

Chapter 1

Material

“We speak through our clothes.”

*Umberto Eco*¹

Singletons: *Piña*

Piña is a textile that represents the Philippines in a singular way.² In a complicated, time-consuming process, fibres are extracted from pineapple leaves and woven into an airy, semi-transparent, very expensive whitish fabric. *Piña* was worn in the 19th century by the Philippine *Ilustrado* class. *Ilustrados* – the enlightened ones – were Spanish mestizos born in the Philippines, who had received their higher education in Europe and enhanced their wealth with overseas trade. The wearing of *piña* was synonymous with the command of the Spanish language, wealth, refined European manners and urbanity. Even before the indigenous population (*Indios*) did so, and in spite of their close economic and cultural ties to Spain, the *Ilustrados* developed the idea of an independent (national) identity separate from Spanish colonial rule. *Piña* was the textile of choice of the wealthy male Filipino for his *barong tagalog*, the wide, long-sleeved, embroidered shirt worn over his trousers.

Later, in the first half of the 20th century, having shifted from Spanish to American colonial influence, the country's elite displayed the American tastes of the time. The western suit with shirt and tie became the clothing of a man of the world and *piña* became passé, now a sign of the Spanish-European past. The national Filipino identity was simultaneously migrating into lower social strata, and in 1953, after the country had gained its independence, the man of the

1 Quoted from Kidder 2005, p. 345.

2 Roces 2013.

masses, Ramon Magsaysay, won the presidential election against his America-leaning predecessor, Manuel Quezon. Piña then rose through a symbolic act of the newly-elected president to a symbol of the new nation: for his inauguration Magsaysay preferred a barong tagalog in sinfully expensive piña over a western suit. Piña thus became a symbol of national identity, from having been the symbol of the Spanish-European past, and having been still earlier a symbol of a cultivated way of life.³

Its manufacturing technique combined with the history of its use made piña an incomparable fabric. It belongs within the world of objects, the superset of all objects, to the class of singular pieces separated from all other objects – piña is a singleton, an object in a set of its own, without comparable relatives.⁴ In the following, a singleton is represented by the symbol \circ .^{5*}

Piña impressively demonstrates the non-verbal communicative power of objects. A fibre obtained from the pineapple plant and woven into a textile conveys distance and proximity over a long period of time; distance between the *Ilustrados* and the *Indios* as well as in relation to the colonial rulers, and proximity to one

3 Today piña belongs to the Filipiniana and is the romanticised symbol of a refined urban Filipino past.

4 Proceeding from objects usually with a plurality of characteristics (material, colour, cut, etc.), a singleton can be defined as an object identical to its sole characteristic (for example, the textile piña). Thus, a singleton object is a mathematical unit set, a set with exactly one member, its characteristic, because the set of its characteristics is by definition (tautologically) a unit set. Defined as a singleton, all garments made from piña are therefore identical and the set of all objects with this characteristic is a unit set. Another example: kitsch is one of several characteristics of certain paintings and therefore there exist different kitschy paintings, hence the set of kitschy paintings contains more than one member. However, as a painterly category 'kitsch', all kitschy pictures are identical and the set of objects with this property shrinks to a unit set. It is already clear from these examples that the mathematical properties of sets of objects are not exogenous, giving reliable orientation to cultural and social scientific analysis. Rather, they are culturally-made variables. We will encounter this complication throughout the book. The derivation of properties from sets of objects is the main analytical task in the following. The use of mathematical language is unproblematic as long as it is understood as the means of an author – and the author is culture.

5 In the following footnotes marked with *, generic terms and concepts used in the main text are translated into the language of set theory. If not explicitly defined, the mathematical notation follows that of Basili and Vannucci (2013), as this source is also used for the further specification of the terms 'distance' and 'proximity'. The reader disinterested in the later formal modelling may simply skip the *footnotes.

another. Piña is exemplary of two important properties of the entire world of objects. Firstly, an object not only creates distance *or* proximity, but both simultaneously – it acts as a separator and a cement in tandem. One can hardly be separated from the other, almost as if distance creates proximity and proximity creates distance. Secondly, with piña, distance and proximity were not created within a group or in between groups, but distance was created towards *other* groups, and at the same time proximity was created *within* a group. The world of objects thus renders the social space visible. Objects are socially distinguishing features *vis-à-vis* the outside world, and at the same time means for identification and the characteristics of identity within a group.

0/+Consumption

Piña is quintessential for the understanding of consumption. Although the fabric itself is a typical consumer good, it does not offer utility by way of positive quantities consumed. *Ceteris paribus* – the more, the better, but through an ordered “Yes to this, no to that!” of at least two consumers, who answer “Yes to what, no to what?” each in a different way.

For understanding this claim, it is helpful to distinguish the consumption goods basket from the goods *type* basket. In the orthodoxy⁶, the utility-generating consumption goods basket contains *positive* quantities of each type of goods that the consumer consumes. Types not consumed are not contained in it – in line with the shrewd motto, ‘You can’t do something with nothing’. In the orthodoxy, this reduction of the sources of utility to positive quantities of goods is also motivated by the fact that zero quantities are irrelevant for compliance with the consumer’s budget restriction. The consumed quantity zero of a type of good, for example, of piña by the Spanish colonial masters or later the ‘Americanists’, is budget-neutral, no matter how expensive the good may be – just as the consumption of positive quantities of goods whose market price is zero is budget neutral. Solely focused on the analysis of scarcity, the orthodoxy treats goods with a positive price that the consumer does not consume in the same way as it treats goods consumed in positive quantities that cost nothing – both are ignored or dismissed as economically irrelevant.

This is a grave omission. For it obscures the view of another source of consumer utility: the utility that consumer A, for example, the Philippine ‘Americanist’, obtains precisely by *not* consuming positive quantities, i.e. shunning that

6 Orthodoxy in the following refers to neoclassical consumer economics.

good (piña), which consumer B, in the example of the Philippine nationalist, is consuming in positive quantities, i.e. is surrounding himself with it, and shunning instead a different good (the Western suit). Avoiding different *types* of goods in each case brings about utility for both consumers because it establishes their identities.

Therefore, a more general definition of economic behaviour than that commonly used in orthodoxy is called for. There, economic activity requires an input of resources. Consequently, that which does not cost any (finite) resources, however defined, is not an economically relevant action. Utility is thus the sole derivative of the availability of scarce resources (nature, money, time, knowledge, network). Zero-quantity consumption, because it's budget neutral, remains economically indeterminate – and implicitly economically irrelevant – however rational it may be.

Here, 'rational' is to be understood in Popper's sense (being consensual across the social sciences) as behaviour appropriate in a concrete situation. In the orthodoxy, zero-quantity consumption is rationalised as the case whereby the first unit of the good that the consumer actually consumes in zero quantity, would provide a lower marginal utility than the last unit of each good that they consume in positive quantities. The resulting conclusion that zero-quantity consumption must then provide a still smaller utility is implicit in the orthodoxy. But it is a false conclusion. For in the identity-forming context, discontinuities at the zero-point of consumption must be taken into account. The first piña barong tagalog consumed might give the Philippine 'Americanist' a lower marginal utility than the last unit of every good he consumes in positive quantities. Nonetheless, his zero-quantity consumption gives him greater utility than the first unit consumed – and perhaps even greater utility than the first unit of a good he actually consumes in positive quantity. The 'Americanist's' specific rationale is thus completely different from that of the orthodox model: the Philippine 'Americanist' doesn't consume piña because the first unit gives him (too) little marginal utility. But instead, because the transition from one unit of piña to zero-unit consumption gives him a large utility increase. Nothing would make him consume piña if it's consumed by the nationalist. This zero-consumption utility, however, would disappear if piña were not worn by the Filipino nationalist, then it would've lost its identity-generating capacity for both consumers.

The crosswise asymmetric zero and positive-quantity consumption of two consumers and two goods is therefore highly relevant for happiness or utility. It is an economically relevant activity, if economic relevance is viewed in terms of seeking happiness or utility, rather than from scarce resources. To this end, economic activity must be understood in more general terms as whatever contri-

butes to happiness or utility, regardless of whether it costs scarce resources or not. To leave it open until the question is settled whether it is the one or the other, I will use the terms *happiness/utility*.

Consumption here is therefore defined as the way in which humans use the world of objects – the culturally laden world of things that partly can and partly cannot be bought – including related consumer behaviours. Then the consumer can also consume an object, if firstly, they don't consume any of its *specimens*, and secondly, if the crossing from the first unit consumed to zero-quantity consumption yields a discreet positive utility increase. Consumption that meets these two conditions is referred to as zero-quantity consumption.⁷ In the following, it is assumed that this increase in utility is due to the existence of other consumers who consume the object in positive quantities, and therefore zero-quantity consumption makes a difference to these consumers.

Positive-quantity consumption of an object is defined as consumption of at least one unit. Note that positive-quantity consumption makes no distinction between different positive quantities of specimens of an object. The consumption of ten piña-tailored barong tagalog is the same as the consumption of one. Zero-quantity consumption by a consumer of an object presupposes the existence of a positive-quantity consumer of that same object. For at least two consumers and for at least one object, consumption is asymmetrical: one avoids the object – piña no! – and the other exhibits it – piña yes! I refer to this relationship between consumers as zero/positive-quantity consumption, in short *o/+consumption*.

Identity, Quality, Motivation

In the following, *social identity* is understood as being mediated by *o/+consumption*: as a consequence of 'one avoids an object and the other surrounds himself with it'. In extreme cases, a single object can convey the different identities of two consumers as a minimum requirement. Umberto Eco's "We speak through our clothes" (which we wear) can therefore be extended to include "...and those we do not wear". The 'piña yes!' of the nationalist and the 'piña no!' of the 'Americanist' lead to different identities only when they are jointly at work.

In the real world we find multiple *o/+consumption*: two consumers with different identities surround themselves asymmetrically with a larger number of

7 Note that the second condition of this definition means that not any decision not to consume a unit of an object is necessarily an act of consumption. In the case of objects for which it is not fulfilled, the orthodox "You can't do something with nothing" continues to apply.

objects, and avoid a larger number of other objects – identity, so to speak, as the result of whole communication salvos from the world of objects. I will use the term *consumer style* for that kind of *o/+consumption*.

In this interpretation, social identity is exclusively conveyed by the world of objects. Without the use of the object world – the position taken here – there is no identity, and putting it simply, nothing more than the world of objects is needed for creating identity. So, the presumption is that consumers' styles are a necessary and sufficient means for creating their identity.

Here the difference between identity and identification is already evident. Identification is a psychological process of assigning oneself to other persons (self-categorisation) with the desire of belonging and for inclusion. Identity, on the other hand, is the result of successful inclusion in a group and thus something social, which in turn presupposes that there must be at least one alternative. Although the Filipino can identify with the entire population of the Philippines, they can only be a Filipino nationalist if there is at least one alternative, in this case the Filipino 'Americanist', and vice versa. This means that piña can only convey identity to the Filipino nationalist if it also conveys the different identity of the Filipino 'Americanist'. *o/+consumption* thus becomes the central social nexus.

The view conveyed here moves the consumption of *quantities* of objects into the background and the consumption of *types* into the foreground. The consumer goods basket full of specimens is replaced by the goods *type* basket, which contains no more than one specimen of the goods types consumed in positive quantities, regardless of the number of units consumed. The consumer goods type baskets therefore differ in *quality* – regardless of how many units of a differentiating product type are actually consumed. That is why I refer to this view as the *Quality Theory of Consumption* (QTC). With regard to utility generated by an object, the only important question in QTC is the binary one: zero or positive-quantity consumption – yes or no?^{8*}

Consumption theory thus undergoes a transformation from a theory of the relationship between thing and human (quantity theory of consumption of the orthodoxy), to a theory of the relationship between human and human (QTC). In

^{8*} Define x_i as a specimen of object type i that can be used for the production of social distance and proximity. Let $X := \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$ be the finite population of one specimen for each existing object type in the world of objects. Let $A \in X$ and $B \in X$ be the goods type baskets of two consumers a and b . The set difference of A and B , $A \setminus B := \{x \mid (x \in A) \wedge (x \notin B)\}$, and of B and A , $B \setminus A := \{x \mid (x \in B) \wedge (x \notin A)\}$ are the utility generating object types. Utility generating for both consumers is the symmetrical difference $(A \setminus B) \cup (B \setminus A)$.

the orthodoxy's quantity theory, the central relationship is established via quantities and prices, in QTC via the quality of objects. In other words, in QTC consumer utility is created by the difference between consumers. These differences are comprised of visible distinguishing patterns in consumption, which is why utility arises only from collective consumption. The idea of consumption of social distance and proximity intuitively captures these relationships.

Which motives for consumption does this QTC assume? Individual consumption exclusively serves social manipulation with the simultaneously pursued goals:

- i. Proximity: the sublimation of one's own individuality within the social in-group (elective affinity), whose membership the individual attains.
- ii. Distance: the sublimation of the differences between one's in-group and (all) out-groups.

The collectivist (Eastern) society is not modelled this way, but rather the individualistic (Western) society. The individual does not strive to fuse with their social in-group (or its prototype), does not strive to disappear in it, but to curate and display their individuality therein. But they're not so individualistic as to have no need whatsoever of belonging to a group, they seek to belong to an in-group, and also to demarcate themselves with this group from the rest of society. The individual thus attains a dual identity, an *individual identity* arising from differences *vis-à-vis* all other members of their in-group, and a *collective identity* arising from differences between this in-group and the out-groups.

Chains: Purple, Titian, Uniform

The world of objects, by which social difference is created, is made up not only of singletons. One of the distinguishing features are the shades of colours consumers wear. For example, the colour purple is a blend of the primary colours blue and red, different blending ratios result in different shades. Every shade can be assigned to a certain proportion of the colour red (alternatively to the colour blue), and be compared using this mapping. Any shade of purple has either a larger or smaller proportion of red than any other shade. A finite number of purple shades can therefore be thought of as arranged in a chain with the two extremes 'almost red' and 'almost blue'.

In the world of objects many chains exist of at least ordinally comparable objects. They can be compared by criteria such as 'more or less ornamental', 'more

or less colourful', 'authentic', 'modern', 'French', 'perfect', 'complete', etc. One question in need of further clarification is how to treat elements of chains as opposed to singletons regarding the creation of social distance and proximity. By intuition, differently! If one consumer wears red and the other blue (which can be thought of as two singletons among colours), then this makes for a different distance between the two than if they wear shades of purple in order to convey the common affiliation to a group. But also by way of their different shades, convey their belonging to different hierarchical levels in it. For a deeper understanding of the production of social distance and proximity by way of the world of objects, it is therefore helpful to distinguish chains from singletons.⁹ Chains are represented in the following by the symbol $|$.^{10*}

In art history chains can be traced in painting styles, for example of Titian. As an exponent of High Renaissance painting, Titian's complete oeuvre does not show a 'finished' style of this epoch, but a style that evolved.¹¹ Young Titian was called to Padua to paint frescoes for the Scuola del Santo. Dedicated to the miracles of Saint Anthony (Miracle of the Newborn Infant, Miracle of the Jealous Husband, and Miracle of the Irascible Son), the frescoes are the first works attributable to him. Their subjects resemble earlier frescoes painted by Paduan painters for the Scuola. This resemblance, however, and the fact that all these frescoes were created for the same principal, are precisely where Titian's stylistic autonomy manifests itself. His style shows fewer human figures, but instead more monumental ones. They are arranged in the foreground, the depicted landscape merely forms the background. The eye's focus is thus led towards the foreground, where the interactions of the figures show narrative clarity, classical drama and previously unknown dynamics. This way, the style is radically different from the typical 15th century painterly narrative style, where figures are depicted as minor additions in a decorative architectural and scenic splendour. It is likely, though, that Titian's break with the painterly style typical of the time, and his independent tendency towards the classical were inspired by sculptures in the Basilica of

9 The reservation made in footnote 4 regarding the mathematical property of singletons applies *mutatis mutandis* also to chains: Whether a subset of objects is a chain is determined by culture. Elements of a subset of, for example, purple shades can be equated with their common characteristic 'purple', which makes the chain a unit set and their elements identical specimens of the singleton purple.

10* A chain of X is a set $C \in X$, so each pair of elements $(x, y) \in C \times C$ is a total, transitive and antisymmetric binary relation on C .

11 Wilk 1983.

Saint Anthony of Padua. Many of his later works sublimate the style of his Paduan frescoes.

Titian's oeuvre is an example of a chain in art brought to light by art history (culture). The radical break with the traditional painterly narrative style has created a new subset of artworks that possess the uniqueness of a singleton as a whole (Titian's entire oeuvre), but can also be treated as non-identical objects of the object type 'by Titian'. Chains of artworks have extremes, as 'almost red' and 'almost blue' are the extremes for the purple shades. The extreme that marks the beginning of Titian's style lies in sculpture, not painting, another extreme for instance in his *Bacchanal* of 1518/19,¹² a work that consummately displays his style.

As we consume art in our collections, as we visit museums, indulging in some and shunning other forms of art, we show our individual taste in it. Being part of the world of objects, art generates utility, helping create social distance and proximity. But this also applies to objects of crafts, the oriental carpet as well as the nativity scene. Art, as used for the production of social distance and proximity, is not a class of objects of its own, though its potential to achieve this in a subtle way may be greater than that of nativity scenes, for example.

At first glance, the soldier's uniform appears as the stark opposite of art. In art, subtle distinguishing features make the difference; in uniforms, uniformity reigns. But to think of them in the *o/+consumption* model as if *pars pro toto* applies would still be wrong. The uniform separates the military from civilians, but it is also a distinguishing feature within the military. The uniform too has characteristics of the chain.

The emergence of the Danish military uniform in the 18th century is a case in point.¹³ Uniforms brought about both social distance and proximity in a complicated way. In its basic uniformity, the garb had to be adjusted to the military hierarchy, and the rules for its use had to be also compatible with the lifestyle of the military ranks. In the 18th century, Denmark was a military state with a bigger army than Prussia in terms of population. As in Prussia, the Danish officer corps was recruited exclusively from the aristocracy. The earlier military organisation of the mercenary army established and demanded loyalty only towards the regiment and its colonel, a war entrepreneur, whose loyalty to his clients depended variably on the amount and regularity of payments received. The nascent idea of the territorial state, and the total subordination of everyone under the kingship,

12 Sometimes artists change their style in the course of their work. The extremes of their oeuvre therefore need not lie in the chronological beginning and ending of their work.

13 Lind, 2010.

now required a military with loyalty to king and state that could be deployed against both the outside world and the civilian population within.

The standardisation of the soldiers' garb and the introduction of a Danish officer class, whose members down to the lieutenant ranked above every civilian in the Danish hierarchy, served that purpose. The officer corps had to wear their uniform permanently, including during non-military practices in their aristocratic lifestyle. The fact that the officer corps of the former mercenary armies had not even worn uniforms in battle, as a sign of their aristocratic lifestyle, was an obstacle to this standardisation. The Danish king needed to take this into account if he was to win the loyalty of his officers. The new Danish uniform thus had to convey distance from the civilian (and thus proximity between all members of the military) and avoid too close a proximity within the military, between officers and common soldiers.

All over Europe, the stylistic language of the military garb, and thus the material with which social distance and proximity had to be 'tailored', consisted of a practical woollen coat, the renouncement of printed textile material, a bold choice of colours, sturdy shoes, and more or less bizarre headgear. The uniform made up of this material, although remaining receptive to civilian fashion trends, had to always convey three deviations from the civilian: I am a warrior (always ready to be deployed to the field), I belong (to the state) and I serve (my king). For the officer corps there was a further deviation from the civilian, which expressed: I am in command. Besides the distance of the entire organisation to the civilian world, officers' uniforms also had to convey the hierarchy of command within.

Communicating the warrior status was the simple part of this combined task. Extravagant cut of garment and choice of colours sufficed. The communication of serving and belonging was a more difficult task to achieve. In Denmark it was tried with the colour grey for the coat and distinguishing colours on cuffs and other garments, which transformed the uniform from a regimental costume into an emblem of royal service. Subordination under the absolutist king was made palatable to the officer corps with the introduction of a rank register (and all officers were soon listed in it): no civilian in Denmark ranked higher than those in the register, no matter how rich, or how old their aristocratic family was. In Denmark, as throughout Europe, the refinement of officers' uniforms with elements of aristocratic garb manifested the corps' elevated hierarchical status: the sash, silver and gold clasps and embroidery, plumes, cockades and other insignia, etc. But nothing marked the officers' status more than the portepee, the sword loop, which in Denmark was hued in the heraldic colours of the ruling dynasty, red and

gold. An unmistakable sign of the officer corps, the warrior, obedience to the Danish state, service to the king, and power of command.

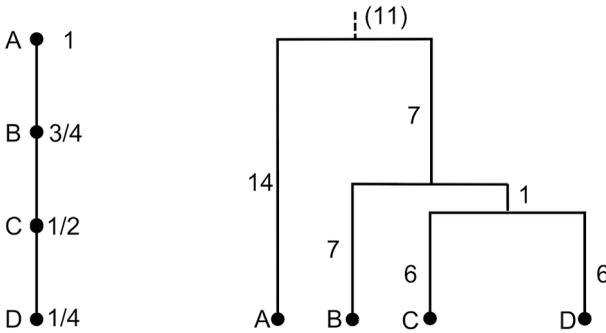
Here, too, intuition tells us that uniform variants contribute to social distance and proximity differently to singletons. Viewing uniforms as a chain of objects, ordinally marking varying degrees of combativeness, zeal for service, belonging to and commanding power, will do more justice to their social distance and proximity-producing capacity than treating them simply as 'one and the same'. Uniforms of the police, and formerly that of the post office, the railway, the clergy, as well as that of present day's 'corporate world', is material for the creation of social distance and proximity, which can be treated as chains.

Excursion into Nature

Chains order objects as though on a string. Consider the subset of the world of objects which consists of four purple shades (objects), A (almost blue), B (purple with a blue component of $\frac{3}{4}$), C (with a blue component of $\frac{1}{2}$), D (with $\frac{1}{4}$). Figure 1 (left side), shows this subset as a chain, ordered such that an object differs from its upper (or lower) neighbour by a portion of blue that is 25 percentage points lower (or higher). The chain conveys three items of information. First, purple shades are distinguished by larger or smaller portions of blue; second, shade A has the largest portion; and third, the difference in the portions of all 'neighbouring' shades is 25 percentage points. The first two items of information are necessary and sufficient for a total ordinal ranking, where total means 'all objects in the set': C is bluer than D, B is bluer than C (and thus D), and A is bluer than B (and thus C and D). All chains are a total order.

The third, cardinal information gives the exact difference in the portions of blue of two shades. It can be used in chemistry to define colour formulae which produce, for example, exactly shades A, B, C and D. To create a total order in a subset, however, a metric is redundant, an ordinal scale is sufficient.

Figure 1: Chain and phylogram.



Left: chain of four purple shades, A, B, C, D, with the proportion of blue as a fraction of one. Right: phylogram of the great apes, A orangutan, B gorilla, C chimpanzee/bonobo, D human. Numbers next to the vertical branches indicate the genetic distance between these species as lengths. But biologists do not convey any information in the horizontal width of their phylograms. The dashed branch at the very top represents the rooting of the phylogram of the great apes in the (larger and not depicted) evolutionary tree of Old World monkeys.

With these properties of the chain, it is now possible to identify some of culture's peculiarities. Firstly, the world of cultural objects should not be thought of as being ordered in a single chain. For this would amount to a culture aligning the whole world of objects towards a single referential point, as, for example, scholasticism tried to align everything earthly in the direction of God. Instead, we must be prepared for finding multiple chains. For example, chains of artworks that are more or less attributed to a painting style, chains of drinks more or less hip. The order of every single chain is total, but the order across all chains is not.

Secondly, this does not imply that different chains have nothing to do with each other. They can have an intersection of (common) objects, as branches of a tree have a common stem. Chains that are bundled at one end make a tree. A tree made of chains, in contrast to any chain in it, is not a total, but only a partial order of objects, because the free ends of the chains are not ordinally comparable. The hippest drink and the hippest painting remain (until further notice) incomparable.

Waiting for us is a fragmented order of the world of objects with a plethora of singletons that are not comparable to anything else, a plethora of detached chains that are not comparable to anything else, but where the objects in each are

totally ordered, $|$, and a plethora of partially ordered trees, which are incompatible to other trees. Trees are represented here by the symbol \mathfrak{M} .^{14*} A material for the production of social distance and proximity awaits you, which is not only voluminous, but also heterogeneous. This material of singletons, chains and trees are symbolised by $\{\circ, |, \mathfrak{M}\}$ when it comes to focusing on the heterogeneity of the orderings in the world of objects.

Thirdly, the shades A, B, C and D in Figure 1 illustrate a special case. Only in exceptional cases can you expect more than ordinal rankings of cultural objects: bluer, older, more beautiful, more modern, more authentic, fresher, more picturesque, more ascetic (or their antonyms) are the scales with which you frequently have to settle for. The typical case in Figure 1 (left side) is a chain with no numbers marking the distances.

A difference between culture and nature emerges: order in nature is greater than that to be found in culture. Evolutionary biologists hope to eventually determine the complete tree of life that unites all smaller trees of organisms in a single stem. In other words, they are convinced that it exists. Only the computational capacity of computers stand in the way of its decoding. The stepwise decoding of the genomes of more and more species (natural objects) allows for the ever more frequent use of a metric to determine genetic dissimilarity.¹⁵ The world of objects used for the production of social distance and proximity is less ordered than nature. Evolutionary biology is nevertheless a good starting point from which to further consider the upcoming issues, not least because it has concerned itself with the dissimilarity of objects for longer than social sciences have.

Figure 1 (right side) shows a phylogram used in evolutionary biology, depicting a partial order in a selected set of reproductive communities (species). A phylogram is a tree with special properties. First: the partial order is defined as the cardinally measurable degree of genetic kinship of two species from the set of species considered. Second: objects are placed at the ends of the branches only – human (D), chimpanzee/ bonobo (C), gorilla (B) and orangutan (A). Third: the node connecting, for example, human with chimpanzee/bonobo marks the last common ancestor of both. The next node up marks the last common ancestor of gorilla and chimpanzee/bonobo/human. The top horizontal line marks the last common ancestor of orangutan/gorilla/chimpanzee/bonobo/human (perhaps not yet discovered as a fossil) as the common link of all species of this subset. Fourth: fossils do not belong in the subset of objects considered and hence have

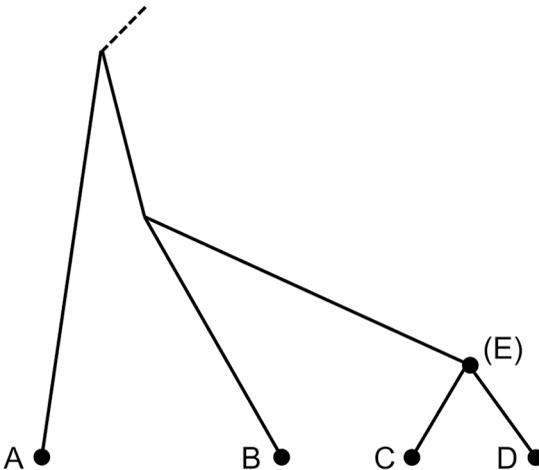
^{14*} A tree $Z, Z \in X$, is a set, so that for each $x \in Z$ the set $x \downarrow = \{y \in Z\}$ of 'preceding' elements is a total, transitive and antisymmetric binary relation in Z .

¹⁵ Dawkins 2005.

no place in the phylogram. Fifth: the cardinal measure (in millions of years, Myr) is the time passed since a common last ancestor. There are 6 Myr since the separation of chimpanzee/bonobo from human, 7 Myr since the separation of chimpanzee/bonobo and human from gorilla, and 14 Myr since their joint separation from orangutan. The phylogram of the great apes depicts their genetic kinship metrically. In evolutionary biology, such precision is achieved by means of the triangulation technique: from the genetic distance measured between two living species as the base of an isosceles triangle, the apex of the triangle is calculated from the known average mutation rate of the genetic material per Myr. The wider the base of the triangle, the further back the division into different species.

Figure 2 shows the kinship between the great apes as a cladogram. In the cladogram, the branch length conveys no information, as the only information that can be retrieved is from the relative positions of nodes. Both C and D are more closely related to one another than either one to B or A, and C/D are more closely related to B than to A. In contrast to the phylogram, however, the cladogram does not say exactly how closely two species are related. The cladogram has been the appropriate way of depicting kinship in nature before the decoding of genomes.

Figure 2: Cladogram of the great apes.



Orangutan (A), gorilla (B), chimpanzee/bonobo (C), human (D). The cladogram shows no information about the kinship of two species by the lengths of branches, but only by the relative positions of the nodes. C is more closely related to D than B is.

A Glimpse at the Peculiarities of Culture

It would be illusory to think that we could find metric scales for cultural objects, the way biology has found the genetic distance between species in nature. So, I will continue my analysis starting with ordinal scales: more or less of what is blue, new, authentic, Japanese, aggressive, young, modern, etc. Evolutionary biologists (now) use a metric scale because it was gifted to them by nature. So far, culture has not been that generous. I am left only with those findings from social and cultural sciences to work with that can be obtained. And they initially amount to an ordinal scale. Yet, I must separate the wheat from the chaff by modelling in the spirit of emic field research, i.e., take into account only those ordinal distinguishing features that consumers are able and accustomed to recognise and consider as such. This requires them sharing a prior cultural knowledge. The analyst's intuition is a crude yet conductive method to remove the chaff – depending on whether you trust the consumer to recognise, for example, not only the baroque as a style (though they may not necessarily be able to designate it as such), but also some gradations of it. The experts' sophisticated etic deliberations, though, can be left in their libraries.

A second difference between biology and culture concerns the method of discovering order in subsets, be it reproductive communities or consumer goods. Evolutionary biologists have discovered order in nature for the sake of their specific interests and developed appropriate methods. When it comes to consumption, you have yet to discover (invent) methods appropriate for your specific interests.

Biologists have found the difference between two objects, A and B, in the genome. For example, A has the genome $a_1b_1c_1d_1$ and B the genome $a_2b_1c_1d_2$. They differ in a and d (for example, a_1 are fins, a_2 are four-toed feet, d_1 are baleen and d_2 are teeth); however, they have the same features b_1 (pulmonary respiration) and c_1 (a vertically mobile spinal column). The genetic distance between A and B in this example is therefore 2, and the two objects are the close relatives, whale (A) and hippopotamus (B). The cardinality of their dissimilarity is a gift of nature, because functional genes (for example, a and d) are taxa-independent causes of a particular pheno-typicality (as a is causal for body parts suitable for locomotion, and d for those in the mouth). The alternatives are, however, available only in 'pure' form, for example, in form either a_1 or a_2 , and not as a mixed form a_{1-2} . Fins and toed feet match body mass, but they are always fixed to either fin or toed foot; we never find 'fin-toed' feet in live species. This gift of nature allows the dissimilarity of two species to be measured cardinally by numbering (and depicting these numbers in the phylogram as vertical lengths). In culture, we can also think

of the 'genome' of an object, abcd, the same way to begin with, for example, a being colour, b plasticity, c impudence, d nostalgia. But for good reason it is difficult to think a,b,c,d merely in binary terms. In the world of cultural objects of interest to us, there are not only fins or toed feet, but also many gradations of 'fin-toed' feet.

The Lascaux prehistoric cave art, for example, is a mixture of painting and sculpture; depending on your viewpoint they have more of one or the other. Titian's inspiration from the sculptures at the basilica in Padua has been mentioned already. And what hair length exactly marks the boundary between ECT and 'perker' hairstyles? All that is left for cultural objects is the possibility of mixed forms with varying shades.

The phylogenetic species concept in evolutionary biology has defined dissimilarity between two species to be the vertical length of two branches up to the node that unites them in the phylogram. But if you deal with the production of social distance and proximity instead, you first must find a precise meaning for dissimilarity in the world of objects. What this means is not crystal clear and I will address it in chapter 3. For the time being, social science is more complex than biology.

As fossils can no longer reproduce and lost their genetic material long ago, we find only subsets of live species in the phylograms and cladograms of biology. The Lucy fossil from the East African Rift has no place in Figure 1 (right side) and Figure 2. In culture another principle applies: everything usable for the production of social distance and proximity must be taken into account in cladograms of the world of objects. So, when consumers create social distance and proximity by visiting museums, exhibits aren't 'fossils' (as old as they may be), but just as 'alive' as the drink consumed in the museum café. Culture is availing us with almost all of its objects ever created. They hardly lose their 'cultural genes'. Nearly everything that has ever been created is still culturally alive.

To biologists, the claim that humans descended from gorillas is absurd. Since gorillas are a living reproductive community, this would mean that humans are more advanced in evolutionary terms than gorillas, who've been standing on the evolutionarily spot for the last seven million years, leaving evolution to humans. For biologists, the gorilla is as much a current expression of the evolution of nature as the human is. We therefore do not find live species in phylograms or cladograms positioned on top of each other in a branch. There is no species E in Figure 2 in biology. Species are always positioned side by side. Applying this to culture would require that no object be positioned on top of another in cladograms. I will maintain this practice as a mere convention until it becomes advantageous to deviate from it and consider objects such as E in Figure 2; when it becomes

important to consider shades in one dimension of the objects' features, such as purple shades in a chain belonging to a tree of objects, which differ in more than one dimension.

In biology, a reproductive community is seen as a *dichotomous* diversification from the tree of life. A group is separated from its fellow specimens (for example, by the break-up of a continent or by driftwood crossing the sea) and transforms into a new reproductive community. A convention among biologists lets the group left behind to also become a new reproductive community, parallel to the emigrants. So, one is turning into two, but the crucial point is, always into *only* two. The tree of life is thus made of nodes, from each of which exactly two branches grow (evolutionary dichotomy). From the biological point of view, this is a plausible assumption, because evolutionary polytomies – the branching of more than two reproduction communities from a common ancestor – are hard to imagine. How unlikely is it that a group of Old World monkeys drifted on a mangrove raft from what is now West Africa to South America, and another group to India from the same place? But in the cultural sphere we cannot rule out multiple splits (cultural polytomies). For now though, I will maintain the dichotomy of splits as a mere convention.

As mentioned, evolutionary biology always leaves living reproductive communities at the very same stage of evolution. This is reflected in the phylogram by the constantly identical length of each branch up to the common origin.^{16*} This property is not mandatory for cultural trees. The lengths above objects to their common origin can vary. A branch of cultural history can end while another goes on. Much like cultural objects that find their place in the 'interior' of cultural trees (for example, E in Figure 2), sooner or later branches may cease to lengthen. The Moai Maea of Easter Island, for example, are as much a part of the world of cultural objects as Henry Moore's sculptures. But the further evolution of these stone heads came to an abrupt end in the 16th century, while Moore's oeuvre continues to produce new successors. I will adopt the longitudinal equality of branches of trees from evolutionary biology, remaining aware that it is a pure convention, to be broken when deemed necessary.

^{16*} To this end, ultrametric scales are used in evolutionary biology for determining the lengths in evolutionary trees.

Cultural Trees: Oriental Carpet, Traditional Costume, Archaic Style

You can barely determine how many types of oriental carpets there are. Carpets have many characteristics: the material quality of wool and dyes, the knot density per square centimetre, the manufacturing technique (hand-made, mechanically), age and origin, the symbols shown, the previous owner(s), the dealer. Its characteristics allow a carpet to belong to the subset of authentic oriental carpets, or not. However, the presence of multiple characteristics in a single piece of textile complicates the aggregation of different assessments (place of origin, manufacturing technique, material type, ornamentation etc.) into an overall score of authenticity. For example, when you disagree on the weight given to different characteristics. What's considered authentic and what's not is a matter of cultural negotiation.¹⁷

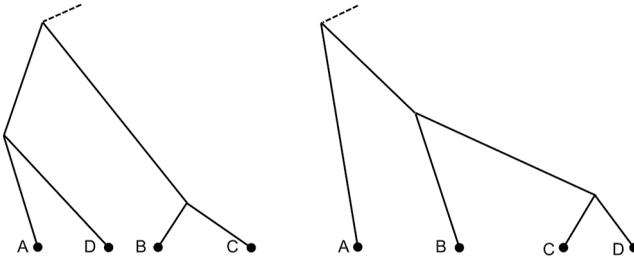
The authentic oriental carpet illustrates the difficulty of trying to define a non-ordered cultural subset *per se*. Counterfeiting is a contributing cause of this difficulty. The complete oeuvre of the avant-garde artist Kazimir Malevich is hard to define, because counterfeits are circulated time and again. Although with artists like Titian, the definition of the subset of their entire oeuvre poses little problem.

Titian's oeuvre is a tree. A part consists of the type of works described above, call it type A. Its overwhelming dynamic of figurative interaction differs from later works, such as the *Venus of Urbino* (1538), with its calmer characteristics rather resembling a still life. Call these paintings type B. What both types A and B have in common and set them apart from pre-Titian painting style, is the dominance of figure(s) in the foreground with architecture and landscape as decorative background. Another type in Titian's oeuvre, emanating from his still-life painting in type B, is his portrait painting. Call it type C. It largely dispenses with narratives from the background, but instead reveals grandeur, tragedy, or be it the cunning of the person portrayed. Yet another type, call it type D, is his later work and revisits the early figurative dynamics of type A, but with mythological instead of religious subjects, such as the *Robbery of Europe* (1559–62).

But how can these four types of works be placed in a tree of Titian's oeuvre? It's obvious now that the definition of the non-ordered subset is not the only complication cultural trees pose. This is because one can always transform a non-ordered subset of cultural objects into differently ordered sets. Figure 3 illustrates this by way of Titian's example.

17 Spooner 2010.

Figure 3: Cladograms of Titian's oeuvre.



Left: cladogram of the semantic variety of his oeuvre (simplification). Right: cladogram of the chronological variety of his oeuvre (simplification). Depending on the ordering principle, semantically or chronologically, different cladograms result from the same non-ordered subset of his oeuvre types (A, B, C, D).

To the right, Titian's richness of stylistic variations is depicted, resulting from a chronological ordering principle. The chronological origin lies in Paduan sculpture, from which the dynamic style of his frescoes (type A) emerged, followed by still-life painting (type B) and portrait painting (type C), and the painting of mythological subjects (type D).

But why should the chronological order of Titian's style be the 'correct' one? Almost typical of culture is its plethora of competing orders. So here too. Though art historians have developed the chronological order, there are also those who focus on the syntactical and semantic order of artworks. Figure 3 (left side) shows the simplified semantic order of Titian's oeuvre: Titian's late, mythological phase (D) is semantically more closely akin to his Paduan, early phase (A) than to the portrait painting (C) that preceded it. Which, in turn, is semantically more closely akin to his still-lives (B) than to the Paduan frescoes (A).

What determines which ordering principle applies? As I will argue in the second part of the book, culture itself as 'crystallised history' determines this, although human agency also exerts a limited influence in the form of style leadership.

Now, returning to the issue of separating the wheat from the chaff: what is the 'correct' order of cultural objects used for producing social distance and proximity? It is not the Titian experts in their etic approach who can answer this for you. Instead, in an emic manner you must take into account whichever order consumers find for themselves: syntax, semantics, chronology, or simply 'beautiful' versus 'ugly', or 'old stuff' versus 'new stuff'.

Traditional costume is yet another tree in the world of objects. With exceptions such as the Oktoberfest, traditional costume is a distinctive and differentiating feature of ethnic and autochthonous groups. It evokes social distance outwards and proximity inwards. The traditional costume is available in different nuances, moderating proximity inwards. The Appenzell women's costume, for example, distinguishes between unmarried, married women and widows. Another example is the historical costume of Turkish peoples.¹⁸ Over a long period of time, its basic components, indistinguishable between the sexes, consisted of a long, bag-like pair of trousers pleated at the hips and ankles (*şalvar*), a shirt (*gömlük*) over which a long-sleeved garment (*entari*) was worn, which in turn was covered by a caftan, a short jacket (*cepken*) and a wide, body-length cape (*ferace*). For centuries, these components remained largely fashion-resistant in being an adaptation to the climatic conditions of the Eurasian steppe. Fashion only showed itself at a few stylistic turning points, for example in the way the garments were closed, right over left or in front, and in westernisation through the introduction of gender-specific costumes. Costumes display substantial similarity in material, cut and pieces among the nomadic peoples of the Huns, Sakassas, Kirghizes and other Turkish peoples. However, different clans have displayed influence from their respective neighbouring cultures in their regional variations. The traditional costumes of Turkish peoples are a wide-branching stylistic tree of complementary individual objects, which at the same time convey the social distance between and proximity within subgroups.

Trees in the arts are not confined to the oeuvre of single artists. The most impressive example is perhaps the archaic style.¹⁹ Originating in the Upper Palaeolithic age by unnamed artists and shown to this day in the paintings of schoolchildren and in tribal art, its traces can be found, for example, in the potteries of Josiah Wedgwood, the sketches of the architect Étienne-Louis Boullée, paintings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Georges Seurat and Kazimir Malevich. And it appears in a plethora of refinements in the paintings of Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Karel Appel, in the paintings and sculptures of Pablo Picasso, in the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti and Jene Highstein, and in the buildings of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The archaic style sublimates the most visible features of things and behaviours through elementary figuration: sequential, explanatory narration; linear, processional composition of asynchronous elements of the same size; different perspectives on figures; the optical creation of space by means of a grid of lines; and monochromatic colouration of planar areas. In a

18 Koç and Koca 2011.

19 Howard 1981.

large tree, the archaic style unites a vast number of scattered artworks from a wide variety of artistic genres, dating back thousands of years, and created by a large number of known and anonymous artists. A multitude of such trees, large and small, can be found in the world of objects.

The Illusion of Total Cultural Order

Evolutionary biology entertains a belief in the existence of a tree uniting the whole animal world, which combines with that of flora to form the tree of life.²⁰ To believe the consumers' world of objects as a whole were such a tree would be illusory.

Such illusion is already evident when looking at art alone, the object category best explored in its internal structure. While there are styles that transcend artistic genres and artists' oeuvres such as the archaic style, there are also the many styles that can be strictly separated from one another according to form and content. For example, John F. Moffitt, art historian and painter, has systematised art by extracting the artist's philosophical motivation from the visual experience of artwork.²¹ For this purpose, he divides visual experience into two overarching categories, the experience of depicted shapes and that of presentation of content. These broad categories he then breaks down into more specific experiential principles. The archaic style, for example, conveys the experience of its shapes through the principles of abstraction, anonymity, frontality, planarity, typologisation, and areal colouration. And it conveys content idealistically, showing philosophical or ideological concepts by figurative symbolism, sacrificing the beauty of appearance for a didactic program, working with repetition and showing the human being as an undifferentiated abstraction lacking a recognisable psyche. This way, Moffitt identifies four clearly distinguishable styles in 18th–20th century painting: the classical style in the tradition of the High Renaissance (from Titian to, in his analysis, Henry Moore's sculptures); baroque, including abstract expressionism (Caravaggio to Wassily Kandinsky); mannerism including pop-art (Giorgio Vasari to Robert Rauschenberg), and the archaic style. In Moffitt's understanding, the painting of this period consists of four separate trees.

So, you'd best give up the illusion of a total order of the world of cultural objects, noticing instead that it may better be characterised as a set of different types of subsets, { \circ , |, \cap }, of singletons, chains and trees, existing in different

20 Dawkins 2005.

21 Moffitt 1979.

variants.^{22*} Such is the material by which social distance and proximity are produced and consumed. With such material, the orthodox marginal utility concept cannot be analytically expressed. Nor can consumer behaviour be predicted in the epistemological ‘as-if’ manner, now so familiar to economics.

Qualitative considerations are to replace quantitative ones: the non-identity, but comparability of objects in chains is one such qualitative aspect. Others are the comparability of objects in a branch of a tree, the commonality of a common origin of all its branches, but also the incomparability that is hidden in the set of objects at the end of its branches. And not least, the incomparability from tree to tree and chain to chain and from trees, chains and singletons to one another. Such material calls for a qualitative analysis. In the face of this, quantities have become a rather crude analytical side of consumption. Instead, qualitative aspects come to the fore, to be dealt with in the *o/+consumption* perspective.

A Glimpse at a Colourful World

It is only by taking a qualitative approach that the analyst can access consumers’ wealth of options for consumer decisions, a wealth less and less reflected by their economic resources alone – nature (beauty, intelligence), money, time, education, and networks. In combination with the budget-neutral consumability of the world of objects (*o-consumption*), money, though not yet redundant in practice, is losing both its unchallenged status as the source of consumption and its predictive accuracy.

Which is why I am pretending here that its effect has completely fizzled out. In what follows I conceive the social realm devoid of money (and all other economic resources), because the full scope of *o/+consumption* for the social realm can only be grasped this way. Even if in reality it is of course also moderated by beauty, intelligence, money, time, education and personal networks.

This way, you can perform an interesting thought experiment: suppose everyone had the exact same resources, the same consumption space, and identical preferences over consumption alternatives. How diverse – how colourful – would society be after consumers have made their choices? The orthodox forecast is this: everyone consumes the same, because everyone starts out the same; society remains as it began, even after consumption, it is still lacking any social diversity. In the orthodox view, a colourful society is predictable only by

^{22*} $X = \{\{o_1, \dots, o_h\}, \{l_1, \dots, l_i\}, \{m_1, \dots, m_j\}\}$

assumption: society becomes colourful only if its members are already endowed with differences in economic resources upfront.

With the *o/+consumption* approach, you arrive at a radically different conclusion: *o/+consumption* turns a society that was completely homogeneous to begin with, into a colourful bouquet of different social groups, that both constitute themselves in society and show themselves in it. Part 2 of the book is dedicated to this. Here I claim for later reflection that QTC's *o/+consumption* approach, but not the orthodoxy, allows for the prediction of a colourful society without taking it as a given.

Beyond the World of Things

This radical point of analytical departure from a uniform society prior to consumption, is further motivated by the fact that social distance and proximity are not only produced by the world of things. Behaviours as distinguishing individual characteristics can also convey social distance and proximity. This further augments the redundancy of money as a social vehicle.

In the late 18th century, the fad of the living (Greek) statue appeared in Naples, a hotspot of romantic-intellectual Europe.²³ In the salons of Neapolitan society, ladies – dressed in high-waisted, white, semi-transparent muslin (which later became the French empirical style, the *robe à la grecque*) – presented themselves in touching poses as 'living classicism'. The tambourine striking Bacchante and Pygmalion's Galatea were popular subjects.

It was Emma Hart, an Englishwoman of lower pedigree, who by mastery of this self-staging became the star of Neapolitan salons. Her marriage to the rich art connoisseur William Hamilton took her from maiden to Lady Hamilton. Her posing was even the precursor for high aristocratic imitators, such as Lady Charlotte Campbell, whom Tischbein painted in the style of a living Greek statue. Goethe, by contrast, in his *Elective Affinities*, infers with Luciane's immature posing a different, derogative meaning to the living statue. Today, Emma Hart would post selfies on the internet.

George 'Beau' Brummell, 'King of the Dandies', since the time of the British Regency is still unrivalled in his virtuoso frolicking with social distance and proximity.²⁴ Bestowed with boldness more than wealth, the 'style entrepreneur' Beau Brummell became sovereign of the most exclusive salons, adored by all of London

23 Rauser 2015.

24 Smith 1974.

(including the ruling Prince of Wales). After having detached himself from his petty bourgeois family, he entered the upper echelons of society in a style of ceremony, audience orientation, contempt, and exclusivity. Beau's ceremony was both aggressive and defensive, dragging a protective trench between him and others that could only be bridged with taste and finesse. By plastering over the superficiality and banality of his socialisation with formal dignity, he brought matters of taste and conduct to the fore while turning substance (e.g., of lineage and wealth) into a minor issue, and interpersonal relationships into the mere celebration of norms. Brummell's audience orientation was evident to his regular visitors, including the Prince Regent himself, attending his morning dress-up ceremony. Or when at the salons or opera he delivered his devastating judgments of taste with cutting irony, inhaled by the audience like sharp tobacco smoke. Brummell displayed contempt towards everything and everyone, all the way to absurdity – nothing was worth being taken seriously, no one from fine society could've ever hoped to be on equal footing with him. His exclusivity marked an impassable distance to those he regarded inferior. To let himself be carried out of the house into his coach to save his shoes from the dirt of the gutter was part of this game. Brummell thus epitomised dandyism, which was later to influence Baudelaire's anti-aesthetic and Wilde's preoccupation with the thoroughly ritualised upper class.

Brummell had access to fine society by means of a small inheritance, but his rise was first and foremost due to his well-calculated behaviour. Resources such as money, wealth, or an exclusive family background were of secondary importance. The dandy existence was hard work, and above all it cost a lot of time, which someone who was just rich enough that he needed not earn a living from work – like the members of the leisure class – had plenty of. All relevant actors were endowed with the same amount of time.

Ironically, in today's high-performance society, availability of time in the societal strata is reversed, yet showing the same need for an alternative theory of consumption: the champs of high-performance society, much like the past leisure class, do have plenty of money, but now are short of time. The unemployed are short of money, but they have plenty of time. Celebrating that one has no time now serves the same social distance and proximity-producing aspiration as the former demonstration of an abundance of time. The production of social distance and proximity with conspicuous behaviour remains as pertinent today as ever.

The neo-tribe of bike couriers is not part of the modern 'leisure class' of the (full-time) unemployed.²⁵ Professionally, its members never have time, but they still have enough left that they can waste in distance and proximity-creating behaviour.²⁶ Their style unfolds in three dimensions: behaviour, appearance, jargon. The most respected couriers show the riskiest style when riding their bikes – 'Ride it like you stole it!' – fearlessly riding on a wave of flowing traffic, sacrificing their safety and ignoring traffic rules. The archetype of the bike courier does without a helmet and has a track bike without gears and brakes, which is difficult to handle on the road and risky for the rider. Over functional sports clothes, filthy-looking street clothes are worn. Just as in other neo-tribes, for example free climbers, the jargon is full of idioms unfamiliar to outsiders. Such as *fix* for a track bike, *wave* for fluid motion, or *line* for the (mostly curved) path through (stationary) traffic. *Alleycats* – organised, illegal, breakneck bicycle races through urban traffic – offer the ideal opportunity to spurn danger. Alleycats prove that couriers' appetite for risk is not (only) owed to commercial pressure, but (also) to a desire for social distance and proximity. This style manifests an urban group of 'rebels without brakes', which creates distance from the rest of society and proximity to each other without the input of money, wealth, or formal human capital, but rather with creative behaviour.

We and the Others and We Amongst Ourselves

For clarification of the concepts of social distance and proximity, one can think of their relationship in social space in one of two ways. First, with the exclusive view of the external differentiation of a group, distance and proximity could be regarded as synonyms for the dissimilarity of two social groups (just as the distance between two villages, measured as the crow flies, can be considered equally close and distant). Alternatively, regarding external *and* internal dissimilarity, one can take an orthogonal understanding of distance and proximity. External dissimilarity is understood as dissimilarity between two social groups that produces social distance between them. Internal dissimilarity is understood as dissimilarity of two individuals within a social group, producing social proximity, albeit without letting the group members become identical. I will always use the terms distance and proximity in this second sense: distance in the sense of dissimilarity between groups, and proximity in the sense of dissimilarity of

25 A neo-tribe differs from a subculture in its voluntary membership (Maffesoli 2007).

26 Kidder 2005.

members of a group. In the following, distance and proximity are not synonyms, but stand in an *orthogonal* relationship.

Orthogonal social distance and proximity, as my modelling has it, are the determinants of human identity. Consumer utility derived from the identity of a member of society hinges on both, distance and proximity. Well-planned consumption, the choice of *o/+consumption* from the ordered world of objects, { \circ , |, \mathfrak{M} }, is correspondingly complex. This complexity is dealt with in the second part of the book.

What is typical about the orthogonality of distance and proximity can be seen in the (semi) criminal youth milieu.²⁷ The *juvenile gangster style* features the ‘perker’ hairstyle (short on the sides and back, longer on top), designer sports hoody and jacket, tank-top, baseball cap, low-waisted tubular jeans, sneakers, silver and gold chains – all of which make up an expensive outfit for the young. Group behaviour presents ‘bad guys’, ready to answer the smallest sign of disrespect with (the threat of) immediate violence. The jargon is a mix of both black rap and mother tongue. This style does not distance itself from an abstract opposite, but rebels against the prevailing mainstream in a provocative aesthetic: what the mainstream avoids, it displays, what the mainstream displays, it avoids. Social distance thrives upon *o/+consumption*, for which a concrete opposite, here the mainstream, is targeted. This is what the ‘gangster’ style has in common with piña, with which the Philippine ‘Americanists’ were targeted. This is the one dimension of orthogonality, that of social distance to the out-group.

But at the same time the juvenile gangster style also performs in the second dimension, proximity inside the group. Therewith, the production of social distance goes hand in hand with the production of social proximity – ‘we and the others’ goes together with ‘we amongst ourselves’. It is trivial that distance to out-groups bonds a group together. However, what is not trivial is that the production of proximity does not lead to total proximity, to the fusion of the group members’ identities. Limited proximity is the case at hand in individualistic societies. In the juvenile gangster style it is having ‘done time’ that makes a ‘gangster’ authentic. No other elements of his style suffice for that. Newcomers and those who were never caught or were repeatedly released by police have a lower internal standing. Even kids stemming from the local population find it hard to gain respect in this milieu, assumed to lack an innate talent for crime. So it is (the glorification of) crime that creates – simultaneously and orthogonally – distance from the mainstream and limited proximity within the milieu.

27 Bengtsson 2012.

The orthogonality of social distance and proximity will be further clarified in chapter 3. Here is a preview of it: in the phylogram, proximity is visible in a portion of the vertical lengths of the branches, and distance in a portion of the horizontal width of the phylogram. In the graphical representation of the phylogram, the orthogonality of distance and proximity is thus shown in the expansion of the tree in two-dimensional space.

Fluid Society

Of the examples from the world of objects dealt with so far, several share the factor of their appearances occurring at a time of social change and instability. Piña became a sign of Filipino identity from the end of American rule to the liberation from American influence. The Italian Renaissance flourished when the Papal, Milanese and Habsburg powers were at odds. The Danish military uniform was born when the feudal system was gradually abandoned in favour of the territorial state. The living Greek statues emerged at a time of romantic liberalisation, and Beau Brummel's dandyism appeared in the Regency era, when the continuity of the old order was unsure. This commonality is no coincidence. The more fluid society is, i.e., the less crystalline social structure it contains, the more fertile is the soil for the enlargement of the world of objects. Because the world of objects brings order back into fluid society, as the following examples show.

Westminster Abbey houses four floor mosaics in the Roman Cosmati style. In the abbey's stylistic language, they take the special status of a singleton.²⁸ Why did the abbey, the coronation site and mausoleum of the English kings, break with the Anglo-French early gothic style it was otherwise built in? The Cosmati mosaics are located right at the coronation ceremony's traditional site within the abbey. The abbey and mosaics were commissioned by Henry III, King of England and Duke of Aquitaine, at a time of declining English influence on the continent. A desire arose for an independent, purely English identity, detached from France, as the nucleus of a new ideology of dominion. The Cosmati mosaics at the coronation site helped articulate this growing need for distance and establish a new relationship with the continent.²⁹

Japanese urban youth styles show many contrasting features to western ones. *Kogyaru*, a very trashy style, is a good example. The term is derogatory for a

28 When interpreted as a singleton, the four non-identical mosaics must be treated as specimens of a single object. For the logic of this interpretation, see footnote 4.

29 Binski 1990.

young, infantilised girl. The kogyaru look includes deeply tanned skin, obtained in tanning studios or by applying chemicals. This contrasts starkly with the historical ideal of the noble Japanese woman, pale from avoiding the sun (to which peasant women are exposed), and further whitened from additional application of make-up. Instead, kogyaru adapts to the Western ideal of skin, expressing the luxury of quality time spent in the sun. How did this ‘cultural rupture’ come about? When Japan ended its isolationist course of the shoguns, it suffered humiliating experiences with the West which increasingly called its national identity into question. The need for modernisation grew into Western-style modernisation – ‘*datsu a nyo o*’ (from East to West) – including imitation of Western colonialism. Colonialism demanded a hierarchical demarcation of the Japanese race from the rest of Asia, with the Japanese in the lead. At the turn of the 20th century, this notion of distance from Asia found support in the West, with the construction of proximity to the Japanese (as opposed to other Asians) as ‘honorary whites’ by Nazi Germany and in South African apartheid. A Japanese *McDonald’s* franchise owner’s statement, “If we eat McDonald’s hamburgers...we will become taller, our skin become white, and our hair blonde” is only understandable against this historical background of a nation in search of its racial identity. This search arose from the belief that race could be manipulated, or at least disguised. Kogyaru is a stylistic offshoot thereof. It targets race as a supposedly innate attribute of humans, by depicting Western racial attributes in an ironic, camp way, thereby holding up a mirror to the artificiality of Japan’s westernisation. Besides tanning, the kogyaru style features brown or blonde coloured hair and hazel or blue coloured contact lenses. The trashy kogyaru youth style owes its existence to a deeply rooted identity crisis of the Japanese nation.³⁰

In the late 17th century, the dilution of traditional English social structure had reached the provincial town. While pedigree and land ownership still exclusively shaped social structure in the countryside, this no longer applied in cities. The pathway into cities’ upper echelons was also widened by commercial success, by profession, or by election to magisterial positions. The urban upper echelons of society came to be a mix of people with very different histories. However, the need for proximity amongst each other, and for distance from the socially inferior urban population remained. Yet this now had to be done in a way conducive to the increasing disparity of resources, controlled by the urban elite. The *English gentleman* performed this task by showing his prosperity (rather than exorbitant riches), demonstrating refinement and selectivity in his attire and home, as well as with his pronounced ‘liberal upbringing’, courtesy and sensitivity (also

30 Black 2009.

towards the less well-off). The *English gentleman* is a product of a period of dissolution of traditional society and a need for a new order, which he helped to create.³¹

When the multi-ethnic Habsburg Empire neared its end, the Vienna Secession artists' group broke away from the Viennese court's official style of historicism. It addressed the fragility, morbidity and hypocrisy of the old system and proposed a new one. The oeuvre of Gustav Klimt, founding president of the Secession, exemplifies the agenda in its treatment of sexuality. Natural sexuality was taboo in official Vienna. In historicism, the naked female body was depersonalised and transfigured by mythological narratives, for example the figurine of Eve. Klimt's paintings replaced historicism's Eve with the Nini of the Viennese demimonde: with pubic hair as opposed to without, and with lively faces, his women show a natural sexuality, and therein, the artificiality of the official ideology. Klimt's work, revolving around the castrating *femme fatale*, grew from a time of an obsolete order, offering a new one containing natural sexuality.³²

Feminism was born from the fluidity of society and, in rejecting the traditional gender role, has itself contributed to it. The *New Woman* had to illustrate her new role within the world of objects. Smoking in public was one of her means. The *Marlboro* man of the second half of the 20th century was preceded by the 'Marlboro' woman in its first half: the modern, smoking woman, co-opted by advertising. Earlier, in Victorian times, the pioneers of the women's movement distanced themselves from women in their traditional role by rejecting impractical garb, with hoop skirt and corsage, repositioning themselves as trendy and fashionable. The Orient's stylistic inventory was ideally suited for this purpose, as it left the body with every freedom under a wide cover, also serving as a symbol for a simpler romantic life and women's natural beauty. The oriental style embodied these ideals well into the 20th century, promoting the ideology of the *New Woman*.³³ New objects – adopted as old ones from the Orient, but given new meaning – found their way into the world of objects of a society that had become more fluid.³⁴

31 Stobart 2011.

32 Néret 2007.

33 Rabinovitch-Fox 2015.

34 Indigenisation of objects from foreign cultures can sometimes be reciprocal in meaning, as the example of the armchair impressively shows (Cevik 2010). The growing predilection for the oriental in the Victorian West brought forth the Turkish armchair (Ottoman) in America, a thing given the term American-style in the Ottoman world, in response to its growing interest in the West. Not only can the same thing acquire a different meaning in different cultures (Coca-Cola),

The fluid society and its novel creations in the world of objects can also be seen in small details. *Hip hop*, a variant of the American black ghetto style, presents itself as a tough style for the hyper-masculine identity. Its dress code is gender-specific: head to toe, he is wrapped in wide, closed textiles – the mystified ‘big black dick’ is hidden in wide pants with a deep crotch. She presents her black body as the object of male desire in close-fitting attire. This hip hop dress code reflects the traditional division of labour in Western mainstream clothing: men hide, women show. Only since the 1980s did the man begin to wear close-fitting garb. First for homosexual wearers who began advertising the male body as a sexual object – a new opportunity in the course of sexual liberation. The *o/+consumption* of the hip hopper’s wide pants and the homosexual’s tight jeans produced, in the simplest way possible, the distance and proximity that the prudery of the male hip hop identity was in need of. However, that liberation also created a new audience for hip hop music, rejecting the examples of the old prudery. Some rappers began adapting their garb to this audience, their tight pants now becoming an irritation for the traditional hip hop identity. The fluidity of (American) society thus created the necessity and the opportunity for a stylistic differentiation within hip hop, between traditional hip hoppers and, from their point of view, the ‘emasculated’.³⁵ Distance within all of hip hop increased with it.

Occasionally, objects are exported from one fluid society to another one. The European *refugee/pyjama style* is an example. The term refers to the neglect of etiquette and self-stylisation owing to necessity and to the bricolage of clothing under the pressure of a sudden flight. This style displays unpretentious comfort (plus sizes), second-hand appearance (faded colours), mid-length garments devoid of neckline, untailored, worn sloppily. It has already entered the Western mainstream. Fluidity of one society, Syria (war), brings fluidity to Europe (refugee crisis) and with it the necessity to restore order with new material for new social encounters. Today, not all refugees have arrived in European labour markets, but all are already productive in the supermarket of style.

The overall findings of this chapter are: the world of objects conveys social distance and proximity – distance between groups and proximity within groups. It consists of comparable and incomparable elements and subsets – of singletons, chains and trees, {◦, |, ⊞}. The key for the creation of social distance and proximity is a qualitative one, *o/+consumption*. It is through it that order in society is created. The fluidity of society creates the necessity for new material in the

but as the armchair shows, it can be endowed symmetrically with the meaning ‘from the (respective) other culture’.

35 Penney 2012.

world of objects. This way, a lost order in society is replaced by a new one. Now the question is how the world of objects obtains its ordering capacity.

