN, 2005), pp. 36–37.

¹⁸ See Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), p. 52.

in, to use Stanley Fish's terminology, an "interpretative community" representing a societal network whose existence depends on the virtue of shared sensitivity to symbolic culture.¹⁹ Interpretative communities, as the literary critic teaches us, do not purport to constitute fixed geographical or organizational entities. The term represents a special kind of symbolic locale, a container of social relations whose constitution is a result of long-lasting socio-historical processes of axiological as well as normative consolidation, rather than purposeful social engineering. In this particular context, the notion of interpretative community is related to the second element of the postulated framework, namely, the stage.

The Stage

An actor's performance does not resemble a solitary monologue. On the contrary, it can be perceived as a voice participating in the heteroglossia of theatrical stages. The notion suggests that dramaturgic events may be spatially and temporarily located within a distinct time-space continuity. As a consequence, the concept of the stage indicates a site of cultural convergence or debate in which knowledgeable and "emplotted" actors enter dialogic relations. Hence, it seems that cultural processes are not a matter pure, agent-less inter-textuality in which elements of symbolic culture belong to "the general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without question marks."²⁰ The stage, as a result, is a locale in which actors compete in the process of legitimising knowledge: it is an arena where dissimilar viewpoints, economic and political interests are intertwined with the pre-existing elements of culture.

The stage is not an objective geographical entity or a fixed organizational system. It rather represents a symbolic location represented as the arena of interpersonal relations and political actions.²¹ Politically speaking, its major function is to represent diverse mechanisms of individual, local and regional policymaking in a form of a coherent conceptual

¹⁹ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

²⁰ Roland Barthes, *Theory of the Text*, trans. I. McLeod, in *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. R. Young (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 39. Quoted after W. Kalaga, *Culture*, p. 62.

²¹ Cf. Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, *Socjologia życia publicznego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Scholar, 2005), pp. 121–214.

framework comprising all political actions involved in a specific issue. In this sense, arenas are constitutive elements of contemporary democratic societies in which policies are products of social participation and grass-roots mobilisation, rather than centralised implementation as well as regulation.

Although the stage is conceptually based upon the aforementioned notion of arena, its significance goes beyond the issues of policymaking. From the perspective of contemporary theory, the stage resembles public sphere conceived, as we learn from Habermas, in terms of an arena of public opinion which constitutes itself in a certain distance from structures of institutionalised authority and control.²² The idea of the stage is represented as a symbolic location of dialogic and communicative actions undertaken in order to attain the societal consensus with reference to symbolic and textual resources constituting the cultural identity of a given community. Consequently, the stage cannot be seen as an axiological and normative monolith, but rather it reveals its mercurial or discordant nature as a network-based site of cultural conflict in which a number of divergent discourses are confronted in the never-ending quest for cultural domination and textual hegemony.

The interpersonal character of the stage involves its conceptualisation, to use Ricoeur's terminology, as a kind of "discordant concordance," a nebular field of diverse, often contradictory voices.²³ In this context, stages seem to head towards the state of "positive cultural integration," which does not imply cultural homogeneity (over-integration), but refers to mechanisms and instruments of public debate, conflict resolution and interpersonal mediation. Ricoeur makes the point most firmly when he advocates the necessity of grounding common history in the concept of public deliberation by means of juxtaposing a number of discourses:

We make the difference between reasonable agreement and intractable disagreement. A common or identical history cannot be reached — and should not be attempted — because it is a part of life that there are conflicts. The challenge is to bring conflicts to the level of discourse and not let them degenerate into violence.²⁴

²² Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 27.

²³ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 142.

²⁴ Ricoeur, "Imagination, Testimony and Trust. A Dialogue with Paul Ricoeur," in *Questioning Ethics. Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, eds. R. Kearney, M. Dooley (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 12.

Hence, the stage, as the aforementioned quotation teaches us, is first and foremost an ethical concept: its functioning reflects norms and ideals of a good discourse which are at heart of the ethics of discussion. Since the discursive ethics entails the possibility to argue without the need to suppress the Other's voice, the stage is founded upon symmetrical relations typical of civil society. However, at this point a methodological digression should be made. The postulated conceptualisation retains its validity only as the Weberian "ideal type," a hermeneutic device representing "subjective meaning attributed to the hypothetical actor or actors in a given type of action."²⁵ Thus, the actual construction of the stage becomes a mere approximation of the delineated model.

Conceived as a symbolic field of dialogic relations, the stage comprises interpersonal networks facilitating the exchange of cultural resources or, to use Ricoeur's nomenclature, testimonies due to the presence of trust. Dramaturgic events entail placing bet as to the Other's contingent actions. The function of trust is, thus, to sustain an individual's ontological security by means of bracketing risks as well as uncertainties involved in everyday life. In this context, the repetitive character of an actor's role as a secure haven may be evoked one more time. In the world of triumphant uncertainty running rampant throughout stages of cultural reproduction, actors are characterised by the need of a text, a reliable role, whose lines would fulfil its palliative function with respect to faced risks. The nature of these textual devices changes respectively with the transformation of cultural stages and could be represented in a form of models comprising societies of pre-modern and late modern characters.

Furthermore, acting on a stage involves the ability to co-operate and communicate in order to create common symbolic representations and discursive devices enabling the perception of socio-cultural reality. The cultural aspect of this process is tantamount to the rise of so-called "discursive coalitions" which unite — permanently or temporarily — actors who are seeking to achieve similar objectives.²⁶ The formation of discursive coalitions, in turn, depends on the ability to accumulate stocks of social capital which becomes related to the existence of robust horizontal and dialogical relations of trust. As Robert D. Putnam puts it:

Social capital here refers to features of social organisation, such as trust norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.²⁷

²⁵ Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, p. 89.

²⁶ See Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 29–30.

²⁷ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, p. 167.

In this sense, trust unveils its constructive nature as a resource facilitating attaining objectives in the quest for influencing cultural policies. Yet, the same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the pre-given textual circumstances of theatrical performances.

Perceived as a spatial and temporal entity, the stage retains its significance not as a geographical sphere, but as a cultural space assuming both the dialectic of presence and absence, as well as the continuous flow of time linking the present with the past and the potentiality of the future. In this sense, the concept outlines the totality of agential actions as being, first of all, localised on the cultural territory existing between the locality of place and the global character of space.²⁸ As a consequence, individuals performing on stages are not only embedded in local circumstances of action, but are also influenced by the phantasmagorical presence of myriads of distant Others. The idea of the stage, second of all, subsumes a process of purely temporal origin conceptualised as a dynamic relation of the present day to both the Past and the Future. Hence, the stage can be delineated as the dialectic of modernisation and tradition. Theatrical performances, in turn, become localised between the ideological, progressive orientation towards the possibilities of distant future and the traditionalistic awe towards the past that cannot be undone.

Throughout their lives actors become embedded in a number of interrelated stages. Since the construction of human subjectivity presupposes the existence of significant relations with a multiplicity of others, agents reflectively refer to themselves as being entangled within a great number of stages. In a way, human life is an art of acting on many stages (educational system, the sphere of work, family life) which utilise dissimilar textual devices and are “inhabited” by many different actors.²⁹ From this perspective, the Self entering the multiplicity of cultural stages constitutes itself as *homo multiplex*, a divergent and multi-layered personality. As George Herbert Mead postulates:

We carry on a whole series of different relationships to different people. We are one thing to one man and another thing to another. There are parts of the self which exist only for the self in relation to itself. We divide ourselves up in all

²⁸ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 18–19.

²⁹ Tomasz Burzyński, “The Self in the Looking-Glass of the Other. Inter-subjectivity, Friendship and Trust in the Discourse of Modernity,” in *Zobaczyć świat w ziarenku piasku. O przyjaźni, pamięci i wyobraźni. Tom jubileuszowy dla Profesora Tadeusza Stawka*, eds. E. Borkowska, M. Nitka (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2006), pp. 122–123.

sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances. [...] There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. [...] A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal, as I have just pointed out.³⁰

Mead seems to suggest that the complexity of interpersonal relations paves the way for the self-constitution of “multiple personalities” and provokes situations in which an agent deals with the Other not as a wholly structured and complete personality but, contrariwise, a constellation of diverse potentialities of personal development. As a consequence, an individual may be regarded in terms of a “wanderer” whose fate entails the necessity to roam from one cultural stage to another on the risky and uncertain paths of his or her life. This fate, to put it still otherwise, rests upon the ability to use one’s agency to adopt to new textual conditions embedded on a novel stage.

The overall significance of the metaphor of the stage for the theoretical apparatus of cultural studies may be attributed to the assumption that the concept purports to constitute the spatial and temporal framework of cultural morphogenesis. The term represents the potentiality of self-change or self-elaboration by means of actions undertaken by knowledgeable agents, which is in-built in social and cultural systems. As Margaret Archer, the leading theoretician of socio-cultural morphogenesis, observes:

Hence the use of the term “morphogenesis” to describe the process of social structuring; “morpho” indicating shape, and “genesis” signalling that the shaping is the product of *social relations*. Thus “Morphogenesis” refers to those processes which tend to elaborate or change a system’s given form, state or structure.³¹

The constructive nature of dialogical relations with the Other gives rise to the process of elaboration of textual forms and structures that are reproduced on a given cultural stage. From the morphogenetic perspective, stages are regarded as changeable entities whose dynamism is rooted in the agential potential of actors, the typically human *élan vital* that reconstructs social and cultural environments. Much embedded

³⁰ Mead, “The Self, the I and the Me,” in *Social Theory. The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, p. 223.

³¹ Archer, *Realist Social Theory: the Morphogenetic Approach*, p. 166. Emphasis mine.

in the theory of action as the concept of morphogenesis may be, its interpretation is not deprived of the problem of external, structural conditions of human agency. As a result, an actor's performance on the stage is both conditioned by their own self-interpretative and agential actions, as well as by the forces of structural determination constituting, as it were, the *alter ego* of morphogenesis.

The notion of the stage would be a mere hypostasis, if it was not for the agential capabilities of individuals. Hence, the term refers to the existence of actors and the audience whose observant gaze seems to be tantamount to, to use Adam Smith's terminology discussed in the previous chapter, the idea of "impartial spectator" who provides the moral equilibrium to the otherwise mercurial universe of dialogic relations.

Actors and the Audience

The legacy of Goffman's dramaturgic approach may be attributed to the great emphasis put on human agency which is perceived from the perspective of performances undertaken by knowledgeable individuals in front of the audience whose gaze constitutes axiological and normative conditionings of performed actions. As a result, individuals are recognised as actors whose existence is conceptualised as a series of formative dramaturgic events involving the presentation of their selves to the audience. Hence, the major premises of the approach are related, first and foremost, to the directly experienced reality of everyday encounters with the Other (the *Lebenswelt*), rather than to the abstract and trans-personal potentiality of social and cultural structures. Needless to say, the dramaturgic perspective is generally considered to constitute a theoretical antithesis with reference to functionalism and structuralism whose theoretical heritage is often subsumed within the pessimist idea suggesting that the autonomous, creative subject is a mere illusion. The dramaturgic perspective is, thus, constituted on the basis of George Homans's bold imperative: "[L]et us get some men back in, and let us put some blood in them."³²

Cultural stages should be seen as arenas on which individuals act reflexively which means that they possess a certain amount of operational knowledge concerning their own actions and circumstances to

³² George Homans, "Bringing Men Back In," in *Institutions and Social Exchange*, eds. H. Turk, R.L. Simpson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 113.

be faced. In this sense, reflexivity should be seen as a cornerstone of human agency:

“Reflexivity” hence should be understood not merely as “self-consciousness” but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human being is to be a purposive agent who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively about those reasons (including lying about them).³³

The idea of reflexive actors is, nonetheless, strikingly dissimilar with reference to the structuralist perspective on human subjectivity depicting it as being generally false or uninformed. It is the ideology heralding the demise of the subject — no matter how provocative it may be — that situates individuals’ motivations and actions as irrelevant to the general construction of society and culture: “intentions or actions of human subjects, whether individual or collective, can easily be disposed of as irrelevant to the structural properties of the system.”³⁴ The main shortcoming of functionalism and structuralism, in this context, may be related to its static conceptualisation of socio-cultural structures conceived as purely autopoietic matrixes representing a more profound dimension of reality. As a consequence — and in relation to the positivist ideology embedded in structural thought — structures are seen as “blueprints” for social relations.

The “structure” of an organism exists “independently” of its functioning in a certain specific sense: the parts of the body can be studied when the organism dies, that is, when it has stopped “functioning.” But such is not the case with social systems, which cease to be when they cease to function: “patterns” of social relationships only exist in so far as the latter are organised as systems, reproduced over the course of time.³⁵

Hence, the concept of the death of the subject logically presupposes attempts at conducting its “post-mortem,” that is actions aiming at dis-

³³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 3.

³⁴ Milner and Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 98.

³⁵ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory. Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 61–62.

secting socio-cultural reality as if it was a corpse subjected to anatomical investigation. The stage would become an empty construction if it was not seen from the perspective of actors and their agency embedded in actions as well as interpersonal relations.

From this perspective, the concept of the stage draws from an idea that actors may be conceived in terms of the *homo creator*: reflexive agents who are placed in-between of the textual legacy of their role and their creative impulses to act. By the same token, the stage constitutes an arena of textual constraints as well as facilitations, the sphere of cultural resources which may be used by agents in informed ways. The central, spot-lighted place on the stage is occupied by principal actors who seek to influence cultural production as well as cultural policy. These actors may be individualised personae (great thinkers, scholars and intellectual provocateurs or gurus) whose work provides us with new insights into the nature of cultural reproduction. Yet the cultural agency may also be embodied in a form of collective actors which are institutionalised (political parties, grass-roots organisations) as well as informal and non-institutionalised (subcultures and social movements).

Actors, who compete on the stage of culture, cannot be seen as being endowed with equal possibilities or capabilities to influence policies; their agency remains differentiated. The situation in which every conceivable agent is able to exert the same proportion of influence on culture — as both commonsensical observation and scholarly theories teach us — is as untenable as squaring of the circle. Let us, without analysing the long debate in the sociology of social inequality, quote the following remark:

Power, in this relational sense, concerns the capability of actors to secure outcomes where the realisation of these outcomes depends upon the agency of others. The use of power in interaction thus can be understood in terms of facilities that participants bring to and mobilise as elements of the production of that interaction, thereby influencing its course. Social systems are constituted as regularised practices: power within social systems can thus be treated as involving reproduced relations of *autonomy* and *dependence* in social interaction.³⁶

The abovementioned conceptualisation of power is, nevertheless, greatly indebted to the Weberian idea suggesting that this particular

³⁶ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, p. 93. Emphasis mine.

term indicates a special kind of interpersonal relation with the Other in which the empowered actor can exercise his/her will upon another participants even in spite of their resistance.³⁷ However, disabled actors are not doomed to face the position of passive reification and — in spite of their unprivileged position within the totality of power relations on the stage — may possess some resources facilitating their performance with regard to the empowered principal actors. This is the so-called “dialectic of control” which, as Giddens teaches us, shows “how the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationships.”³⁸ The concept, to put it otherwise, indicates the role of the audience on the stage. In this theoretical framework, the audience represents the totality of agents who at a given time remain silent (or silenced) during the cultural debate. Yet, as the rationality of democracy teaches us, their role becomes constitutive as far as principal actors’ actions are concerned: the audience is endowed with a special form of collective agency best characterised by the Latin proverb: *vox populi vox dei*.

The Performance Towards the Culture of Trust

The three components of the proposed methodology cannot exist independently and are joined together as the dramaturgic event. Texts are performed by knowledgeable actors who retain the ability to interpret both the textual resources as well as their identities from the perspective of the performed roles. Actors reflexively refer to themselves as being placed within the multiplicity of other agents embodied within distinct spatial and temporal relations constituting stages. Therefore, dramaturgic events seem to constitute the only empirical entities as far as culture is concerned. A similar ontological postulate has been envisaged by Sztompka who coins the category of socio-individual field in order to show the mutual dependence of the structural and the individual.

³⁷ See Weber, *The Theory of Social*, p. 152.

³⁸ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 374.

In their own constitution social events fuse individualities and totalities, persistence and change, potentiality and actuality.³⁹

During the performance on the stage, an actor is not only rooted in the potentiality of textual references, but also in the actuality of the gaze of the Other. Agents are naturally driven towards the Other whose presence confirms the validity of performed roles. The Other's actuality as well as integrity is *mutatis mutandis* the provenance of trust in one's own identity.

The general idea that stands behind the outlined conception of the theatrical performance suggests that this particular framework may be adopted in order to analyse morphogenetic processes participating in the construction of stable trust cultures. The term indicates that interpersonal reciprocity, solidarity as well as trustworthiness are not only individualised phenomena, but also may be seen in terms of attributes inscribed in any given socio-cultural environment.⁴⁰ The culture of trust — conceived as a collective, emergent institution — remains a function of personalised trust. It is constructed on basis of human agency that actualises itself in a form of actions oriented at placing trust, entrusting something and evoking trust. In this sense, trust culture is an objective of cultural actions, a goal, to use the employed terminology, of dramaturgic performances.

Applying these conceptions to the building of trust culture, we must first emphasise the continuity of the process, which unfolds incessantly from the past through the present toward the future. Taking the perspective of the present, we shall notice that the relevant praxis consists of actions — individual and collective — in which people deploy trust, and make the bets of trust in three forms: placing trust, entrusting something and evoking trust. Looking backward, toward the past, we shall see that people act within some received tradition concerning trust, that is, the prevailing cultural climate of trust, or the reverse, the culture of distrust. [...] Looking forward, toward the future, we shall see that these bets of trust bring some results: predictive trust is confirmed, entrusted values are returned, evocative trust is reciprocated.⁴¹

³⁹ Sztompka, *Society in Action*, p. 96.

⁴⁰ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, pp. 119–121.

⁴¹ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, p. 120.

The aforementioned quotation asserts most firmly that the emergence of trust cultures resembles an active process of cultural morphogenesis taking into account both individual or collective actions undertaken by actors as well as structural, or textual, conditionings of their acts.

The following chapters are devoted to the analysis of trust cultures of traditional and modern societies from the perspective of the outlined framework of theoretical performances. In this sense, the problem is conceived in the context of an interplay between agential and structural factors whose generalised impact produces dissimilar cultures of trust. The main thesis illustrating patterns of changeability is the assumption that trust cultures undergo the process of modernisation in which the onus is shifted from the structural (textual) conditionings of the role to the spatio-temporal environment of stages and the agency of actors manifested by their ability to win trust. In other words, pre-modern cultures are seen as trust cultures that generate trust on the basis of legacy of textualised roles. In turn, trust in modernity is related to the agential activity of actors who perform in an uncertain environment defined by the proliferation of theatrical roles and ubiquity of global, networked stages.

Chapter Five

Trust as a Structural Expectation

Tradition, it might be said, is an orientation to the past, such that the past has a heavy influence or, more accurately put, is made to have a heavy influence over the present. Yet, clearly, in a certain sense at any rate, tradition is also about the future, since established practices are used as a way of organising future time. The future is shaped without the need to carve it out as a separate territory. Repetition [...] reaches out to return to the future to the past, while drawing on the past also to reconstruct the future.¹

Trust cultures are endowed with a purely temporal dimension signalling that processes of social change give rise to distinct cultural environments providing individuals with wide ranges of incentives as well as disincentives facilitating or, contrariwise, hindering reposing trust in the Other.² It postulates that forces of historical change give rise to distinct patterns of cultural reproduction responsible for the construction of trust cultures. As far as the theatrical framework is concerned, these patterns entail specific combinations of agential (actors), textual and spatio-temporal (the stage) factors subsumed in them. When translated into the problematic of interpersonal relations of trust, this hypothesis postulates that trust cultures may be perceived as systems in the process of change from the structurally rendered expectation towards the dimension of agential necessity.

The following chapter wishes to unveil the structural (or textual) determinants of the process of reproduction of trust cultures in the

¹ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernisation. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. U. Beck, A. Giddens, and S. Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 62.

² Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 100.

realm of pre-modern or, to put it otherwise, traditional societies. In this context, the major cultural phenomenon fostering durable structural foundations of trusting relations is the reign of traditionalism, a specific organisation of time which establishes the hegemony of institutional time over the temporal order of day-to-day existence by means of the all-pervading compulsion of repetition.

The Kula Ring

An investigation into pre-modern trust cultures pays its theoretical debts to social anthropology which renders a more informed and, so to speak, de-romanticised outlook on the reality of pre-modern societies. The realm of traditional folk cultures becomes deprived of its conventional interpretation defining it as a sphere of heavenly order and tranquillity. In the context of anthropological discourse, pre-modernity cannot be seen as a historical era whose cultural ethos contained more friendship and benevolence, than it is experienced nowadays.³ Here, the stress is laid not on attempts to prise the ethos of pre-modernity, but to observe it in a more critical manner. This is also indicative of this very argument which traces the pre-modern patterns of trust culture reproduction as being anchored in collective and traditionalistic mechanisms enforcing reciprocity and multilateral solidarity, such as the institution of the "Kula Ring."

In the context of social anthropology, the Kula Ring may serve as a prototypical trust culture whose functioning depends upon pre-modern, structural (textual) mechanisms of accumulating stocks of generalised trust. The distinctiveness of the Kula Ring is related, first and foremost, to specific patterns through which the pre-modern cultural order is being reproduced. Sociologically speaking, pre-modernity connotes the *Gemeinschaft*, a community based upon strong and emotional social ties whose durability is reinforced by the sacred authority of tradition as well as the familiarity of local cultural environments.⁴ In the reality of pre-modern community, interpersonal bonds and bridges can be constructed only when the Other is perceived as being predict-

³ Bauman, "Modernity and Ambivalence," in *Global Culture, Nationalism and Modernity*, ed. M. Featherstone (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 151.

⁴ Tönnies, *Community and Association* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).

able and the conditions of his or her benevolence are presented in a convincing and plausible manner.⁵ Trusting, consequently, becomes inscribed into a totality of cultural mechanisms — such as the Kula Ring — facilitating the reduction of complexity inscribed in interpersonal relations.

The Kula Ring has won almost universal acclaim as a paradigmatic instance of cultural institution whose main function is attributed to preserving individuals' ontological security by means of providing moral foundations for relations of trust and reciprocity.⁶ Bronisław Malinowski took greatest intellectual courage and stamina to delineate a vivid and cognitively inspiring representation of native cultures inhabiting the coral archipelago of the Triobriand Islands. Although his study unveils itself as a formative and seminal text as far as the development of social anthropology is concerned, it also enables drawing more informed parallels between the cultures of pre-modernity and advanced societies of the contemporary era. Malinowski's study contains empirical evidence belatedly sustaining John Locke's argument suggesting that social bonds and mutual responsibilities (*appetitus societatis*) predate fully-fledged political organisation. The case of Triobriand islanders, to translate it into the discourse of political philosophies, illustrates the thesis suggesting that the elaboration of interpersonal structures of trust logically antedates the rise of institutionalised mechanisms of coercion typical of advanced political bodies, such as national states, for instance.

The cultural logic of the Kula Ring, to put it briefly, aims at "the creation of networks of alliances among stateless societies so as to facilitate commercial exchange."⁷ The term denotes an elaborate system of ritual exchange in which eighteen tribal communities of the Triobriand archipelago take part each year. The islanders participate *en masse* in the cyclical, ritual exchanges of ceremonial artefacts (red shell-disc necklaces and white shell bracelets) which are performed with regard to complex norms of reciprocity. The reciprocity logic of the Kula Ring prescribes complex exchange rules stating that the necklaces are traded to the north (the artefacts circle the whole archipelago in a clockwise direction) and the bracelets are traded to the south (the items circle the archipelago in a counter-clockwise direction). Consequently, the

⁵ Cf. Luhmann, *Trust and Power*, trans. H. Davis, J. Raffan, and K. Rooney (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), p. 4.

⁶ Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauci Zachodniego Pacyfiku. Relacje o poczynaniach i przygodach krajowców z Nowej Gwinei* (Warszawa: PWN, 1981).

⁷ Janet Landa, *Trust, Ethnicity and Identity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 142.

archipelago's naval and territorial geography becomes re-defined by the ring-shaped trading network.

Despite its elaborate cultural regulations, the trade itself is seen as a mere façade with reference to the main function of the ceremonies, namely, the construction of stable interpersonal bonds between members of the geographically isolated communities. Consequently, the ritual exchange gives rise to network of moral obligations that serve as a form of social capital which could be depended upon at various times in the communities' existence. The ritual of interchange is firmly anchored in the common cultural tradition of the Triobriand Islands whose constitutive elements provide mythical and magical rules governing not only the trade itself, but also auxiliary activities surrounding the ceremony.⁸

The ritual exchanges are associated with a high proportion of uncertainty and risk. The islands are separated by rough seas which pose a serious threat for the communities deprived of modern naval technologies. Hence, despite its supposedly commercial character, the ritual cannot be regarded as an economic institution *par excellence*. The objective value of the artefacts cannot compensate both dangers as well as labour necessary for the accomplishment of the ceremony. As opposed to the majority of modern economic institutions, the Kula Ring ritual seems to aim at the reproduction of cultural imperatives, rather than the sheer accumulation of economic capital. In this respect, Malinowski's functional methodology — to use the contemporary discourse of functionalism — is constructed on the basis of a dichotomy between manifest and latent functions.⁹ This distinction, to put it succinctly, lays stress on the idea that socio-cultural realities are endowed with hidden patterns or regularities whose existence renders order to seemingly irrational actions or phenomena. Consequently, methodological insights, so some would claim, should be placed first and foremost upon the whole array of unintended consequences (latent functions) which make actions intelligible from the perspective of a cultural system conceived as a functional totality. A modern observer may therefore find no practical or utilitarian value in the institution of the Kula Ring. Yet the unintended consequences associated with the institution unveil its latent teleology as a powerful and active means of attaining cultural integrity.

Behind this functionalistic brand of thought, there lurks an idea suggesting that the methodology based upon the predilection for

⁸ Malinowski, *Argonauts*, pp. 149–155.

⁹ See Robert King Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968).

unveiling the hidden cultural meaningfulness is, nevertheless, indicative of Malinowski's perspective on the mythical aspects of traditional cultures.

Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilisation; it is not an idle tale but a hard-working, active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom.¹⁰

Despite the apparently Western penchant for applying evaluative terminology, the postulated viewpoint on pre-modern cultures — as the citation teaches us — seems to convey a very post-modern or post-colonial idea proclaiming that indigenous communities are endowed with their own specific cultural rationale and, therefore, cannot be assessed as being primitive from the viewpoint of modernised rationality. The rationality in question refers to the necessity of possessing accumulated stocks of moral resources (trust, solidarity, empathy) for the development of modern social organisations. In fact, theories, which tend to occupy a sizeable part of contemporary debates in contemporary social philosophy and sociology, seem to give great prominence to the re-invention of close emotional ties as a remedy for the societal disintegration which runs rampant in our times.¹¹

In the context of modern problems with societal fragmentation and deregulation, the paradigmatic significance of the Kula Ring may become attributed to the assumption that, historically speaking, it constitutes the first model conceptualising the accumulation of social capital by means of constructing, to use Mark Granovetter's nomenclature, an all-encompassing network of "weak social ties."¹² The notion has been originally coined in order to conceptualise the importance of

¹⁰ Bronisław Malinowski, "The Role of Myth in Life," in *Sacred Narrative. Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. A. Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 199.

¹¹ See especially Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Putnam, *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹² Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983), pp. 201–233.

interpersonal relations of acquaintanceship for specific mechanisms of cultural production (creation of new ideas or ideologies, dissemination of beliefs) in highly differentiated urban settings. In this sense, “the strength of weak ties” is not an oxymoronic phrase, but a statement expressing a firm belief in societal networks conceived as determinants of the macroscopic integration of communities. As Granovetter aptly observes:

The macroscopic side of this communication argument is that social systems lacking in weak ties will be fragmented and incoherent. New ideas will spread slowly, scientific endeavours will be handicapped, and subgroups separated by race, ethnicity, geography, or other characteristics will have difficulty reaching a *modus vivendi*.¹³

Although the notion remains firmly embedded within the urban panorama of modern societies, its theoretical implications seem to convey wider connotations and may also become indicative of the pre-modern type of social organisation. From this specific perspective, the cultural productivity of weak societal ties is especially evident in the case of the Argonauts of the Triobriand archipelago. Despite the objective, geographical distances between particular islands, the native communities succeeded in the construction of an all-encompassing network of interpersonal interaction, a peculiar cultural stage whose axiological and normative organisation seems to defy the pre-existing spatial intervals.

The cultural significance of trusting relations based on the weak social ties — to translate it into the general terminology of the theatrical performance framework — can be attributed to their role in accumulating stocks of social capital which may potentially enhance actors’ performances undertaken in the uncertain and fluid world inhabited by myriads of Others. This enabling (or facilitating) character of trust becomes indicative, to put it otherwise, of the general construction of socio-cultural reality in which individual actions are, to use Ricoeur’s nomenclature, “emplotted” within the trans-personal as well as the inter-subjective. From a more utilitarian perspective, vesting trust becomes constructive as far as an actor’s activity is concerned: both mutual obligations and solidarity seem to amplify individual agency. This practical aspect of trust sheds further light on the inter-subjective

¹³ Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited,” p. 202.

nature of culture in which objectives are attained collectively by means of cooperation and negotiation.

From the perspective of weak social ties, the institution of the Kula Ring constitutes an intelligible mechanism aiming at the societal construction of a particular type of the public good: a stable and well integrated culture of trust. In this context, the routine of ritual voyages as well as axiologically reinforced confidence that the ceremonial gifts must be reciprocated constitute the all-pervading aura certitude which interpolates the native cultures of the Triobriand archipelago. Myths and rituals participating in the societal actualisation of normative imperatives implicit in the institution may be regarded in terms of factors enabling coping with risk and complicity inscribed in the realm of everyday experiences.

Therefore, the Kula Ring — to put it in a discourse of contemporary cultural studies — constitutes a distinct signification system in which the tribesmen cease to function as anonymous individuals and become participants taking part in the same performance. They are all united by the perception of common imperatives and undertake actions which become intelligible from the perspective of the whole cultural system. This institution, as far as its general cultural significance is concerned, is indicative of the functional status of myths and rituals within the panorama of pre-modern cultural systems. Symbolic devices, as Clyde Kluckhohn asserts, may function as elements aiming at the preservation of ontological security in a world of uncertainty and risk in which everyday experience seems to sink in the turmoil of contingency as well as unpredictability.

Existence in an organised society would be unthinkable unless most people, most of the time, behaved in an expectable manner. Rituals constitute “tender spots” for all human beings, people can count upon the repetitive nature of the phenomena. [...] Rituals and myths supply, then, fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment.¹⁴

From this perspective, the cultural productivity of myths and rituals fulfils a palliative function with regard to the totality of human actions. Actors tend to perceive each other as trustworthy persons due to the fact of being united by the shared principles of the Ring. Risk associated with unfulfilled obligations becomes, consequently, diminished.

¹⁴ Clyde Kluckhohn, “Myths and Rituals: A General Theory,” in *Reader in Comparative Religion. An Anthropological Approach*, eds. W.A. Lessa, E.Z. Vogt (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 74.

The significance of the Kula Ring for the cultural analysis of pre-modernity enables postulating a thesis suggesting that in this particular context trust functions as a form of generalised normative expectation. In this particular context, trusting is not a result of profit/loss calculations which presupposes a conscious decision of vesting confidence in the Other. The agency of trust, consequently, presupposes an act of rational choice — an individual is obliged to make an informed decision on the basis of knowledge concerning the Other and his/her motivations to undertake particular actions. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to the figure of a trustee who becomes obliged to present oneself as a reliable partner of interaction.

The problem of trust — as it is presented in the case of the Kula Ring — does not seem to be subsumed within the category of the agency of trust. In this case, trusting relations are placed externally upon individuals. In other words, to use terminology of the theatrical framework, trust seems to be safeguarded by the legacy of roles which actors fulfil during cultural performances (such as the Kula Ring). As Sztompka observes:

Looking at trust as a cultural phenomenon is the domain of the cultural approach, unravelling the third dimension of trust. From this perspective, trust appears as neither a calculated orientation, nor a psychological propensity, but a cultural rule. [...] It is the property of social wholes, rather than relationships or individuals. If the rules demanding trust are shared by a community, and perceived as given and external by each member, then they exert a strong constraining pressure on actual acts of giving or withdrawing trust.¹⁵

In the context of pre-modern culture, actors are normatively expected to vest trust in the Other, and as a result, to believe that their positive attitudes will be reciprocated. The statement, to put it in a more general or synthetic terminology, indicates that pre-modern cultures may be perceived in terms of realms of structural expectations and obligations. Actors who remain anchored in the textual aspects of sacred tradition — as opposed to modern individuals who enjoy the plurality of choices — live under the spell of compulsion and repetition. They are expected to emulate and internalise sacred imperatives as well as prerogatives. The postulated understanding of pre-modern cultures, to

¹⁵ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, p. 66.

put it still otherwise, may be conceptualised from the perspective of an actor's biography. Human biographies cannot be solely perceived through the prism of agential drives of self-actualisation implicit in a personality typical of a cultural actor. Important as they may be, such innate drives are always related to culturally established patterns of behaviour providing individuals with ready-made, "off-the-shelf" personality models suggesting legitimised trajectories of "normal" biographies.

The overtly compulsive character of pre-modern culture becomes also reinforced by the roles played by actors performing on stages of culture. As opposed to social roles of modernity, whose normative contents may be subjected to processes of negotiation, moral obligations typical of pre-modern cultural actors are expressed in a form of imperatives that cannot be transformed. This is emphasised by the term "status relations" which, as Francis Fukuyama observes, indicates the sphere of life-long compulsion, rather than the agential predilection for making biographical choices:

A father was bound to his family or a lord to his slaves and servants in a lifetime personal relationship that consisted of a host of informal, unarticulated and often ambiguous mutual obligations. No one could simply walk away from the relationship if he or she did not like it.¹⁶

The problem of axiological as well as normative obligations corresponds to the construction of the Kula Ring which assumes that the participants are bound by the authority of tradition and, therefore, one cannot withdraw their access to the institution or change its rules.¹⁷ The concept of the status relationship — if it is perceived from a more psychological perspective — is endowed with a serious implication concerning the psychology of its participants: partaking in such a relation is a matter of habitual and often unthinkable repetition. As a consequence, actors are not perceived in a reflexive manner — their performances rely upon the ability to follow the lines of texts in the most literal sense of the word.

The idea of non-reflexive cognition clearly summarises Malinowski's observations concerning the islanders who are perceived in terms of passive participants. The possessed knowledge becomes limited to an individual's subjective motives and aspirations: consequently, one is deprived of a more generalised perspective on the phenomenon he

¹⁶ Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 9.

¹⁷ Malinowski, *Argonauts*, p. 132.

or she partakes in.¹⁸ This mechanism is, nevertheless, indicative of processes of participation in the totality pre-modern cultures and their institutions, such as mythologies for instance.

Myth [...] is not an *intellectual reaction* upon a puzzle, but an explicit act of faith born from the innermost instinctive and emotional reaction to the most formidable and haunting idea. [...] They never explain in any sense of the world; they always state the precedent which constitutes an ideal and a warrant for its continuance, and sometimes practical directions for the procedure.¹⁹

The quotation may be interpreted in an evaluative manner as an attempt at inscribing native tribesmen into the realm of the natural which manifests itself by their reliance upon the reign of biologically intelligible instincts and primordial — psychoanalysts would say unconscious — drives lurking at the hinterlands of human personality and being expressed by myths. Yet when we approach this statement with more contemporary explanatory devices, it becomes apparent that the dependence upon ritual and myth is not a sign of developmental backwardness, but rather an indicator of reliance upon the impact of “practical consciousness” which takes hold of human behaviour both in modernity and in bygone historical eras. This notion suggests that all purposeful actions involve the use of tacit knowledge which cannot be entirely expressed in a discursive way.²⁰ Although practical consciousness tends to be underestimated as a means of controlling an individual’s flow of acts, this kind of knowledge is indispensable for the continuity of social and cultural systems. The overwhelming majority of Englishmen, for instance, consist of competent users of their native language. They, however, can speak the language without having a detailed and discursively expressed knowledge of linguistic theories or generally accepted rules of prescriptive grammar. Moreover, the continuous and reflective use of this knowledge would backfire the most crucial function of language, namely, the societal communication.

In the context of the Kula Ring, cultural reproduction can be seen as a matter of habitual, quasi-instinctive ability to recall and repeat. Hence, it depends on the element of human experience that is deeply

¹⁸ Malinowski, *Argonauts*, pp. 128–129.

¹⁹ Malinowski, *The Role of Myth*, p. 206. Emphasis added.

²⁰ See Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, pp. 6–7.

interwoven, as Chris Jenks postulates, into the very sense of continuity and change conceived in terms of foundations of cultural reproduction processes.²¹ The ability to provide discursive explanations for individual or collective actions is, in the context delineated above, a very modern phenomenon which may be related to the growing expansion of professional expertise in the age of modernity. In the context of practical consciousness, actors rely upon textual devices which are embedded in their roles and the whole cultural performance seems to head towards the stability of structures, rather than the mercurial activity of human agency.

The next sub-chapters wish to seek for underpinnings of pre-modern trust cultures in three interrelated conditions of cultural reproduction. First of all, this is the all-pervading impact of tradition which organises cultural stages. Secondly, this is the agential conceptualisation of natural environment which assumes the role of the guardian of the textual. Thirdly, it is the spatial organisation of communities invoking associations with the *Gemeinschaft*-like type of societal organisation.

Memorization as a Form of Compulsion

The stage is a concept related to the issue of spatial and temporal location of actions aiming at the reproduction of culture. From a perspective of an individual actor, the temporal aspect of the stage is represented by the degree to which it provides acting agents with reliable means of coping with the passage of time, the unnerving fact of temporality inscribed in the world of human affairs. Hence, the cultural significance of the stage arises from the fact that every attempt at providing culture with continuity in time and space occurs within a distinct set of pre-existent spatial and temporal relations. Cultural conceptions of time, to put it otherwise, may facilitate or, contrariwise, constrain modes of cultural reproduction.

When translated into the conceptual reality of the postulated theatrical framework, dramaturgic events involve three intertwined orders of temporality.²² The first aspect of temporality is the reversible *durée* of daily routines. This is the temporal order which is constituted by the

²¹ Chris Jenks, "The Analytic Bases of Cultural Reproduction Theory," in *Cultural Reproduction*, ed. Ch. Jenks (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 5.

²² Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, pp. 34–36.

necessity of constant repetition. Not only do actors follow the lines of the same script each day, but they also expect to take part in repeatable and reliable institutions, rituals or other recurrent cultural phenomena. In other words, actors — when facing similar social situations everyday — are compelled to draw from comparable discursive options (texts) in the process of coping with problems of daily existence.

A strikingly dissimilar order of temporality is discussed when the problem of human ontogenesis becomes evoked. The overall course of human life, then, constitutes, the irreversible time of human ontogenetic existence. Nevertheless, when we assume a different viewpoint, the problem may be conceptualised as constituting the second axis of ontological security stating that actors are obliged to vest trust in the life-long continuity of social and cultural institutions. This particular aspect of ontological security is related to a belief that one's existence is dependable upon the logic of social evolution. It stresses that stability of social order is not only temporary, but it is a permanent, life-long feature of social systems.

This expectation that social systems reach beyond the individual's life alludes to the third order of temporality. In this context, one can observe the dimension of temporality conceived as an essential element of trans-personal institutions of society and culture. This constitutes the reversible time of institutions which indicates that patterns of social evolution are a mixture of continuity and change so that each successive generation follows the same ontogenetic steps and expects that after their death culture will continue to exist.

The concept of trust cultures perceived through the prism of theatrical performances is based upon the premise that the process assumes the unity of actors, stages and texts. Yet a similar assumption can be postulated with reference to the aforementioned orders of temporality:

The reversible time of institutions is both the condition and the outcome of the practices organised in the continuity of daily life, the main substantive form of the duality of structure. It would not be true, however, as I have already mentioned, to say that the routines of daily life are 'foundation' upon which the institutional forms of societal organisation are built in time-space. Rather, each enters into the constitution of the other, as they both do into the constitution of the acting self.²³

²³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 36.

Actors, to put it otherwise, orientate themselves towards the repeatable actions constituting the day-to-day practice as well as their “grand performance” representing the irreversible flow of activities heading towards the end of earthly matters. This temporal reality of daily routine as well as the irreversible time of being-towards-death transform themselves and, consequently, create — to use Fernand Braudel’s terminology²⁴ — the historically defined *longue durée* of social and cultural institutions. This reversible institutional time *mutatis mutandis* constitutes the sphere of constraints as well as facilitations enabling the course of daily routines. By the same token, the institutional time renders ontological security of the irreversible time of being-towards-death.

The cultural significance of tradition — to put it in the most general context — alludes towards a distinct cultural strategy of organising and controlling of time.²⁵ This concept ought to be understood in terms of a peculiar trans-individual phenomenon and, since individual traditions are not conceivable, it is tantamount to the aforementioned *longue durée* of social and cultural institutions. Hence, traditions may be subsumed within the idea of collective memory or consciousness. The social aspect of the phenomenon is expressed by an idea that all traditions involve an organisation of interpersonal relations as well as reciprocity: the term reflects the existence of social consent with reference to accepted hierarchies of inherited norms and values.

In the context of the aforementioned triadic order of temporality, the reign of tradition becomes a collective medium of memory rendering the organisation of reversible time associated with day-to-day activities possible. As far as pre-modern cultures are concerned, the authority of the past goes hand in hand with the organisation of activities concerning the totality of day-to-day pursuits, especially when those tend to involve uncertainty and risk.²⁶ In this context, media of collective memory supply actors with solutions to problems of eschatology: they help to re-organise human life so that it contains more sense and order in its process of oscillating for eternity. Running parallel to these statements is the appreciation of tradition as being a living phenomenon,

²⁴ Fernand Braudel, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²⁵ Anthony Giddens, “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” p. 62.

²⁶ Magic and myths seem to constitute the pre-modern response to problems, to use contemporary discourses, of occupational safety and risk management. See Bronisław Malinowski, “Myth in Primitive Psychology,” in *The Myth and Ritual Theory. An Anthology*, ed. R.A. Segal (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 173–179.

that is, a cultural institution that has no other conceivable mode of existence, than through actions undertaken both in the scope of daily routines and human life in its totality.

Less evident, however, is the agential side of tradition. This strategy of temporal organisation is not a given, stable monolith, but it consists of processes of interpretation aiming to defy the devastating impact of time. Hence, tradition — conceived here as a mechanism of cultural reproduction — renders a specific configuration of pre-modern dramatic performances in which the principal cultural actors separate themselves from social masses (the audience) by means of boundaries that cannot be crossed.²⁷ This mechanism results in the hierarchical, rather than individualistic or egalitarian, construction of pre-modern societies. The logic of cultural hierarchy, to put it succinctly, indicates that a candidate aspiring to a privileged status in a community has to fulfil a parade of normative imperatives, including those of age, gender, or family connections. Therefore, the temporal dimension of tradition becomes reinforced by its agential or social aspect. Traditional cultures are based upon a distinct type of social structure whose organisation situate the older on the top of societal hierarchy. This mode of, to use Margaret Mead's terminology, "post-figurative cultures" renders the guardians of the textual a role of principal cultural actors within societies of pre-modernity.²⁸

If in oral cultures older people are the repository (and also often the guardians) of traditions, it is not only because they absorbed them at an earlier point than others, but because they have the leisure to identify the details of these traditions in interaction with others of their age and teach them to the young. Tradition, therefore, we may say, is an organising medium of collective memory.²⁹

In the context of the quotation, tradition becomes both a medium of collective recollection and an institution indicating the position of principal actors in the process of cultural becoming. This element of agential interpretation implies that traditions cannot be conceived in terms of the institutions *sui generis*. The contemporary understanding of traditionalism and its role in the pre-modern morality is best

²⁷ The next sub-chapter provides a further insight into leadership patterns implicit in pre-modern processes of cultural reproduction.

²⁸ Margaret Mead, *Culture and Commitment. A Study of the Generation Gap* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

²⁹ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," pp. 63–64.

characterised by the expression “living tradition.”³⁰ This idea suggests that traditions must be reproduced, so that they may acquire a relative continuity in time and space.

Living tradition — conceived here as morality in the process of ongoing social becoming — is a chief temporal mechanism fostering the development of pre-modern trust cultures. It “provides an anchorage for that ‘basic trust’ so central to continuity of identity; and it is also the guiding mechanism for other trust relations.”³¹ The most essential means, to put it more analytically, through which living traditions acquire the persistency in spite of the passage of time are rituals:

Both myth and ritual are symbolic procedures and are most closely tied together by this as well as by other facts. The myth is a system of word symbols, whereas ritual is a system of object and act symbols. Both are symbolic processes for dealing with the same type of situation in the same affective mode.³²

Rituals come to serve as specific dramaturgic events — the perfect unities of the textual, the agential and the interpretative — whose cultural function aims at the reproduction of axiology and morality by means of compulsive repetition. In the case of the aforementioned Kula Ring institution, the ritual of undertaking sea voyages aims at the reproduction of trust culture typical of the Triobriand islanders. Yet the general function of tradition in the creation of generalised trust expectations seems to transgress this isolated example. A more holistic aspect of the process becomes unveiled when the general construction of the pre-modern socio-cultural reality is taken into account. Bauman tries to ground pre-modern cultural phenomena in the idea of homogeneity suggesting a kind of systemic integration which becomes defined the “dense sociability.” Let us adduce the following definition *in extenso*:

The “dense sociability” of the past strikes us, in retrospect, as distinct from our own condition not because it contained more friendship than we tend to experience in our own world, but because its world was tightly and almost completely filled with friends and enemies — and friends and

³⁰ Cf. Mircea Eliade, “Cosmogonic Myth and the ‘Sacred History,’” in *Sacred Narrative. Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. A. Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 127–151.

³¹ Giddens, “Living in a Post-Traditional Society,” p. 81.

³² Kluckhohn, *Myths and Rituals*, p. 71.

enemies only. Little room, if any marginal room only, was left in the lifeworld for poorly defined strangers.³³

The dislocation of strangeness from the scope of pre-modern social organisation becomes indicative of situations in which actors are all engaged in the same, community-based theatrical performances. Consequently, actors wear basically the same cultural mask which is a product of shared conditions of existence. At the same time, they act according to pre-existent lines of sacred texts and are not granted (except for the principal cultural actors) the privilege of creative improvisation or interpretation. In other words, the societal organisation of pre-modern theatrical performances provides the majority of cultural actors with clear-cut, predictable conditions of existence: trajectories of their identities are firmly rooted in the sphere of shared discourses, fixed interpretative communities, and well-organised paths of sociality.

Life which follows the lines of the text, to use the theatrical metaphor one more time, is inevitably anchored in the sacred legacy of the past which is conveyed by the totality of mythology and becomes socially expressed in a form of rituals. From this perspective, the virtue of integral and homogeneous culture — as it is expressed by the unwavering continuity of axiological and normative hierarchies — may transform itself into the stable integrity of human subjectivity. Mechanisms of cultural integrity may be represented as models of personal development indicating legitimate trajectories of human existence. Hence, under the circumstances of stable, community-based trust cultures, actors' biographies are "normal" in a way that they reflect the pre-existent stability of culture. In other words, trust vested in the integrity of culture gives rise to unwavering self-narrations which, in turn, constitute the cornerstone of coherent identities. From this perspective (and as it is stated earlier in the text) actors' identities remain non-reflexive or, to put it still otherwise, textually granted.

The aforementioned relatedness of human identity to cultural imperatives of personal development is indicative of collectivism. Thus, it is the reign of collectivism that separates human agency from human development. In this way, individualism is indeed a typically modern invention which cannot be adjusted to the cultural reality of pre-modern communities. As Giddens observes:

³³ Bauman, *Modernity*, p. 151.

[T]he individual, in a certain sense, did not exist in traditional cultures, and individuality was not prized. Only with the emergence of modern societies and, more particularly, with the differentiation of the division of labour, did the separate individual become a focus of attention.³⁴

In the context of pre-modern society, identity cannot be conceived in terms of a project which needs to be attained or worked out. Quite to the contrary, it is a permanent feature granted to individuals by their societal and cultural organisations. In a way, individual identities are all rooted in collective ones, so that a person, most of the time, ceases to be an agent and remains a particle driven by superintended forces of social integration, such as mythology, religion, habits and folkways. Tradition one more time unveils its epistemological hold over the present day and the future time: myths and rituals indicate the sphere of socially legitimised knowledge with reference to human identity.

This is, nevertheless, indicative of Ernst Cassirer's perspective on the pre-modern epistemology which states that "[N]ot nature, but society is the true model of myth."³⁵ Cassirer gives great prominence to textual elements of traditions which in his anthropology become representations of the pre-existent social and cultural orders made, as it were, *ex post*. Myths are vehicles of social integration: they fulfil functions which are productive as far as the integrity and durability of social institutions (such as marriage or rites of passage) are concerned. This particular way of conceptualising tradition is, nevertheless, indicative of the perspective on cultural models as it is delineated by Clifford Geertz. This standpoint is an attempt to problematize the concept of model by means of providing a dichotomous classification between, so to speak, prescriptive and descriptive understanding of the term in question.³⁶ In this context, textual resources of tradition seem to fulfil the prescriptive function as elements of social knowledge created in order to reinforce a community's norms and values by supplying evidence sustaining their functionality. This methodological strategy seems to reverberate in Mircea Eliade's conception of mythology as the sacred history of pre-modern communities.

³⁴ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 75.

³⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), p. 106.

³⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 93.

Now in every case where we have access to a still living tradition, and not to a acculturated one, one thing strikes us from the very beginning: the mythology not only constitutes, as it were, the "sacred history" of the tribe, but it equally reveals a hierarchy in series of fabulous events that it reports.³⁷

The internal organisation of an actor's identity is deeply rooted in the temporal character of culture: it is a way of dealing with the passage of time which, consequently, allows for coping with cultural changeability.³⁸ In the context of pre-modern cultural environments, we may speak of the positive dialogue with time: traditions, in turn, obtain their precedence over the present day as the sources of cultural classifications that are used in order to make sense out of the external reality. Such a constructive conversation, needless to say, makes it possible for actors to tolerate the all-pervading impact of the past upon their present biographical narrations.

Nature as a Guardian of the Textual

The sacredness of common history remains, one may propose, at heart of traditionalism conceived in terms of a specific orientation towards time which is typical of pre-modern cultural settings. As opposed to civilisations of (post)industrial modernity, which in the main are founded upon the free circulation of knowledge, all traditional cultures rely upon the existence of severe structural constraints restraining the flow of information. The realm of pre-modern epistemology, to put it otherwise, is founded upon arenas of arcane knowledge which is deposited in the hands of the few who constitute the social elite. Therefore, the status of knowledge in traditional cultures cannot be conceived in terms of an expertise which, it is argued, is a typically modern phenomenon.³⁹ The traditional organisation of beliefs concerning the past distinguishes itself from the contemporary perception of history. The latter, as a distinct branch of modern academic expertise, remains open to dialogue and re-interpretation. It is a particular type

³⁷ Eliade, *Cosmogonic Myth*, p. 140.

³⁸ Eliade, p. 72.

³⁹ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," p. 84.

of public good subjected to the process of political or scholarly discussion uniting all interested parties under the common denominator of all-inclusive debate.⁴⁰

The cryptic knowledge implicit in traditional cultures coincides with a specific model of social structure in which guardians of the sacred beliefs — namely, prophets, priests or shamans — become the principal actors engaged in the process of cultural morphogenesis. The privileged status of their cultural roles is related to the unique abilities of interpretation of the sacred history. From this perspective, the traditional model of cultural morphogenesis is defined as being dependant on a particular type of principal actors whose authority is derived from a combination of innate psychological traits and the charismatic abilities to partake in the order of the supernatural. Max Weber makes the point most firmly when he outlines the most classical definition of charismatic leadership:

The term “charisma” will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.⁴¹

Charismatic leadership, as opposed to the modern pattern of authority (the legal-rational leadership), is founded upon the specific type of innate predilection for communicating with the divine, rather than upon the institutional properties of political systems. Therefore, to put it in a critical manner, the substantial shortcoming of the charismatic authority is the constant crisis of legitimisation which may be resolved only by means of providing evidence of one’s supernatural powers. This is, however, not the case with the pattern of legal-rational authority which is based upon institutional mechanisms (the rule of law embodied by the constitution) that aim at providing modern leadership with a stable framework of social and cultural legitimisation. The constant crisis of legitimisation, as it is discussed later in the text, is the first premise upon which natural environment becomes used in a political way in order to provide the long-lasting foundation of the charismatic leadership and the durable basis for traditional orders in the long run.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ricoeur, *Imagination, Testimony and Trust. A Dialogue with Paul Ricoeur*, in *Questioning Ethics. Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, eds. R. Kearney, M. Dooley (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 12.

⁴¹ Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, trans. T. Parsons (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), pp. 358–359.

Charismatic leaders, as the theatrical perspective teaches us, assume social roles of principal cultural actors: their duty is to control processes through which culture is reproduced. Needless to say, ordinary tribesmen assume the role of the audience who are compelled to vest trust in the spiritual capabilities embodied by their leaders. The principal cultural actors' powers of interpretation rely on epiphany in which the hidden essence conveyed by the authority of sacred texts becomes unveiled and translated into the everyday discourse. Their work implies a belief in a kind of hidden teleology, a peculiar "formulaic truth" whose existence legitimises social status of charismatic leadership.

Like all other aspects of tradition, ritual has to be interpreted; but such an interpretation is not normally in the hands of the lay individual. Here we have to establish a connection between tradition's guardians and the truths such traditions contain or disclose. Tradition involves "formulaic truth," to which only certain persons have full access. Formulaic truth depends not upon referential properties of language but rather upon their opposite; ritual language is performative, and may sometimes contain words and practices that the speakers or listeners can barely understand.⁴²

Consequently, the idea of formulaic truth seems to uphold the initial conceptualisation of cultural reproduction as a series of dramaturgic events. It depends upon the dichotomous classification between the main stage (the articulated part of cultural reproduction which is performed and disguised as a ritual) as well as the backstage constituting the repository of the cryptic knowledge used in order to provide a legitimisation framework for the performed actions. In this sense, pre-modern charismatic leaders seem to be forerunners of modern legislators whose task — as Bauman's perspective on cultural modernity teaches us — is to delineate as well as implement plans and projects aiming at the superimposition of social order.⁴³

The aforementioned classification between the cultural stage and the arcane backstage is indicative of the societal significance of the taboo mechanism. The essential characteristic of morality based upon the invention of taboo "is that without consulting experience it pronounces *a priori* certain things to be dangerous."⁴⁴ The exclusion of public

⁴² Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," p. 64.

⁴³ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, pp. 136–137.

wisdom as well as experience from the social institution of taboo, as a consequence, reinforces the monopoly of pre-modern legislators to formulate moral judgements that purport to attain the status of divine truth. Hence, the pre-modern system of morality is based upon an ability to conceptualise formulaic truths whose social function is to uphold moral coherence of a community. It is the cultural integrity which is conveyed by the sacredness of mythology and laboured in a long process of interpretative reproduction undertaken by the elite perceiving themselves as the guardians of traditional thinking.

As opposed to modern systems of political legitimisation, traditional mechanisms of morality (such as systems of taboo ethics) and the concomitant position of charismatic leaders all seem to fall victim to the perpetual crisis of legitimisation. As a consequence, the stability of their authority rests upon the readiness to provide a strong coercive instance which would act as a factor legitimising moral knowledge that cannot be consulted by experience or practical wisdom. An attempt at legitimising taboo morality is typical of, as Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky assert, the cultural mechanisms of politicising natural environment.⁴⁵ In this particular case, charismatic leaders represent themselves as moral authorities whose power is derived from their special communion with the threatening and destructive forces of nature. Their cultural role is, therefore, related to the act of conceptualising nature in an essentially agential manner as a guardian of morality which secures the axiological consensus by means of relating natural dangers to moral defects perpetrated by individual or collective actors.

Such a standpoint is, nevertheless, indicative of the cultural perspective of risk which outlines social strategies of amplification or attenuation of dangers from the perspective of moral norms and values implicit in a given community or social organisation.⁴⁶ In this context, Douglas outlines a moral aspect of natural hazards perception within the scope of pre-modern morality:

In short, the stronger the solidarity of a community, the more readily will natural disasters be coded as signs of reprehensible behaviour. Every death and most illnesses will give scope for defining blameworthiness. Danger is defined to protect the public good and the incidence of blame is a by-product of arrangements for persuading fellow members to

⁴⁵ Douglas and Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture. An Essay on the Selection of Environmental and Technological Dangers* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

⁴⁶ Douglas and Wildavsky, p. 6.

contribute to it. [...] A common danger gives them a handle to manipulate, the threat of community-wide pollution is a weapon for mutual coercion.⁴⁷

The quotation, thus, refers to the existence of an intrinsic connection between trust and the public understanding of uncertainties. The development of positive and coherent trust cultures is seen as depending on the ability to deploy common fears as a means of upholding common moral values.

The moral dialogue on how to organise moral communities seems to postulate that natural environment is not perceived in terms of an object, but an agent. As opposed to the axiology of industrial modernity, traditional cultures see nature as a powerful benefactor of their cultural leadership. In this sort of discourse, nature is perceived through essentially ethical lenses as the perfect template of order.

If nature contains a divine element it appears not in the abundance of its life but in the simplicity of its order. Nature is not, as in polytheistic religion, the great and benign mother, the divine lap from which all life originates. It is conceived as the sphere of law and lawfulness. And by this feature alone it proves its divine origin.⁴⁸

Nature is believed to be seen as a particular type of a cultural actor, a player on arenas of pre-modern communities, which uses its external position to enforce moral order upon the tribesmen. The political or moral functions of natural environment clearly indicate that nature is not an objective notion, but rather a societal construction. It is often argued — for instance in the post-industrial discourse in general and in the cyberpunk genre in particular — that nature ceases to constitute an independent sphere and resembles a cultural construct made, as it were, *ex post* in order to justify the supremacy of societal or technological environment. This is, for instance, indicative of the Heideggerian concept of *enframing* which postulates that modern rationalisation represents nature from the perspective of its own interests so that a river ceases to constitute a complicated biological habitat and is perceived through technologically reductive lenses in terms of a resource supply for industry.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Risk and Blame. Essays in Cultural Theory*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 131.

⁴⁹ See Keith Tester, *The Life and Times of Post-Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 95.

It also seems implausible to see nature as the guardian of morality, since from the very onset the construction of nature defies morality: it is the realm of biologically intelligible egoism where competition among species knows no sense of ethical commandments. From the perspective of the political use of nature, we may say that coding natural environment as an ally in the fight with human wickedness can be regarded as an ideological subterfuge indicating the parallel between pre-modern and modern (perhaps even post-modern) conceptualisations of nature. As Ulrich Beck, the leading scholar on the arena of sociology of risk, postulates:

If someone uses the word “nature,” the question immediately arises: What cultural model of “nature” is being taken for granted? [...] So, nature in itself is not nature: it is a concept, a norm, a recollection, an alternative plan. Today more than ever. Nature is being rediscovered, pampered, at a time when it is no longer there.⁵⁰

Within the discourse of traditionalism, nature is “no longer there”: it is dislodged from its genuine meaning and becomes transformed in order to be functional as far as community integration is concerned.

In the age of traditional culture, the moral conceptualisation of nature goes hand in hand with two antithetical attitudes towards it: the fear of the natural as the realm of incomprehensible risk and the veneration of its deity-driven order. The awe articulated towards natural environment becomes self-evident when one assumes that to the pre-modern worldview man becomes subordinated to the powers of nature which is seen as the all-encompassing chain uniting all the conceivable beings. The doctrine of all-pervading forces of nature (the divine *pneuma*) establishes natural and unbreakable connections between society, culture and the natural habitat, so that people can no longer perceive themselves in terms of detached observers or manipulators of the natural.⁵¹ As opposed to the modern man of science, who experiences the rational supremacy over the irrational nature, members of traditional communities may perceive nature in a semantically reduced way as a guarantee of order, but at the same time they bow before the magnitude of its creation. If, to put it otherwise, the modern man of science allows to intervene into the order of nature, the actor of pre-modernity believes in the reverse logic of the process:

⁵⁰ Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 21.

⁵¹ Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 109.

it is nature that intervenes into social affairs. As Douglas comments on Levy-Bruhl's cultural anthropology:

He taught that after millennia of our human past in which dangers were said to be caused by witchcraft or taboo-breaking, our distinctive achievement was to invent the idea of natural death and accurately believe in it. The concept of accident rate and of normal changes of incurring disease belongs to the modern, scientific way of thinking. Faced by statistical averages, there is no point in my asking why a particular illness should have struck me. If there are no deeper explanations available, the question about my own case appears pointless. Our curiosity is stopped by the doctor's certificate of death from natural causes.⁵²

From this specific perspective, the core element of pre-modern morality is attributed to the aforementioned feature of hidden teleology: the reign of charismatic leaders becomes sustained and reinforced by the alleged powers of observing cryptic connections between people's misfortune and their behaviour assessed from the viewpoint of taboo ethics.

When Culture Precedes Territory: The Place as a Locale

The cultural significance of spatial relationships subsumed under the notion of theatrical stage cannot be reduced to the objective dimension of geographical distances, but it rather concerns the notion of interplay between presence and absence. Consequently, the cultural organisation of spatial relations comes to serve as a crucial factor pre-determining the emergence of stable trust cultures. The reality constructed upon well-defined conditions of co-presence (which are at core of the cultural conceptualisation of "place") is conducive to the development of trust and personal security. The relations of co-presence constitute the *axis mundus* of world conceived as a sphere of familiarity and transparency.⁵³ The loss of familiarity, when the surrounding reality is not domesticated, becomes a keynote to the rise of interpersonal distrust,

⁵² Douglas, Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*, p. 31.

⁵³ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory*, pp. 123–124.

suspicion and cynicism. Moreover, the dissolution of well-entrenched rural communities may also lead to personal or collective pathologies, such as the disruption of personal identities, delinquency or the erosion of kinship relationships.⁵⁴

From the perspective of the theatrical framework, actions may be expressed in terms of their dual relationship with the cultural dimension of space. Firstly, human actions tend to bind space, that is, produce meaningful cultural localisations. Rituals or religious ceremonies, for instance, establish a perimeter of the sacred space which is automatically differentiated from the spatial and cultural circumstances typical of day-to-day activities. This form of cultural morphogenesis is typical of pre-modern communities in which traditions tend to control space through their capability of organising time.⁵⁵ Yet, an opposite relationship is also plausible. When established by means of action, cultural spaces retain the potentiality to shape organised human practices. In this context, sacred spaces, to return to the aforementioned example, may determine certain classes of actions. They may refrain individuals from undertaking a great majority of practices associated with day-to-day life and provide a place for behaviour which would be coded as abnormal or even bizarre in a different interpretative context.⁵⁶

The cultural significance of relations between traditionalism and space seems to pre-date the modern cartographic discourse in a way that it makes spaces domesticated by means of subsuming them under the label of shared symbolic devices. In this context, a modern map renders a certain domestication of geographical spaces possible in order to represent them as realms of familiarity, stable environments for the emergence of trust cultures.⁵⁷ This task, as far as modern cartography is concerned, is possible only when a map is perceived in terms of a "representation conceived as imitation."⁵⁸ Yet, a similar mechanism

⁵⁴ A classical instance of the loss of domestication was observed in the case of Polish emigrants in Chicago. Cf. W.I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Boston: Badger, 1918–1920).

⁵⁵ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," p. 96.

⁵⁶ Geertz speaks of religion systems as a means of actualisation of specific psychological moods and motivations that would otherwise be left in a void. See Geertz, *The Interpretation*, pp. 94–98.

⁵⁷ See Zbigniew Białas, "Mnemotechnics, 'Projection' and Colonial Cartography: Enforcing a Comprehensibility of Strangeness," in *Memory and Forgetfulness. Essays in Cultural Practice*, eds. W. Kalaga, T. Rachwał (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 1999), pp. 9–11.

⁵⁸ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 123. Quoted after Białas, "Mnemotechnics, 'Projection' and Colonial Cartography," p. 9.

of signification seems to be at the heart of tradition and its power exerted over topographical spaces. From the perspective of traditionalism, the organisation of the Kula Ring could be perceived in terms of a cultural institution that produces distinctive symbolic locations of actions oriented at the emergence of the native trust culture. As a result, the Ring itself should be conceived as a form of pre-modern simulation, a representation which seems to follow Jean Baudrillard's homology of simulacrum to a cartographic entity which precedes allegedly pre-existent territorial organisations. By way of exemplification, let us quote the relevant passage:

The simulation is no longer that of territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory — procession of simulacra — that engenders the territory [...].⁵⁹

Hence, in raising the question concerning the theoretical use-value of the Kula Ring conception, one may recognize that the institution does not purport to constitute an objective geographic entity. It is, rather, a symbolic representation of the Triobriand archipelago conceived from a cultural perspective of ritual exchanges which bind the isolated islands into a relatively coherent spatial totality. In this sense, cultural imperatives — stating that necklaces and bracelets must be interchanged in two opposite directions — bind the spatial organisation of the Triobriand archipelago. The rules of exchange provides the islands with a new sense of territorial organisation (hence the term “Ring”) that restores order to otherwise chaotic geography of the archipelago.⁶⁰ The islanders' tradition, to put it otherwise, establishes hegemony over the spatial organisation of the archipelago, thus rendering its conversion from the realm of risk (uncertainty associated with dangerous sea voyages) into the emergent trust culture.

Challenging as it is, the significance of spatial relation to the development of pre-modern trust cultures cannot be solely reduced to the issue of traditionalism as a medium enabling the control of space. As far as pre-modern cultural systems are concerned, the cultural institution of the Kula Ring provides us with a paradigmatic organisation of space. Despite the existence of geographical distances, the Triobrianders

⁵⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. S.F. Glaser (The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁶⁰ Malinowski, *Argonauts*, p. 128.

are motivated to undertake long and risky journeys in order to visit their partners inhabiting the neighbouring islands.⁶¹ As a consequence, the act of ritual exchange involves the establishment of cultural relations of co-presence. This cultural imperative of participating in the exchange — to perceive it from a different angle — defines the cultural signification of the pre-modern stage: the islanders' system of ritual exchange is based upon moral imperatives that get the upper hand over the constraint of geographical distances. As a result, the Triobrianders participate in the same spatial arena of cultural morphogenesis.

The system of the Kula Ring provides a pattern of cultural institution that establishes its hegemony over objective territory. This sort of spatial relations is best conveyed by the term "place" which should be understood in opposition to the concept of "space."

"Place" is best conceptualised by means of the idea of locale, which refers to physical settings of social activity as situated geographically. In pre-modern societies, space and place largely coincide, since the spatial dimensions of social life are, for most of the population, and in most respects, dominated by "presence" — by localised activities.⁶²

The focus on co-presence gives rise to the notion that social cognition is anchored in the same mechanism. This type of perception is indicative of the so-called "facework commitment" which, as Goffman observes, is based upon the ability to maintain one's face, that is, to present one's self as being benevolent or trustworthy by means of verbal and non-verbal acts directly perceived by the Other.⁶³

The social becoming of pre-modern trust cultures, to conclude this chapter, seems to be firmly rooted in the structural, or textual, conditionings of actor's agency subsumed under the cultural significance of traditionalism. Hence, trusting relations constitute a kind of structurally rendered axiological expectation, rather than an agential necessity or obligation awaiting to be fulfilled, or "worked out." In this context, reciprocity seems to be more psychologically rewarding than bonds of trustworthiness inscribed within the contemporary, "faceless" networks of indirect and mediated communication.⁶⁴ In the realm of pre-modern cultures the gift of trust becomes almost instantaneously reciprocated by a trustee. Actors of cultural exchange, to follow the

⁶¹ Malinowski, *Argonauts*, pp. 126–132.

⁶² Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 18.

⁶³ See Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), pp. 5–9.

⁶⁴ Cf. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 113.

model of the theatrical performance, are united by the shared textual references rendering structurally reinforced trust cultures. The sacred legacy of texts, in turn, is founded upon the charismatic nature of pre-modern leadership whose authority is derived from their relation to natural environment conceived as a guardian of traditionalism. Hence, it is the structurally granted reliability of exchange which constitutes the aura of psychological credibility and predictability.

Chapter Six

The Agency of Trust in the Framework of Reflexive Modernization

Moralists, reactionaries, and people with strict feelings for style are perfectly correct when they complain about the increasing “lack of form” in modern life. They fail to understand however, that what is happening is not only a negative, passive dying out of traditional forms, but simultaneously a fully positive drive towards life which is actively repressing these forms.¹

Social changes affecting modern socio-cultural orders have paved the way for a new form of trust culture. As opposed to the pre-modern cultures, in which interpersonal trusting is inscribed within axiological and normative systems as a kind of structural expectation, the advent of modernity gives rise to the agential conceptualisation of trust as a cultural resource inscribed in the personal reflexivity of a cultural actor facing the systemic nature of modernization. This idea also suggests that in the era of late modernity structural constraints are entities in the terminal phase of development, which enables actors to re-organise their identities, social roles as well as their individual propensities for trusting.

This progressive drift towards the culture of agency becomes facilitated by the dissolution of spatial and temporal constraints of the stage, which is related to the proliferation of texts and the multiplication of cultural actors equipped with distinct political, social or cultural agendas. As a consequence, trusting resembles an endeavour of coping with risks as well as uncertainties inscribed in the world of rampag-

¹ Georg Simmel, *The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays*, trans. K.P. Etkorn (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p. 12.

ing contingency in which myriads of actors participate *en masse* in the heteroglossia of the global network.

Modernity and the Idea of Historical Discontinuity

What seems to rest at the heart of the contemporary theoretical vantage point in the humanities is a feeling of fundamental uncertainty which is best characterised by Thomas Kuhn's methodology relating risk inherent in theory-making to the process of the paradigm shift. Not only do definitions or conceptualisations drift in the realm of uncertainty, where their practical usefulness becomes assessed, to evoke Karl Raimund Popper's claim, by the criterion of falsification, but also entire systems of theoretical explanation (or paradigms) are regarded as being transient, fluid and potentially non-effective.² Consequently, what becomes postulated as the ultimate fate of methodologies is a certain degree of uneasiness related to the grim aura of foreboding concerning the arrival of a theory's Other, a competing paradigm. The process of cognition, to put it otherwise, becomes perceived through the lenses of fluidity. Epistemologies unveil their changeable character assuming a form of the incessant parade of crises putting the enlightened premise of the linear and cumulative cognitive progress into oblivion. In this context, the solidity of so-called "normal science" becomes dissolved into a dialectical process of verification and falsification, a cognitive struggle in which the ability to forget is often more seductive and functional than the knowledge how to memorise. As Kuhn aptly observes:

The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal science emerge is far from a cumulative process, one achieved by an articulation or extension of the old paradigm. Rather it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalisations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications.³

² Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962), p. 85.

³ Kuhn, *The Structure*, pp. 84–85.

The ideas of fluid uncertainty and conflict signalled by the carnival of competing paradigms seem especially illustrative of the contemporary debate concerning a legitimate methodology that would provide a better insight into the contemporary socio-cultural reality. This theoretical dialogue seems to constitute a testimony to the unprecedented distrust towards categories of contemporary social and cultural theories and assumes a form of an academic wrangle over the idea of historical discontinuity which has been triggered by the term "post-modernity."

The mainstream of contemporary debate is, consequently, focused upon the struggle for a basic theoretical framework enabling more informed conceptualisations of socio-cultural realities of advanced societies of the northern hemisphere.⁴ In this sense, the discussion unveils itself as the lack of one dominating meta-narrative, a unified biography of the present times. This absorption, to use Jean-Francois Lyotard's terminology,⁵ in the multiplicity of linguistic games provokes the return to basic, philosophical problems. It also suggests the proliferation of existential and ontological questions which can no longer be bracketed off by the feeling of certitude associated with the supremacy of a coherent, theoretically outstretched meta-narrative. This "recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals"⁶ is, needless to say, a coefficient to the cognitive turmoil caused by the parade of paradigms.

Such conceptual dilemmas assume a shape of theoretical projects purporting to capture the problem of historical discontinuity and represent it as the unnerving presence of modernity lurking at the hinterlands of supposedly post-modern discourses. In this interpretative context, modernity manifests itself as both an opportunity and problem imposed on us by the malicious forces of societal change. On the one hand, one may be fully aware of its historical inevitability which is inscribed in the objective logic of technological development resulting in the advent of industrial systems of mass production and the rise of extensive urban spaces. Modernity, therefore, constitutes a single step, an element in the complicated matrix of economic, technological and social changes which are all subsumed within the paradigms of progress and modernization.

On the other hand, however, the framework of modern society may be perceived through the prism of its negative consequences, the ramifications which cannot be accepted as morally neutral coefficients to

⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Spór o ponowoczesność*, in *Ciało i przemoc w obliczu ponowoczesności*, ed. Z. Bauman (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 1995), p. 23.

⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 66.

⁶ Kuhn, *The Structure*, p. 91.

progress.⁷ It is precisely the burden of those abominable consequences — such as the reification of agents in overstretched bureaucratic environments or the rise of totalitarian regimes — that facilitates the withdrawal from discourses of modernity. From the latter perspective, a logical solution to the cultural legacy of modern society is, then, putting the very philosophical idea of modernity into the sphere of remorse and seeking redress in a different philosophical discourse that will hopefully leave the old troubles aside.

The opportunity side of modern society is emphasised by those intellectuals whose certitude of judgement could be compared, as Bauman puts it, to legislators' unwavering trust in their ability to delineate axiological formulas by means of "the provision of authoritative solutions to the questions of cognitive truth, moral judgement and aesthetic taste."⁸ Nevertheless, legislators' task is very often debunked, which goes hand in hand with the contemporary incredulity towards the idea of objective truth, the totalising concept that has been discarded in the post-modern rush of axiological holophobia. To listen to Habermas:

[T]he usefulness of the concept of legitimation, which permits a demarcation of types of legitimate authority (in Weber's sense) according to the forms and contents of legitimation, is undisputed. What is controversial is the relation of legitimation to truth.⁹

Legislators' theoretical — and perhaps transcendental — vantage point is deeply rooted in the legacy of positivistic optimism concerning a possibility of implementing cognitive apparatuses of the exact sciences onto the field of the humanities. This cognitive strategy was especially evident in the case of Charles Darwin's evolutionism, which paved the way for socio-philosophical conceptualisations of history in terms of a series of continuous, cumulative processes of structural elaboration and systemic perfection.¹⁰ The most evident case of such a strategy is the modern understanding of modernisation processes which explores

⁷ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 3.

⁸ Bauman, "Is There a Postmodern Sociology?" in *Theory Culture and Society* 5 (1988), p. 219.

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 97.

¹⁰ The most widespread example of such a conceptualisation is the linear process of socio-economic development in which particular stages form a cause-and-effect chain of logical relationships. See W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 4–16.

social and cultural changes in terms of a "gradual process of social and cultural change considered as differentiation."¹¹

The paradigm of modernization gives rise to the reinforcement of the synchronic-diachronic antinomy. The legacy of evolutionist methodology teaches us that social and cultural reality could be conceptualised in terms of a series of timeless snapshots which constitute the sequence of social development.¹² As a consequence, the changeable nature of society and culture becomes lost. One, consequently, tends to forget that "ontologically, society is nothing else but change, movement and transformation, action and interaction, construction and reconstruction, constant becoming rather than stable being."¹³

The concept of post-modernity seems to be greatly indebted to the aforementioned model of social change conceived as modernisation. In this sense, the advent of post-modernity is logically inscribed in the framework of evolutionary social change: it denotes a crisis of industrial modernity and an assumption that modern civilisation is no longer functional. Hence, the idea of post-modernity stands at the fountainhead of the contemporary disillusionment with modern society and signals the arrival of a supposedly new model of socio-cultural development stressing "the pluralism of authority and the centrality of choice."¹⁴ This concept has been coined in order to disseminate an ideology suggesting that modernity itself faces a terminal stage of self-development; it resembles a phenomenon which has utilized all the conceivable possibilities of further development. In this specific sense, as Mike Featherstone observes, "to speak of postmodernity is to suggest an epochal shift or break from modernity involving the emergence of a new social totality with its own distinct organising features."¹⁵

Post-modern culture is often defined in terms of its penchant for the unreal and non-existent. As opposed to modern ideas of truth and scientific objectivity, the new culture of simulation succumbs to the realm of imagery representations "to the point of collapsing every last

¹¹ Kenneth Bock, "Theories of Progress, Development, Evolution," in *A History of Social Analysis*, eds. T.R. Bottomore, R. Niesbet (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 70.

¹² Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, p. 198.

¹³ Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change. A Case of Postcommunist Societies," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. J.C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p. 155.

¹⁴ See Peter Beilharz, *The Bauman Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp. 173–188.

¹⁵ Mike Featherstone, "In Pursuit of the Postmodern: An Introduction," in *Theory Culture and Society* 5 (1988), p. 198.

form of ontological distinction or critical truth-claim.”¹⁶ Hence, this new societal totality unveils itself, to put it otherwise, as a cultural coefficient to new forms of socio-technological organisation, subsumed within the model of the post-industrial or information society. This type of relationship is especially evident in the case of Lyotard’s and Baudrillard’s methodologies which both link post-modernity to the proliferation of communication technologies and mediascapes, the rise of data simulation as well as modelling in the age of information exchange and the widespread use of abstract scientific expertise.¹⁷ In the life world structured by the reign of most advanced technologies, society and culture become transformed to such an extent that human existence cannot be organised around sets of ontological positions typical of the reality of industrial modernity — i.e. consolidated workplaces, national states, families with a single breadwinner. Consequently, human life is far less organised or structured by the spatial and temporal dimensions of the production processes and becomes concerned, first and foremost, with consumption as well as the processing of information and abstract knowledge.¹⁸ As far as social structure is concerned, this transformation becomes indicative of the rise of a new middle class, the *technostructure* (also known as the knowledge class) embodying highly qualified, mobile young urban professionals. Consequently, the hard, mechanical character of industrial civilisation becomes, as it were, dispersed and transformed into the organic and networked character of post-modernity.¹⁹

Despite the proliferation of post-modern discourses, a sizeable part of the contemporary debate in the humanities is devoted to the pursuit of a golden means that could facilitate keeping balance between the hopes for modernization and the grim awareness of their consequences stressed by the adherents of post-modern theories. The methodology behind such a conciliatory conceptualisation seems to be embedded within a fairly realist conception referring to the sequential logic inherent in historical processes.

[H]istory does not possess any metaphysical, substantive reality. Thus, in this image, the pattern of history is not

¹⁶ Christopher Norris, *What’s Wrong with Postmodernism. Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 23.

¹⁷ Douglas Kellner, “Postmodernism as Social Theory. Some Challenges and Problems,” in *Theory Culture and Society* 5 (1988), p. 249.

¹⁸ Cf. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 76.

¹⁹ Bauman, *Liquid Times. Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 3.

superimposed or pre-established, but rather emerges out of intermeshed plurality of events. Such a pattern is not treated as unique or singular, but rather emerges as the combined product of multiple sequences, overlapping and parallel, convergent and divergent, contradicting and complementing each other. It is not seen as a uniform and unidirectional process, but may change direction, course and speed. It is not viewed as approaching any fixed, final goal, but is open-ended and contingent, allowing of alternative scenarios.²⁰

In the context of sequential understanding of history, the rise of industrial modernity is viewed as a process which was logically heralded or prefigured by structural changes within traditional socio-cultural orders. The direction of those changes is not self-evident or pre-established: the contemporary global world consists of societies exhibiting diverse paths towards modernity. By the same token, modernity unveils itself as a sequential process intertwining the possibilities for modernization with consequences of progress; intermeshing socio-cultural features that contradict and complement each other.

In the context of the sequential logic, theories of the post-modern seem untenable since the constitutive pillars of modern society and culture (such as national states organised by means of bureaucratic administration, free capitalist markets, the rule of legal-rational authority as well as processes of institutionalised surveillance and control) are still valid as the foundations of social organisation. Moreover, their transformation is more quantitative than qualitative.²¹ For instance, the rise of post-industrial information technologies is not tantamount to the demise of industrialism as a branch of national economies. It, rather, denotes the quantitative economic change affecting labour markets and manifesting itself as the stable tendency towards the economic supremacy of services as potential sources of work opportunities and the gross domestic product.²² In this context, the dominant features of the emergent post-industrial order — namely the centrality of knowledge, new intellectual technologies, the spread of knowledge class, and the transition from goods to services — are seen as futures deeply rooted into the modern potentiality for innovation as well as modernisation,

²⁰ Sztompka, *Society in Action. The Theory of Social Becoming*, p. 71.

²¹ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 58–59.

²² Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture into Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. IX–XXII.

rather than a distinct set of post-modern socio-economic coefficients. As Giddens declares:

Rather than these developments taking us “beyond modernity,” they provide fuller understanding of the reflexivity inherent in the modernity itself. [...] We are left with questions where once there appeared to be answers, and I shall argue subsequently this is not only philosophers who realise this. A general awareness of the phenomenon filters into anxieties which press in on everyone.²³

Hence, the changes occurring within contemporary society and culture should not be seen as sign of the radical departure from the order of modernity, but, contrariwise, as phenomena implicit within the very system of modern civilisation. This viewpoint, to put it more methodologically, is tantamount to the analysis of changes occurring *in* the system itself, not transformations *of* the system. Therefore, this perspective is concerned, first and foremost, with the inherent dynamism of modern institutions, its implicit, innate potential for self-transformation. Consequently, modernity is seen as being in the state of fluidity²⁴ which allows for a gradual demystification of the hidden developmental possibilities implicit in it. In this context, the socio-cultural order of modernity may be perceived as a self-transforming entity equipped with its distinct, sequential logic of change implying the existence of the early (industrial) modernity and late (post-industrial) modernity.

Reflexive Modernization: Towards a Phenomenology of Late Modernity

The methodology of late modernity as well as its existential or epistemological contours seem to problematize traditional conceptualisations of socio-cultural change which are rooted in the positivistic ideology of progress and modernization. The late modern understanding of modernization processes stands under the sign of investigating into the negative consequences of change so as to construct a new methodol-

²³ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 49.

²⁴ The self-transformation of Bauman's attitude towards methodology is indicative of this perspective. See Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

ogy subsumed under the notion of “reflexive modernization.” As Beck sees it:

This type of confrontation of the *bases of modernization* with the *consequences of modernization* should be clearly distinguished from the increase of knowledge and scientization in the sense of self-reflection and modernization. [...] Then “reflexive modernization” means the self-confrontation with the effects of *risk society* that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society — as measured by the latter’s institutionalised standards.²⁵

Consequently, the emergent paradigm delineates internal changes within the nature of modern cultural institutions in terms of the negative tendencies that have been caused by the very success of modern ideology and practice. Modern standards of rationalisation have prepared the foreground for abstract knowledge which is no longer viewed as emancipatory or ameliorative but, contrariwise, unpredictable and uncertain by its very nature. In this context, the contours of late modernity tend to subsume the discourse of “risk society” stressing the dark side of modern civilisation in which the distribution of undesired outcomes of modernization overshadows the classical debate over the societal distribution of accumulated economic surplus.²⁶ From this perspective, the awareness of risk has become the cultural dominant of late modern social life: modernity itself is perceived as a riddle to itself where “uncertainty retains and proliferates everywhere.”²⁷

The era of reflexive modernisation paves the way for a new “phenomenology of modernity” which stands for distinctive forms of individual and collective consciousness by means of which modern institutions are represented in forms of cultural reproduction. In this specific context, the cultural reality of late modernity can be seen through the prism of trust and uncertainty conceived as phenomenological correlates to the interpersonal organisation of social life. The idea of risk as a coefficient to reflexive modernity goes hand in hand with the importance of trusting relations. Here, late modernity is seen

²⁵ Beck, “The Reinvention of Politics: Toward a Theory of Reflexive Modernization,” in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Eds. U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 6. Emphasis added.

²⁶ See Beck, *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity?* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992).

²⁷ Beck, “The Reinvention of Politics,” p. 12.

as the age of cryptic relationships inscribed in the networked as well as globalising world in which trust can no longer be mediated by means of face-to-face interpersonal interaction and cultural institutions inscribed in familiar social organisations. The general logic of those transformations suggests that modern trusting relations are marked by the risky dialectic of presence and absence involving the intensification of the Self-Other relations. The emergent global order of late modernity seems to be creating both novel demands for trust as well as innovative forms of insecurity and risk.

In other words, the times of reflexive modernity constitute, as it were, the realm of cryptic agency. It is a new form of social organisation in which actions performed by topographically distant others seem to reside "on the other side of the fence." This annihilation of spatial and temporal dimensions of social life is also reflected by the demise of privacy and intimate self-control or self-monitoring. As Beck argues, "[T]he most intimate — say, nursing a child — and the most distant, most general — say, a reactor accident in the Ukraine, energy politics — are now suddenly directly connected."²⁸ The quotation suggests that the array of contemporary life options is not conditioned by events and processes taking place in local settings. By the same token, human cognition cannot be reduced to interpretation processes occurring within the framework of "hermeneutics of nearness" typical of the traditional, pre-modern order. Being modern is to be entangled in the global network in which uncertainty becomes an existential coefficient to the presence-absence dialectic. In this latter context, cognition becomes much more hypothetical and dependable upon the "hermeneutics of remoteness."

The idea of remoteness inscribed in the global, networked culture is especially conducive to the development of the agency of trust. With the proliferation of unknown strangers, trusting resembles an individual enterprise, a project to be planned and executed, as it were, single-handedly. In this sense, remoteness translates itself into the inability to exercise effective control over social practice. This agential conceptualisation of trust is, needless to say, an outcome of freedom granted to individuals in the age of modernity. In this sense, "an actor's trust in others presupposes the freedom of action of others."²⁹

²⁸ Beck, "The Anthropological Shock: Chernobyl and the Contours of the Risk Society," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987). Quoted after Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 121.

²⁹ Jack M. Barbalet, "Social Emotions: Confidence, Trust and Loyalty," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 16, no. 9/10 (1996), p. 79.

This developmental change in the ontology of trusting relations stems from the increasing ubiquity modern abstract systems and networks (mass media, mass communications, global financial markets) that act as intermediaries of trust. Such abstract trust networks are embedded within contemporary communications systems and post-industrial technologies which, as will be argued later in the text, establish a new interactive paradigm of presence/absence dialectics reinforced by the separation of time and space in the cultural experience of contemporary societies. This paradigm, as Giddens observes, may be subsumed within the general idea of globalisation which “concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations ‘at distance’ with local contextualities.”³⁰ The concept of globalisation is not only a strictly social phenomenon. Its personal aspect is inevitably related to the rise of a new kind of selfhood, a novel strategy of auto-biographical narration which, after Scott Bukatman, may be defined in terms of the “terminal identity.” The terminal identity of late modern era succumbs itself to the episodic and transitory character of human existence dictated by the fluidity of commerce and the ubiquity of signs constituting astral empires.

The transformation of trust relations in the late modern cultural setting, as the formerly outlined theatrical framework suggests, is related to three major socio-cultural processes. First of all, this is the implosion of spatial and temporal distances constituting theatrical stages of cultural reproduction of trust cultures. The annihilation of time and space occurs within abstract terminal spaces linking the existing to the non-existent, the present to the absent, the Self with the potential, cryptic and elusive Other. Secondly, the transformation of trust cultures is related to the increasing number of partners taking part in electronically mediated interpersonal interactions. As a consequence, the era of late modernity witnesses, last but not least, the increasing proliferation of cultural actors (individual and collective) with distinct political and cultural agendas (the lack of universal texts), whose voices in the public debate constitute a new type of agency subsumed under the notion of “multiculturalism.”

³⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 21.

Modernity as a Challenge to Trust Cultures

The self-transformation of modern trust cultures can be represented as the struggle between two modes of cultural morphogenesis: the real, denoting patterns of “off-line” interpersonal interaction, and the hyper-real stressing the impossibility to “maintain the old economy of truth and representation in a world where ‘reality’ is entirely constructed through forms of mass media feedback, where values are determined by consumer demand [...], and where nothing serves as a means of distinguishing truth from merely truth-seeming.”³¹ This dichotomy may, in turn, serve as a starting point for a discussion concerning the process of erosion affecting traditional regimes of trust which — as the aforementioned citation suggests — are founded upon maintaining strict distinctions between reality and representation. Furthermore, the late modern paradigm of media saturation brings to one’s mind the problem of the implosion of sociality into social masses (the idea of *societas abscondita*) and, consequently, postulates the demise of grassroots political activities that are not propelled by the compulsive demand for media feedback.

While addressing the problem of trust in late modern societies, Francis Fukuyama identifies a syndrome of consequences implicit in late modern culture which he aptly names as the “great disruption” affecting the well-established systems of values and norms typical of traditional and early modern social and cultural settings:

Anyone who has lived through the decades between the 1950s and the 1990s in the United States or other Western countries can scarcely fail to recognize the massive value changes that have taken place over this period. These changes in norms and values are complex, but can be put under the general heading of *increasing individualism*. [...] Instead, involuntary ties and obligations based on inherited social class, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and the like are replaced by ties undertaken voluntarily.³²

Future scenarios for the European and American modernities are associated with new forms of individualism (also conceptualised as

³¹ Norris, *What’s Wrong*, p. 166.

³² Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 47. Emphasis added.

individualization by Beck and Giddens) reinforced by the proliferation of media networks (the Internet). This form of individualism is fostered by information bombardment which dissolves traditional constraints set upon an individual person and his/her lifestyle opportunities. The ubiquity of information facilitates human agency by providing opportunities showing that the currently practised lifestyle is just a single option taken out of the possibly unlimited array of existential choices. This triumph of agency over the restraining impact of social and cultural structures (habit, religion, tradition) indicates that late modernity unveils its “liquid” character as the era in which traditional cultural constraints of identity and personality formation cease to exist. As Bauman teaches us:

First of all, the passage from the “solid” to a “liquid” phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them.³³

Psychologically speaking, the concept of “individualization” stands for the demise of the traditional trajectories of human biographies. As far as the theatrical perspective is concerned, the late modern information bombardment destabilises and deregulates actors’ roles by undermining the durability of their textual underpinnings.³⁴ This, to put it otherwise, is rooted in the deregulation affecting axiological frameworks embedded in late capitalistic society. It is “the unqualified priority awarded to the irrationality and moral blindness of market competition, the unbound freedom granted to capital and finance at the expense of all other freedoms, the tearing up of socially maintained safety nets and the neglect of all but economic considerations [...]”³⁵

The process of individualization may be, therefore, presented in terms of the progressive liberation of human agency from the constraining impact of social and cultural structures. The structural and textual frameworks of the early industrial phase modernity — namely, fixed ideologies, family structure, nation state, class or gender — are dissolved and replaced by social forms promoting new possibilities

³³ Bauman, *Liquid Times*, p. 1.

³⁴ Cf. Beck, *The Reinvention*, p. 13. See also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 7.

³⁵ Bauman, *The Individualised Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 84.

of exercising the freedom of individual choice.³⁶ Consequently, the structurally understood society becomes increasingly remote from human everyday experiences which forces individuals to take full responsibility for decisions made under the circumstances of risk. One, therefore, cannot see society through the prism of structural or textual constraints but, contrariwise, from the perspective of self-development and self-actualisation. The late modern pattern of cultural reproduction, to refer to the delineated dramaturgic metaphor, is anchored in the agential process of textual improvisation denoting the autonomy to browse through a potentially unlimited number of values, norms and signs offered by the contemporary mass media.

The breakdown of structural and textual constraints in the age of individualistic consumer societies of late modernity is powered by the rise of simulated representations of sociality offered by the contemporary mass media. The participation in new forms of digitalised symbolic culture may be compared to an experience of a city dweller who becomes lost in the world of fluid and changeable appearances. Individuals assume, as Bauman puts it, a cultural mask of strollers who observe the external reality as being deprived of depth, history, hierarchy and significance.³⁷ Needless to say, actors on the stage of late modern society are forced to assume an attitude of a person who lives in the world of changing appearances, where the essence remains elusive since cognition is inevitably reduced to a series of camera-like glances. As Ewa Borkowska observes:

In an increasingly computerised life, the change of symbols is simply too fast for reflexive cognition and since a visual paradigm establishes hegemony over culture, thought becomes perceptual and “the glance” replaces “the gaze” in the scopic regime of signification.³⁸

Traditional trust relations as well as traditionally established “facework commitments” are becoming dysfunctional in this novel, media-saturated setting. What becomes postulated in their place is the quality

³⁶ See Scott Lash and J. Urry, *Economies of Sign and Space* (London: Sage Publications, 1994).

³⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, “Ponowoczesne wzory osobowe,” in Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej* (Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, 1994), pp. 22–25.

³⁸ Ewa Borkowska, “The ‘Culture’ of Simulation,” in *Signs of Culture: Simulacra and the Real*, eds. W. Kalaga, T. Rachwał (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 89.

of “civil inattention,” the very opposite of the interpersonal cognition postulating an act of mutual non-cognition in which a single and momentary glance should suffice. This form of inattention, as Giddens observes, constitutes “a very general presupposition of the trust presumed in regular encounters with strangers in public places.”³⁹ As a consequence, this late modern strategy of sustaining trust cultures seems to be playing a crucial role within virtual realities in which all individuals are mere complexes of signifiers, avatars participating in the “consensual hallucination”⁴⁰ of media spaces.

This seductive character of contemporary mediascapes induces the withdrawal of trust from the traditional regimes of reality and gestures towards Baudrillard’s dystopian scenario of media representations conceived as something more real than the reality itself.⁴¹ As a consequence, the contemporary discourse of media distrust seems to follow the Gibsonian concept of the “consensual hallucination” which — in this context — postulates that the mass media “are nothing else than a marvellous instrument for destabilizing the real and all true, all historical or political truth.”⁴² Baudrillard’s theoretical output, to put it otherwise, seems to constitute a dark scenario for the prospects of Western democracies. The discourse of all-pervading media simulation seems, as Christopher Norris observes, to arrive at the point where human agential subjectivity becomes left behind since “‘the real’ is the construct of intra-linguistic processes and structures that allow no access to a world outside the prison-house of discourse.”⁴³ Since political debates are conceptually framed by the mass media feedback, political actions are staged by means of mass media and the very process of governance becomes caught in the treadmill of public relations management in which each decision is dependent upon the prediction of the potential impact of government decisions on public opinion. As Norris observes:

One line of argument much canvassed in the run-up was that opinion polls were perhaps having a harmful influence on the democratic process since voters were unduly swayed by the wording of questions, the “hidden agenda,” or the

³⁹ Giddens, *The Consequences*, p. 81.

⁴⁰ William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace Books, 1984), p. 67.

⁴¹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. S.F. Glaser (Minneapolis: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 2.

⁴² Jean Baudrillard, *The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 217.

⁴³ Norris, *What’s Wrong*, p. 185.

feedback-effect which told them what to think before they had even started to make their minds up.⁴⁴

The erosion of traditional trust cultures is also evident in the empirical studies conducted by Robert D. Putnam, who concludes that the recent developments in media technologies may be “driving a wedge between our individual interests and our collective interest.”⁴⁵ The rise in the new forms of trust operating within the abstract systems of post-industrial technologies manifests itself as the decline in civic cooperativeness (the dissolution of civil society) as well as the eroding willingness to participate in the democratic institutions (such as popular elections), which is tantamount to the fall of civic culture. In this sense, the destructive impact of media hyperreality on contemporary trust cultures is represented as the erosion of civil society with the concomitant decline in the productivity of grassroots organisations and other institutions functioning as arenas of public debate. Putnam’s argument, to put it in a nutshell, points to the destabilization of democratic regimes that come in the wake of the dissolution of public interest in forms of civic life. In this sort of political discourse, civic grassroots organisations are indispensable for having a fully fledged democratic order because they are instrumental in fostering the general norm of reciprocity, a feeling of reliability and confidence associated with encounters with Otherness.

The consequences related to the transformation of trust cultures in the age of late modernity do not affect only socio-political systems, but also actors performing their roles on those stages. Mediated trust is, on the one hand, indispensable with reference to the process of sustaining routines integrated within abstract systems. This constitutes a new pillar of ontological security: human existence is founded upon trust vested not in particular individuals, but rather impersonal principles and regulations whose role becomes instrumental in stabilizing social relations across indefinite spans of temporal and spatial dimensions implicit in the global society. Yet this situation, as we learn from Giddens, “creates novel forms of psychological vulnerability, and trust in abstract systems is not psychologically rewarding in the way in which trust in persons is.”⁴⁶ This process is inevitably related to the self-transformation of interpersonal relations which, as it were, are rendered more public and technological character. The multiplicity of

⁴⁴ Norris, *What's Wrong*, p. 176.

⁴⁵ Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995), p. 75.

⁴⁶ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 113.

actors and the rise of novel circumstances of interaction are related, furthermore, to a notion postulating that in the age of late modernity trust resembles a process, a project or an enterprise, rather than a state granted and taken at face-value.

The transformation of trust unveils the true nature of the individualization processes implicit in late modern culture. In this specific context, individualization does not necessarily mean the self-constitution of individuals conceived autonomous, self-dependent and active personalities. In this sense, the modern culture of individualism unveils its more sombre face related to the rise of inert mass societies. As Rollo May observes:

What is occurring as an inescapable phenomenon of our times, the inevitable result of the collectivism, mass education, mass communication, mass technology, and other "mass" processes which form modern people's minds and emotions.⁴⁷

The panorama of late modern social world implies the radical implosion of the social into the mass, the coming of the age which could be characterised by the term *societas abscondita* delineating the world of human relations that hides itself behind the façades of anonymity, media hallucination and conformity to the demands of consumption markets. The modern model of individual designates a fragile personality succumbed to the incessant propaganda of consumer society and endowed with an internalised penchant for emulating the external reality.

Moreover, new forms of psychological vulnerability attributed to the development of post-industrial abstract systems seem to deepen the quality of loneliness which David Riesman deploys in order to delineate the reality of contemporary mass societies.⁴⁸ This decline of interpersonal bonds or the erosion of social capitals, as Putnam would diagnose it, coincides with the rise of "other-directed personalities" — individuals who remain succumbed to their inner indecisiveness because of their essential inability to face risks associated with taking decisions. Consequently, the feature of other-directness does not mean the readiness to engage in a risky cooperation with the Other, but rather to treat him/her in terms of a template which is going to be

⁴⁷ Rollo May, *Psychology and the Human Dilemma* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), p. 28.

⁴⁸ Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*.

unreflectively emulated in the conformist pursuit of social approval. Needless to say, this type of other-directed personality becomes here a cultural coefficient to the late modern “cyberblitz,” the increasing assault of media advertising technologies on the real world.⁴⁹

Time, Space and the Ontology of the Terminal Identity

The erosion of traditional trust cultures is a consequence of changes affecting spatial and temporal distances (subsumed here under the notion of theatrical stages) that characterise late modern socio-cultural systems. Interpersonal relations which previously took place in the local settings are nowadays dissolved and re-organised across the dimensions of global, networked society. This process, however, seems to be endowed with far-reaching cultural consequences which overshadow its purely spatial and temporal understanding. The cultural panorama of late modernity — as the theatrical framework sees it — enables the increasing estrangement of both cultural actors to the point in which the cultural reproduction of trust cultures resembles a process of interacting among distant and absent strangers.

The ontological conditions of existence in the world of modernity are usually inscribed within the discourse delineating the process of globalisation whose technological, economic, social and political coefficients render the emergence of the networked social and political reality possible. As Douglas Kellner puts it:

For critical social theory, globalisation involves both capitalist markets and sets of social relations and flows of commodities, capital, technology, ideas, forms of culture, and people across national boundaries via *global networked society*. The transmutations of technology and capital work together to create a new globalised and interconnected world. A technological revolution involving the creation of a *computerised network of communication, transportation and exchange* is the presupposition of a globalised economy, along with the extension of a world capitalist market system that is absorbing

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Baudrillard, “Design and Environment, or How Political Economy Escalates into Cyberblitz,” in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, ed., trans. Ch. Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981).

ever more areas of the world and spheres of production, exchange, and consumption into its orbit.⁵⁰

What becomes immediately associated with the advancement of globalizing tendencies is the establishment of a new form of social structure conceptualised, as Manuel Castells suggests, in terms of the “network society.”⁵¹ The networked organisation of social structure may be perceived as a practical illustration of the rhizome, a type of structure which remains persistently contradictory with reference to thinking in terms of hierarchies, orders or fixed categorisations.⁵² The concept of the network society is, then, delineated in terms of a global, fluid organisation of flows of information, political power, cultural authorities and, last but not least, capital which seems to defy national and territorial boundaries as well as any established patterns of fixed social structures or hierarchies.⁵³

The flexible structure of the network society paves the way for the cultural re-conceptualisation of both spatial and temporal dimensions of human agency which in the late modern order assume the forms of “timeless time” and “space of flows.”⁵⁴ The idea of the space of flows pays its theoretical debts to the Yi-Fu Tuan’s phenomenological conceptualisation which defines cultural spaces as being deprived of well-defined interpretative connotations embodying human histories associated with a given locality.⁵⁵ The spatial organisation of the network society reflects the idea of global heterogeneity taking place as the free fluctuation of cultural meanings. The latter term, in turn, delineates the radical compression, and the subsequent annihilation, of temporal dimension of human practice. This process is especially indicative of computerised environments in which performed actions bring their consequences instantaneously so that there is virtually no possibility of withdrawing from them in the meantime.

This type of flexible, fluid disorganisation and the apparent chaos that comes in its wake is made possible by the introduction of digital

⁵⁰ Douglas Kellner, “Theorizing Globalisation,” *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 3 (2002), p. 287. Emphasis mine.

⁵¹ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004).

⁵² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 7–14.

⁵³ Castells, “Materials for an Explanatory Theory of the Network Society,” *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1 (2000), p. 15.

⁵⁴ Castells, “Materials for an Explanatory Theory,” pp. 13–14.

⁵⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Space and Place: A Humanistic Perspective” *Progress in Geography* 6 (1974), p. 213.

technologies of the information processing. As a consequence, the annihilation of temporal and spatial dimensions of social life leads towards the self-transformation of theatrical stages of trust culture reproduction. As Castells comments on the spatio-temporal mechanisms of network society:

Culture was historically produced by symbolic interaction in a given space/time. With time being annihilated and space becoming a space of flows, where all symbols coexist without reference to experience, culture becomes the culture of real virtuality. It takes the form of an interactive network in the electronic hypertext, mixing everything, and voiding the meaning of any specific message out of this context.⁵⁶

The overall characteristic of late modernity is related to the separation of time and space which denotes the existential coefficient of technological processes that cannot be conceived within the boundaries of traditional, pre-modern cultures.⁵⁷ This process is, nevertheless, firmly grounded within the phenomenon of modernization. It implies the colonization, standardisation and technological appropriation of time and place. As far as the problem of trust is concerned, this process is endowed with a serious ramification: partners to interaction may interact in the same time, but not the same space or, conversely, may occupy the same space but at different time intervals.

The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between absent “others,” locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly phantasmagoric: this is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them.⁵⁸

The stage, on which the reproduction of trust cultures is undertaken, becomes transformed: trust is no longer sustained within regimes covering the relations of co-presence, but rather by the unique combination of presence and absence implicit in abstract systems of modernity. These processes, in turn, give rise to the disembedding of social and

⁵⁶ Castells, “Materials for an Explanatory Theory,” p. 21.

⁵⁷ See especially Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 17–19; Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 16–19.

⁵⁸ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 18–19.

cultural systems of trust, which in the age of late modernity, become “lifted out” from the traditional context of locality and reproduced around vast tracts of space implicit in the global organisation of the network society. In this sense, we cannot really speak of the “global village” after the fashion of Marshall McLuhan’s thought: the village conceived as a pre-modern social setting implies the relations of co-presence taking place in local circumstances of action which activate traditional forms of trust cultures. Global society, in turn, is founded upon the existence of abstract systems of trust.

Contemporary forms of trust involve “faceless commitments” actualised in frameworks of economic, technological or political systems of modernity.⁵⁹ This sort of commitment is based upon interactions which are conceived not as the cooperation complete persons but, contrariwise, as a relationship taking place between fragmented personalities defined by the roles fulfilled temporarily for the sake of the interaction in question. This process was first pointed out by Durkheim whose insight into the nature of modernity rests upon the concept of division of labour. In modern economy, individuals do not act as compete personalities, but as fragmented ones which are constituted by a role chosen to be economically productive at a given moment in time (relationships taking place between managers and floor workers is a good example here).⁶⁰

This process, nevertheless, reaches its extreme character in the late modern abstract systems (such as contemporary mediascapes and virtual realities) through which human subjectivity and agency becomes mediated. The reality of information technology, then, promotes a new form of human subjectivity: individuals are not interacting as fragmented personalites, but rather as mediated or dissimulated avatars.⁶¹ The ontological challenges posed by the dialectic of presence and absence within cyberspaces of information industry give rise to a new conceptualisation of actors (agents) defined as “terminal subjects” by Bukatman. The term denotes a distinct form of subjectivity as well as agency which evolves at the intersection of the human mind (perceptive skills) and the computerised (silicon) machinery.⁶² This interactive, perhaps even dialogic, construction of the terminal subjectivity seems

⁵⁹ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 80.

⁶⁰ Cf. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

⁶¹ The name is taken from Neil Stephenson’s novel *Snow Crash* in which living characters act within cyberspaces as *avatars* — digitalised representations of personality. See N. Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (London: Roc., 1993).

⁶² Bukatman, *Terminal Identity. The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 22.

to elude the traditional dichotomy of the techno-phobic and the techno-philiac. In this particular case the subject is empowered and enabled by its extension into the cyberspace and, at the same time, constrained or entombed in the digital cage of fake, digitalised representations. Let us consider, for instance, the dissimulated reality of an internet chat room: each actor is granted the ability to bracket off space and to chat with spatially distant Others (timeless time and space of flows are at work here) but, at the same time, one is restrained by uncertainty as to other participants identities.

The ontology of terminal subjectivity is closely related to the nature of network society. This new type of social actor enjoys the privilege of autonomy that is granted by the very nature of social structures of information society. As Marcin Mazurek puts it:

As there is no privileged source of the space origin, be it the ultimate computer or a universal mind responsible for the system's internal regulation, terminal space appears to be a perfectly de-centred structure. Its net-like nature negates the very possibility of a privileged and dominant discourse which could possibly operate within terminal territory. The most essential consequence of this lack of source is the absence of the periphery, hence the opposition between the centre and the margin becomes irrelevant and as such is treated with remote indifference.⁶³

The heterogeneous network of late modern abstract systems increases demands for the construction of stable trust cultures. In this context, trusting seems to remain the only remedy for situations of uncertainty and risk inscribed in modern societies. Vesting trust is equivalent to the act of bracketing off the encountered spatial and temporal distances. Trusting, thus, provides individuals with an emotional inoculation against the feeling of anxiety associated with other people's absence. In this sense, trusting may be represented by the notion of continuity of individuals and things, the coherence of socio-cultural world which has been lost with the advent of abstract systems. Entrustment, to put it still otherwise, enables binding up of the temporal and spatial dimensions of human existence in a way that is similar to the role of the "place" within the culture of pre-modernity. Trust communities in this sense resemble patterns of emotional sociability which are formed

⁶³ Marcin Mazurek, "Thirdness of Terminal Space. Implosion. Indifference. Infinity," in *The Same, the Other, the Third*, ed. W. Kalaga (Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ, 2004), p. 87.

by actors engaged in the reproduction of norms and values of trust in the condition of co-presence.

The rise of institutionalised networks of multilateral trust may be seen in terms of a remedy for the increasing individualism inscribed within social systems of modernity. The unceasing, all-pervading media bombardment, or the cyberblitz, become an essential element of life within abstract systems of late modernity. Yet, the remedy for it can be found in the act of symbolic return to the realm of traditional community, the pre-modern continuity of time and space. This is, nevertheless, possible only when the tissue of organisations constituting civil societies is flourishing.

The Reflexivity of Trust in the World of Counterfactuals

The era of traditional pre-modernity unveils itself as a realm of systemic — both social and cultural — constraints set upon an operating actor. The very idea of tradition conceived in terms of repetition paves the way for the conceptualisation of a social actor as being deprived of agency since from the onset individuals are dispossessed of rational calculation conceived here as a means of informed planning as well as acting. Actions remain legitimised in the cognitive framework of the past and their reference leads towards the sacred tradition, rather than the future, conceived as the realm of possible opportunities as well as risks.

It is the orientation towards the future, a feature firmly rooted in the temporal organisation of the modern cultural stage, that undoes constraints set upon actors and opens fields of possibilities before their eyes. Future events are, then, perceived as a venture into institutionalised plurality, rather than homogeneity enclosed in the strict forms of formulaic truths provided by traditional thinking. As Terry Eagleton comments on modernity seen from the perspective of its penchant for modernization and colonisation of the future:

All historical epochs are modern to themselves, but not all live their experience in this ideological mode. If modernism lives its history as peculiarity, insistently “present,” it also experiences a sense that this present moment is somehow of the “future,” to which the present is nothing more than an orientation, so that the idea of the Now, of the present

as full presence eclipsing the past, is itself intermittently eclipsed by an awareness of the present as deferment, as an empty excited openness to the future which is in one sense already here, in another sense yet to come.⁶⁴

The ideology implicit in the drive towards the colonisation of the future endows modern culture with its inherent dynamism, an orientation towards the process of perpetual modernization and development. In this sense, modernity resembles a project in the agential process of becoming.

The logic of reflexive modernisation, however, transforms this typically modern orientation towards the future. This transmutation of modernisation becomes inherent in the constitution of late modern culture and is regarded as a logical consequence of the very nature of the future conceived as a field of conflicting, counterfactual possibilities and, therefore, of uncertainty. As a result, as Giddens claims, "[T]he more we try to colonise the future, the more it is likely to spring surprises upon us."⁶⁵ In this sense, late modernity resembles a grand experiment founded upon the basis of the radical methodological doubt, the cognitive strategy that has always been present in the panorama of modern thought. Modernity is indebted to the less known part of the famous Cartesian dictum in which, paradoxically enough, the enterprise of attaining the ultimate truth is always preceded by the initial act of distrust towards the status of knowledge.

As nature becomes invaded, and even "ended," by human socialization, and tradition is dissolved, new types of incalculability emerge. [...] On the global level, therefore, modernity has become experimental. We are all willy-nilly, caught up in a grand experiment, which is at the one time our doing — as human agents — yet to an imponderable degree outside of our control.⁶⁶

The point is that the tendency implicit in modern culture is to operate within the wide range of possible scenarios (cultural texts or discourses) which do not unveil themselves as objective truths but, contrariwise,

⁶⁴ Terry Eagleton, "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism," in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. D. Lodge (London: Longman, 2000), p. 367.

⁶⁵ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," in *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. A. Giddens, U. Beck, and S. Lash (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 58.

⁶⁶ Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society," pp. 58–59.

are closely depended upon human knowledge and willingness to act. In this sense, modernity is seen as the triumph of human agency over the constraining capabilities of structures. The future is seen as being “worked out” right now by actors engaged in their performances taking place on the theatrical stages consisting of possibilities as well as limitations. This paves the way for a new conceptualisation of cultural (re)production: cultural resources are not granted but, on the contrary, are being created on theatrical stages by actions undertaken by actors (individual as well as collective) equipped with their own discourses, values and political agendas. As a consequence, the popular idea of “multiculturalism” gestures towards the essentially late modern idea of agential reflexivity conceived as an ability and willingness to construct one’s own personal biographies without the suppressing of the Other’s perspective.⁶⁷

The ideas of human agency as well as knowledgeability constitute the core element of the modern culture of human reflexivity. The term delineates an array of epistemological processes through which modern culture reproduces itself by means of the constant use of knowledge which — along with the calculus of chance versus risk — come to constitute a basis for social organisation.

With the advent of modernity, reflexivity takes on a different character. It is introduced into the very basis of system reproduction, such that thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another. [...] The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.⁶⁸

The very idea of reflexivity is, thus, encoded within the modernist promise of social practice which uses history in order to construct history. However, this process — as the very idea of the paradigm shift suggests — is far from being cumulative and linear: future is always associated with the grim awareness of risk, the developmental by-product of the modern will to change.

The modern principle of reflexivity affects the societal basis of trust cultures. It is related, as the delineated theatrical framework postulates, to the overall change of actor’s performance: our roles are more de-

⁶⁷ On the idea of multiculturalism, see W. Kalaga, ed., *Dylematy Wielokulturowości*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas, 2007).

⁶⁸ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 38.

pendable upon the agency of relatively free interpretation, rather than their employment within shared textual references. This triumph of agency over structural constraints is a result of the spatial and temporal transformation of stages on which trust cultures take place. In the age of late modernity, one experiences processes of globalisation which “lift up” localised trusting relations and reproduce them on the networked stage of global society. Moreover, in the era of overt individualisation and the radical implosion of structural (textual) constraints, trusting becomes individualized as well as introduced as the very basic principle of system reproduction. Since the social becoming of late modern trust cultures involves the cooperation and cohabitation of diverse actors operating within open-ended networks of multicultural societies, the willingness to enter dialogical relations of reciprocity and trust becomes the crucial cultural competence. Trust cultures are not, moreover, granted or stabilised by the constraining forces of the past: vesting trust resembles an enterprise of browsing through great numbers of competing or counterfactual discourses. Hence, in the late modern context, we may elaborate on the reflexivity of trust.

Conclusions

Ours is an individualized, privatised version of modernity, with the burden of pattern-weaving and the responsibility for failure falling primarily on the individual's shoulders. It is the patterns of dependency and interaction whose turn to be liquefied has come [...] Solids are cast once and for all. Keeping fluids in shape requires a lot of attention, constant vigilance and perpetual effort — an even the success of the effort is anything but a foregone conclusion.¹

Behind the conceptualisations delineated in this dissertation would lurk an assumption that cultural phenomena are socially productive, especially in the spheres of norms and values. In this specific sense, diverse axiological and normative elements of culture are constructive forces producing normatively integrated moral communities based upon standards of generalised reciprocity as well as interpersonal trust. The moral discourse of trust, consequently, seems to pull carpet from under the feet of those who might be still inclined to the early modern — deeply rooted in the legacy of Marxist thinking — conception suggesting that culture is a matter of false consciousness. The social becoming of trust cultures does not constitute a mere reflection of pre-existent social structures and concomitant mechanisms aiming at the inter-generational reproduction of economic inequalities. Quite to the contrary, accumulated reservoirs of societal trust unveil their economic as well as political productivity as stocks of social capital facilitating the undertaking of collective actions in the trans-personal reality. From this perspective, trust culture may assume a form of an autotelic value in a sense that the generalised reciprocity may serve

¹ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 7–8.

as a public good whose accumulation is beneficial for the community considered as a whole. Needless to say, trusting mechanisms imply a transition from discourses conceptualising an individual in the utilitarian terms of *homo oeconomicus* to a more communicative notion of *homo reciprocus*. Consequently, norms of reciprocity are inscribed in symmetrical interpersonal relations and founded upon dialogical norms of, as it were, cultural rationality which seems to take the upper hand over the purely economic calculus.

The process of social becoming of trust cultures can be discussed in the context of the general changeability of socio-cultural orders which emanates from the dynamic and historical character of societal reality rendering the transformation of traditional, pre-modern communities into rationalised orders of advanced modernity possible. The institutionalisation of modernity is tantamount to the general reconstruction within intrinsic mechanisms structuring the morphogenesis of trust cultures. The process denotes the rise of a new environment of trust in which reciprocity and trusting relations become projects which remain, so to speak, *in statu nascendi*. Methodologically speaking, the work purports to delineate the aforementioned transformation of trust cultures from the perspective of the theatrical framework conceiving processes of cultural morphogenesis in terms of a combined outcome of structural (textual) conditionings of human agency, spatial, temporal and interpersonal frames of symbolic interactions, and actors' creative impulses to take action. By way of illustration, a brief summary of argumentation is given in table 1.

The theatrical framework predicts that the transformation of trust cultures may be represented as a process of change in which trusting relations are assuming a form of compulsive necessity rendering an actor's agency possible. In other words, in the realm of pre-modernity trust is not a problem. Individuals — as being united within the same interpretative horizon of shared norms and values — are routinely expected to vest trust in other actors. The advent of modernity, on the other hand, problematizes interpersonal trusting relations. In the contemporary context, trust becomes a function of individual choices; it resembles a project to be "worked out" from a potentially infinite range of life scenarios. Moreover, the ubiquity of risks and uncertainties inscribed in abstract systems of modernity manifests itself as the necessity of vesting trust: actors are simply compelled to trust in order to participate in social life.

The theatrical framework perceives the aforementioned transformation of trust cultures in terms of a joint result of changes affecting stages of social interaction, discursive (textual) options possessed by

Table 1
A Comparison of traditional and modern trust cultures

Elements of Theatrical Framework	Traditional Society	Late Modernity
Stage	the place conceived as a realm of familiarity implying relations between present actors; focus on the sacred past reinforced by the political use of dangers	global and networked spaces implying the dialectic of presence/absence; colonisation of the future via risk calculation
Texts	traditions conceived as sources of relatively unified reference points	multiple textual references; structures as fatal forms
Actors	charismatic leadership; identities are fixed: individuals interact as coherent and complete personalities	plurality of individual as well as collective actors with distinct political agendas; actors interact as fragmented and dissimulated "terminal identities"
Performance	domination of inherited roles, the compulsion to repeat	centrality of individual choice, the agential interpretation of roles
Trust culture	trust as a structurally rendered expectation; fixed, non-negotiable character	trust as a necessity; agential character <i>in statu nascenti</i>

individuals as well as actors' identities. In this context, the theatrical stage undergoes a radical change from the realm of predictable familiarity — the *Gemeinschaft* in Ferdinand Tönnies's nomenclature — where actors relate to one another as participants in shared elements of symbolic culture towards the global space where interaction implies uncertainty calculation inscribed in the dialectic of presence and absence. The totality of textual resources oscillates from the pre-modern unity of traditionalism to the rhizomatic plurality of discursive options, the multiplicity of divergent voices constituting the post-traditional symbolic culture. An actor's identity, consequently, changes its fixed nature reinforced by direct encounters with other individuals (who are conceived as coherent, complete personalities) into a fragmented and dissimulated character which is typical of participants in indirect relationships inscribed in the disembedded character of modern social

institutions. From this perspective, social becoming of trust cultures — conceived as a theatrical performance — undergoes transformation from the reliance on fixed discourses of tradition and compulsion to repeat roles towards the agential interpretation and negotiation of social roles, the improvisation performed as an interplay of multiple textual references.

Hence, the dynamic character of trust and reciprocity in the age of reflexive modernity is related, first and foremost, to the incredible advancement of human agency. In this essentially individualistic era, actors are often liberated from the formative, structuring impact of social and cultural structures. As a consequence, trajectories of their personal identities become truly “individual” in a way that they are no longer anchored in a secure, repeatable authority of cultural texts rendering human behaviour more predictable. Hence, it is the culture of human agency, the era in which cultural structures become “fatal,”² which poses new challenges as far as the morphogenesis of trust cultures is concerned. The very act of trusting becomes individualised and privatised; it depends more on the capability of human agency (actualising itself within a distinct time-space continuity) than upon the traditionalised legacy of cultural structures.

The overall transformation of trust cultures gestures towards the emergence of a new cultural discourse of modernity which is defined by the notion of “cultural trauma.” In this sense, modernity becomes coded as a cultural phenomenon which seems to jeopardize the very foundations of moral communities. The idea that advanced culture of modernity constitutes a deeply traumatic phenomenon is firmly rooted in an extensive criticism of modernity, in which it becomes understood as an intrinsically oppressive socio-cultural formation conveying the previously hidden potential of social reification and standardisation. As Sztompka observes:

The career of the concept of trauma as applied to society begins with the realization that change itself, irrespective of the domain it touches, the group it affects, and even irrespective of its content, may have adverse effects, bring shocks and wounds to the social and cultural tissue. The focus shifts from the critique of particular types of change to the disturbing, destructive, shocking effects of the change

² See J.S. Epstein, M.J. Epstein, *Fatal Forms: Toward a (Neo)Formal Sociological Theory of Media Culture*, in *Baudrillard. A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Kellner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994).

per se. The classical assumption that change is autotelic value is finally lifted; the fetish of change is undermined. It is countered with the hypothesis that people put value on security, predictability, continuity, routines, and rituals of their lifeworld.³

The discourse of cultural trauma, as the aforementioned passage puts it, lays great stress on the idea of predictability and certitude constituting, to use Giddens's nomenclature, the cornerstone of human ontological security.⁴ In this context, the notion may be defined in terms of a sense of spatial as well as temporal continuity of perceived things and encountered individuals, which an agent experiences in his/her everyday life. Hence, in order to exist in the *Lebenswelt* of everyday life, an actor must develop a sense of universal reliability, the generalised expectation that risks and contingencies of the outside environment may be — to use phenomenological nomenclature — bracketed off.

The feeling of ontological security is anchored in the interpersonal universe of early childhood, in the psychological need for continuity which becomes personified, first and foremost, by the figure of a mother who constitutes the *axis mundus* of a child's life. In this context, the notion of individual security becomes, as it were, exercised in a daily process of upbringing in which a child has to cope with the absence of his/her caretaker. Ontological security, consequently, emerges as a form of faith vested in a caretaker's integrity representing a firm belief that periods of absence are only temporary aberrations from the standard pattern of everyday life.

The theory of cultural trauma suggests, however, that it is precisely this general awareness of security and predictability which the contemporary, late modern culture is very reluctant to provide. In this sense, the ontology of reflexive modernity — as the last chapter of this work attempts to describe — may be subsumed within the pattern of escalating autonomy in which every single agent is capable of inventing his/her identity since from the onset they are all embedded in a reality where pre-existent structural constraints of class, gender, nationality have imploded (or at least some intellectual provocateurs have claimed so). In this situation, the transformation towards modernity constitutes a deeply traumatic process. It postulates the essential as well as all-pervading change which shatters the well-entrenched

³ Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change. A Case of Postcommunist Societies," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. J.C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p. 157.

⁴ See Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 36–42.

foundations of ontological security, namely, systems of traditional values and beliefs, firmly grounded role expectations (for instance within a family structure) and the pre-conceived trajectories of personal development indicating the existence of “normal” biographies. In this context, the cultural discourse of trauma refers to, as Sztompka teaches us, the universal sense of “cultural disorganisation and accompanying disorientation”⁵ experienced mostly in the axiological as well as normative elements of culture.

The domain of culture, consequently, manifests itself as a fragile ontological construction which is deeply susceptible to the shattering effect of generalised change. This peculiar sensitiveness to the impact of traumatic change, however, is not surprising. Culture is, first and foremost, the realm of continuity and reproduction, the sphere of identity formation, as well as the depository of heritage and tradition. In this sense — to translate it into the nomenclature of theatrical framework — culture becomes the domain of remembering, rather than forgetting, in which the textual (structural) foundations may serve as a sort of secure haven. Cultural traumas bring dissolution to this textual order of remembering and recollection. In this sense, trauma connotes — one may say — an anomie, an axiological and normative chaos in which individuals can no longer dwell upon well-established patterns of daily routines.

Cultural traumas unveil their destructive potential as far as the general readiness to vest trust in the Other is concerned. In this specific sense, this discourse becomes truly tantamount to the idea of “great disruption,” as Fukuyama aptly calls the axiological transformation of modern order.⁶ The idea of cultural trauma is in this sense closely related to the personal propensity to vest trust in the Other as well as to the general capability of constructing stable trust cultures.⁷ It is argued, then, that cultural traumas may be perceived through the prism of a “prevailing syndrome of distrust” which manifests itself by the erosion of trust towards individuals and social institutions indicating the general lack of “social rootedness,” a secure *milieu* of close interpersonal or systemic bonds.

Social change is compatible with trust, but only if it proceeds gradually, regularly, predictably, in a slow rhythm and consistent direction. [...] Instability undermines the existential

⁵ Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social Change,” p. 164.

⁶ See Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

⁷ Sztompka, “The Trauma of Social Change,” p. 166.

fabric of social life. People are suddenly faced with a totally overhauled social order: reshaped groups, new associations, institutions, regimes. Old habits, routines, and accustomed patterns of action are no longer adequate. Feelings of estrangement, insecurity and uneasiness arise. Everyday conduct, as well as longer life perspectives, lose their fixity and rootedness. Everything suddenly looks possible, nothing is excluded, and hence nothing can be certainly predicted. [...] No wonder permanently changing, "post-traditional" societies are so ripe with distrust.⁸

In this essentially traumatic environment, trusting relations are left behind in a structural void. The morphogenesis of modern trust cultures, to put it otherwise, does not assume a form of inter-generational reproduction organised on the basis of stable coordinates constituting the cornerstone of everyday experiences. It is the world of fluids which defies any attempts to render it a more stable and predictable form.

In the context of the "liquid modernity," axiological and normative spheres of culture assume features of the narrative of social trauma, the all-pervading notion of anxiety and being out-of-place experienced in the wake of sudden and all-encompassing changes. In a way, cultural traumas provide individuals with a new signification system which becomes a constructive way of adaptation to novel circumstances of actions. One may suggest, consequently, that deeply traumatic experiences may be, at the end of the day, positive in a way that they enable the formation of new collective identities, trans-personal narratives that help to constitute novel "discursive coalitions"⁹ aimed at coping with the experienced (or estimated) adversity of change. From this perspective, one cannot really address the realm of late modern society as a socio-cultural framework based upon the complete annihilation of trust cultures. What we experience nowadays, then, is rather a peculiar agential environment of trust in which the readiness to vest trust in the Other is no longer mediated (or facilitated) by the existence of solid and unquestionable frameworks of axiological and normative descent.

⁸ Sztompka, *Trust. A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 123.

⁹ Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 31.

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**Pomiędzy sceną a tekstem
Podmiotowość i struktura w analizie zmiany kulturowej
z perspektywy zaufania i niepewności**

Streszczenie

Publikacja stanowi interdyscyplinarny projekt łączący w sobie teorie kulturoznawcze, socjologiczne, politologiczne i filozoficzne oraz zmierzający do przedstawienia dynamiki zmian społeczno-kulturowych z punktu widzenia zaufania i niepewności. Przyjmując tezę, że zaufanie jest sposobem na radzenie sobie z niepewną i ryzykowną przyszłością, praca ta opiera się na założeniu, że omawiane pojęcia służą zobrazowaniu stopnia zadomowienia się jednostki w zmieniających się strukturach i systemach społecznych, ekonomicznych i kulturowych. W ten sposób niniejsza publikacja wychodzi poza ramy tych teorii modernizacji, które zmianę społeczną przedstawiają przede wszystkim z perspektywy strukturalno-systemowej, uwzględniającej przemiany instytucji politycznych, administracyjnych (struktur biurokratycznych) lub ekonomicznych. Praca ta jest zatem próbą nakreślenia dynamiki procesów zmiany kulturowej, a zwłaszcza jej normatywnych, aksjologicznych i symbolicznych aspektów. Książka jest adresowana przede wszystkim do osób zainteresowanych problematyką kształtowania się społecznych zasobów zaufania (kapitału społecznego) oraz powstawania kulturowych mechanizmów wzmacniających lub osłabiających skłonność jednostek do przybierania postawy uogólnionej ufności.

Tomasz Burzyński

**Zwischen der Bühne und dem Text
Subjektivität und Struktur in der Analyse der Kulturänderung
hinsichtlich des Vertrauens und der Ungewissheit**

Zusammenfassung

Die Publikation ist ein interdisziplinäres Projekt, das kulturkundliche, soziologische, politologische und philosophische Theorien vereint und bezweckt, die ganze Dynamik der sozialkulturellen Wandlungen von dem Vertrauen und der Unsicherheit her zu schildern. Angenommen, dass das Vertrauen eine Methode ist, mit der ungewissen und risikoreichen Zukunft zurechtzukommen, stützt sich der Verfasser auf die These, dass vorliegende Begriffe dazu dienen, die Anpassung des Menschen an die sich verändernden sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Strukturen und Systemen darzustellen. So sprengt das Buch den Rahmen der Modernisierungstheorien, welche den sozialen Wandel vor allem aus der strukturell-systemhaften Perspektive betrachten, d.i. alle Wandlungen im Bereich der politischen, administrativen (bürokratische Strukturen) oder wirtschaftlichen Institutionen in Rücksicht nehmen. Der Verfasser versucht, die Dynamik der Prozesse des Kulturwandels, und besonders dessen normativer, axiologischer und symbolischer Aspekte zu schildern. Das Buch richtet sich vor allem an die Personen, die sich für die Entwicklung des gesellschaftlichen Vertrauensbestandes (Gemeinschaftskapitals) und für die Entstehung der Kulturmechanismen interessieren, die im Stande sind, persönliche Neigung des Menschen eine vertrauensvolle Einstellung anzunehmen, zu verstärken oder abzuschwächen.



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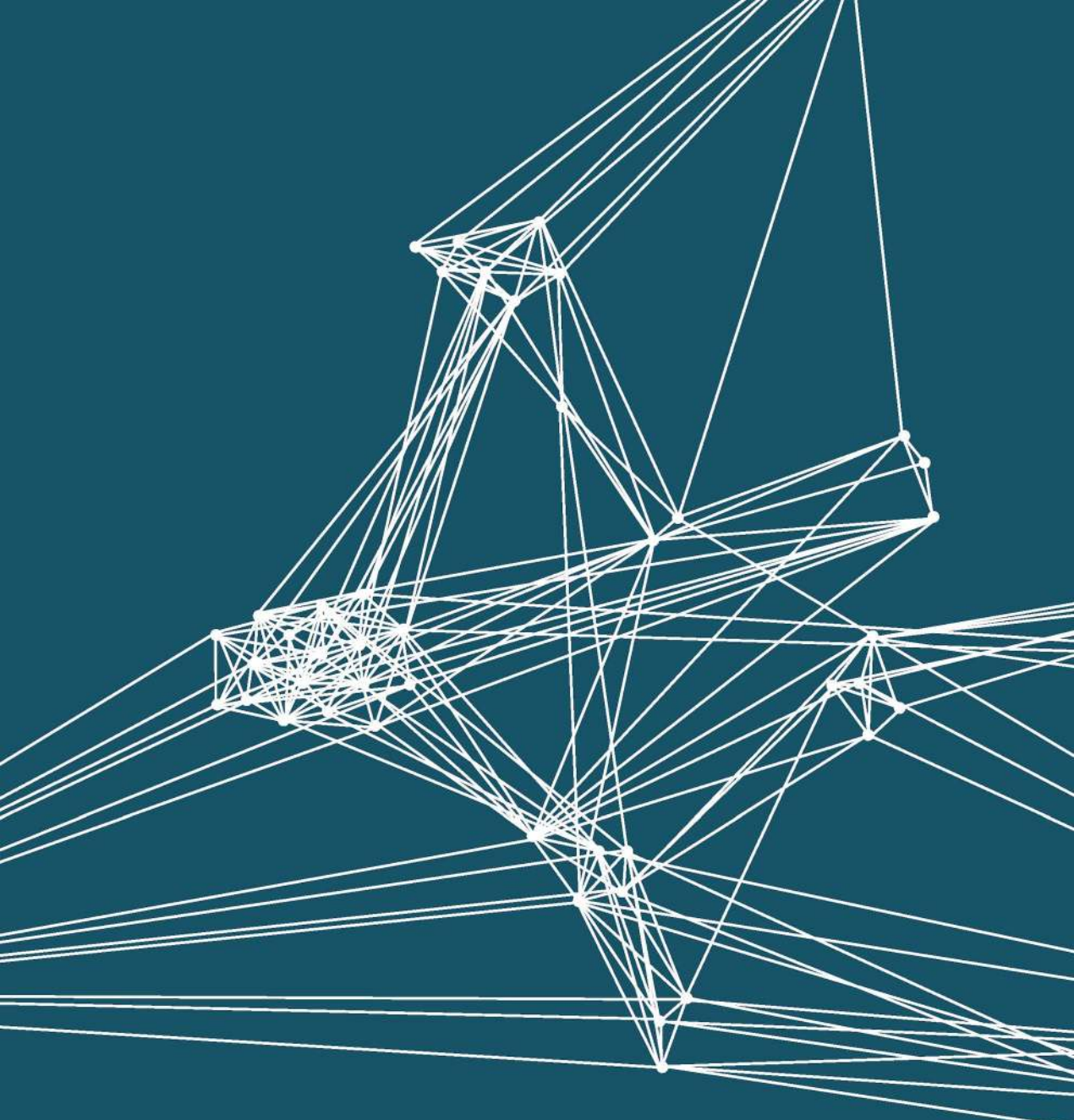
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