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Abstract

In this articleⁱ I will argue that trust is a fundamental and critical concept because trust is the direct or transcendental constitutive ground of most social phenomena, as well as applicable as an operational method in critical theory. There are two different but overlapping positions on trust I address in this article. One is the standpoint we find in business strategy, that trust is naïve to show, and control or contracts are presumed better. In the strategy game the idealistic good guys seems to lose (Arrow 1974), (Williamson 1975). The other position is the position taken by systems theory where trust is treated as if it was a value-neutral system-internal decision, which presupposes that trust and mistrust are symmetrically interrelated functionally (Luhmann 1979). In his early book *Trust and Power*, Niklas Luhmann seems to agree with the vision guiding my general argument that there is a need for clear directions and specifications in organisations and systems as to whether trust or distrust is appropriate and rational (Luhmann 1979:93). Yet I challenge these positions described above with an alternative understanding inspired by Jürgen Habermas which can be applied as an operational strategy for analyzing trust in its' empirical and social distribution, without ignoring the questions of validity in real social settings where trust is actively playing a direct or indirect constitutional role in the foundation of most interactions, organisations, institutions, and societies.

The Function of Trust

There is generally no disagreement that trust has a social function reducing the complexity of social life (Luhmann 1979:71). There is no doubt that the objective world is more complex than any system, and that systems need to reduce complexity in order to function as systems, as Luhmann explains (Luhmann 1979:32). Furthermore it is a fact that reality as a whole is too complex to know in its' entirety and to control instrumentally. With increasing complexity the need for assurances such as trust grows accordingly (Luhmann 1979:13). This goes back to a basic need to be able to have confidence in one's own expectations and beliefs, and to be able to exhibit self-control regarding the realization of one's desires (Luhmann 1979:4). The question is just how does trust reduce the complexity? Both a functional and an intentional strategy are suggested. The functional strategy sees trust as a system-internal anticipation of disappointment of expectations (Luhmann 1979:79). Luhmann argues against the intentional strategy by saying that it is based on a misunderstanding that "stable structures within persons could be founded on unstable structures within their environment" (Luhmann 1979:79). Contrary to Luhmann's position I am suggesting that we combine an intentional explanatory approach with an approach focused on the question of intersubjective validity. The need for performative certainty (Habermas 2003:253) and the need to be able to distinguish things (Aristotle) are part of the reason why we need to be able to trust our own knowledge and why we demand validity. Luhmann's position to a certain extent contradicts the need for knowledge or excludes the possibility of having knowledge at all. A major difference between Luhmann and Habermas on this point is whether such reduction of complexity should be systems-based functional reduction of

complexity or intentional and validity-based. My argument is supporting the intentional knowledge-based reduction of complexity, where empirical analysis of trust and its' social distribution is always connected with validity claims. Even though trust often functions as implicitly taken for granted or as a tacit presupposition, it can be made explicit in empirical analysis following the strategy that "whatever can be meant can be said" (Searle 1988:19-20) (Habermas 2001:4). We can thus say that whatever can be trusted can be declared trustworthy. The problem with a validity-oriented strategy on trust is that a pure cognitive or knowledge-based approach to trust seems to be naïve as presented in the next section. But even though we may never base our trust on secure knowledge, we need reflectively to be able to trust our knowledge – this is an essential part of epistemology. Since we can trust analytic knowledge which is necessarily true a priori we cannot, as is often done, reduce all aspects of trust to being empirical and contingent, even though the contingent is the field where trust has its' main function.

Knowledge and Trust

It is a concrete problem that we don't know when it is sensible to demonstrate trust, and when mistrust is more appropriate. The problem continues, fed by doubt, if we consider whether we have trust in our knowledge. In our daily lives, knowledge can confirm our trust or mistrust if we understand knowledge as well justified true beliefs (Bordum 2000). We normally expect rational persons to be able to justify their beliefs to themselves and others (Brandom 1994, Scanlon 1998). In principle this also applies to a declaration of trust or mistrust, that it can be substantiated.

There can be a difference in silently demonstrating or presuming trust and declaring trust. Trust declarations and knowledge claims look like one another on certain points in and with that they are explicit and can require a justification. Knowledge can be used as foundation to create additional trust or mistrust. Confronted with ignorance, uncontrollability, unpredictability, insincerity, and incomprehensibility, we often find reason to demonstrate trust anyway for the lack of a better option. We can call this form of powerless trust a cognitively naïve trust. The problem is that our declaration of trust in the end is always cognitively naïve and cannot be completely substantiated. By blind I mean that every declaration of trust or mistrust is fallible, in other words has the potential for error, and can show itself to be incorrect. In this article I will furthermore argue that there is an asymmetrical relationship between trust and mistrust. We cannot, for example, anchor our trust in knowledge, but we can well anchor our mistrust in exact knowledge, even though declarations of mistrust can also be in error.

Trust is something which we ascribe in a relationship between us and something else in a given situation. There are therefore at least four essential elements, which may vary: the situation; we who ascribe trust; the trust which is ascribed; that to which we ascribe trust. We can have trust in such very different objects as things, functionality, systems, persons, structures, organizations, controlling mechanisms, trains of thought, propositions, and knowledge. When we ascribe trust to ourselves we often call it self-confidence. If we were not convinced that the saw blade was fastened tightly to the buzz saw, or the chain was properly attached to the chainsaw, we would not use them. If we were not convinced that workmen had set their scaffolding up correctly, we would not go under it. If we did not trust that our brakes worked, and that the other drivers drove on the same side as us, we would not dare to drive out in traffic. We normally have trust

that things and systems in our surrounding world are working. We would not at all be able to function instrumentally in the world if we didn't presuppose a minimum of trust, if we didn't as a basic assumption and point of departure expect that things function. Each practice would become an infinite regression of tests of whether things were as we were convinced they were and expected them to be, and no instrumental action could be realized.

So it is also with social actions. As Max Weber writes, social actions can be oriented towards other persons' past, present, and expected future actions (Weber 1978:22). Trust is mainly directed at the present and future, and less relevant regarding the past. In order for an action to become social, the person who acts, in their subjective understanding of the action, takes into account, relates to, and orients themselves to others' actions (Weber 1978:4). We must presuppose a modicum of trust, not only in connection with instrumental actions in relation to an object, but also in connection with social actions in relation to other people, before these actions can be realized (Gambetta 1988:219). When social processes are successful we can see that trust can generate trust, and that trust can both appear as a precondition for and as a product of social action. It becomes obvious that we with both instrumental and social actions must presuppose trust, if we, as in the following examples, look at situations characterized by mistrust. If complete mistrust reigns, the cooperation between free and equal persons cannot be realized.

The Undesirable Situations

- (A) Thomas Hobbes described life in a natural state, where no-one could have trust to each other as "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short (Hobbes 1985:186)." If no-one trusted each other life would be

dangerous for even the biggest and strongest, in that the weaker could easily join forces and, for example, attack from the back. As a result the weaker would then wage war upon one another. Whether the state of nature is imagined or real, no-one could know themselves to be secure in such a state of nature. Being unarmed in the state of nature is to show trust, but is a risky behaviour. One would never be able to trust the others, even if one could have trust in one's knowledge that the others would always present a threat. The condition is foreseeable and would, according to Hobbes, exactly therefore find its' natural berth around self-preservation realized as self-defence. Self-preservation and self defence would be thus a condition, a norm, and every individual's natural right. The natural state is, although created for the sake of argument, an undesirable state, among other reasons because no-one can have trust in others.

- (B) The sociologist Talcott Parsons believed that double-contingency is a fundamental condition for all social action. This is because we cannot immediately know with confidence what we and others will do in a future situation. Double-contingency arises when actor A acts contingent upon what actor B does, and B's actions are conditioned by what A does. Double-contingency creates an indecisive and unstable social relation, which in fact makes the social action impossible, if it does not become absorbed. Future-oriented actions are often uncertain, unpredictable, and characterized by such a double contingency. In a condition characterized by such a contingency one would not be able to have trust in either one's own or another's actions, on the basis of the inherent insecurity and unpredictability.
- (C) Many economists' theories, for example the neoclassic, have as an invariable fundamental assumption that actors on the market, like the

ideal type construction economic man (*homo oeconomicus*), are egoistic individuals concerned with maximizing their own personal benefit. They know all and can all, but are finally only interested in their own gain, and not in the other actors. They are essentially acting on price information only. Maximizing of own personal benefit should in theory, and under the presupposition of a functionally coordinating invisible hand on the market, be motive enough to get all workforce, money, goods, and service exchange to function without glitches or transaction-costs. On the market, one can trust that the others will optimize their own, but for the same reason one cannot have trust in the actors themselves. It is, as in the natural state, quite predictable that all will optimize the benefit for themselves, but is not necessarily desirable and trust inspiring behaviour. It is a line of thought which assumes that all are unknown and not obliged to each other, and that they wish to remain as such. The logic of market competition is self-propelling and apparently impossible to get out of, and is characterized by imperatives to be competitive or lose, to innovate or die. As Hartmut Rosa has pointed out, societies based on market economics face challenges of accelerating social processes which have negative effects on those sub-systems incapable of social acceleration (Rosa 2003). The line of thought concerning maximization of own personal benefit has been formalized in the mathematical game theory, which is used as an analytical tool by both economists and those who work in the realm of political science. One of these formalized games is called the prisoner's dilemma. The prisoner's dilemma is an example of a game where the actors attempt to choose a strategy based upon expectations of which strategy the other actor will choose. The prisoners are suspected of having robbed a bank together, and they are held

separately after the arrest. The police lack conclusive evidence. Both prisoners are promised that they will get reduced sentencing if they are themselves not guilty, and will implicate the other. If the prisoners do not get the opportunity to speak with each other, they become trapped in the double-contingency dilemma, and choose the least stable and least optimal social relation. The result of double-contingency is that both prisoners have rational grounds to implicate each other, which they thus do. Situations which appear as the prisoner's dilemma are undesirable and will, even if they are very predictable, only confirm mistrust between prisoners.

Whether the model is Thomas Hobbes' natural state, Talcott Parsons' double contingency, or neoclassic economic theory, they are all individualistic. They exemplify which undesirable conditions we can experience in the natural state, with the double contingency, or where others maximize their own personal benefit at one's expense in zero-sum games. The situations are formally predictable, but can at the same time in their content justify why we can't under the given circumstances have trust in the individual actors.

It is obvious that unless the characteristic state of structurally created and infinite mistrust is in one way or another dissolved, social stability, coordinated action, and the like can in no way take place. What the models have in common is that the consequence of the individual's freedom and autonomy is the others' uncertain and uncontrollable actions. The social meeting easily becomes a social collision, when mistrust becomes written into the interpretative frame. That which lies as a core exception in the arguments is that all have cognitive grounds to expect that all use their freedom to eliminate the others' freedom. The only thing we

can do in opposition is to eliminate their freedom. It is the structure and the implicit presupposed infinite mistrust that lead to the best defence being an attack. The natural state, civil war, or a struggle for power are naturally the results of such a line of thought.

The models have the amazing characteristic that to have mistrust in the others becomes rational. A mistrust which is often self-referential and self-amplifying. The models force us to attribute to the others motives which work against our own objective interest in survival, to cooperate, and to make a fair exchange of goods. Therefore there lies also as a hidden normative premise in the models that state of nature, double contingency, and collective sub-optimizing are undesirable states for the actors.

Culture, common knowledge, norms, promises, institutions, family structures, local informal social cooperation and other relations are in practice all used to dissolve the state of nature, double contingency, and the infinite mistrust to the other actors which are the consequence of the models. Sometimes there is a merging between one's own interests and everyone's interests. We must often choose and evaluate whether we have trust in other people acting in agreement with their own interests, or whether we have trust in that they will live up to mutual obligation and act in agreement with a common or agreed upon interest.

Trust is Created in the Light of Expectations

There is widespread professional agreement that trust as a concept is tied to expectations. We can relatively easily paraphrase sentences where the word trust appears, replacing the word trust with the word expectation, without significant loss of meaning. We can, on the other hand, not

meaningfully paraphrase all sentences in which the word expectation appears, with the word trust as a replacement. The reason for this is perhaps that the concept trust is positively value-laden, while expectation is attributed no value in itself, but expresses a relation to the subjective world. Different expectations meet when people meet.

“Expectations can be thought of as the basic stuff or ingredient of social interaction, as matter is the basic stuff of the physical world. Expectations are the meanings actors attribute to themselves and others as they make choices about which actions and reactions are rationally effective and emotionally and morally appropriate. All social interaction is an endless process of acting upon expectations, which are part cognitive, part emotional, and part moral (Barber 1983:9).”

The creation of expectations and trust functions as a sort of a social laying down of cards of who and what one wishes interaction with now and in the future. That and those with whom we don't interact we have no need to demonstrate or have trust in. The unknown and strange can be frightening, while we have trust in that which looks like that we already know, and in those who look like ourselves. Erving Goffman formulates the point with the social laying down of cards and the relationship to trust with regard to the staged in distinction to what goes on “backstage”.

“It is apparent that if performers are concerned with maintaining a line they will select as team-mates those who can be trusted to perform properly. Thus children of the house are often excluded from performances given for guests of a domestic establishment

because often children cannot be trusted to behave themselves, i.e., to refrain from acting in a way inconsistent with the impression that is being fostered (Goffman 1978:95-96)."

A declaration of trust is seen in this light as not just a social blank check which the receiver themselves can fill out, it is also a kind of risk-calculated preference, in that there lies an active choice of those and that one we will interact with. In Goffman's example, children are evaluated to be less reliable than adults, and are therefore excluded as cooperative partners in the grand staging of self. We especially need trust as a means to secure continued social interaction when we face unclarity, insecurity, and a lack of knowledge. Trust functions as a social stabiliser and justifies a continued interaction which is unchanged, while mistrust justifies changing or breaking off the interaction.

Trust is, as legitimacy, something which others attribute and accordingly something which cannot be instrumentally controlled, owned, stored, etc. If we ask who determines trust, the answer is always the other. Expectations are of a special magnitude not necessarily anchored in reality, but in what is not yet actual. We can speak of true or false expectations as long as expectations are empirical and deal with that which is. As an emotional function, which is subjectively or normatively anchored, expectations can either be fulfilled or disappointed. There is therefore no unambiguous sensible compulsion for the creation of expectations. Expectations are as different as people. Like desires, expectations can be kept on normative grounds even when they are in disagreement with reality. An essential social function is therefore to mutually stabilize expectations between people. If we look at promises for example, their goal is often to stabilize others' expectations (Weber 1978:28). The most important role of norms is to

dissolve double contingency by mutually stabilizing normative expectations in the light of common knowledge. The promise is easily the most trust inspiring arrangement we have. The apology and forgiveness constitute one of the most trust rebuilding social mechanisms we have. But they also rest, in the final analysis, upon a foundation of trust which is essentially blind and fallible. Think simply of those who automatically offer the excuse and count beforehand on forgiveness. The promise, the disappointment, the excuse, and the forgiveness are all mechanisms which can be activated when expectations are not answered by that which is actually the case.

The Cognitively Naïve Trust

Trust creating mechanisms do not create trust. They are insecurity minimizing mechanisms. Pharmacies do not operate in a free market, but in a regulated market with the goal to uphold the trust that they sell us the correct and not the most profitable medicine. Political decisions should best be public, and the political process should be monitored by the public to work against power becoming in itself sufficient and corrupting. The public is often used as a monitoring mechanism to stabilize trust. Publicity secures the separation of the private and the public as well as minimize actions carried out in self-interest (Weber 1978:957). Our expectations can be disappointed, and trust turn to mistrust. Processes where mistrust turns to trust are much slower and more time demanding than the processes where trust is changed to mistrust. This is because trust, like experience and knowledge, is built up over time. According to Anthony Giddens, trust shall, in order to be active, be created and won. One cannot simply demand or presuppose that it is present

(Bech 1999:130, 116). Even experts must constantly prove their trustworthiness and accountability in a modern reflexive society.

When we have expectations which concern an atomic power plant's security, for example, expectations are of an epistemic magnitude. It is not the atomic power plant in itself which we have trust in, but a relationship between our expectations and the atomic power plant. Trust is a concept of validity, which like truth, neither belongs solely to the judging person, nor to the object judged (Cf. Habermas 2003:90, 227). A theory, which views trust as something other than a concept of validity and as something we judge about something else, and which therefore is always interpreted and infected by theory, misunderstands this. Trust is always related to our knowledge about the objects of trust. When we have knowledge by acquaintance we have no reason to distrust our knowledge, although we may distrust the object. Regarding know how, we are committed to trust that the desired alternative situation is desirable, and that means are available to the desired end. We trust the instrumental functionality. In the case of propositional knowledge, we need to trust in the justification justifying a belief as valid, as well as trust that an entailed action is secure because justified. We can interpret a declaration of trust as a linguistic judgement, as an evaluation of our expectations of something else. If trust were made explicit, it would have the form of the declaration of trust and the empirical linguistic judgement. The process in which a judgement is made can thereby be understood as analogous to learning processes, because we can only afterwards experience whether we have judged wrongly and have trusted the wrong one, and can first hereafter revise our judgement. We declare and interpret trust as a judgement, and revise trust in the light of our experience and learning process. We can, according to the fallibilistic doctrine that our empirical knowledge never is secure, because in the future it can reveal itself to be

false, never be absolutely sure that our beliefs and expectations hold. Charles Sanders Peirce defined the doctrine thus: “. . . fallibilism is the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute, but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy (Peirce 1958 vol. I§171).” According to theorists such as Charles Sanders Peirce, Karl Popper, Karl Otto Apel and Jurgen Habermas, this is a condition for all forms of empirical knowledge. In the end we cannot even have definitive trust in our knowledge, but only in our own willingness and ability to learn. Therefore there will always be an element of insecurity bound to trust understood as a form of linguistic judgement. When we explicate and put forth our expectations positively, there will always be alternative possibilities and a blind spot we cannot justify, control, foresee, or rule over. Declared trust will therefore in the end always be cognitively naïve in the meaning fallible, and will therefore have an element of unfounded faith (Giddens 1994:34).

There are, as I see it, two further substantial reasons that declared trust is cognitively naïve;

The first reason that declared trust becomes blind is that we do not have access to secure predictions which give insight into the future. Unpredictability and the possibility for change, that things could be different, are problems which refer to a future. The necessary may be foreseen with security; that is not the case with the empirical and contingent.

Trust based on experience contains a logically invalid inductive generalization, in the assumption that what we can experience and observe in the present will also be valid in the future. Experience is a strong knowledge-base when concerning the past, but it is weak when concerning the future. The problem with the experienced based and positively grounded declaration of trust is that it is particularly in relation to a given future that trust has its' function. Trust and mistrust are expectations anchored in the present, aimed

at that which will be the case in the future. David Hume was already attentive to the phenomenon that we often in error make past experiences standards for our future judgements. Expectations are in their function aimed towards a future, despite their grounding in the present, according to Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann 1979:12). "To show trust is to anticipate the future. It is to behave as though the future was certain (Luhmann 1979:10)." It is the idea that the future will be identical with the past which is ungrounded and often will show itself to be false.

Because trust most often functions in relation to states or other people's actions in the future, it is difficult to avoid the element of invalid inductive generalization. Inductive generalization as David Hume understood it, as a faulty naturalistic inference assuming that because it is valid in the past, so is it valid for all the future. But also inductive generalization in the meaning that since Aristotle has been the paradigmatic form for induction, understood as a generalizing inference that something that is valid for some, therefore likely becomes valid for all (Holland 1986:230). Inductive generalization, in the aforementioned examples, concludes from the past to the future and from some to all. None of these resulting conclusions can be finally validated if we with the concept "all" mean all cases at all times. We cannot, for instance, believe that all accountants are trustworthy now and in the future, without committing an inductive fallacy. The problem with a trust concept based positively on experiences is that such a concept of trust, used to stabilize expectations to future relations, does not avoid invalid inductive conclusions. Nelson Goodman formulates the problem as:

*"Predictions, of course, pertain to what has not yet been observed.
And they cannot be logically inferred from what has been*

observed; for what has happened imposes no logical restrictions on what will happen (Goodman 1972:371)."

Ulrich Beck, in the light of his thesis on the risk society, formulates the lacking connection between past and future as: "The concept of risk reverses the relationship of past, present and future. The past loses its power to determine the present (Beck 1999:137)."

The second reason that trust becomes blind and naïve is known as the problem of other minds: that we don't have immediate access to others' consciousness or mental processes and therefore do not have secure insight into others people's minds. Others' intentions and action plans are invisible for us, unless they choose to mediate them to us communicatively. And even then we cannot know these with certainty in that the communication could be insincere. The conception of trust which is dealt with above presupposes either that mistrust is ignored or that trust and mistrust are assumed to be symmetrical by nature. In combination, people's free will, the problem of other people's minds, fallibility regarding empirical knowledge, and the inductive character of trusting make up a conclusive argument. Declared trust always becomes cognitively naïve, because we don't have the ability to foresee the future and do not have direct access to others' consciousness and plans of action.

The conclusion of the above stated arguments is that positively grounded or experienced based trust, which is built up over time and which has its' functional role in relationship to the future, runs into problems with invalid induction and the unpredictability of the future. The trust which is declared or simply demonstrated will therefore always be blind in the meaning fallible. Such a conclusion makes trusting naïve and contradicts that most social processes could not be explained without trust as a fundamental

presupposition, and contradicts that trust is critical. This conclusion changes if we bring in both trust and mistrust as premise for our analysis, and also take the pragmatic and functional necessity into account, where trust becomes constitutive for social action. Socially, trust is not naïve but a functional presupposition for many desired social phenomena.

Trust and Mistrust are of Asymmetrical Magnitudes.

In our intercourse with the world and each other, for counter-factual grounds it becomes necessary to demonstrate and presume trust. Trust is a condition for many social processes. A counter-factual foundation for trust's constitutive character could be that a given process could not at all progress without trust being present between the parties. In a counter-factual inference, something or other, Q, is determined by something or other, P, in a way which cannot be truth-functional and therefore doesn't belong to the formal logic. A counter-factual relationship between P and Q does not express a formal logical relationship, but more likely causal connections or family relationships (Quine 1982:23). An inference as in "if there were no oxygen I could not breathe," is true and valid, not for logical formal grounds, but for causal. Even though trust declarations are fallible and blind, we must for counter-factual reasons show trust, because many social meetings and social constructions would not at all take place without being anchored in trust. Trust appears often as a necessary precondition for the progression of other social processes. Money media, power media, judicial media, and scientific knowledge production build, for example, on a cognitively unjustified trust, which is a precondition for their functioning socially as mediating processes (Luhmann 1979:48). The justification for our having to show trust

is the counter-factual that if we wish that certain social phenomenon shall be able to exist and function, we must necessarily construct them upon or around trust relations (also even though we know theoretical analysis as in the aforementioned must conclude that this is naïve, because trust is naïve). The consequence of this argument is that trust is not normatively and socially naïve, but valuable and needed, which is just another asymmetry between trust and mistrust. This practical opposition between the functional and cognitive grounds for the declaration of trust arises primarily when we view trust independently of its' opposite, mistrust, which is done in the aforementioned. In the aforementioned, trust and mistrust are not specifically related. It is my point that trust and mistrust, if they as a conceptual pair are understood as of binding and coherent magnitudes, alter the blindness and naiveté which is otherwise bound to a purely cognitively justified declaration of trust.

Trust and mistrust are not simple opposites (Giddens 1994:37). We cannot conclude that because mistrust is not present, we have a trust-relation. Trust and mistrust exclude each other as descriptions and declarations, in that we cannot meaningfully at one and the same time and in every respect declare trust and mistrust. It would be a contradiction and a meaningless declaration which no-one could obligate themselves to. This is because trust and mistrust stand in an asymmetrical relation to each other as concepts. It is my point that there is an asymmetrical relationship between trust and mistrust because the two phenomena in fact have different fundamental characteristics. The difference is apparent in the asymmetry between the concepts trust and mistrust.

There must, for example, be infinitely many relations to substantiate trust positively, but only a single relation to justify mistrust (Bordum 1998:94-98) (Bordum 2001). Trust is bound by a certain cognitive fallibility and blindness.

Mistrust does not necessarily presuppose the same form of blindness. Expectations may simply be disappointed a single time to rationally justify a declaration of mistrust. Trust is built up and revised over time, but there shall be only a single disappointment of expectations, or a single experience which dissolves trust, before judgement can rightfully be altered, and mistrust declared. In relation to time, an asymmetry lies inherent here, in that the logic for the building of trust and the break down of trust to mistrust are completely different.

It is in principle possible for a person to analyze things and operate with a highly differentiated conception of trust. I trust that the doctor can operate competently, but do not trust his driving. I trust that my wife is faithful, but do not trust that she can clean thoroughly. Such an atomistic or deconstructed trust based on single attributes, aspects or predicates is possible, but this is not how trust generally operates in social settings. A differentiated conception of trust has to be synthesized in order to be operational and would presuppose a kind of cost-benefit evaluation or an axiomatic ranking of judgments, which is in itself a complicated demand to fulfill, especially when the future has to be taken into account. In social settings trust usually opens up for possibilities and future action. Trust is sustained and reproduced when a person takes on the rational commitments expected of them. Not being committed may dissolve the trust relationship. According to Robert Brandom competent linguistic practitioners keep track of their own and each others' commitment and entitlements, as deontic scorekeepers (Brandom 1994:142). Because of this ever working mutual deontic scorekeeping it is difficult or almost impossible to build trust on insincere or manipulated grounds. Building trust takes the redemption of obligation and commitment. In a sense we are all informal accountants of trust. Making it explicit provides us with a rather sensible tool to analyze social phenomena.

The building of trust normally takes a long time. The declaration of mistrust's experience basis can, in contrast, be reaped in a short time. The declaration of mistrust has no problem being generalized in the future and is not bound to any need to be deduced from other persons' invisible and uncontrollable intentions and thereafter resulting unforeseeable plans of action, because it can be deduced from observable behaviour.

Mistrust gives the justification for breaking off or changing the type of interaction, while trust most often functions as a justification for continued and unchanged interaction. This is an example of functional asymmetry. A declaration of mistrust can be well-grounded concretely and materially. It is the declaration of trust as a singular and material passing of judgement which runs into problems with blindness. As material declaration the asymmetry between trust and mistrust reveals itself in that only the declaration of trust becomes inductive and naïve. Mistrust demands only a single disappointment of expectations. Mistrust can be grounded singularly and finally with reference to risk, danger (Giddens 1994:37), insincere or deceitful expressive communication, or retrospectively with reference to breach of trust and factually disappointed expectations. Mistrust can only indicate what one should not do, who one should not trust in, who one should not be dependent on, etc. A well-grounded mistrust cannot lead the way in establishing who and what one can have trust in. We can only naïvely hope that those who have not yet disappointed our expectations will not do it in the future either. If one's expectations have infinite mistrust as a point of departure, one cannot be disappointed, but only positively surprised that the negative expectations are not fulfilled. The asymmetry in relation to trust reveals itself in the relation that the expectations we reflexively stabilize by showing trust can always be disappointed (Luhmann 1979:79). The problem with recommending expectations of infinite mistrust is that this will dissolve

every possibility for functionality of social relations based on trust, and that such an expectations horizon would make social action impossible. It is therefore in practice impossible to live consistently with a presupposition of infinite mistrust.

We can have well grounded mistrust in that a speaker is expressing themselves sincerely, as far as the content between the speakers' speech and action is inconsistent. A speakers' sincerity can, in other words, be invalidated, but not be confirmed by other observers. Trust is closely connected to the concept of validity claims. To each of the validity claims; cognitive truth, normative rightness, and speaker sincerity, there exists a corresponding form of insincerity (Bordum 1998:49). There is asymmetry between sincerity and insincerity because we can have well grounded mistrust if an expression is not sincerely spoken. On the other hand, we cannot base a well grounded trust on the understanding that an expression is sincerely spoken. Sincerity is a necessary pragmatic, but not sufficient condition to create a well-justified trust. Think of the executioner who says: "in a minute I will swing my axe and separate your head from your body." The executioner speaks both truthfully and sincerely, but is certainly not a person one has trust in. Trustworthiness is demonstrated in the willingness to stand by one's word. The executioner can be "trusted" but is not trustworthy, and does not inspire trust. This is because, culturally seen, trust is defined as something positive, something which is good in itself. It is contrary to the nature of trust to see it as something negative, because mistrust does not exist in itself but is simply an expression of lack of trust. This a priori normativity lies also inherent in the thought that trust is normally better than mistrust, just as love is normally better than hate. It lies in the culture and inherent in the language that trust is normally a desirable condition and mistrust is an undesirable condition. An example of normativity and

attribution of value inherent in the language can be seen in that loyalty is good and wished for and disloyalty wrong and undesirable. The demand of trustworthiness which the executioner lives up to can be more generally understood as a demand for performative consistency. One does what one says, and says what one does. Hypocrisy, insincerity, and deceit are examples of performative inconsistency, where a speaker does not feel bound by his words. We have reason to perceive the executioner as an agent to be “trusted”, but there is something or other missing in the relation which gives a foundation to something which is in value positive, trustworthy, or good in itself, and confirms that we can have trust in the executioner. An expression shall in a particular relation be understandable, true, correct, and sincere, and live up to the communicative action’s demands over time, before it can create a rational basis for a declaration of trust. Trust and distrust can be understood as judgements we lay down over such different relations as persons, organizations, systems, things, communications media, and knowledge. As with all judgements, we wish for a certain security that that which we judge in fact exists. Therefore the question of truth and lie becomes relevant. Falsehood and lies give reason to mistrust. We also wish with every judgement that the judgement we apply is in fact normatively adequate. We wish that our predictions of intention, behaviour, or functionality in fact hold. We wish to avoid the insincerity problem that the others in the role of speaker lie consciously or unconsciously. Trust is vulnerable and invalidated as soon as only a single validity claim shows itself to be unfulfilled.

Conclusion

I have shown here that there can be found several different asymmetries between trust and mistrust. Trust seems to have a positive value both culturally and functionally which distrust does not have. Trust building takes time and functions inductively, whereas mistrust can be established quickly and justified by a single ground. Furthermore the new asymmetry arises that trust may be cognitively naïve to demonstrate but can socially and functionally be a necessity. The asymmetry means among other things that it is invalid to conclude from the absence of mistrust that there is therefore trust. The asymmetry also means that one cannot say terribly much about trust by referring to examples of mistrust. The asymmetry shows therefore, that trust understood positively and based on experience cannot be established as well-justified true belief. Distrust can, on the contrary, be declared well-justified because a single experience is final and concrete. The likelihood of being mistaken in a material judgment is rather low, even though sense betrayal and sources of error in perception of course can occur. The declaration of trust is blinder than the declaration of mistrust. The declaration of trust, according to the above arguments, never becomes cognitively secure and based on certain knowledge. Although trust does not find as much cognitive support as one could hope, there can be a number of important social, functional, and moral reasons to declare trust, even taking into account the risk of being blind and becoming disappointed. In the normative and expressive dimension, trust can be functionally justified without being naïve at all. It can in fact be unethical to declare mistrust without justified reason. A declaration of trust can only be unethical if it is not sincere. This

conclusion changes the strategic frame of self-propelling mistrust build into many theoretical systems. Finally, the arguments on asymmetry indicate that there is something inconsistent and invalid in the way Luhmann treats trust and mistrust as functionally equivalent value-neutral ways for a system to reduce complexity.ⁱⁱ

Most of those phenomena that critical theory is critical towards, for example, coercion, lying, irrationality, illegitimacy, instrumentalizing reason, etc., generate mistrust when analysed in concrete social settings, and are operationally sensitive to an analysis applying trust as its' analytic perspective. Therefore trust is a critical concept, not just in the sense that most social processes in their foundation presuppose one form of trust or another, but also critical in the sense of a possible analytic perspective available to critical theorists who are seeking to make operational the thoughts of Jürgen Habermas and his fellow colleagues. The close connection to validity claims and the questions of knowledge, norms and sincerity connect the analysis of trust directly with the framework suggested by Habermas. I suggest that trust can be applied as an operational strategy of analysis because meaning in a social setting is not only pragmatically apparent in the distribution of consensus and dissent, but also concerning the phenomena of trust and mistrust. In a sense, we are all informal accountants of trust and mistrust, which can be made explicit and mapped in its social distribution. Therefore I suggest that trust is a critical concept.

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ⁱ This paper has been presented at The Conference on Philosophy and The Social Sciences, Prague 2004.

ⁱⁱ The formal argument would be that Luhmann's assumption of functional equivalence presupposes reflexivity, and a certain kind of identity. If a relation is transitive, and non-symmetrical, as I have demonstrated, then it cannot be reflexive. The functional identity between trust and mistrust would not be possible, although they may share certain properties. Luhmann's logic is by analogy, and even though rhetorically convincing, not valid. To support my argument is a further argument, that value-neutrality (which Luhmann presupposes by functional equivalence) would presuppose a reflexivity, which does not exist.