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Some comments on the historical role of *fetishism* in economic anthropology

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Abstract. Following an interdisciplinary approach going through the grounds of psychological anthropology, symbolic anthropology, sociology and ethnography, pursued with an historical methodology, in this paper we wish to argue about the role played by fetishism in economic anthropology and its possible applications. Anyway, what emerges is the primary importance of the occurrence of fetishism in the rising of human symbolic function.

Keywords: *fetishism, disavowal, symbolism, quality, quantity, number*

1. Introduction

Recently¹, ethnographic studies have gained an ever increasing role in modern marketing theory as witnessed by recent researches made along this direction or line: for instance, following a systemic approach, Finsterwalder, Love and Tombs (2015) have highlighted the importance and usefulness of the comparison between early societies and the modern ones, in this regard arguing that

«[...] at the risk of building a straw man, we ask two key questions: 1) are there any similarities between traditional tribes, the contemporary consumption tribes and service systems thinking? And 2) if this is so, what can we learn from the traditional tribal system that may help in our understanding of the system(s) in which the contemporary consumption tribe operates in? In an attempt to answer these questions we take a fresh look at the phenomena of consumer tribes by reflecting on the structures of a traditional tribal system, the Pre-European New Zealand Māori, to uncover tribal structures. We map traditional tribal systems against contemporary conceptualisations of the consumer tribe and service systems thinking and discover interesting parallels. [...] Findings of this research project reveal the parallels of Māori tribal and neo-tribal structures as well as parallels to current systems thinking and system levels».

Another line of research of ethnography lies in the area of ethnopschoanalysis and ethnopsychiatry (Nathan 1996; Conti and Principe 1989) which have been recently reconsidered, in some of its respects usefully applied to economy and social sciences, for example, by Kurasawa (2004), Cluley and Dunne (2012) and Kiarina Kordela (2013). For instance, following the abstract of her remarkable work, Kiarina Kondela advances a new interesting theory of *biopolitics* by first showing that the shortcomings of both Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben theories are due to the fact that they do not approach biopolitics as both an historically specific and a transhistorical phenomenon. On the basis of a synthetic reading of Karl Marx analysis of capital, labor-power and

¹ See (Arnould 2001), (Finsterwalder, Love & Tombs 2015) and references therein.

commodity fetishism, Spinozian monism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Claude Lévi-Strauss analysis of incest prohibition and the relation between nature and culture, Georges Bataille theory of religion and Étienne Balibar differentiation of state capitalism as the era of ideology as well as market capitalism as the era of commodity fetishism, Kiarina Kondela argues that biopolitical mechanisms are organized around the transhistorical prohibition of self-referentiality – a basic prohibition that constitutes the very precondition for any society to function. It then traces the concrete historical manifestations of this prohibition from archaic societies through the state and sovereignty to capitalism and its distinct phases. After showing that the primary referent of the prohibition of self-referentiality is the blood – as in the incest prohibition of archaic societies, that is, the interdiction of same-blood marriage symbolically interpreted – Kiarina Kordela essay follows the subsequent historical *transubstantiations* of blood through theocracy and sovereignty to state and market capitalism; it concludes by addressing the contemporary biopolitical need for a racism – defined, following Foucault, as the break between those worth living and those who must die – that is based on a radical reconceptualization of humans as immortal beings. We are very near to the methodological and philosophical line followed by Kiarina Kordela, but we will focus on some aspects concerning ethnopsychanalysis applied to economic anthropology, namely on the diachronic (i.e., historical) role played by fetishism in the early origins of some basic notions of economy, according to the perspective which puts into comparison ancient societies with modern ones, according to Finsterwalder, Love and Tombs (2015). Loosely speaking, any object – amongst which are assets, goods and merchandises – has a meaning depending on the symbolic order in force in a given period and relatively to a given social group, which may be characterized from a psychoanalytic perspective that may turn out to be useful also from a marketing viewpoint (as witnessed, for example, by the very recent and notable works of Robert Cluley and co-workers – see (Cluley and Dunne 2012)). In this paper², we start from a classical, historical consideration of fetishism as originally interpreted by philosophy until up the attempts to elementary understand it from a psychoanalytic stance which seems to be quite suitable to characterize the deep nature of this common human psychic feature. The *disavowal* mechanism³, introduced by Freud to explain fetishism and psychoses, is a basic defence mechanism against those painful perceptions that, counteracting with pleasure principle, do not allow to recognize reality or lead to an hallucinatory transformation of this to fulfil desire (Galimberti 2006); such a mechanism chiefly acts through two main subfunctions – one performing a symbolic task and the other having a fetishistic aim – which are complementary and inseparable of each other, and thanks to which it is possible to provide or assign a meaning to an intentioned object. As one of the main scopes of this paper, this latter meaning will be briefly examined just from an historical-economical viewpoint. In any case, in accordance with other our previous researches⁴, it turns out that fetishism plays a fundamental role in the origin of human symbolic function, as witnessed too from what will be discussed herein from a more properly economic stance. On its turn, the outcomes which will follow from this historical-critical discussion, notwithstanding that they more properly belong to symbolic anthropology, have too importance from an economic anthropology viewpoint as well as possible applications to marketing theory if one looks at the as much important role played by the possible deep symbolic meanings owned by commodities. Therefore, our historical analysis falls into that non-void region

² Which is an extended and improved version of the content of a previous communication (Iurato 2015a).

³ See also (Iurato 2013).

⁴ See (Iurato 2013).

given by the intersection between economic anthropology and symbolic anthropology, from which emerges, let us say another time, what fundamental role play fetishism phenomena in the rising of symbolic function, which is the most typical feature of human being, as above all highlighted by Claude Lévy-Strauss.

2. First Hall: Psychological and Symbolic Anthropology discourse

Amongst other things, the ethnographic and ethnological work achieved by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the late 1940s has played a central role in Symbolic Anthropology, as well as in the general history of culture. In particular⁵, he has pointed out the primary role played by the familial triadic structure in developing the symbolic function through the action of the *Œdipal phase*⁶ which gives rise to the so-called *symbolic order*, marking the crucial passage from nature to culture. Following Héritier⁷ (1979; 1988), the prohibition of incest, which has an almost universal feature and characterizes the overcoming of the universal Œdipus complex⁸, has opened the road to every form of social exchange, relation and reciprocity, so providing the primeval grounding for any further social and cultural extrafamilial organization and institution. Jacques Lacan has masterfully retaken these Lévi-Strauss' ideas in formulating his celebrated notion of *symbolic register*⁹ as a primary source for the *symbol* meant as the covering of a *lacking*, the only human reality for the absence, and centred on the dialectic pair *absence-presence*, so inaugurating the human *desire*, as distinct from the human (biophysiological) *needs*¹⁰, by means of a continuous desiring process of referring – a signifying chain – from a signifier to another signifier starting from a primary signifier (the *Name-of-the-Father*) and according to Roman Jakobson structural linguistics. According to Lévi-Strauss, already in the primary operation of cooking the food basically there is a human desire to subdue uncooked food to culture, so that also in the biological need of eating there is a symbolic intention. The food and its choice very often assumes the role of a kind of mark, as a social discriminant. According to Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas, the symbolic function precedes every human action and choice (Aime 2008). The constitution of the human subjectivity is possible only when the *Otherness* is recognized, through which to put in comparison own identity with the other one. Each

⁵ See (Borgogno & Tresso 1976; Ingham 1996). The intertwinements between psychoanalysis and anthropology are still flourishing and fruitful within the framework of structuralism and economic anthropology (Heald & Deluz 1994; Drach & Toboul 2008). Main common points are incest and aggressivity. The psychoanalytic anthropology tries to look for the triangular structure of Œdipus complex, considered to be universal, into the various and different cultures and societies, also considering the ones not having a conjugal family. The Œdipus complex plays a central and fundamental role in the structuration of personality and in orienting the human desire (Laplanche & Pontalis 1973).

⁶ Which, in its widest enunciation, comprises either the (Freudian) *Œdipus complex* (for males) from one hand, and the (Jungian) *Electra complex* (for females) from the other hand. The related *incest prohibition* is an almost universal principle, as also pointed out even by criminal anthropology and legal medicine (Vella 1989).

⁷ See also (Fabietti 2010).

⁸ Above all G. Rôheim, who inaugurated the psychoanalytic anthropology, has stressed the universality character of this complex, meant in a wider sense than the initial Freudian one. Also the ethology says us that in the animal reign there exist forms of incest prohibition, even more sophisticated than human ones (Nathan 1996).

⁹ That, with the *imaginary register* and the *real register*, provides the basic formal structure of human psyche and its dynamics (*psychoanalytic field*). The human being is subdued to the predominance and omnipotence of the *symbol* (Borgogno & Tresso 1976; Francioni 1978; Ingham 1996).

¹⁰ There is no other human need, besides the sexual one, for which human being cannot do without it. The sexual instinct is the only one which may have derogations with respect to its original ends, for instance by means of sublimation phenomena. The incest prohibition, as entailed by Œdipus complex, is the primary rule which will regulate sexual reproduction from a social standpoint, hence it will control sexual drive at a social level. The incest prohibition is the basic rule that assigns a first social-cultural order which warrants the maintenance of a social agreement and its cohesion (Bidou 1988).

child born in an undifferentiated and lacking state, mainly due to the constitutional anatomic incompleteness and to the prolonged mothering, so for restoring the traumatic separation¹¹ – which is need for becoming a single individual – from the symbiotic and pleasant maternal state¹², in the child arises the *desire* of something which he or she feels to be lacking and that may be obtained only through symbolic representations referring to the own *other* (the Ideal Ego instance) and the *Others out of self* (the Ego's Ideal-Super Ego instances) and not with a simple real object like in a need's satisfaction. This is the main gap, among other characterizing human being, between 'need' and 'desire'¹³, upon which, for example, Jacques Gomila has written an interesting essay (Gomila 1978; Roberts 1978). As early as the late 1800s, Freud distinguished between a somatic sexual excitation and a psychic sexual excitation in a suckling, the former very similar to a need whereas the latter should correspond to that desire that Freud designated with three main terms. But, what is truly important is stand out the distinction between the somatic and the psychic feature of a sexual excitation process, which gives rise to the desire. In this regard, Freud states that such a semantic variety is mainly due to the strong impulse with which the desire pushes to throw itself towards the future because it is a seek for a pleasure (*pleasure principle*) both in reaching the (desired) satisfying object and in realising the subject from all the obstacles which hinder such an impellent satisfaction (*reality principle*). This corresponds just to the overcoming of the Oedipus complex through sublimation, trying to convert primary process into secondary one. The latter is a necessary step mainly due to the prevalence of the *live instinct* (*Eros*) over the *death instinct* (*Thanatos*)¹⁴, to hinder¹⁵ the killing of the father and the coupling with the mother together with a consequent anxiety production, but however desiring always his symbolic death since the father is the main object that forbids the total and immediate possession of the maternal object, ardently coveted by the baby-boy; and, *mutatis mutandis* for the baby-girl. Therefore, the desire is a living tension¹⁶

¹¹ Due to the father action.

¹² Which gives rise to the so-called initial *maternal imago*, and from which, on its turn, will spring out the imaginary register of the child.

¹³ From a neurobiological viewpoint, this is also due to the homination deconstrainment of the rigid animal instincts, which has provided a major freedom degree to sexual impulse, with respect to the other needs (like hungry, thirst, and so on), increased either by the bipedalism process and by the sexual availability of woman throughout the whole of the year (Oliverio 1982). The sexual drive of cavemen was very strong (mainly due to the weakness of Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego agencies), entailing a quite violent and competitive behaviour due to the high hormone levels, which was gradually tamed with the increasing degree of civilization and socialization (Ego's Ideal-Super-Ego agencies), mainly through sublimation phenomena. These researches have also speculated that some *Australopithecus* species could have a monogamous status, and that social monogamy would be sprung out from attempts to contain male infanticide due to the main fact that, in an initial sexual promiscuity condition characterizing hordes, without a sure paternal figure who recognized the own paternity status, women weren't intentioned at all to continue nursing infants. Therefore, following, for example, the well-known F. Engels history of family, for a sort of connate life drive in which it was seen opposed the rising of family to the existing horde, cavemen started to form first familiar nuclei having a prevalent monogamy character which slowly moved towards patriarchal settlements. Furthermore, many of the subjects of the first cave's paintings were mainly occupied with women nudity, with a wide use of red pigments (like menstruation blood), so giving rise to first female worships having more a therapeutic-erotic's aim rather than a religious one, to alleviate anxiety and doubts of man (loosely speaking) about her or his desire. See (Opie et al. 2013; Schmandt-Besserat 1992) and references therein.

¹⁴ Which often operates through the *coaction to repeat* mechanism.

¹⁵ Through, for instance, *acting out* processes.

¹⁶ On the other hand, as early as H. Marcuse considered *Eros* as the essence of life, where a freedom space will allow the expression and sublimation of the *Eros* also at the creative and ludic level, trying to differentiate the own space from the collective one. Marcuse enunciates some original ideas on repression and the social emersion of the removed material through projection, in the society, of what had been early introjected. Also W. Reich, as well as the Frankfurt school of Th. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, E. Fromm and others, dealt with possible intersections between Marxian theory and Freudian system towards a dialectic materialistic view.

springing out from the incest interdict which either undergoes to a symbolic fulfilling (sublimation¹⁷) or releases in non-symbolic things¹⁸ (*fetishism*¹⁹), this kind of bifurcation being made possible thanks to the action of the (Freudian) *disavowal mechanism* that J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis would want consider as a general human psychic mechanism Ego's splitting producing (Laplanche & Pontalis 1973). This is the early Œdipal origin of the human desire (ruled by pleasure principle) which will be then accomplished chiefly through symbolic transformations – above all by sublimation – of the primordial desires into conscious symbols hypostatized (through abstract reification²⁰) in social and cultural practices and structures (ruled by reality principle). The two complementary subfunctions (i.e., symbolism vs. fetishism) exerted by disavowal mechanism, are inseparable of each other and always present although in a different reciprocal ratio ranging from an almost full symbolic view with a net separation from reality (like in psychotic states) to an as much almost complete fetishistic evaluation and adhesion to materiality (like in perversions). Therefore, marketing theory might draw useful insights from the dual pair of these two psychic subfunctions (sublimation-symbolism vs. fetishism) which are complementary and inseparable of each other. Marketing theory should look therefore at the possible symbolic meaning that an individual surely attributes to a given (consumption) material object of human desire²¹ chosen as a fetish or however having a basic fetishistic meaning. According to Lacan theory, the psychic development performs according to four main stages: the maternal symbiotic phase, the mirror stage to reach the primary bodily unity, the Name-of-the-Father as representing the external world, and the desire to achieve – following Hegel – the ontological status with its various possible ontological declinations (Fossi 1983).

The Œdipal function is therefore nothing but a sublimation transformation closely connected with the crucial passage from primary process (ruled by pleasure principle) toward secondary process (ruled by reality principle), internalizing the Super-Ego normativity ruling libido through creation of social-cultural organizations and institutions which, meant as unconscious structures and hence undergoing to unconscious rules, allow a reciprocal communication among human beings otherwise impossible to have without supposing existing a common underlying comprehensive structure (Lévi-Strauss²²). A social agreement is not the objective result but rather the sign of an underlying unconscious basis. Thus, when the child accepts the Father law, and if this has previously been accepted by mother herself, then he or she is thrown into the symbolic net if and only if it is also present another fourth pivotal element, that is to say, the *Name-of-the-Father* (or paternal metaphor), which is a primary, irreducible founding and bounding norm stated and commonly shared by a given social aggregation (society, community, clan, and so forth), whose ethnographic origins should be traced into the primitive rites and customs, basically referring to the Phallus which symbolically lies at the irreducible primary basis of any further human hierarchisation or order

¹⁷ That is, a non-material culture.

¹⁸ In this respect, the overcoming of the Œdipus complex is quite different for males and females. In general, we might say that, very roughly and loosely speaking, for the former its overcoming in the positive [negative] form leads to symbolic [fetishistic] formations, while for the latter its overcoming in the positive [negative] form leads to fetishistic [symbolic] formations.

¹⁹ That is, a material culture.

²⁰ See (Collins 1980).

²¹ Not of primary need, like crude food and other, even if Lévy-Strauss himself pointed out even on the intrinsic and indelible symbolic meaning attributed also by primitive civilizations to the choice of food and its cooking fashions (Aime 2008).

²² Just upon the notion of unconscious structure according to Lévi-Strauss, relies a useful and fertile meet point between historians and ethnologists (Héritier 1979).

through a universal signifier (i.e., the Law-of-the-Father²³). It is reductive to see a simple triadic material structure into the Œdipus complex (and given by mother, father and child), because a fourth term always exists, namely a symbolic term which allows to identify and join the reciprocal position and role of each individual, as well as their relationships within symbolic register which allow them to communicate (Filloux 1996). In doing so, Lacan, by means of Lévi-Strauss, has casted another bridge between psychoanalysis and anthropology, recognizing the primary role played by the Œdipal function in establishing any possible social order through the intervention of a primary universal signifier – the Name-of-the-Father, or Law-of-the-Father – meant as a commonly shared and unifying element of the various triadic familial structures and individuals. In primitive societies, there is no conceivable sexual relations outside a social compromise or without a conjugal link: indeed, little by little a man and a woman have regular sexual relations, the social group to whom they belong starts to speak of a marriage. The procreation is unconceivable outside the marriage, whilst a sterile sexual relation entails the nullity of the marriage itself. The conjugal relation is at the basis of any other social level: in particular, man starts with the preparation of a land for growing crops by his future wife, and whilst she will work the land, he will go to fishing and hunting, according to the related archetypical meanings coming from primitive religious systems (see later). So, the sexual complementarity regarding familial work, will be the basis for the further economic reproduction of society (Bidou 1988), while this same division of the work between men and women has too a sexual meaning (Aime 2008). In every culture, the incest and its prohibition are closely related to systems of representations regarding the person, the world, the social organization and the reciprocal interrelations amongst all these three elements. In studying Nuer tribe, Evans-Pritchard (1963) refers that certain incestuous relationships (*rual*) may be then considered allowable only through rituals involving asset exchanges like jewellery, livestock, and so forth. Therefore, the incest has not to be understood as hindering exchanges, but rather as addressing and re-orienting them according to a certain order and a regulatory codex without which one would have a reduction of the exchanges and a closure of the familial nuclei. The exchange, therefore, is an indispensable and primary praxis for a social life and its maintenance²⁴. This exchange, according to Lévi-Strauss, operates upon three main basilar objects: *words*, *assets* and *women*²⁵. For Lacan, the Œdipus is a structure pre-existing to every individual life²⁶ because it has a dimension which transcends the familial novel that such a psychic complex will realize later; it acts to pull up the child out of maternal subjection through the intervention of the father who hinders the pre-linguistic aphasic reciprocity child-mother given by incest, introducing the interdict given by the Law-of-the-Father upon which the symbolic order just relies. The incest symbolism is based on the opposition between equality and diversity, while the incest prohibition breaks down the former to give rise to the latter, hence to the *Otherness*²⁷ (or *Alterity*), from which spring out many other forms of dichotomic and binary oppositions like human/barbaric, allies/enemies, and so forth, which characterize the basic ambivalence ruling human being²⁸. Incest symbolism and its interdicts,

²³ This might moreover explain the rising of ideologies.

²⁴ See also (Nathan 1996).

²⁵ See also (Nathan 1996).

²⁶ This is also confirmed by ethology, which contributed to build up Lacan theory (Laplace & Pontalis 1973).

²⁷ See (Iurato 2015b) and references therein.

²⁸ From this primary opposition arises the kinship system, hence any other form of binary opposition, like, for instance, 'bad' and 'good' (social) group with which one has respectively to fight and to exchange. As we have said above, from this basic opposition spring out systems of kinship relations, hence primary systems of thought ruled by a certain logic of exchange which basically relies on binary opposition. To pursue this, human psychic apparatus needs to make use of

is not necessarily linked with properly genealogical consanguinity²⁹, but rather assumes a logical, syntactic link that joins together various different representations: the representations of the person, its parts and relationships, the genealogical and parentage representations, the representations of kinship, the representations of the external world, the representations of the social order, altogether considered with respect to the biological individual. All these representations are based on the *exchange* and *movement* of many fluxes having various nature and order, which demand to be regulated. Only in such a manner, a society may arise (Héritier 1988). Moreover, the incest interdict prohibits either ‘near relations’ (e.g., inside nuclear family³⁰) and ‘far relations’ for example between geographically far social groups, mainly to preserve the given social group itself both internally and externally (Bidou 1988; Nathan 1996). On the other hand, according to Maurice Godelier, in primitive societies it is often impossible to isolate the functioning of production manners from the kinship relationships³¹; thus, with Godelier, there is a functioning similarity between production manners (determining the infrastructure) and kinship rules, similarity which puts the latter at the early foundation of a social group.

From the 1910s onwards, within his second functional topic of human psyche given by the well-known three psychic instances *Ego* (consciousness), *Super-Ego* (normativity) and *Es* (instinct’s realm), Freud³² began to consider deeply the structure and interrelations of the first two; with the work *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (of 1921), he alluded to a first dual structure of the Ego, distinguishing an *Ego’s Ideal*, corresponding to the Super-Ego, from an Ideal Ego, mainly having a narcissistic source, even if Ideal Ego and Ego’s Ideal were considered as synonymous of each other by Freud himself. It was H. Numberg, in 1932, to distinguish these latter psychic agencies, then D. Lagache and J. Lacan since the 1950s, with a clear distinction between an Ideal Ego, having a narcissistic character due to the primary child identification with the mother for giving rise to the *imaginary* register as place of the *other*³³ (*o*), and an Ego’s Ideal-Super Ego system which presides to the normativity, so attending at the symbolic function and allowing the establishment of the interpersonal relationships with the dawning of the *symbolic* register as place

a basic opposition like, for example, the one provided by the splitting between *good* and *bad object* (d’après Melanie Klein, Joan Riviere, Susan Isaacs, and others) (Nathan 1996).

²⁹ The anthropology considers the incest prohibition as mainly ruling social exchanges in regard to the so-called social-cultural kinship (like social classes, and so on), while psychoanalysis considers the incest prohibition as ruling sexual relations in regard to biological kinship. On the other hand, certain societies by us considered to be wild (like African ones), do not confine incest only to biological kinship as mainly made by so-called modern societies but also in regard to social-cultural kinship: for instance, they consider incestuous also those relations between members belonging to the same club, association, congregation, brotherhood, social class, and so forth (Nathan 1996). It is important, therefore, to put attention to these different levels in which incest prohibition may explicate.

³⁰ In this case, the incest prohibition properly refers to psychoanalysis. Therefore, in this last sense, it is also possible to consider the anthropological viewpoint of incest prohibition as wider than the psychoanalytic one, because the former comprises an interdict related to either ‘near’ and ‘far’ relations. In any case, the genetic argument for incest prohibition seems to be not valid from a deeper ethnoanthropological analysis, as has been already claimed by Lévi-Strauss himself ever since the 1940s and as the recent ethnopsychanalysis conclusions sustain as well (Nathan 1996). In short, the societies seem to establish such a rule (i.e., the incest interdict) independently from any psychological and genetic law or consideration; furthermore, the cultural definition of incest, to be efficacious just from a social-cultural stance, must depart from any psychological and biological datum.

³¹ See (Fabiotti 2001).

³² See (Iurato 2013).

³³ By means of the *mirror stage*, the other (*o*) takes place mainly through an initial identification with an own bodily integration of the initial distressing disaggregation condition in which the child was born, enabled through the maternal imago.

of the *Other*³⁴ (*O*). The main psychic human development takes place from the dialectic and dualistic dynamics between the (maternal) Ideal Ego and the (paternal) Ego's Ideal-Super Ego system, hence from the dualism *O/o* which basically formalizes the Lévi-Straussian crucial passage from nature (*o*) to culture (*O*) by means of the splitting, due to the incest prohibition, operated by the action of the Father Law in breaking the symbiotic tie child-mother, so marking the as much crucial passage from the maternal *imaginary order* (*o*) to the complementary one, that is, the paternal *symbolic order* (*O*), and introducing the child into the symbolic net with the rising of the sense of Otherness (or Alterity). The Father names the child, giving symbolically her or his name together with the complex and variegated set of all its history, memory, legacy, tradition, myths and legends of her or his race, the sedimentations of the usual language, the ethnic background, the social-cultural environment until up the related ancestral past. Following (Iurato 2013), the dualistic, dialectic and inseparable interaction between the (maternal imaginary or fetishistic³⁵ *o*) Ideal Ego and the (paternal symbolic *O*) Ego's Ideal-Super Ego system, hence between imaginary register and symbolic register, is mainly due to the action of the *disavowal mechanism* operating on the real register and whose essence is centred on the alternation *presence-absence* of the primary signifier, chief origin of the desire; roughly, following Freud, the child, on the one hand, rejects the reality through certain manners of behaviour, but not forbidding nothing to herself or himself, whereas, on the other hand and at the same time, he or she recognizes the reality danger, so assuming the anxiety as a pathological symptom, and trying then to protect herself or himself. Thus, this psychic mechanism – i.e., the disavowal – seems try to basically reconcile two opposite tendencies³⁶, above all to recognize and, at the same time, do not recognize the reality, but at the expense of an Ego splitting because, on the one hand, the fetish rescues the Ego creating a defence against the painful recognition of the childhood trauma and the consequent distressing threatens of personality disaggregation just due to this recognition, whereas, on the other hand, the fetish threatens the occurrence of an Ego's loss because subdues Ego itself to the predominance of the fetish. So, the synthetic function of the Ego is perturbed, with a consequent shattering of the Ego³⁷. The fetishism entails the creation of a unitary childhood's imago from experiences and features belonging in two different contexts, namely the Self and the object. Indeed, the psychic mechanism of disavowal was many times invoked by Freud to explain fetishism and psychoses, that later, around the late 1930s, he suggested to be at the basis of psychotic disorders as entailing an Ego's splitting when, in the child, a basic conflict arises, namely between a demand of sexual drive (*Anspruch*) and the objection (*Einspruch*) moved by reality, and with respect to which he or she

³⁴ In which the signifier chain will develop from the primary signifier, the *Law-of-the-Father*, through the mechanisms of the metonymic asynchronous concatenation (i.e., displacement) and of the metaphor synchronous selection (i.e., condensation). Each signifier, then, will tie with the signified through *anchoring points* individually assigned to give rise a signification. Signifier and signified are into a coalescence state in the imaginary register, disjoining in the symbolic register through which takes place every possible form of human exchange. Everything which is out of these two registers, i.e., which cannot be neither imagined nor symbolized, belongs to the *real* register, linked to the anguish, suffering, death and sexuality dimensions, hence ruled by life and death drives; in it, there is the unthinkable, the unimaginable, the ineffable, the impossible, the enigma, what is still to be discovered, the place of the symptom, which may be known only through the symbolic order in dialectic and dualistic interplay with the imaginary one (Richardson 1990; Fossi 1983; Roudinesco 1993).

³⁵ This is coherent with what has been said above in regard to the coalescence between signifier and signified at the imaginary register level, because one of the main features of fetishism is just the confusion between these two characteristic aspects of the symbol, above the absence of the signifier function (Valeri 1979, 1999).

³⁶ Which is one of the main features of symbolic formation.

³⁷ The recent psychoanalytic trends are even more oriented to suppose, in any case, a splitted and multistructural nature of the Ego (Sasso 2011).

does not opt for one or the other but choosing both coherently with the complementarity of the two main psychic subfunctions (namely, symbolism vs. fetishism) arising from the action of the disavowal mechanism. This situation, however, is closely related to castration anguish for man and to penis envy for woman³⁸, hence to the Œdipal phase, and is quite analogous to the one delineated above with regard to the action of the Œdipal function in ruling the desire, above all in the clear Lacanian framework previously delineated in its main elements and points, hence in relation to the formation of the ratio *O/o* formalizing the crucial passage from nature to culture³⁹. Lastly, we recall in passing that, among other things, the Lacanian theory provides one of the possible frameworks in which coherently laying out the different notions of incest interdict understood from either the anthropological and ethno-psychoanalytic standpoints (Nathan 1996).

3. Second Hall: Economic Anthropology discourse

First forms of internuclear social agreement go back⁴⁰ to the birth of the first forms of agricultural practices, namely around Holocene epoch, thanks to the rising of domestication practices. It is presumable that man appeared in lower Palaeolithic period, approximately 2.5 million years ago in Africa, during which a slow but constant social-cultural development took place. First sacred (hence religious) experiences may be traced in rituals occurred since high Paleolithic, and mainly having either a funeral and cosmological nature. However, there are different hypotheses on the origins and nature of religious phenomenon: amongst these, the sociological one⁴¹ seeks in it a first attempt to comprehend and try to solve or, at least, mitigate, the related anxiety connected with the pragmatic and existentialistic problems of human societies, so that it had a prevalent institutional aim. From the point of view of anthropological functionalism, the religious phenomena cannot be disjointed from any other social and cultural aspect, so that it is very difficult to identify historical priorities within them. The set of all social and cultural structures might be considered as mainly due to the action of the Œdipal function sublimation-producing to symbolically satisfy human desire. The nuclear family is the main basic social structure since primitive era, which has preceded every other structure and institution due to its primary, indispensable and unavoidable biological functions to which it accomplishes. On the other hand, from an anthropological standpoint⁴², every religious phenomenon is basically characterized by an integrative and protective function; furthermore, aims and perspectives of religion are quite different from other possible types of practice, scientific and aesthetic intellectual activity, so that the related symbolic functions cannot be put into comparison among them simply because the symbolic activity of religion always and inevitably refers to a persuasive authority. Indeed, any religious system is not comprehensible outside the consideration of the relationships between power, authority and truth which, on the other hand, are the founding

³⁸ Which is that universal irreducible situation to which every psychoanalytic setting reduces (Dell'io 1994, item Penis).

³⁹ This Lévi-Strauss' stance might be further confirmed by the simple fact that, from a juridical anthropology viewpoint, the civil and penal legislations born just from the regulation of lawful and non-lawful human unions, kinships, marriages, and so on. Therefore, the history of social and cultural anthropology cannot be disjointed from the history of law. On the other hand, nowadays the interdisciplinary viewpoint is an unavoidable method to attain every knowledge's aim, that is to say, it characterizes the modern approach to any social and cultural discipline, above all for ethnological sciences (De Lauri 2013; Sacco 2007).

⁴⁰ See (Gupta 2004; Sacco 2007).

⁴¹ See (Monaghan & Just 2000).

⁴² See (Fabiatti 2010).

elements of any social structure having the nuclear family as an irreducible constitutive element⁴³, this being coherent with the main fact according to which every symbolic manifestation has always to be conceived inside a given social context, since the symbolic function is the main common feature of all human activities such as poetry, art, religion, myth, science and language⁴⁴. We agree with Lévi-Strauss according to whom the symbol precedes every human action (Aime 2008). The objects become symbols when they are settled and interpreted within a given social-cultural system of reproduction of reality thanks to which the social agreement has access. Thus, the symbolic value of a (symbolized) thing derives from its cultural sight provided by the insertion of the latter into a circuit of social relationships⁴⁵. Historically, first forms of symbolic function having a social valence came from environment, giving rise to a space symbolism which had not aesthetic aims only but, above all, a social end of agreement, membership and integration within the given community or clan, coherently, for instance, with what has been said above on the main features of religious symbolism: for example, it is well-known what primary role plays a church in accomplish such functions, that is to say, protection, integration and aggregation; likewise for architectural or urban symbolism, in which the archetypical sources play too a notable role⁴⁶. On the other hand, just every form of social agreement is always characterized by certain sets of relationships, hence exchanges, so that the notion of *exchange* is really a founding one from a sociological viewpoint, characterizing almost every human relation aspect, from religion (e.g., with human relationships to the sacred) to any other one. According to Lévi-Strauss, we may say that the real and chief aim of incest prohibition, from an anthropological viewpoint⁴⁷, is just the establishing of a cultural interdict which entails a *generalized exchange* and a *logic of exchange*, which are inaugurated with a *gift* or *present*⁴⁸ whose articulation of the various and possible interchanges gives rise to thought's general systems, that is to say cultural codices ruled by a certain logic, which are needed for the existence of any possible form of social agreement starting with primitive social contracts (Nathan 1996).

The first symbolic expressions⁴⁹ seem to refer to forms of astronomical and cosmogonic religions, through which human being tries to cast a bridge between Earth and Sky, seeing in the terrestrial realities images of the celestial ones, and continuously establishing comparisons between these two worlds. These symbols seem neither have any ordering form nor are linked to any clear phoneme or sound, except some rudimental phonetization always linked to ritualization practices; they are multidimensional symbols, non-linear ideographs in which the related idea association is plurivocal.

⁴³ See (Sacco 2007).

⁴⁴ See (Demarchi et al. 1987).

⁴⁵ We are at the bases of *symbolic interactionism* as due to G.H. Mead and H. Blumer. Symbols aren't interpretable but only present into a relationship among them (Sias 1997). Sias (1997) retakes a quotation by F. Creuzer, according to which every symbolics requires a holy interpret, coherently with what Umberto Eco states too, that is to say, that behind every symbolics there always is a 'theology' which has the function to legitimate it (Speziale Bagliacca 1999). Therefore, we may infer what primary role plays the semantic function into that inseparable ternary structure of the symbolic order, provided (at least, in linguistic context) by the tern {syntax, pragmatics, semantics} whose elements are into reciprocal, unavoidable and inseparable relationship of each other, and at the foundation of semiotic (Morris 1946).

⁴⁶ See, for instance, the meaning of certain architectural stylistic forms of Gothic buildings.

⁴⁷ Instead, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, the psychic functioning takes place with an inner interdict into the nuclear family which equally gives rise to a series of exchanges, like the language that only in human beings reaches its highest level and widest application. From this latter stance, Lacan has been the first to have successfully unified coherently the two points of view given by psychoanalytic and anthropological incest prohibition, hence provided a unified notion of exchange springing out from this interdict.

⁴⁸ Meant in its widest meaning: for instance, Lévi-Strauss says that society began with the gift of the sister to another familial group to gain a brother-in-law, and so on (Nathan 1996).

⁴⁹ See (Giannetto 2005).

Therefore, at this stage of symbolic function, we infer that the complex, non-linear, syncretic and multidimensional human thought runs by imagines. From the periodicity character owned by astronomical phenomena, as well as from their intrinsic geometrical manifestation, it derived first forms of proto-mathematics having yet a mythological feature in which seems that a recurrent motif is related to the triadicity character of divinity (on its turn, maybe derived from the triadic structure of nuclear family as basic social unit). Nevertheless, as we have already said, this first symbolism, notwithstanding will arrange the grounding upon which the next scientific thought little by little will grow up, had a prevalent mythological nature. From lower Paleolithic⁵⁰ period to about 20,000 years ago, the humans relied on hunting and gathering as unique ways to live until up about 12,000 years ago, when humans long last began to devise and make experience of a whole set of new and useful behaviours during the so-called *Neolithic Revolution*, amongst which deliberately grow crops and animals, including a range of domesticated animals and plants, so giving rise to first agriculture forms having a social valence⁵¹. At the same time, previous religious practices were implemented into this new human practices which, in turn, provided a more systematic and regular ritualization with sacrifices, so giving rise to sacrificial and ritual worships⁵². Accordingly, the same symbolic function enlarged its domain to comprehend not only celestial referents but also terrestrial realities, which both gradually were thus put together and into a reciprocal comparison. Therefore, the early cultural activities came from the implementation of previous religious experiences, which mainly had cosmological-astronomical vocations, into agricultural practices, so providing a more concrete character to the symbolic function itself, which was in a fully mythological stage. From that, the early forms of civilization, given by farming societies, arose during a period approximately comprised between 12,000 years ago and 5,000 years ago, whilst first forms of fairly sophisticated political, juridical and social organizations appeared in Mesopotamia as early as 4,500 years ago, with the rising of the private law from the advent of the notion of private property⁵³. The complex and variegated framework formed by religious practices as well as by arithmetical, geometrical and astronomical knowledge imbedded into the new social-cultural-economical-political structures and organizations, gradually will give rise, around 3,000 BC, to the phonetic-alphabetic writing which will replace the previous non-linear and complex symbolic thought by multidimensional images, with a linear, sequential and unidimensional logical-verbal linguistic thought which marked, so to speak, the epochal continuous passage from *mythos* to *logos*. Due to the connate gender physiological differences⁵⁴, women were little by little excluded by agricultural activities and were therefore relegated only to familial concerns, but, at the same time, introducing matriarchal

⁵⁰ Roughly corresponding to the geological epoch of Pleistocene.

⁵¹ The hunting *big game* of primitive societies led to the extinction of many animal species with a consequent paucity of food reserves, to which humans supplied only with the rising of agriculture and domestication (Rampa 2010).

⁵² The term 'worship' (or 'cult') is etymologically linked to the term 'agriculture'.

⁵³ Since early cavemen, first rudimental forms of private property existed, for example those given by a poor amount of little hunter's game gathered by a single individual (Rampa 2010).

⁵⁴ See (Goldberg 1973), where the author starts considering physiological aspects of our own being which make us male and female. His main thesis assumes that male dominance is deeply rooted in those unavoidable physiological gender differences between men and women. These physiological differences would also lead to cognitive and behavioural differences. This thesis therefore stresses the central importance of psycho-physiological factors, furthermore assuming that hormones influence the central nervous system, in turn influencing thought and action. This thesis therefore stresses too the central importance of neuro-endocrinological factors. Men respond to competition and threats with a stronger physiological response than women; moreover, men also respond to status and hierarchy in a stronger way than women. Historically, there has never been a society without hierarchy and status. However difficult may be to accept these theses, they yet have a background of crude truth. Also anthropology points out on the gender differences and their role in the social-cultural life of every time and place, considering them almost natural and unavoidable (Aime 2008).

elements in religious systems with a net distinction between patriarchal and matriarchal archetypes⁵⁵: to be precise, the first were correlated with terrestrial divinities symbolizing the virile force, whereas the second were correlated with celestial divinities symbolizing the creation. Nevertheless, the patriarchy gradually prevailed upon almost every form of human activity, so giving rise to authority and hierarchy. Ever since primitive era⁵⁶, there was however a *continuum* of modes of exchange of assets, all referred to the reciprocity category, which ranged from the altruistic gift to the balanced or selfless exchange, until up the with-profit exchange (Giannetto 2005).

Between⁵⁷ resources and authority, there has always been an indivisible two-way relationship. The former may be material assets as well as ideal needs⁵⁸. The acquisition and availability of any resource either material or merely symbolic can never be fully disjoint from the occurrence of some form of authority. The ethnography, above all after the pioneering works of B. Malinowski, comprehends many cases in which primitive or archaic societies make asset's exchange apparently void of any immediate economic valence or meaning: amongst these, the reciprocal exchange of costume jewellery which mainly had ritual nature⁵⁹. Moreover, it was also possible to identify a distinction between prestige objects and usual wear objects, the former being able to symbolically acquire the latter. Certain prestige objects even had a deep symbolical meaning linked to the personal history of the owner: for instance, the circulation of certain objects belonging to qualitatively different sets of assets or objects, called *spheres of exchange*⁶⁰, was also used for marriage ends; and when, for example, an asset or object overruns the given exchange sphere to which it belonged, then it will be in hold by an individual, so giving rise to the notion of private property. Barter between objects belonging to the same sphere of exchange were allowable, but not for objects belonging to different spheres of exchange; furthermore, according to Paul Bohannan (1959), the rising of money is closely related to the notion of sphere of exchange. Anyway, the main symbolical meaning of such exchange objects relies on that wide set of social relationships which they were able to give rise and to which such objects have been basically predisposed inside a certain social net, this confirming the chief social source of symbolic function, hence the close relationships with authority and power⁶¹. Therefore, besides their material nature, a deep symbolic valence was also owned by these objects, which went beyond a merely economic scope because thanks to them political aims or social prestige were reachable: an emblematic instance of this fact is provided by the birth of the concept of number with the rising of the notions of the categories of quality and quantity, as we will see later. The authority and power should be understood in its widest sense. Michael Foucault identified the deep unconscious nature of these latter, the implicit (or tacit) and pervasive occurrence of them, which often assume explicit forms of abstract reification (*hypostatization*⁶²) among the various institutions; Foucault, for example, said that the

⁵⁵ In this regard, see the various works of the psychologist and philosopher Erich Neumann.

⁵⁶ See (Rampa 2010) where, amongst other things, an interesting application of game theory is pursued in analyzing possible primitive economy sceneries.

⁵⁷ See (Fabiotti 2010).

⁵⁸ That is to say, having a purely symbolic nature. But, only in recent times a clearer and explicit distinction between material and symbolic resources has been recognized.

⁵⁹ The usage of human body and its parts as moral source and aesthetic expression is well-known in anthropology that points out its role in delineating ethic confines of every society (Aime 2008).

⁶⁰ See (Sillitoe 1991).

⁶¹ In agreement with Lacan theory.

⁶² Following (Collins 1980), the action of any social-cultural organization or institution, meant as ideological reified abstractions (*hypostatizations*), is always lastly reducible to the action of a restricted number of individuals with their

power is everywhere, embodied in ourselves. Therefore, the authority and power cannot be identified only in the various social-cultural institutions simply because otherwise the various primitive or archaic societies would not have had any form of social organization, that isn't. The authority therefore springs out naturally from the social relationships themselves, simply where there is some social agreement or community. In any event, the economic anthropology⁶³ states that at the early basis of every possible economic system there are, as has been already said above, the principles of *reciprocity-symmetry* (between kinship's groups), *redistribution-centrality* (authority) and *exchange-financial market* (supply and demand law), which are institutionalized principles embedded into every form of social agreement, and inside which various forms of economic relationships take place. Besides this, another basic aspect should be considered is the production process of the various resources, what is necessary and how we do for obtaining them. The first analyses of the production manners were due to Karl Marx, who identified three main elements involved in any production process, namely, means of production, manpower and production relationships. Roughly, the *means of production* are the raw matters and the involved knowledge and technology owned by a society in a certain historical moment; the *manpower* is the human energy involved in the production process, namely, the *work*; while, the *production relationships* are the various social relationships relating production means and manpower amongst them. The latter is the most important one, and has a chief diachronic feature: in primitive and ancient societies prevailed slavery as main production relationship, then, in medieval societies prevailed the feudal system, to reach later capitalistic societies in which appeared *salaried work*, with which the workers sale their manpower, that becomes *workforce* bought by capitalists like a merchandise underwent to the main laws of the market, above all the supply and demand one. Marx states that any economic asset incorporates many and various elements amongst which the three ones mentioned above, mostly the production relationships. Marx stresses the social conditions underlying the production of any resource and, above all, the corresponding symbolic meaning underlying it, pointing out the fact that, both capitalists and workers, consider the resource as something a priori given naturally in the last form in which it occurs, making the resource as a fetish even if it is rather the result of a particular and historically social mode of production.

The economic anthropology has studied the forms of economic life of archaic societies starting from the works of Polanyi and Marx. The domestic communities analyzed by C. Meillassoux, as well as the so-called *vernacular societies* of S. Latouche, have shown how social relationships may influence economic activities of these agricultural communities. Indeed, due to the fact that in these social agreements where the authority was held by ancients and in which the only resources which could be regulated were the women ever since there was an equal free access to the various means of production (like land, tools, etc.), it follows that the control of women was the key-factor from which the power arises. Women, therefore, were the main resource thanks to which men could

concrete human aims and scopes, who gather power and prestige from the work of their subalterns. Therefore, because of their own ideological nature commonly shared by the constitutive elements of a given collectivity, there are no doubts that an intrinsic and unconscious structure underlying such social-cultural entities should be brought back to certain universal elements commonly but unconsciously (hence symbolically) shared by almost all the members of this agreement, which, ultimately, refer to a common but irreducible structure, namely the triadic familial nucleus as basic social unit. This is coherent with the notable structural anthropology ideas of Lévi-Strauss on the unconscious structures of institutions. Only in these very simple terms, we might understand a certain degree of temporal stability which has internally to characterize every human agreement, partial confirmation of this coming too from *human ethology* (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2001).

⁶³ Above all, after the studies conducted by Karl Polanyi.

become independent, forming a new nuclear family of the given community, so feeding the domestic cycle with which the power will be later transferred to the next generation of seniors. Clearly, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, this refers to the action of the Oedipus complex and its overcoming, as well as to its meaningful symbolic valence in ruling life and organization of an archaic or ancient social agreement. The materialistic influence of the production manners cannot be disregarded if one sees to what drastic changes the incorporation of domestic community economic system (*affection's economy*) by capitalistic one (*value's economy*) has brought to the nuclear family structure⁶⁴; the capitalistic system has gradually incorporated the former, devaluing the principle of symmetry-reciprocity on behalf of the redistribution-centrality one, with a penalization from the social-cultural wellbeing standpoint of the little communities involved in such even more incorporating and globalizing process. From an ethnographic viewpoint, it turns out that almost every attempt to modify a well-established economic framework of a given autonomous social agreement without taking into account the related social-cultural roots upon which it relies and depends on, has led to a failure. Furthermore, the introduction of new agricultural techniques has deeply changed the structure itself of social relationships both internally (in regard to the relationships between members of the same group) and externally (in regard to the relationships between members and the environment of production, like land, fauna, flora, etc.); for instance, in certain archaic societies, the agricultural practices were closely and inextricably linked with a series of ritualistic representations which have as main reference point the land, considered as a living and generating organism. In short, society, rituals and productivity are closely interconnected amongst them. In particular, the farming cultivation and crops have a precise meaning in dependence on the related seeds, so when new techniques proposed hybrid seeds, they felt an increasing weakness predominating over their social-cultural context which was so strong and ruled by reciprocity-symmetry principle which warranted a compactness and a solid social agreement that went even more lost as these hybrid seeds taken upper hand, so giving rise to an individualistic and disaggregating market logic (like in mercantilism), turned towards personal money accumulation, with a consequent drastic change in the social relationship sphere. At the same time, the new agricultural trend seemed to have modified as well the ritualistic modalities with which themselves relate with nature: for instance, we attend to the passage from the sacredness of farming cultivations to the contempt of the hybrid seeds, whilst, as regard propitiatory rituals, whilst before the land was the main object of these rituals, now we see a gradual transfer of propitiatory offerings to the new technologies, like water holes, motor pumps and so forth, decorating them with coloured ribbons and flowers. At the same time, modern economists have not seen what deep symbolic meaning there was in certain behaviours of archaic and primitive societies, which were summarily reclassified as non-economic or however disadvantageous, like shell out many money in sacred rituals⁶⁵ amongst which many patron feasts and ancestor commemorations. The recent anthropological thought, instead, does not see a kind of economic irrationality in these collective behaviours, but rather the symbolic need to satisfy a desire considered as primary to be fulfilled to reach a certain purpose. Therefore, it would be the social-cultural codex of a certain society, in a certain period, to establish what is rational or not, even if a great problematicity arises from the rationality's notion itself: for instance, in anthropology, it is well known what drastic change of value, from merely symbolic to

⁶⁴ See (Fabiotti 2010).

⁶⁵ These customs, however, are still widespread in many localities of South Italy in which folkloristic and religious traditions are still well-rooted and alive into the social tissue.

economic one, undergo many tribal art objects when these are put into a given circuit like museums and antiquarians⁶⁶.

4. Third and final Hall: the rising of *quality* and *quantity* categories, and all that

Coming back to Marx, we would like to highlight some points of his thought which may turn out to be useful to shed further light in the origins of symbolism. Indeed, in (Iurato 2013), we have already stressed the possible role played by disavowal mechanism in the rising of symbolic function, just starting from elementary mathematical context since we think that history of the early mathematics may turn out to be also useful to study origins of symbolic function. On the other hand, for what has been said above, further ethnographic considerations concerning proto-history of mathematics might likewise to be useful to further confirm or corroborate this hypothesis. Exactly⁶⁷, the history of the truly early stages of the mathematical thought dates back to Paleolithic period. The first attempts of counting going back to Neanderthal men and their ritualistic practices so that the general anthropological context cannot be avoided in history of mathematics. Since 50,000 years ago, humans were able to make paints which shown the reaching of a remarkable geometrical esprit, so it seems that spatial-visual skills and abilities had to precede the advent of the first primordial rudiments of elementary arithmetic operations. The historian of mathematics Dirk Struik pointed out that the first valuable progresses in counting taken place with the rising of agriculture practices, that is to say, with the so-called *Neolithic revolution* which was also characterized by an improvement of the geometrical insight. But, the recent history of mathematics has gone beyond, thrusting until the night of time. Indeed, on the basis of the important work of the archaeologist Denise Schmandt-Besserat⁶⁸, the first explicit numerical counts date back to about 8,000 years ago, when the first agricultural settlements appeared in the Near East, where the climate and land conditions were the most favourable ones for the related practices and crops. The performances of these counts were possible thanks to ovoid shells (like Nuzi's one, or the so-called *bullae*) containing clay balls as tokens and upon whose surface there was a key-legend of various objects and things mainly referring to agricultural context, hence having a practical counting purpose like a sort of primitive ledger. Nevertheless, there still was a strict connection (that is to say, in modern words, a bijective correspondence) between the type of tokens and the type of what they stand for. In Neolithic period, we have an autarchic economy based on barter where the so-called *surplus* wasn't necessary to be pursued, because any familial nucleus just produced the right necessary to be self-sufficiency for itself, and this is the condition to which has to satisfy every familial nucleus. With the metal ages, instead, the first work's specializations arose, so that the economy underwent new laws and rules, with a consequent new social-cultural organization forced to produce a surplus to maintain those people who are assigned to jobs not producing any primary asset. Accordingly, a new social consciousness arose, together with a civic sense, just thanks to this new economic system mainly based on metal manufactures; this, furthermore, taken place above all in the regions of Mediterranean basin, differently by other areas in which still persisted an autarchic agricultural economy because no came out from stone age. From a relatively parasite state,

⁶⁶ In this regard, see also (Graeber 2001).

⁶⁷ See (Israel & Gasca 2012; Struik 1981; Bagni 1996) and references therein.

⁶⁸ She mainly states that with symbolic function started human culture. The unique archaeological findings in our own, date back to Neanderthal man of Mousterian epoch, as late as 60,000 to 25,000 BC (Schmandt-Besserat 1992; Israel & Gasca 2012).

gradually human being became sedentary producer, entailing deep changes into the social-political settlements (Aime 2008). This is an incontrovertible prove how economic context influenced, and still influences, the various social-cultural organizations, also in agreement with the cultural materialism of Marvin Harris as well as with Marxist anthropology trends. All this also contributed to renew the countable system itself, with the invention of new counting tools which replaced the previous ones based on an exact two-way correspondence between tokens and assets⁶⁹, until up the invention, ca. 4th-century BC, of clay tablets in which, for each quantity of a certain merchandise, a specific ideographic symbol (sign) was appointed in relation to the *quality* of this merchandise together another symbol which denotes the *quantity* of this asset. Thus, we have a crucial and epoch-making distinction, although still implicit, which wasn't there before, that is to say, the implicit categorical distinction between *quality* and *quantity*, with the use of an abstract symbol, called *number*, to denote the latter independently from the former; the next explicit distinction between these two categorical notions will be then given, for the first time, by Aristotle, around the same period (4th-century BC). Therefore, in these new clay tablets, an abstract *numerical symbol*, quantity estimating, is appointed to another distinct sign rigidly referring to the quality of a given asset, the former being determined by precise ratios arising from the comparison amongst different sets. This phylogenetic origin of number, basically springing out from the reciprocal comparison between sets of different elements (assets, merchandises, etc.), is well-known either from an historical viewpoint⁷⁰ and from those ontogenetic viewpoints which would want to identify, in such a comparison procedure, the really early origins of the concept of number in children (like, for instance, did Jean Piaget). Nevertheless, we have reconsidered this fact to highlight other possible perspectives. Firstly, it seems that the first explicit expressions of human abstract symbolic function should be referred just to the rising of numbers because the history of mathematics says us that the emergence of number marked the birth of symbolic thought in close relation with the development of writing (Israel 2011; Israel & Gasca 2013). Also the economist Adam Smith said that numbers were the first abstract ideas that human mind could able to imagine (Struik 1981). Secondly, from all that, it also follows that the writing would be sprung out from countable reasons and not for representing a discourse. Thirdly, from an historical viewpoint, humans started to represent objects and their number, in a very concrete manner and in its simplest form, that is to say, through other more suitable objects able, by a nomination act, to better accomplish this representation function, by means of a concrete bijective correspondence. Later, along a phylogenetic order, this realistic representation gradually will replace real objects with graphical denotations whose sets⁷¹, put into reciprocal comparison, will give rise to a more abstract degree of representation replacing a set of certain objects with a unique symbol denoting their possible common quantity (number), while a phoneticism will denote the type or quality of the objects. Therefore, with a common origin, language and number seem to be sprung out at almost the same time – according to Schmandt-Besserat's theory – but then following two independent ways, and this because either stimulated by

⁶⁹ For instance, in the case of ten ewes, we would have had ten distinct tokens, each token specifically denoting a single ewe.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, (Giusti 1999).

⁷¹ In passing, we recall that the origins of the term related to the usual unknown x (ics) is referred to a 'thing', a 'quod'.

the same tension (due to human desire) towards symbolic abstraction⁷² which pushed upon an initial undistinguished mix between these two chief categories, i.e., quality and quantity.

Now, from what has been said so far, this latter phylogenetic evolution which has led to the crucial separation between the categories of quantity and quality, is inseparable from the historical changes regarding the given social-cultural conditions, in turn depending on the economic settlements of the given period. Therefore, it seems not fully meaningless to claim attention on the possible dialectic-materialistic influence of economic systems on the birth and development of this symbolic abstraction process through the rising of number, essentially given by the above mentioned crucial separation between the two chief categories of *quality* and *quantity*, and that, at the same time, has marked their rising. Therefore, from this stance, we may ask: what might have been the reasons of this crucial bifurcation for the dawning of symbolic function? In this regard, we go back again to some further aspects of Marxist thought system, after having flashing out some points of ancient history of economy, mainly Plato and Aristotle works. The Greek political and economical thought was always centred around *Polis*, considered to be the only possible agreement's form of civil existence as well as the centre of the whole human existence, so that a Greek philosopher was basically a political philosopher. Plato idealized what had to be a Polis, its idealistic model as moulded by the basic social unit given by patriarchal family (*gens*), in his celebrated work *The Republic*. As regard economy, Plato pointed out the division of work and the symbolic meaning of money which mainly refers to the exchange. Aristotle, instead, carried out an analytical account of social-political systems, with a view towards economic sociology, in his celebrated *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle worked out too an his own economic theory on human needs and their satisfaction. He also established a theory of money essentially opposed to the previous one provided by Plato. Aristotle worked out the first distinction between *use value* and *exchange value*, the latter partially depending on the former. On the other hand, the explicit Aristotelian distinction between the two categories of quality and quantity was outlined in the first book (according to Immanuel Bekker classification) of *The Organon*, but because of it is very difficult to give a temporal priority within the wide Aristotle corpus, we cannot establish a temporal ordering within it, so there is uncertainty about the evolution of the categories of quality and quantity according to Aristotelian thought. In any case, as we have seen above, a certain distinction between the two categories of quality and quantity already implicitly differentiated ever since 4th-century BC with the rising of the concept of number, hence shortly after explicitly identified by Aristotle. Therefore, a deeper historical examination of the possible role played by the rising of the concept of number in the Aristotelian distinction between the two categories of quality and quantity, should be useful. Also Aristotle argued that the existence itself of a society mainly relies on the exchange of assets, goods, services or merchandises, starting with the consideration of first forms of exchange given by direct and indirect barter, later ruled by first normative systems. Hence, he argued on the possible use of metals (above all gold and silver) to perform such exchanges, also thanks to their specific properties like homogeneity, divisibility, transportability, relatively stable value, and so on. In such a manner, the various means, norms and customs established to ruling such exchanges were being used little by little also to estimate the value itself, so implicitly recognizing what possible stock value could have the exchange means themselves. Therefore, according to Aristotle, the money was

⁷² Which seems to be supported by a previous predisposing intuitive visuospatial skills which should be meant already existing before any other possible next symbolic function development. This is also coherent with the main mechanisms underlying consciousness considered by S. Dehane, amongst which are those just related to vision.

(often tacitly) meant as mainly having an exchange function but, to accomplish this, it must have too the same nature of what is exchanged, that is to say, it must be too a good, an asset or a merchandise: to be precise, about Aristotle's theory of money, Schumpeter (2006) states that

«Essentially, this theory embodies two propositions. The first is that, whatever other purposes money may come to serve, its fundamental function, which defines it and accounts for its existence, is to serve as a medium of exchange. Therefore, this theory belongs to what Professor von Mises has described as “catallactic” theories of money (to exchange). The second proposition is that in order to serve as a medium of exchange in the markets of commodities, money itself must be one of these commodities. That is to say, it must be a thing that is useful and has exchange value independently of its monetary function – this is all that intrinsic value means in this connection – a value that can be compared with other values⁷³. Thus the money commodity goes by weight and quality as do other commodities; for convenience people may decide to put a stamp on it in order to save the trouble of having to weigh it every time, but this stamp only declares and guarantees the quantity and quality of the commodity contained in a coin and is not the cause of its value. This proposition, which, of course, is not either identical with the first or implied by it, will identify what we shall henceforth call Metallism or the Metallist Theory of Money in contrast to the Cartal Theory of which Plato's is an example».

Therefore, as concern any possible good or merchandise, Aristotle⁷⁴ was the first to explicitly study, on the basis of a theory of money, the formation of the good's value, pointing out the distinction between *use value* and *exchange value* on the basis of an historical recognition of the previous economic systems and monetary theories. According to Aristotle, roughly speaking the *use value* is an intrinsic feature of the given good and it is linked to the nature itself of the good; the *exchange value*, instead, is a common feature present in every good which accomplishes to exchange functions between different goods. Aristotle makes this distinction to legitimate the first forms of good exchanges, first of all the barter, meant as the first and most natural manner of commercial activity; instead, the later human commercial and economic activities will have a more factitious character, formally represented by the first money theories, so giving rise to monetary economies whose early origins date back ca. 1,500 years ago with the rising of first forms of social-political organizations. Nevertheless, ethnoanthropological studies show that, since primitive ages, first rudimental forms of a good-coin existed, which often could have not only an economic mean but rather a ritualistic and ceremonial one related to relationships between distinct exchange spheres, having a prevalent social tie scope with a more personal meaning in respect to the modern impersonal feature of the next monetary systems where coin gradually will acquire a prevalent treasurization aim and a value unity measurement meaning. Therefore, coin has historically undergone a truly complex re-semantization process, starting from certain objects and goods whose intrinsic nature allowed to perform such a function of intermediary exchange's mean, until metallic coins of mercantile economies recognized within a given local social-cultural context and that will lead to first forms of organized political economies. In any case, during the crucial passage from

⁷³ This is nothing but a prolegomenon of a fetishistic theory of money, in its rudimental form.

⁷⁴ See (Majorana 1926) as well as the well-known St. Thomas Aquinas commentaries to Aristotle's works (above all, the *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*).

stone age to metal age, coin gained a more economic meaning with the introduction of metal coins as a *real money* which later will be distinguished from the so-called *imaginary money* having a mere symbolic function devoid of any material metallic content and exclusively arranged as a mere value measure and suitable neither to exchange ends⁷⁵ nor treasurization aims, distinction that practically will disappear in the 18th-century. The above Aristotelian distinction between use value and exchange value will then lead to the well-known *paradox of value*, first explicitly approached by F. Galiani⁷⁶ long before 1776 A. Smith attempts, which arose from the failed previous attempts to explain value by means of utility.

Approximately, the *value* of a commodity (i.e., good, resource, merchandise or asset) refers to the quality and quantity of other commodities with which the unity of a given commodity may be exchanged. After Aristotle, it is measured in monetary unities, and does not refer to the materiality of the given commodity. As has been said above, Aristotle was the first who explicitly distinguished two main types of values, that is to say, *use value* and *exchange value*, even if such a distinction should have been already implicitly present in previous theories. For our ends, we now overcome those authors who have, after Aristotle, made further investigations and studies on these central notions of value theory, like A. Smith, D. Ricardo, R. Cantillon and others, directly pointing on Karl Marx work⁷⁷. He retaken such a classification, considering the use value of a good as immediately perceivable in the good itself as inherent in quality's category⁷⁸, whereas the exchange value is considered as immaterial and perceivable only through relationships (e.g., exchanges) when a good acts as equivalent to another good, and inherent in quantity's category. Marx stresses the importance of this last equivalence's character related to exchange value, above all in relation to goods having different use values but amongst which it is more difficult to establish their equivalence or not. This latter operation, on the other hand, is also closely related with the one underlying the above mentioned crucial categorical bifurcation between *quality* and *quantity*, because it will allow to identify distinct sets of objects (e.g., goods), embedded into an exchange

⁷⁵ Or rather, it is also thinkable as a measure of virtual exchanges.

⁷⁶ In his 1751 celebrated work *De Moneta*, where, amongst other things, starting from previous works made by B. Davanzati (16th-century) and G. Montanari (17th-century), in a pioneering manner he, for the first time, introduced the notion of *marginal utility* just to solve this paradox. In such a treatise, first forms of the so-called *exchange equation* (which links together, through money, the exchange value with the amount of assets exchanged) may be traced, though also J. Bodin, around 1569, gave a similar formal expression. Such an equation will also receive attention by D. Hume in 18th-century and by J.S. Mill in 19th-century, while its definitive algebraic formulation will be given in 1911 by I. Fisher, so that it should be more correctly named *Davanzati-Galiani-Bodin-Mill-Hume-Fisher equation*. However, for a more complete historical view of the paradox of value, see (Ekelund & Thornton 2011) and (Ekelund & Hébert 2014).

⁷⁷ Following the survey paper (Valeri 1979), which is the main reference here followed. Valerio Valeri (1944-1998) has been a valid philosopher and anthropologist, prematurely died, who taught at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa and at the University of Chicago.

⁷⁸ Following textually (Perkins 2013), use-value refers to the *qualitative* characters of an object itself, i.e., its sensuousness, its material composition, and most apparently, its usefulness as a material object (e.g., a chair is useful for sitting on). Exchange-value, instead, refers to the *quantitative* matrix of exchange according to some magnitude of valuation (i.e., quantified social labour). While at first glance exchange-value appears as the quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use-values of one kind exchange for use-values of another kind. In Marx's formulation, a commodity's exchange-value does not come from its use-value, but instead through its value determined by the quantity of labour expended to produce it in a highly abstract sense as the total labour-power of society composed of innumerable individual units of labour-power. Therefore, exchange value is derived from socially necessary labour-time, or the labour time which is necessary on an average under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labour prevalent in that society. The only relation between exchange-value and use-value is that in order for a commodity to have an exchange-value, it must have a use-value for a future consumer. In a certain sense, the fetishism of commodities refers to the initial formulation of exchange-value immediately dismissed by Marx: that some quality of the commodity itself (i.e., use-value) determines the quantity of its value relative to other commodities (i.e., exchange-value).

circuit, qualitatively different but having the same *number* of elements, that is to say, quantitatively equal sets. This is, on the other hand, a well-known fact of the foundations of mathematics concerning the distinction between sets within the George Cantor framework (and dating back to the 1870s), that is to say, to be aware that two sets may be different when they have either qualitatively different elements or a different number of elements. One of the main points upon which relies the definition of (formal) *set* according to Cantor, is just the capability to distinguish its elements which must be determined in a very precise and exact manner, so introducing, besides the categorical notion of quantity, the anthropomorphic categorical notion of quality, even if such basic categorical notions were already known ever since Aristotle and before. Therefore, coming back to the above discussion, if the exchange value of a resource is independent from its use value, from its materiality – since it is immaterial – then, how can it may be apperceived without the intervention of something which acts as a signifier? Accordingly, it is just from the need to have something having a material nature as a ‘mark’ for this immateriality, that spring out all those ‘metaphysical sophistications’ of the resource which are nothing but *fetishistic deformations* of it but thanks to which it will be possible to apperceive its exchange value, inherent in its *quantity* (i.e., the number⁷⁹). Marx, on the basis of the thought of Kant and Hegel about fetishism⁸⁰, points out that it is just the fetishism to be at the foundation of the chief dialectics between material and immaterial, between use value and exchange value. The fetishism will give rise to a resource (e.g., good *B*) whose use value, its materiality, will be the symbol of the use value of the initial resource (e.g., good *A*) to which the former is put into reciprocal comparison, so that the materiality of the good *B* becomes the mirror of the use value of the good *A* (i.e., the *Wertkörper* of *B*).

For instance, let *A* be a given snip of *silk*, and *B* a *dress* made with it, so that the use value of the good *silk* is now expressed into, or mirrored by, the body of the good *dress*, so that the use value of a good (i.e., *A*) is expressed with the use value of another good (i.e., *B*), which are yet linked together by an exchange value given by the *work* needs for building up such a dress. Therefore, it is possible to think that both use values of these two goods are nothing but the manifestation of a unique substance, the *work*, that makes them reciprocally comparable and exchangeable. Thus, the exchange does not create use value, but manifests it which, at the same time, is also occulted in its real nature. Hence, such an exchange value, as a signifier, *symbolizes*⁸¹, through the *work*⁸², those equivalent use values (signified) owned by the two given goods put into reciprocal comparison and referring to quality category. In our case, the above dress of silk has both an exchange value given by its immediate perception of exchangeability, and a use value given by its materiality (e.g., given by the wellness of freshness, for instance, in a summer day). This enigmatic and multiply character

⁷⁹ This is coherent with what explained in (Iurato 2013) about some possible origins of symbolism and the related role played by fetishism, if one historically considers the *number* the first symbolic manifestation of human being (Israel 2011).

⁸⁰ In passing, Kant mainly considered fetishism as a kind of ‘magic religion’ thanks to which it is possible to acquire divine favour as well as to satisfy own desires. According to Hegel, fetishism is a form of primeval and spontaneous religion through which humans indirectly control nature by means of magic (i.e., through the fetish) for obtaining what they need and desire. For Hegel, fetishism reflects a particular transitional stage in establishing human relationships with the world and the nature, e.g., from an immediate sensory-motor attraction towards a work-mediated relationship, or from a worshipping natural object to investing them with a spiritual meaning (Abbagnano 1998).

⁸¹ Coherently with the main social nature which must have a symbol, also in accordance with the *symbolic register* in the Lacanian sense.

⁸² Marx states that it is the result of a *first level* (or *simple*) *fetishism* of use value, while a salaried work is the result of a *second level* (or *generalized*) *fetishism* money producing. The money therefore is a (second level) fetish, and this interpretation might be usefully put into comparison with the one provided by psychoanalysis, and vice versa.

inherent in the (simple fetishistic⁸³) pair snip-dress, which, in turn, refers to the dialecticity of the pair use value-exchange value, is lost if one looks at its extreme (generalized fetishistic⁸⁴) symbolization given by the *price*. The higher the fetishistic level, the wider the symbolization given by monetarization. It is through the second level fetishism, which gives rise to *money* (again meant as a fetish), that one can describe a wider quantitative equivalence between resources having different or heterogeneous use values, hence between qualitatively different resources⁸⁵, comparing the related involved *salaried work*, which is a social relation and is the result of a first level fetishism as a first degree manifestation of exchange value⁸⁶. The illusion of first level fetishism consists in a material value exchanging (say f , i.e., the workforce) between two resources (say $A \xleftrightarrow{f} B$) as a manifestation of an immaterial value (exchange value, i.e., the work) which is that common element between these two resources making them quantitatively equivalent of each other, along the exchange process itself. Afterwards, when we carry on with a second level fetishism, then it will be possible to enlarge this comparison, for instance between two different exchanges $A_i \xleftrightarrow{f_i} B_i$ $i = 1, 2$ as outlined above, through a *monetarization* each of them (operating on f_i), which takes place within a given social-political organization (so giving rise to a *political economy*) that, in turn, is historically determined (*historic* and *dialectic materialism*). The so-called *alienation* of the worker just acts on this last passage, while the (second level) fetish creation, *money*-producing, denies⁸⁷ a basic reality, i.e., the underlying social exchange relationship (already denied with a first level fetishistic production given by *work*), that may be mystified contrarily to money which is, instead, unanimously recognized. Therefore, Marx provides a two-level fetishism theory of the use value in which the various exchange relationships underlying among resources, goods or assets are nothing but a connate human attitude to satisfy needs and, above all, desire⁸⁸, coherently with what has been said above. This Marxian theory of fetishism has many common points with the Freudian one, above all the main fact that fetishism is characterized by either a denegation of a reality and a basic contradictory relation⁸⁹ with reality inasmuch it provides a *fictitious* representation of reality (e.g., by a neurotic, or by society) which nevertheless, at the same time, makes also possible a *true* (or tolerable) representation of it. On the other hand, also the previous theories of fetishism, like those of Charles de Brosses and Auguste Comte, recognize that a kind of fetishistic synthesis, although false in itself, expresses a true relation between natural and supernatural according to de Brosses, or between human and nature, as well as it realizes a first conceptual framework in which to lay out and classify the data of the various observations according to Comte. In short, almost all the fetishism models have the basic common idea according to which fetishism implies a union

⁸³ At first level fetishism.

⁸⁴ At second level fetishism.

⁸⁵ This conceptual pattern is similar to the one previously discussed in regard to the rising of numeric and numeral symbolism (corresponding to first level fetishism work) from the first implicit distinction between the two categories of quality (corresponding to use value) and quantity (corresponding to exchange value).

⁸⁶ Maybe, the above mentioned separation between *quality* and *quantity* giving rise *number*, dating back ca. 4th-century BC (and just overlooking Aristotle work), might too having been due to an economic phenomenology of this type, operating at an implicit level subsequently explicated by Aristotle himself. Nevertheless, this last historical conjecture needs for further deepening and examinations.

⁸⁷ Mainly in accordance with Freudian fetishism model based on disavowal mechanism.

⁸⁸ See (Baudrillard 1972).

⁸⁹ In almost every theory of symbolism, on the other hand, a basic contradictory, or dualistic, or oppositional feature is always present, and put at the foundation of symbolic production.

between something of human with something of non-human⁹⁰, between something animated with something non-animated, while the related fetish is either accessible (when it is material) and not accessible (when it has a symbolic nature), manifesting presence and lacking, is the recognition and the misrecognition of the residues of a given society which, therefore, are disguised. The accessibility, as well as the sense of power that fetish offers to the perverted, indeed hides her or his inability to recognize and accept the reality, the real essence, to avoid the traumatic anguish of such a recognition, but with a consequent, unavoidable fragmentation of the own Ego. Another common feature between Marxian and Freudian fetishism models, is the fictitious separation of a *part* (or *partial object*) from a *whole* (or *total object*): for Marx, it is the use value of a resource to be considered as a part (or an attribute) of a whole, i.e. the human work (first level fetishization of exchange value), which has produced it and incorporates it. This attribute, splitted or separated from the human substance (work) that has produced it, becomes a fetish. The work, according to Marx, is the essence of the species (*Gattungswesen*) of the human beings. Of course, nowadays these Marxian ideas⁹¹, in all their greatness, should be contextually re-interpreted just according to the intrinsic features of his materialistic theory, which is dialectic and historic, that is, it should be synchronously re-examined, because the true nature, or else, the real characteristic of history, is just to be materialistic, and the ethnoanthropological sciences confirm this. For instance, the capitalist is socially perverted since he or she overestimates, in the other, only those attributes which may turn out to be acquired by capitalist, that is to say, her or his workforce at first level fetishistic view, or else, the related commodity so fetishistically produced. This view might be extended or generalized, supposing, for example, that human being is basically perverted because almost always he or she sees, in every social relationship, only some aspects of the whole concrete totality of the *person* (not individual) or of the complex integrity of the *Self*. Often, fetishes are associated to what has an extreme residual moral status in a given social context, like the desire of power, vindication, and so forth.

Closely related to that of value is the as much important notion of *utility*⁹². In the history of economy, first traces of such a notion date back to the resolution of the *St. Petersburg paradox* by D. Bernoulli in the early 1700s, while, as said above, from attempts to solve the *paradox of value*, F. Galiani, in his 1751 celebrated work *De Moneta*, implicitly introduced the notion of *marginal utility*. Then, the so-called *marginalistic* school stressed the importance of the notions of asset's consume/use and *utility*, that every consumer or user may get. This school has made use of many psychological notions and laws for trying to define utility, even to be called *psychological* school as well⁹³. The *utility*⁹⁴, roughly speaking, may be defined as the degree of satisfaction aroused by the consume/use of a certain quantity of a given commodity. It is also possible to define utility as the attitude, true or alleged, of a commodity to satisfy a primary need or a desire (J. Bentham). In this

⁹⁰ Initially, fetishism was introduced to explain first attempts of primitives to represent nature, as well as to symbolize divine phenomena, through objects. Therefore, the usage of fetishes marked the birth of first primitive forms of culture as well as the first means through which relate with nature and represent it. In any case, the fetish, in general, does not belong to a well-defined class of objects since it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between its signifier and signified, its main feature lying in the fact that, only through its phenomenological manifestation, it is possible to descry its value which, nevertheless, remains quite omitted.

⁹¹ Independently of the limits of Marx's theory from a more properly economic standpoint, such a theory surely plays a certain role in human sciences. Indeed, it is undeniable that the social-cultural modes of being play a preeminent role in influencing human actions.

⁹² See (Samuelson & Nordhaus 2002; Schumpeter 1972, 2006).

⁹³ Not by chance, the psychophysical *Fechner-Weber law* was also used to formulate the notion of marginal utility.

⁹⁴ See also (Varian 2002).

regard, J. Fisher and Ch. Gide suggested to call it *desirability*, to highlight the essential subjective-psychological character of such a notion. The utility is also definable, following J. Bentham, as the capability of a commodity to give rise pleasure (desire) for cutting displeasure (anguish). The 19th-century economists spook of the overall wellbeing (or wellness) of an individual for defining utility, hence introduced numerical estimates of her or his happiness, so that they supposed consumers tried to maximise it. Therefore, just due to the links with human desire, they believed that utility could be measured through a cardinal scale, whereas nowadays it is known that only an ordinal scale may be used for estimating it⁹⁵. Indeed, great conceptual difficulties arose about utility and its attempts to quantify it, mainly due to the fact that a preeminent role is played by the possible choices of consumer, highly variable from an individual to another one. Therefore, it seemed more proper to consider *preference* as a chief parameter to estimate utility, hence using an ordinal scale rather than a cardinal one, until up to use an isotone *utility function* for ordering preferences. To estimate variations of the latter, it is need to consider three main types of utility in dependence on the possible quantitative subdivisions of a good in equal doses, so that we have a *dose* utility, an *initial* utility in reference to the satisfiability gained by the consume/use of the first dose of good, and a *marginal* utility in reference to the satisfiability gained by the consume/use of the ultimate dose of good. Moreover, the utility may be *direct*, when the need or desire satisfaction arises from the immediate and direct consume/use of the good, and *indirect* when the good provides other good having direct utility. There exist too some basic laws ruling the variations of utility in dependence on the variations of good doses, like the so-called *Jevons-Gossen laws*. The marginalistic school stressed the dependence of value on utility: for instance, the use value is simply the utility of a given good, hence meant as satisfaction's capability of an individual. According to W.J. Jevons, the economic theory is nothing but an estimating computation of pleasure and pain, meant in their psychological meaning, pointing out the primary role played by marginal utility in pursuing this. In passing, from what has been said above, first attempts to (unconsciously) use the notion of utility in doing preferences, might be linked to the early origins of formal ordering ability of human consciousness, since, as we have seen, the main formal feature of utility is just its ordinal nature. At the same time, we have also seen that a manipulation (also at unconscious or implicit level) of the notion of value, with its distinction in use and exchange value, would have led to the crucial 4th-century BC separation or bifurcation between the categories of *quality* and *quantity*, with the birth of first forms of symbolic abstraction provided by numbers, these categorical notions having been shortly after explicitly recognized by Aristotle. The pragmatic use, mainly carried on at unconscious level, of these notions of value and utility has, therefore, led respectively to the rising of early forms of symbolism, with the advent of numbers, as well as to the rising of ordering abilities, with the institution of a system of social choices or preferences. All that suggests⁹⁶ a prevalent *materialistic* origin of the fundamental, basic notion of elementary mathematics, that is to say, *number* and *order*, as basically sprung out from the early forms of human agreements and related social-cultural-economic activities. Following (Israel & Gasca 2012), it seems moreover that a kind of hidden (that is to say, unconsciously present or tacit) ordinal numerals preceded the rising of cardinal number concept, so that numerals first, second, third, and so on, preceded the rising of one, two, three, and so on; furthermore, ordinal numbers had a prevalent anthropomorphic nature, having being linked

⁹⁵ This measurement process being meant according to the well-known 1946 theory of scales (or levels) of measurement due to S.S. Stevens.

⁹⁶ In coherence with the related Piaget's theories if one considers the right ratio between a phylogenetic and ontogenetic development of human psyche at least from a psychological standpoint.

to concrete sets of things or individuals: for instance, as regard the first collective numerals, *duo* referred to a pair of persons, *trio* referred to a group of three persons, and so forth. From these unconscious ordinal numerals arose, after a long development process, (cardinal) numbers. In ancient languages and in primitive people without writing systems, there was a primordial sequence of the type «one, two, many»: for instance, in Wedda tribe of Sri Lanka, there only was a sequence of four terms for ordinal numerals, as «single, couple, one extra, many». In any case, also on the basis of a kind of *embodiment* origin of proto-mathematics⁹⁷, by a multiethnic comparison, it turns out that the number is an intrinsic human feature, as well as the language. Number sprung out, therefore, from the almost universal human need to consider and estimate sets of objects, hence from the connate tendency towards the account for the quantity of objects or things, so that number arose through the symbolic representation of such quantities, whose first manifestations historically occurred with practical, logistic and economic activities and concerns, in turn sprung out from *exchange* practices, the early foundations of any possible form of social agreement and cultural manifestation, marking the critical (Edipal) passage from *nature* to *culture* (d'après Lacan) as well as giving rise to that complex realm of *fetishistic* phenomenology to which it is very closely related, in an inseparable way, the human symbolic function as well, with the crucial although implicit separation between the two primary categorical notions of *quality* and *quantity* providing *number* meant as one of the first main forms of symbolism, to which shortly after followed the Aristotelian explicit distinction between these two categories together the first explicit recognition of the as much crucial notions of *use value* and *exchange value*, with the dawning of the social-economic thought.

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⁹⁷ See also (Iurato 2013) and references therein.

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