

CREATING TRUST¹

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Abstract: In this essay, we argue that trust is a dynamic emotional relationship which entails responsibility. Trust is not a social substance, a medium, or a mysterious entity but rather a set of social practices, defined by our choices, to trust or not to trust. We discuss the differences and the relationship between trust and trustworthiness, and we distinguish several different kinds or "levels" of trust, *simple* trust, *basic* trust, "*blind*" trust, and *authentic* trust. We then argue that trust as an emotional practice, can be "willful," voluntary and a matter of personal responsibility.

In 1990, soon after the "Velvet Revolution," Vaclav Havel was elected president of Czechoslovakia. He pleaded with his people, in an impassioned speech, "we have to trust one another." That profound and startling request hit every level of human interaction and exchange. It was, first of all, deeply personal, an attempt to collectively fight fifty years of ruthless suppression and exploitation, resulting in the widespread distrust and paranoia documented in Havel's own writings and in the expatriate works of Milan Kundera. It was also a plea to set in place the preconditions necessary to establish capitalism and free enterprise in place of the suffocating state-run operations of the past. Havel recognized, as have most of the enlightened leaders of the world, that trust, not fear, cooperation, not control are the path to a more prosperous and harmonious society. Of course, Havel's speech was a political plea, a plea for the recognition of Havel's own presidency and a chance to make things happen. This was not, as we cynically say, "politics as usual." But it is the nature of this plea for trust, and the similar plea that is today resounding throughout the world and the business community in particular, that we want to understand. How can we create trust, especially where distrust and even paranoia reign supreme? More to the point of this essay, how can an appreciation of trust be made an intrinsic part of business ethics?

In our experience, business people feel uncomfortable talking about trust, except, perhaps, in the most abstract terms of approbation. When the topic of trust comes up, they heartily nod their approval, but then they nervously turn to other topics. Executives are talking a great deal about trust these days, perhaps because they rightly suspect that trust in many corporations seems to be at an all-time low. A consultant for a major corporation recently gave a lecture on "the importance of trusting your employees" to several hundred executives of one of America's largest corporations. There was an appreciative but stunned silence, and then one of them—asking for all of them—queried, "But how do we control

them?" It is a telling question that indicates that they did not understand the main point of the lecture, that trust is the very opposite of control. Or, perhaps, they understood well enough, but suffered a lack of nerve when it came time to think through its implications. We all know the importance of trust, the advantages of trust, and we all know how terrible life can be without it. But creating trust is taking a risk. Trust entails lack of control, in that some power is transferred or given up to the person who is trusted. It is leaping from the dark, claustrophobic fuselage of our ordinary cynicism into what seems like the unsupported free-fall of dependency. Yet, nothing is more necessary.

Today, there is a danger that trust is being oversold. There is such a thing as too much trust, and then there is "blind trust," trust without warrant, foolish trust. Trust alone will not, as some of our pundits promise, solve the problems that our society now faces. Thus we think there is good reason to listen to doubters like Daryl Koehn, who rightly asks, "Should we trust trust?"² But the urgency remains on the side of encouraging and understanding trust. There is a lot of encouraging going on today. What is lacking, we want to suggest, is understanding. The problem is not just lack of an adequate analysis. The problem is an aggressive *mis*understanding of trust that pervades most of our discussions. The problem is that trust is treated as if it were a "medium" in which human transactions take place, alternatively, as "ground," as "atmosphere" or, even more vaguely, as "climate." Benjamin Barber, for instance, who is one of the early writers on trust and often appealed to by the current crop of commentators, says that trust is "the basic stuff or ingredient of social interaction." But as "stuff" or "ingredient," as a "resource" (Fukuyama³), as "medium," "ground," "atmosphere" or "climate," trust all too easily tends to seem inert, simply "there" or "not there," rather than a dynamic aspect of human interaction and human relationships.

Trust is a *dynamic aspect of human relationships*. It is an ongoing process that must be initiated, maintained, sometimes restored and continuously authenticated. Trust is not a social substance or a mysterious entity; trust is a social practice, defined by choices. It is always relational: A trusts B (to do C, D, E). We can say that A is "trusting," but by that we mean that he or she has a disposition to readily trust people. Indeed, the very word "trust" is misleading, insofar as it seems to point to an entity, a thing, some social "stuff." Although we will continue to use the word, it might better be thought of as "trusting," an activity, a decision, a transitive verb, not a noun. [Where there is some chance of misunderstanding, we will add the parenthetical suffix, "(ing)."] The discussion of trust is shot through with what French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre called "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*), the distancing of our own actions and choices and the refusal to take responsibility for them. The not very subtle message of too much of the talk about trust today is, "*The problem isn't me/us, it's them,*" as if WE are perfectly willing to trust others—if they are trustworthy, that is, but, unfortunately, they are not or have not proven themselves so.

The misunderstanding of trust takes the form of a dangerous rationalization. Trust(ing) presupposes trustworthiness. Either one is trustworthy or one is not.

So trusting takes the form of a kind of knowledge, the recognition (which may, of course, be fallible) that someone is trustworthy. If one trusts, so the rationalization goes, then nothing need be said, and it is much better that nothing be said. That is the core of our problem. Trust is rendered inarticulate, unpresentable. According to this view, to even raise the question, “do you trust me?” or “Can I trust you?” is to already instigate, not only indicate, distrust.⁴ **If one does not trust, then nothing much is accomplished by saying so, except, perhaps, as an insult, a way of escalating an already existing conflict or, perhaps, as a confirming test** (“If you tell me that I should trust you, then you are doubly a liar.”) When a politician or a business leader says, “trust me,” he takes a considerable risk. Those who support him may well wonder why he needs to say that, and become suspicious. For those who are already suspicious of him, such an intrusive imperative confirms their suspicions.⁵ On the other hand, when someone says “I trust you,” there is always the possibility of some sense of manipulation, even the unwanted imposition of a psychological burden, one of whose consequences may be guilt. It is notable that Havel does not say “trust me” or “I trust you” but “we must trust one another.” The circumstances in which a politician (or anyone else) would or should say such a thing are worth analyzing, but here we will only say that the primary reason for talking about trust is not just to “understand” the concept philosophically but to put the issue of trust “on the table” in order to be able to talk it through in concrete, practical situations. By talking through trust, trust can be created, distrust mitigated. Not talking about trust, on the other hand, can result in continuing distrust. In the Czech Republic, and in the business climate which that new state is fomenting, we see a set of circumstances in which people who have been living and working together for centuries nevertheless do not trust one another, and this lack of trust has so far proved to be calamitous to their flourishing as a nation and as individuals.

Trust in Philosophy and in Business Ethics

Until very recently, the business ethics literature was almost silent on the topic of trust. There were the requisite nods to trust, for example, in discussions of management-employee relations and agency relationships⁶ but the nature of trust went unanalyzed, as if no analysis were needed. **Francis Fukuyama's *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* and John Whitney's *The Economics of Trust*** have both attracted considerable attention in the business world. Each has its virtues, and their central theme—that trust is essential for prosperity and business—is undebatable. But what they fail to do is to say anything much about trust itself, and they assiduously avoid the red-flag term “ethics.” It is as if the point of trust is mere efficiency, the elimination of wasteful “transaction costs,” with no moral or ethical implications. Whitney, for example, starts and essentially ends his analysis with the *Random House Dictionary* definition of trust—as if that “official” definition of the word were sufficient to grasp the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon.⁷ Fukuyama dubiously redescribes trust as “spontaneous sociability” which is found in some cultures but not in

others. Perhaps the single most important feature of his book is the subordination of economics to culture (which is why, we surmise, most economists have abandoned Fukuyama). But then, against his own insight, Fukuyama turns to an overly economic analysis of the consequences of trust and distrust. Nevertheless, it is the ethics of *living* in “high-trust” versus “low-trust” societies that forms the real dynamic of the book, which is never given the analysis it requires.

Economic approaches to trust, while well-intended and pointing in the right direction, are dangerously incomplete and misleading. Trust in business is not merely a tool for efficiency, although it does, as Nicholas Luhmann argues at length, have important implications for dealing with complexity and therefore efficiency.⁸ Moreover, it would hardly be honest to guarantee (as many authors do these days), that more trust will make business more efficient and improve the bottom line. Usually, of course, trust has this effect, but there is no necessary connection between trust and efficiency, and this is neither the aim nor the intention of trust. Indeed, trust as a mere efficiency-booster may be a paradigm of *inauthentic* or phony trust, trust that is merely a manipulative tool, a facade of trust that, over the long run, increases *distrust*, and for good reason. Employees can usually tell when the “empowerment” they receive like a gift is actually a noose with which to hang themselves, a setup for blame for situations which they cannot really control. Managers know what it is like when they are awarded more responsibility (“I trust you to take care of that”) without the requisite authority. Like many virtues, trust is most virtuous when it is pursued for its own sake, even if there is benefit or advantage in view. To think of trust as a business tool, as a mere means, as a lubricant to make an operation more efficient, is to not understand trust at all. Trust is, first of all, a central concept of ethics. And because of that, it turns out to be a valuable tool in business as well.

In general, philosophers have been prodded to talk about trust only recently and reluctantly.⁹ Trust is not just another abstraction or “contested concept”¹⁰ but a rich, “thick” social and ethical phenomenon. Not surprisingly, philosophers all-too-often tend to interpret trust as a phenomenon of belief, and thus in terms of one more question about justification, but trust is not primarily about belief (although clearly it may involve any number of beliefs), nor does it readily invite anything like the usual evidential grounds for justification (which is not to say that trustworthiness, which is usually the basis for trust, does not require evidence). Trust is first of all an attitude, a feeling, an emotion, an affect, topics which make many philosophers uncomfortable. And justifying an attitude involves a different logic and different kinds of evidence than the justification of belief. Moreover, trust is not a single attitude.

In one of the most prestigious philosophy journals, three distinguished ethicists—Karen Jones, Russell Hardin, Lawrence C. Becker¹¹ have taken on the phenomenon of trust full-tilt and attempted to remedy some of these shortcomings. Briefly, Jones and Becker analyse trust as an “affective attitude of optimism” and “non-cognitive security” respectively, while Hardin focuses instead on the “devices for commitment” which, he claims, make trustworthiness

possible. (Trust is treated as an individual's attitude or a set of subjective probabilities.¹²) Much of what they say is of considerable merit, but, perhaps, nothing they say is as important as the very existence of the symposium itself, which signifies the emergence of trust as a full-blooded philosophical topic.

Within the realm of ethics, trust fits best *not* into the framework of duties and obligations nor into the familiar calculations of utility and efficiency but into that relatively new (but also very old) form of ethics now known as "**virtue ethics.**"¹³ So much of ethics, over the past two centuries, has been wedded to theory, and, in particular, theories about rational principles and decision-procedures for action that the kinds of considerations that would bring trust to the fore have been systematically slighted. Trust, we argue, is primarily about relationships. Of course, one can and does "trust *x* to do *y*" but rarely does such trust make sense outside of some larger frame of trust and trustworthiness and a context which includes the history and nature of the relationship between the people, including their roles vis-a-vis one another. Annette Baier insightfully describes the range of activities that fall within the range of appropriate trust, for example, of a baby-sitter, a friend, a colleague. Under normal circumstances, for example, one trusts a baby-sitter to take care of the baby but not to perform emergency surgery, to straighten up the house, perhaps, but not undertake the installation of a new plumbing system. Thus trust depends on the role and the relationship as well as the particularities of the context. One could trust people, "on principle," we suppose, but this would be an odd and much-qualified principle, to be sure, and certainly not the sort of rational principle that philosophers usually talk about under the rubric of ethics.

Trust—both trusting and being trustworthy—has a good deal to do with *character*—which is why it is so suited to virtue-ethical discussion. Trustworthiness is obviously a virtue, indeed, so obviously so that some of the leading virtue ethicists—Aristotle, in particular, do not bother to speak of it. (It is presupposed, one assumes, in the character of the good person.) But it is not just the character of individuals that is in question here but the character of relationships and institutions. Trust(ing) is more controversial, and here it is particularly important to clarify the distinction and the relationship between trust and trustworthiness, both of which are usually subsumed under the heading of "trust." These form an obvious complementary pair. In the ideal case, one trusts someone because she is trustworthy, and one's trustworthiness inspires trust. But "trust as a virtue" is too often understood in terms of trustworthiness as a virtue.¹⁴ To be sure, trustworthiness is a virtue,—the compound virtue of being dependable, capable, responsive and responsible, but trust(ing) is a virtue of a different sort, and one not limited to cases of trustworthiness. One can and sometimes must or should trust someone who is untrustworthy or untried. Trust(ing) is a virtue both because it is often useful and necessary (and thus utilitarian), and because it opens up possibilities in a relationship (and for its members) which would be impossible without it. Inability to trust, in a situation in which trust is appropriate or necessary, is a moral defect.¹⁵ Inability or refusal to trust does not violate any

ethical principle, and it is not primarily concerned with the consequences of action, although one can argue that the consequence of not trusting, in general, are devastating.¹⁶ Nevertheless, trust can and should be considered an admirable, occasionally courageous but most often simply amiable and agreeable thing to do. A person incapable of trust is a person who is something less than fully human, less than fully socialized, less than fully a member of society. Trust, that is, **trusting**, is a neglected human virtue, indeed, a "non-relative" virtue, one that is essential to all forms of society regardless (more or less) of the particular culture. (Thus Fukuyama distinguishes between "high trust" and "low trust" societies as a matter of degree, not kind. Without some degree of trust, there would be no society at all.¹⁷)

In a relationship, trust and trustworthiness are typically to be found on "both sides," that is, as complements. To say that someone is trustworthy is to say that he is "worthy of trust," and to trust someone is to act as if he or she is trustworthy. But, again, trust is not limited to cases of trustworthiness, and one sometimes must trust someone who is untrustworthy. Most trust relationships are bidirectional, however. That is, the person trusted typically trusts the trustor in certain ways as well. An employer trusts his or her employee but is trusted (for example, to pay the promised salary) as well. Thus cynics might say that trust is based on a balance of power, or rather, on a balance of vulnerabilities and threats. But it should not be supposed that because most trust relationships are bidirectional they are therefore symmetrical. Typically, trust and trustworthiness are role-related and, where the roles are asymmetrical, the trust relationship will be asymmetrical too. Friendship and marriage may be, for the most part, symmetrical, but employer-employee relationships, in general, are not.

Thus, in business ethics, the specificity of trust and the asymmetry of trust and trustworthiness is more obvious than it is in many less well-defined relationships. It is a mistake, however, to move immediately into talk about implicit contracts and agreements, just because a business relationship is so well-defined. Business relationships may well follow trusting or partially trusting relationships, and, in rare cases, they may replace trusting relationships, but we should not reduce trusting relationships to contractual relationships, no matter how loosely or "implicitly" we understand the nature of contracts. In business, it is pretty obvious that trust is always specified, we trust a person or a corporation to do X at or by time T. But, again, all such specificities imply a more general trust. A shop-owner trusts a sales assistant to take care of customers, watch the cash register and take care of sales transactions, but virtually no list (and no employment contract) could include all of the possibilities such trust encompasses. (In return, the employee trusts the shop owner to pay him on time, to not "set him up," to not expect more than is reasonable, and so on.) One can list any number of possible actions encompassed by the trust (including such small probabilities as acting sensibly in case of an armed robbery or protecting fragile goods near-at-hand in an earthquake), and, no doubt, one could manufacture any number of "principles" which apply, most of them either impossibly broad and

vague or casuistic and ad hoc. But what is really going on is *a certain kind of relationship* between the shop-owner and the assistant, and its viability depends on the character of both of them. **On the shop-owner's part, he must be trusting, if not in general (and who can or should be trusting in general, these days?) then in the specific context of his business and his employee. Inability to trust, in addition to being terribly inefficient and time-consuming (enforcement costs, keeping a watchful eye, re-doing what one has already paid another to do, not to mention thereby provoking resentment and possibly rebellion, even sabotage) thus suggests a managerial as well as a moral defect.**

On the part of the employee, on the other hand, the primary virtue in question is trustworthiness. Trustworthiness clearly implies sincerity, first in the sense that the (perhaps implicit) promises made to the employer are made sincerely. Second, and derivatively, trustworthiness implies that those promises will be kept. Traditional ethics would agree that promises (implicit or explicit) lie at the heart of ethics, of course, but it would be the fulfillment of the promise, not the making of the promise, that would earn their attention. (How deep Nietzsche's query goes, in the second book of his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, when he asks, "To breed an animal with the right to make promises—is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man? is it not the real problem regarding man?"¹⁸) Trust and trustworthiness involve *sincerity*, that ultimate "bourgeois" virtue that Nietzsche (sometimes) so despised. Trustworthiness virtually never refers to a single instance of trust. It rather refers to something approaching an objective fact about the person, a product of their past behavior, their engagement in the situation, the sincerity of their promises and commitments, their competence at the tasks in question. But trust, too, involves not just probabilities and risks but an attitude that Karen Jones correctly describes as "optimism," if not toward the world then at least toward a small temporal and personal bit of the world.¹⁹ In other words, the question of trust bypasses the field of attention of most traditional ethical theories and goes straight to the ancient concern for personal character and relationships.

Shifting the focus from principles and actions to character and relationships allows us to look at how trust actually *works*. It is obvious that trust is, in one sense, an everyday, taken-for-granted phenomenon. This is what one might call the "ontic" nature of trust, trust as a social and personal *practice* that is so familiar and so "natural" that it is only in its breach or breakdown that we feel compelled to look at it or try to understand it, what, following Heidegger, we might call the "ontology" of trust. The perceived crisis of trust in politics and business today presents us with just such an occasion. Thus Havel presents trust as a challenge, as a promise, as something new and as yet untried. And Fukuyama reminds us that trust is a vital "social resource" and a precondition for economic prosperity which we may be in danger of depleting. But Fukuyama does not sufficiently analyze the question, how trust is created (or destroyed). Instead, he takes trust as a "given" aspect of some cultures, not others. Indeed, in one of the

most important cases in his study—the enormity of China and Chinese business—Fukuyama misses the topography of trust altogether.

China and Chinese societies (such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) have few large corporations and keep business trust mainly within the family, it is true. But to understand the vitality of Chinese business culture one surely has to appreciate the global reach of many thousands of intricate extended family networks, spreading from East Asia to Europe and North and even South America, including such vibrant economic centers as San Francisco, New York and Vancouver, Sydney and Auckland. Fukuyama starts out with a limited cultural model of trust, but trust (both in business and in culture) takes many forms, and Fukuyama's model seems not to fit what surely ought to be one of the most tantalizing cases. This is the price of taking trust as a "given" rather than a dynamic aspect of relationships and of a culture.²⁰

We want to take seriously the idea that trust is part and parcel of a social practice, or, rather, a wide range of social practices, which have particular application in business. To insist that we need to understand trust as a social practice is to say that we have to understand trust not as a "resource" but in terms of individual and collective activities and their presuppositions and skills. We do not think of trust as a skill or a practice, but this is a mistake. One learns to trust by trusting and that is how one gets good at trusting (which includes the knowledge of when not to trust). Trust(ing) is a social skill in much the same sense that communication, charm and salesmanship are social skills. They take practice (even if, as is obvious, they presume a "given" temperament—extrovert-introvert, charming-grumpy, trusting, distrustful). Trust(ing) is thus an **existential** concern, which is to say not only that it is urgent and important, but that it is first and foremost a matter of *personal responsibility*. This is not to deny the importance of trust in culture and in social life, of course, but it is to emphasize the fact that trust is, first of all, something that we create for ourselves, and for which we (individually and collectively) are responsible. Bemoaning the loss of trust or insisting on the need for trust is one thing: resolving to create or maintain that trust is something quite different and much more important. Creating and maintaining trust requires not silence and taking trust for granted but analysis and self-criticism. Quite the contrary of the "resource" and "medium" metaphors, trust requires articulation, understanding and continuing interpersonal action.

Trust as an Emotional Skill: Simple Trust, Blind Trust, Authentic Trust

To make trust into an economic resource, whether as "capital" or as a commodity, is to dehumanize it, to rob it of a good deal of its interpersonal significance. Our central point, accordingly, is that trust is very much our own doing, our own way of *being*. In particular, trust is essential to our emotional well-being. Distrust breeds disharmony and alienation, and extreme distrust—paranoia—is a pathology. By way of abbreviation, we might say that trust is itself **an emotion**, or, more accurately, an emotional phenomenon and part of an

emotional practice. So, too, love and moral indignation are distinctive emotional practices, shaped by our culture although clearly grounded in our basic biology. To say that trust is an emotional phenomenon is not to say that its significance is first of all “felt,” or that it is, like many (but emphatically not all) emotions, merely transient. Trust, like love and indignation, finds its significance in the bonds it creates (or, better, in the bonds we create through such emotions), and it is the very essence of trust, like love (but unlike indignation), that it is enduring. Nevertheless (as with love) it may be cut short, betrayed, interrupted, and, on occasion, it may be all too fleeting, usually because it has been foolish. But trust, like all emotions, is dynamic. It defines our relationships and our relationship—our “being tuned”—to the world. The “being tuned” to the world (German, *Bestimmen*) image comes from Martin Heidegger, who talked more about mood (*die Stimmung*) than emotion or “affect” (*Rührung, Gefühl, Affekt*).

The importance of understanding emotion as a dynamic embracing of the world (or some particular piece of it) is essential to our view of emotion in general and trust in particular.²¹ The contrast is the usual passivity picture of emotions as physiological interruptions of our lives that *happen to* us. Trust, in particular, is not something that simply happens, or is found or intuited. It is rather created through interaction and in the making of relationships. This is not to deny that there is an innate predisposition to trust, as evidenced so obviously in most babies, and it is compatible with the fact that trust may (tentatively) be established very quickly, within the first few minutes, of a relationship. But what this means is that we will have to be very careful how we talk about trust, careful that we do not collapse and confuse several very different phenomena.

Part of the problem with trust is that several very different forms of trust are conflated or confused, not only trust and trustworthiness (which are quite distinct if typically complementary phenomena), but trust in various forms and degrees of sophistication and articulation. We can and ought to distinguish **simple trust**, naive trust, trust as yet unchallenged, unquestioned (the faith of a well brought up child), **blind trust**, which is not actually naive but stubborn, obstinate, possibly even self-deluding, **basic trust**, which consists in the sense of physical and emotional security which most of us happily take for granted, which is most blatantly violated in war and in acts of random violence, and **authentic trust**, which is trust reflected upon, its risks and vulnerabilities understood, with **distrust** held in balance. (Distrust admits of similar distinctions and levels of sophistication.) Authentic trust, as opposed to simple trust, does not exclude or deny distrust but rather accepts it, even embraces it, but transcends it, absorbs it, overcomes it. With simple trust, one can always be surprised. The reasons for distrust are not even considered, much less taken seriously.

Authentic trust can be betrayed, of course, but it is a betrayal that was foreseen as a possibility. There is no denial or self-deception, as in blind trust. There is no naivete, as in simple trust. Authentic trust need not be opposed to basic trust, but when basic trust is violated authentic trust sees clearly what trust remains. Thus we might also distinguish **articulate trust**, trust articulated as belief.

It is obvious that there are trusting relationships among animals—and, even more obvious, between animals and people (notably between pets and their human caretakers). It is obvious that babies trust their primary caretakers, too. Simple trust, and much of basic trust too, is trust unarticulated, not “spelled out.” (This is why Lawrence Becker puts so much emphasis on the “non-cognitive” nature of trust, but by doing so he all but rules out articulate and therefore authentic trust from consideration.²²) Once trust is spelled out, all sorts of new possibilities arise. It can be examined. It can be specified. It can be turned into explicit agreements and contracts. The mistake is to think that such agreements and contracts *precede* or *establish* trust. There can, of course, be agreements and contracts in the absence of trust, typically with elaborate enforcement mechanisms. (This seems to be Russell Hardin’s cynical paradigm.²³) But it is just as much of a mistake to conflate all trust with articulate trust as it is to conflate all trust with simple or basic (inarticulate) trust. The emotional life of trusting relationships is much more intricate and humanly complex than either contracts and cognitive interactive strategies or “non-cognitive security about motives” would alone allow.

What we are suggesting is that while “trust” might well be used as a blanket term to cover all of these, trust is best conceived not as a singular phenomenon but as a fascinating family of phenomena, which may share a certain “optimism” and a certain vulnerability but, nevertheless, are very different, particularly in their relation to distrust. If trust is a kind of optimism, as Jones suggests, then distrust can be seen as a kind of pessimism. It should also be clear that trust and distrust, while “opposites,” are contraries and not contradictories: one can neither trust nor distrust but simply remain indifferent, or agnostic, or avoid specific vulnerabilities altogether. (There is a popular ideology, however, that would champion the avoidance of interpersonal vulnerabilities altogether, in the name of total “independence.” We think that this is a myth, and a dangerous one, a pathological extension of what is generally referred to as “individualism.” But whether or not such independence is desirable, it is rarely possible. One can avoid specific vulnerabilities most of the time, but one cannot avoid vulnerabilities.) But trust and distrust are not exclusive either. One can have both at once, and a denial of this not only contradicts familiar experience but betrays a false and oversimplified view of emotions.²⁴ We can and do have “mixed feelings.” Sometimes, one feeling “triumphs” over another, sometimes not. Sometimes, we can *make* one feeling “triumph” over another, sometimes we cannot. In authentic trust, we do succeed in making our trust dominate our distrust, although this is not to say that the trust is therefore well-placed. Even authentic trust can be misplaced, mistaken, or, as in John Le Carré novels, just plain wrong.

Simple trust is a primitive emotional attitude that is devoid of distrust. Indeed, the absence of distrust is what makes it so “simple.” A baby once dropped, abused or left alone for an excessive amount of time already loses the simple trust it is born with. A dog tripped over hastily checks out the tripper to see if he or she is friend or foe, and if the trip was a kick or other act of malevolence. And yet, simple trust is often treated in much the same way as what George Santayana

called "animal faith."²⁵ Blind trust denies the very possibility of distrust, despite all of the evidence that this or that person is not to be trusted. Blind trust, therefore, has much in common with self-deception, and shares many of the same problems. In a larger frame, however, we might note that the obstinacy and "blindness" to alternative evidence so characteristic of blind trust is not at all uncommon in strong emotions in general. Anger, notably, has its own obstinacy and willful blindness (and this is even before we get anywhere so extreme as in "blind rage.") Anger, it can be argued, sets up a kind of courtroom scenario, in which the prosecution gets almost all of the attention and the outcome, as in the Red Queen's Court, is more or less determined from the outset.²⁶ It is because of this resistance or refusal of evidence or non-biased consideration that anger is often called "irrational," but it is important to appreciate just how much rationality is involved in such emotions. Quite the contrary of incoherent, inconsistent thinking, emotions such as anger are remarkably unified in their purpose, so much so that one would not be wrong in considering them, as Jean-Paul Sartre does in an early work, as *strategies*.²⁷ This is what is so very wrong about setting up a false conflict, as Larry Becker does in his essay, between cognitive strategies and non-cognitive attitudes. Emotions *are* strategies, even if they are inarticulate. Such strategies can be articulated, of course, but it is equally a mistake to think that by thereby being brought into the proper realm of rationality, they are no longer emotions. Quite the contrary, some of the most articulate strategies are expressions of the sharpest emotions, for example, in caustic resentment or in moral indignation.

Basic trust is more intriguingly complex than simple trust, although the two are often fused. Basic trust is what Becker emphasizes in his stress on security, but this is multiply ambiguous and by no means is limited to other people's motives. Basic trust is indeed a sense of security, but what counts as security depends on the domain and context of the trust. For example, the truly most basic consideration is freedom from physical harm. For most of us, for most of our lives, this trust is taken pretty much for granted. As infants, we did not fear that our parents would drop us (even when our doting fathers tossed us over their heads—it was the smile that made it alright.) As children, we were told to avoid but not to fear strangers. As adults, we assumed our physical safety on our jobs, at home, even on the streets, with only rare and mercifully brief exceptions. In wartime, of course, such happy presumptions go by the wayside. It remains to be seen what long-term affect the violence in our schools will have on our children, or what effect the new breed of random, aimless violence in our communities will have on our general sense of trust and justice. But what we should not precipitously conclude is that the end of simple, basic trust, that is, the end of taking trust for granted in the most basic matters of security, marks the end of trust. As evidenced in wartime and times of shared emergencies, that may be precisely when trust becomes most palpable, precisely because it has been articulated and called into question.

Insofar as the matters of basic security are taken for granted, basic trust and simple trust coincide. One might even hesitate to say that they are emotions. The

overall attitude is rather a lack of emotions, lack of fear, in particular. Both simple trust and basic trust involve "taking for granted," the difference between them being that in simple trust (e.g., trust in a baby or a very young child, or, perhaps, a puppy) the possibility of danger or maltreatment is not even imaginable, whereas in basic trust (appropriate in adults and, perhaps, in a well-cared for dog) the possibility of danger or maltreatment is clearly imaginable but not emotionally active. (Consider walking down the street and simply thinking, "On streets such as this one, bad things sometimes happen to people" as opposed to walking down the street, fearful for one's safety.) Thus both simple trust and basic trust might well be characterized as the absence of emotion, again, the absence of fear, in particular. But this is probably a mistake, thinking that the absence of strong emotion is the same as a lack of emotion. Here is where Heidegger's notion of "being tuned" becomes particularly important. There are any number of ways of being open to and engaged in the world. Only some of them are as focussed and as excited as a typical bout of anger or indignation. Trust, in particular, is virtually never like this. It is always a general "being tuned," even when its object is quite specific (e.g., trusting Jones to lock the door when he leaves.) But if we take simple, basic trust as our paradigm, as Becker does, then we will surely get a distorted view of what trust is. Perhaps trust is never so "intense" as anger or indignation, but to assume that it is necessarily simple and not strategic is to misunderstand the most dramatic cases of trust and trustworthiness.

Articulate trust, trust "spelled out," becomes an *issue*. The question becomes, "trust or distrust." Trust is no longer taken for granted. Authentic trust, then, is an articulate emotional attitude that has wholly taken into account the arguments for distrust and has nevertheless thrown itself on the side of trust. How this "throwing" takes place is a topic that we shall try to address here, for it lies at the heart of creating (as opposed to simply having) trust. What we want to emphasize is the importance of that form of trust, authentic trust, which survives and transcends the end of simple or even of basic trust and is a willful emotional attitude constituted as much by doubts and uncertainty as confidence. Simple trust may be a kind of paradigm (for instance, for Baier and Becker), but simple trust can easily be naive, uninformed, taken in. Blind trust can be downright foolish, even tragic, for example, in the much-discussed case of Othello.²⁸ But authentic trust embraces distrust and involves the willful overcoming of it. Authentic trust differs from blind trust in its acceptance of the evidence for distrust, although it is similar in that it ultimately insists on trust nevertheless.²⁹ It is authentic trust that we want to promote, obviously, as the kind of trust—unlike simple trust—that can most obviously be created or, in the case of loss, restored. And it is obviously the sort of trust that is necessary in business and in business ethics.

Consider a non-basic form of security, the sort of security that bears that name, "security," an interestingly ambiguous word. A security is both property deposited as a pledge, something that secures, and an investment, a financial instrument, for example, a share of stock or a bond. No matter how naive the

investor, the presumption is that a good deal of consideration and attention has gone into the investment, and while trust is involved on many levels, basic trust is rarely an issue. (Investors have been figuratively mugged by their brokers, perhaps, but rarely literally.) Babies have basic, simple trust. Investors are supposed to have articulate, authentic trust. Business is shot through with this demand, from "Caveat Emptor" ("Buyer beware") to the presumption of understanding and the absence of coercion that underlies every business contract. Again, the contract must be seen as secondary, trust as primary, but here we are clearly talking not about naive, unblinking trust but well-considered, authentic trust in which the risks and liabilities have been well thought-out and accepted.

The idea that trust and distrust are exclusive, in the business context, makes no sense whatever. Simple trust may be out of place in business, but it is a mistake for "hard-headed" businesspeople to conclude that trust is inappropriate as well. Blind trust is downright foolish, a paradigm of bad (or no) business sense, and basic trust is rarely relevant, except in the sense that we must trust our basic financial institutions to function (more or less) normally. Every business deal involves risk, and, so, every business deal involves some form of (usually limited) vulnerability. What makes it "business" is (more or less) wise choice in trusting and distrusting, but this can only be authentic trust, articulate trust that has already transcended simple trust and is well aware of the risks and vulnerabilities, also known as "the market."

Like most emotional phenomena, trust is generated out of and in relationships. It does not simply precede them. It is not "either there or it isn't," as background, to be taken for granted. In particular, trust is generated in dialogue, by way of expectations, understandings, promises, demands and dependencies. Again, this is not to say—as so many social analyses too quickly conclude—that trust is an "agreement" or an informal (or formal) "contract." But it is a dynamic relationship, in which not only speech but pre- and nonverbal behavior of many varieties are instrumental. (Think of the familiar and complex relationship between eye contact and trust.) Trust is not just the emotional attitude of an individual, although, of course, it is this too. The mistake here is akin to one that is prevalent in discussions about love, a kindred emotion. Love is too often discussed as an emotional attitude one person has for another (which may or may not be reciprocated). There is something obviously right about this, but what gets left out is love as a relationship, not only between two people but also *within* the emotions of each of them, as part of their essential structure. We would argue that trust is structurally a lot like love, even if it is also (obviously) different. In the context of business, this is not a point we would care to push very hard.³⁰ What is important here is to get away from the solipsistic view that trust and love (and emotions in general) are processes or states in individuals' minds or "heads" rather than relationships between them in the social world. (Even where there is delusion, as in blind trust, the trust is a function of the relationship—whatever that may be—and not merely the mistaken or self-deceptive thoughts of the deluded trustor.) The ontology here is more complex

than we can discuss here, but the “political” nature of emotions is an essential feature of their dynamics.³¹ It is because trust is engendered in relationships, and not just “in the head” of the trustor, that it can be systematically created and destroyed. Personal “affirmations” may occasionally do wonders in strengthening one’s confidence (in oneself or in another), but conversations, commitments and commitments fulfilled do far, far more.

Trust In Dynamic Relationships

Trust is created in relationships, it does not precede them. Obviously, trust may precede any *particular* relationship, but we do not form relationships only with people we already trust. Trust in most human relationships develops and continues to develop throughout the relationship. We usually assume basic trust, that is, we do not enter into most relationships concerned about our physical safety and well-being. Simple trust is not usually so routine, since most relationships that really matter—romantic relationships and important business alliances, for example—typically include at least a modicum of suspicion and distrust, and the development of the relationship is, from one perspective, the incremental (and occasionally dramatic) overcoming of that suspicion and distrust. Even when the trust is established and can be taken for granted, the memory and the aura of residual doubts and distrust remain, which means, to be a bit overdramatic, perhaps, that trust can never rest.

Although trust is not a “medium” for relationships, as Fukuyama and Barber suggest, the trust established in one relationship or—more generally—in a culture, a community or an institution may appear to act as a “medium” in much the same way that a couple’s love may, for certain purposes, be treated as a medium in which their particular transactions take place. In any civilized society, at least most of the time, basic trust acts as such a medium, from a feeling of safety walking down a strange street or unanxiously eyeing an approaching stranger to the ordinary shopping transaction. But “medium” here is misleading as a way of referring to a dynamic process that has become mutual and routine and has receded into the background. But, again, trust should not be taken for granted, and it is not taking it for granted that makes it authentic, even when it has become “second nature” in the relationship and no longer a matter of active concern. Of course, in any good relationship, trust will fade into the background and be taken for granted for substantial periods of time. In a healthy “high trust” culture, trust may also fade into the background and be taken for granted as simply part of or even definitive of that culture. But trust is not an inert substance, a concrete foundation, “ground,” nor a more ethereal “atmosphere.” Trust is part of the dynamics of a relationship (or a culture), even when it seems to be not dynamic or “in play” at all. Even in its “taken for granted” state, trust is being increased or decreased, created or destroyed.

In particular, trust is created (and damaged) through dialogue, in conversation, by way of promises, commitments, offers, demands, expectations, explicit and tacit understandings. It is through such dialogue and conversation, including

the rather one-way conversation of advertising, that producers make the nature and quality of their products known, that professionals and companies make their services and the abilities known, that expectations get initiated and intensified. This is not to say that trust is entirely linguistic, the product of promises and expectations verbally created. There is a good deal of trust embodied in our mere physical presence to one another, in our gestures, looks, smiles, handshakes and touches. Animals (especially "social" animals) have enormously complex trust relationships, often highly competitive at the same time, as any casual observation of two or more dogs (or wolves) together will confirm. Nor is the emphasis on dialogue and conversation suggested to imply—as so many social analyses too quickly conclude—that trust is an "agreement" or a "contract" (formal or informal). Contracts, too, are too static (although the negotiation of them, and negotiation out of them, may be dynamic indeed). Nor should trust be understood *primarily* in terms of limited or momentary interactions or transaction—or any number of them. Analyses of trust too often take as their paradigm either the intimate of relationships—mother and child, husband and wife or lovers—or the most casual of them—notably, the one-shot business deal (for example, buying gas on the Interstate), or, the repeated one-shot business deal (buying gas at the same station on the way back down the Interstate). An interaction—even repeated interaction—is not yet a relationship, although, obviously, such repeated exchanges—and, occasionally, even a single one, can easily turn into one. A relationship is not simply the banal ontological status of "two things in relation to one another" (e.g., "to the left of") nor is it the vacuous sociological category of "two people interacting." A relationship is by its very nature ongoing and dynamic, in which one of the central concerns of the relationship is the relationship itself, its status and identity and, consequently, the status and identity of each and all of its members. Trust is an essential and "existential" dimension of that dynamic relationship.

This is not to deny the obvious, that we can and sometimes must trust or put our trust in strangers. When I stop at a store in a strange town, I trust that the melons are not rotten, that the coffee or the fruit juice in the open dispensers is not poisoned, that the change I receive is not counterfeit, and so on. But let us not trivialize the notion of "relationship" by reducing it to any interaction whatever, or, in the case of strangers with whom we are not engaged, non-interaction. Basic trust, particularly insofar as it consists in trust that one will be left alone and not, for example, attacked in the street, does not presuppose the existence of a relationship. Nevertheless, we should distinguish between those forms of trust that extend to strangers and others with whom we have no ongoing relationship and those forms of trust that are selective, even exclusive, and particular to relationships. It is not that these will have nothing in common, but basic trust is "basic" just because it precedes not only any particular relationship but all relationships (within a certain domain). For example, when I touch down at the airport of an unfamiliar city, my basic sense of trust—which, to be sure, varies from Auckland to La Guardia to Bogotá—that trust precedes even my first encounters

(with customs, with baggage handlers, with taxi drivers) there. But, presumably, it does not precede all such encounters anywhere. I have been to an airport, or at least public thoroughfares, before.

Our discussion of trust, for the most part, focuses on trust as it functions in relationships, what Jones less committedly calls "interpersonal trust."³² It is a mistake, we think, to confuse such "interpersonal trust" with the sporadic interactions or transactions that game theorists, in particular, like to talk about. "Interpersonal trust" means an ongoing (even if possibly brief) mutually concerned dynamic of some significance. (Indeed, in the popular social sciences, a "relationship" is distinguished precisely by its importance, however disguised by the euphemism.) The significance turns on the **vulnerability of the self** in relationships. To be sure, one may be vulnerable in a momentary, isolated transaction (say, on a street corner with an aggressive stranger, or at an unknown eatery miles off the Freeway), but it is systematic vulnerability that is at stake in trust relationships. Whatever other vulnerabilities may be at stake (one's job, the next election, substantial amounts of money, the success of the business, the good opinions of the betrothed's family) it is the **self** that is in some danger. Relationships, as opposed to mere exchanges, transactions and interactions, involve vulnerabilities of the self.

Of course, questions about what is to count as the self makes this distinction problematic, since one can sufficiently identify with one's job, one's office, with one's wealth, with one's business, and, of course, with one's family, such that any danger to these things is a danger to self as well. What we are trying to do is to force some distinction, however "fuzzy," between exchanges, transactions and interactions that only minimally involve the self and, consequently, require minimal trust, and those that involve something more, in which the self and its vulnerabilities enters in necessarily. To be sure, as soon as an exchange, transaction or interaction takes on the additional dimension of a promise or a commitment, it may become a relationship. Thus if one buys an item at the market and pays cash, that is a mere transaction. As soon as one orders it for delivery later or, perhaps, pays by promissory note, takes it back to complain or follow through with another order, it starts to become a (mini-)relationship. What is important here is not the precise boundary between exchanges, transactions and interactions, on the one hand, and relationships on the other so much as the nature of the difference between them. Relationships are *involved* in a way that exchanges, transactions and interactions are not. This is not to deny the fact that relationships sometimes consist for the most part of exchanges, transactions and interactions or that there are exchanges, transactions and interactions that readily become relationships, for example, with the friendly neighborhood grocer after just a few weeks of regular shopping.

Trust in human relationships, at any rate, is largely developed through dialogue and in conversation. Again, this is not to deny the importance of nonverbal cues and it is certainly not to deny the significance of actions performed. But it is a way of focusing on the dynamic through which most human relationships

build and occasionally destroy trust, by way of promises, commitments, requests and offers. Various assertions and ascriptions are crucial to trust, of course, notably descriptions of one's intentions and one's abilities. If a lawyer says, "I know real estate law, I think you have a winnable case, and I have the time to take it on for you," she is not just stating some truths for you to think about but establishing hopes, expectations, and confidence that encourage and solicit your trust. In other words, she is making an offer, with an implied (if qualified) promise, and, consequently, a commitment to you. One readily expects a series of demands will then follow. What we have in mind is that broad view of language that has come down to us as "speech act theory," whose application we want to greatly expand to encompass not only the usual examples (promise-making, christening, marriage vows) but to go the heart of our relationships *before* the more formal commitments are made.³³

Although the exchange of information obviously provokes questions of trust: Is the information accurate? Is the bearer of the information trustworthy?—the more important source of concern about trust involves those speech acts that J. L. Austin called "performatives," such as promising, requesting, and getting married. Of course, such speech acts do not only depend on language. They also depend on the context and circumstances surrounding the speech act and the totality of behavior of the speaker. One cannot get married, for example, except in the (ever more lenient) context of an appropriate civil or religious authority, together with another person and the assumption that neither of you is already married. One cannot readily make a promise in a context of fictional and ironic dialogue, for instance, in a stage play, where the words "I promise" are just part of the performance, not a "performative" in Austin's sense. And body language, pre- and nonverbal behavior is relevant and sometimes definitive too. A person who rolls his or her eyes while promising or, more sneakily, crosses his or her fingers, undermines the promise, indicating that it is not to be taken seriously. Indeed, the familiar and complex relationship between eye contact and trust is central here. It is simply false that one can tell that a person is untrustworthy if he or she is unable or unwilling to look you in the eyes, but there is no doubt that some much more complex connection exists between truthfulness, trustworthiness and the ability to look one in the eye. Eye contact (and the rejection of eye contact) between wolves and dogs and other pack animals is illustrative of the complex trust relationships that are possible on a non- or preverbal level. Posture, for instance, is an important but rarely appreciated ingredient in mutual trust, as a cowering dog makes painfully clear. People don't usually cower, except on the stage, but even a casual observation of bosses and subordinates, husbands and wives, teachers and students, reveals many more subtle but equally telling gestures.

Trust in business is especially focussed on speech acts, but it is equally important to realize how much trust between people who work together, often for long hours, depend on routine and unremarkable gestures and postures, indicating respect of one another's "space," for instance, or that slightly overdrawn

look that spells suspicion or distrust. A great deal of focus is placed on such questions as who comes through on their large, important commitments and who does not, but in terms of everyday working trust—and consequently, trust regarding those large, important commitments—what is just as important but often overlooked are all of those small but indicative acts of commitment which are too easily taken for granted or not taken seriously at all. The members of a department show up fifteen, twenty minutes late for a meeting scheduled “promptly” at three o’clock. Does that not already tell us something profound about their attitudes towards their own commitments and obligations? Do we really need to “test” them by giving them a big assignment, when they cannot even walk down the hall on time?

To say that trust is borne in and of relationships and through speech acts is important because this view makes trust much less mysterious than the usual view of trust as unanalyzed “ground” or “atmosphere.” Trust is the **result** of interactions within relationships (or in a culture or between cultures). We can readily appreciate how this works if we consider, for example, the coming together of two people in courtship and marriage, or simply in a friendship, or in a business relationship. Two people meet, each of them with a lifetime of experience and “baggage,” including their dependent relationships with their parents and possibly siblings, including their prior relationships and any number of vicarious relationships through novels, movies, friends and acquaintances. They may both be “trusting,” or they may not, or, just as often, one is trusting and one not. In the last case, it will probably fall to the more trusting to “win” the trust of the other. How does that happen? Any two-bit love story gives us a clue. What does not happen is that trust is established in a sort of default position to begin with, good until violated. There are many people who think this way, of course, which makes certain scenarios more or less self-fulfilling. That is, believing that trust is established means that it need not be “worked” for, and believing that betrayal is the end of trust means that any perceived betrayal does indeed mean the end of the relationship, because it immediately becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not working to increase trust is itself a decision about trust, an abnegation of responsibility, and the decision to end the relationship because of a betrayal is not brought about by the end of trust. It is rather a decision to stop trusting (by ending the relationship).

Every relationship, no matter how “easy,” proceeds by supposition, trial and error. One person is punctual and expects the same of the other, who is habitually late. The reason may be overscheduling, or a casual indifference to time, or the false belief that one ought to be a fraction late for all non-work-related appointments. The explanation does not matter. (Indeed, if or when the tardy person begins to explain his or her lateness, that is in itself a new development in the relationship, and not necessarily a positive one.) The punctual person, on the other hand, silently simmers, sooner or later coming to expect the other to be late. Coming to expect the other person to be late ends the period of dashed expectations (now the punctual person makes it a point to have a good book

while waiting), but that period of anger and frustration is replaced by another, potentially more damaging. The late arrivals, now expected, are seen not as irresponsibility but as disrespect, or even as contempt. Trust, accordingly, is eroded. The lateness begins to poison the relationship. For some time, the perpetually tardy person does not realize that his or her behavior is not only discourteous but trust-destroying. Depending on the relationship, the outspokenness of the punctual person and the sensitivity of the tardy person, this period may be protracted. But once the conflict is aired (which might be provoked by excuses on the part of the tardy person), the dynamic changes. It becomes mutual, a problem to be solved, in place of two independent behavior patterns that have resulted in unintended conflict. A conversation leads to a concrete program, a new resolve, on the part of the tardy person, to be on time. It may or may not lead to a promise, an explicit commitment, but it is clear that the conversation as such amounts to a commitment of sorts. Future tardiness will now be viewed as betrayal, a serious and direct violation. On the other hand, future punctuality may well be rewarded, if only by a word of praise or an extra gesture of affection. The resulting collaboration converts the former source of distrust into a strong source of trust, as the tardy person's effort to overcome old habits in sole consideration of the feelings of the punctual person is appreciated.

Or, it may be up to the person who expects and demands punctuality to adjust. There are, to be sure, more and less important commitments. Once the tardy person has explained his or her difficulty meeting the other's expectations and schedule, it may well be more appropriate for the latter to adjust to the former rather than the other way around, or, some combination of both. What is important is that the problem is mutually recognized and "worked through," by way of a series of understandings and renewed commitments, including, perhaps, the commitment not to take the scheduling so seriously.

This example may seem trivial and insignificant, but trust in relationships is built out of such "trivia," such routine everyday making and keeping of promises and commitments. Philosophers seem to love talking about adultery and sexual infidelity.³⁴ But business relationships offer more practical if only because more routine and less traumatic examples. To think that trust in a marriage amounts to the absence of such flagrant violations only feeds the view that trust is an established "foundation" which can simply be taken for granted and is not in general in dynamic equilibrium. So, too, to think that trust in business is simply based on the absence of flagrant violations of trust feeds the view that trust can simply be taken for granted and is not the subject of continuous negotiation. But we want to suggest that trust is continually under negotiation, whether explicit and articulated or not. Trust in any relationship is built out of (and destroyed in) routine frustrations, promises and commitments. Indeed, one way of understanding relationships is by understanding the importance and the intensity of these everyday and ongoing encounters, like going to the same store or dealing with the same administrator everyday.

Recent philosophy sometimes talks in grandiose terms of "teleology" and "shared values," but paying attention to our own relationships seems to show

that such grand concepts are often secondary to the primary importance of working together and mutually adjusting to expectations and demands. Couples function harmoniously despite considerable differences in political ideology or religion. The surprising but successful marriage between Mary Matlin, chief campaign strategist for the Bush presidential 1992 campaign, and James Carville, chief Clinton strategist in the same election, is but one of many examples. They had not only opposed but urgently competitive jobs. They needed to keep secrets from one another and played serious tricks on the other side. But the marriage depended not on this so much as on the routine promises and commitments that every couple makes and lives with. It is in being conscientious to "trivia" that trust becomes generated. So, too, in business relationships, suspicion, distrust and dissolution usually follow not the grand betrayal (by which time a hundred smaller infidelities should have been evident) but those small infidelities and infelicities themselves.

Conscientious habits regarding trivia readily become conscientious habits regarding the most major matters. In the military, it is not anal compulsiveness that leads sergeants to insist on mirror-shine spit polish on the boots of their recruits. It is the secure knowledge that soldiers who are conscientious about the details of their appearance because of the demands of their superiors will become equally conscientious in their dealings with military authority in matters much weightier, when lives are on the line. Business relationships show much the same logic, this logic of "trivial" promises and commitments. At a major Manhattan bank, for example, bank officers who are caught in even the smallest infraction are fired, not because of the seriousness of the infraction itself, but because such behavior is corrosive of trust. Executives who worry how they can improve trust in the corporation and limit their attention to grand compensation schemes, profit-sharing programs, for example, are missing the obvious. Employees are not so much upset by the astounding differential between executive salaries and their own (averaging 160:1 in 1995, up from 34:1 in 1974³⁵) as they are by seemingly minor disappointments of reasonable expectations. A bonus program is announced in January; in November, its terms are altered. A disruptive and unproductive assistant manager is promoted only because he is a friend of the Vice-President. The company Christmas Party is cancelled to save money. For all of the proper commotion about "down-sizing," distrust in corporate America is arguably as provoked by "trivia" as by the disruptions that make the headlines.³⁶

The upshot of this discussion, although its "proof" requires a more extensive, detailed analysis of the dynamics of trust (and distrust), is that trust, particularly in business and in business ethics, should not be viewed as a "given" or as something so ethereal as an "atmosphere" or so concrete and established once and for all as a "medium. Trust is the *product* of our relationships. Unlike matter and energy, it can be both created and destroyed. It is not, in the usual passive sense, a mere *phenomenon*, something that *appears*. Neither is it a passion, insofar as that term has come down to us to mark off something suffered, something that

happens to us. Our views of trust too often share in this passivity, as view trust as a blessing we are fortunate to have, or which can be taken for granted, or an advantage which, once lost, cannot be regained. That, of course, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, which is then mistaken for an obvious truth. But together we are, if not masters or captains, then at least the oarsmen of our fate.

On Whether Trust And Trustworthiness Can Be "Willed"

Central to our theme of "creating trust" is the idea that trust is indeed something that we are responsible for. Russell Hardin, for one, is utterly dismissive of any such idea.³⁷ That trustworthiness might be a matter of willing is a bit of "psychological nonsense."³⁸ He adds, "Hobbes and many others ridicule such willing. As Hobbes noted, there is nothing that keeps me from changing my mind if there is only my own will to motivate me.... This seems so overwhelmingly correct a view that there is little point in exploring the possibility of direct willing of trustworthiness."³⁹ Hardin thus dismisses one of the central obsessions of Western philosophy, from the earliest stories of the Hebrew Bible to the philosophy currently called "existentialism," the importance of "one's own [and God's own] word."

Karen Jones is mercifully less dogmatic, but she claims, "Because trust involves an affective attitude, it is not something that one can adopt at will."⁴⁰ The question of whether one can adopt an emotional attitude "at will," however, is by no means obvious, and one might suggest that making a commitment—making a promise, for example, including a "promise to oneself"—is exactly what we mean by adopting an emotional attitude. As she goes on, however, she modifies this claim: "trust cannot be demanded in the absence of ground.... we can't just decide to believe regardless of the evidence." Well, people do, and when they do so in the realm of religion we do not consider it inappropriate or "irrational." Where many emotions are concerned, "leaps of faith" (or whatever) are not at all uncommon. Getting angry, for example, often involves leaping beyond the available evidence, typically with a foregone conclusion or even an ulterior motive in mind.⁴¹ Love, certainly, often proceeds on the basis of belief without evidence, and trust, we have suggested, bears several similarities to love. But Jones modifies her claim still further. She says that "while trust cannot be willed, it can be cultivated,... by a selective focus of attention toward the grounds for trust and away from the grounds for distrust."⁴² She then acknowledges that trust "gives rise to beliefs that are highly resistant to evidence," and one wonders why she will not acknowledge that trust is also created not only in the face of but on the basis of beliefs that are highly resistant to evidence.

We believe, on the contrary, that the willfulness of trust and trustworthiness lies at the very foundation of the issues discussed here. Hardin's dismissal of any such notion in favor of "external constraints" strikes us as contrary to the very idea of trust and an exemplary case of what Jean-Paul Sartre called "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*), a refusal to acknowledge one's responsibilities.⁴³ Lady Ukifune in Masakawa's *Genji* (Hardin's example) is hardly showing weakness

of will when she shaves her head and debases herself before her community, thus making a retreat from her commitment to the religious life impossible.⁴⁴ The fact that she takes these steps is not only to assure her commitment by adding external constraints but, at least as important, it is part of the expression of that commitment itself. It is fair to say that any commitment of any interest brings with it its own sanctions, not only a sense of guilt and shame in the face of failure but the loss of some more particular personal "face" which was very likely the reason for putting the commitment in play in the first place.

Hardin presses the importance of institutional sanctions, and, in general, external constraints. This seems exactly wrong. Trust and trustworthiness are relevant precisely where there is an absence or inadequacy of such sanctions. I may say that I trust you not to steal my books because I will have you arrested or that I trust you not to steal my ideas because I will sue the pants off you, but my use of the word "trust" is surely ironic in those contexts. It is when I cannot or will not do anything by way of having you punished or sanctioning you that I give you my trust, although, to be sure, I do not therefore *have* to give it to you. I could keep my eye on you every minute, ready to run with my possessions. I could simply sit here in terror, or perhaps well armed, an attack dog or my attorney at my side. But probably the most prudent thing for me to do would be to trust you, and at the same time tell you that I am trusting you, thus making your knowledge of my trust part of the circumstances in which you will then be motivated to be trustworthy. Karen Jones collapses this dynamic into a single phenomenon, such that the trusting and the projected expectation of being trusted are one and the same. They are not. It is one thing for me to trust you. It something more for me to tell you I am trusting you, and something more again for you to be trustworthy because you know I trust you as opposed to merely being trustworthy because that is how you are or, more to the point, how you choose to be. You need not know that I trust you, and whether or not you are trustworthy (with regard to me) is quite independent of what you know or think about me. Indeed, it is my telling you that I trust you, *not my trusting you*, that may well be interpreted as unwarranted or unwanted pressure, as an imposition, as coercion, even if my trusting you (and your knowledge that I trust you) is unproblematic.

But none of this yet answers the question, whether trust and trustworthiness can be willed. One might admit the secondary nature of external sanctions to trust and trustworthiness and yet insist that trust and trustworthiness cannot be willed. Jones qualifies this significantly when she, and then Hardin too, suggest that, nevertheless, trust and trustworthiness can be *cultivated*. The difference here is interesting and important. It is a point often made, nowadays, about the voluntariness of emotions. On the one side is the traditional view of emotions as "passions," that is, as things that happen to us.⁴⁵ On the other side, Jean-Paul Sartre has forcefully insisted that such a view is exemplary of "bad faith." Such *mauvaise foi* allows us to make excuses for attitudes and behavior which ought to be acknowledged as our responsibility. More recently, Robert Solomon has similarly taken the strong view that emotions should be understood as strategies,

as choices, as explicitly "willful."⁴⁶ (Nothing should be read into this somewhat archaic phrase, which does not presuppose any strange Kantian entity called "the Will.") According to the traditional view, emotions cannot be willed. According to the opposing view, emotions are or at any rate can be willed, although what this means is not entirely clear. The "cultivation thesis" attempts to develop a middle ground between the two, insisting that we are responsible for our emotions but, nevertheless, they cannot be understood as "willed." The familiar analogy is to Aristotle, who in the *Nicomachean Ethics* argued that a man may not have control over his action while he is drunk, but he is, nevertheless, responsible for having gotten drunk and, more fundamentally for having cultivated a vice instead of a virtue.⁴⁷ He is therefore responsible for his drunken actions as well.

Heidegger also takes a middle ground, but without resorting to "cultivation." Heidegger's language, admittedly obscure, has the virtue of adopting a stance strategically ambiguous between voluntaristic and "happening" imagery. Indeed, the realm of the mental has too long been forcefully partitioned by a philosophical "green line" between straightforwardly "willable" deliberate intentional actions and purely victim-status passive experiences. But much of our mental life is not so clearly one or the other, which is why Nietzsche can so famously and insightfully say, "A thought comes when it will, not when I will." To be sure, we are happy to take credit for our thoughts, or, at least for most of them. (Those we wish to disown we now attribute to the Unconscious, or, in New Age philosophy, to voices not our own.) But it is not at all clear that we normally "will" thoughts, nor is it entirely clear what it means to do so. To be sure, we can decide to think of Buenos Aires, or to recall a quotation from Borges, but it is not at all clear that we simply "will" these *de nihilo*. Not only do such thoughts require some modicum of knowledge beforehand, but a different kind of complexity comes into view when we think about breakdowns, an inability to form an image or to recall what one knows that one knows. ("It is right there on the tip of my tongue. I just can't quite get at it.") This seems especially so of our emotions. One can decide to love—or not to love, one can decide to get angry—or not get angry, one can decide to grieve—or to stop grieving, but all such efforts are insecure and depend on the circumstances and one's state of mind more generally. Deciding to love, for example, is to decide to adopt a certain way of looking at and thinking about someone. Needless to say, anyone will not do, and it is hopeless to make such a decision with someone with whom there is little attraction or compatibility. But the real mistake is in thinking that a single decision, a single commitment, will do the job. Most decisions, most commitments, depend not on a single initiating act but on a continuing sequence of acts, many of them reciprocal with another person (especially in trust, or in love).

So, too, one can choose to make oneself lovable, by adopting a certain role, making certain gestures, and so on. One can both choose to make oneself trusting and choose to make oneself trustworthy. This cannot be done *de nihilo*, in the absence of evidence, etc., but one can leap over the evidence nevertheless.

Every instance of trust, like every instance of faith, is a "leap." The circumstances have to be right, one's frame of mind has to be right, but one can act to alter circumstances and one can act to alter one's frame of mind. Cultivation and commitment go together here. Trusting is not just doing something which will cause us to have certain emotions, nor is being trustworthy entangling ourselves in constraints and sanctions such that, whatever we THEN choose, it is out of our hands. Being trustworthy is by its very nature being able to breach the trust, and where and when one can no longer do so, the question of trust and trustworthiness is no longer relevant.

We think that the puzzle over "willfulness" and the harsh choice between voluntariness and passivity depends upon an obstinate refusal to look closely at cases and a refusal to give up on inadequate but long-standing dichotomies. So long as the argument remains abstract, the false dichotomy between what is willed and what is not will continue to haunt us. But when we consider cases—Hardin's literary examples of Wagner's Alderich and Lady Ukifune will do—this "either/or" is no longer very plausible. Every commitment is riddled with both "given" circumstances and possibilities, "facticity" and "transcendence." Consider a particularly difficult example: quitting smoking. Unlike most examples of emotion, certainly including trust and even Alderich's lust, the craving to smoke is clearly beyond voluntary control. But would we ever say that smoking or not smoking is not a choice, that the commitment to quit, on the basis of "resolve" alone, is "preposterous"? Hardly. We understand perfectly well both the difficulty of seeing such a commitment through and the inescapable need to insist on responsibility. To be sure, a dramatic announcement alone will do. A smoker who simply declares his resolve to quit, like Alderich with his dramatic fore-swearing of love, may not be convincing. And when we add the enormity of the stakes involved—a longer, healthier life in one case, the gold and power of the Rheingold in the other—we are still not convinced. The disjunctions between the agent's beliefs and the resolve, and between the stakes and the resolve, are not to be so easily bridged. Resolve is not just cultivation, but a continuing series of difficult and painful decisions, "one day" (or one hour) at a time. There is nothing preposterous about Alderich's resolve (much less the least credible incident in the whole of Wagner's *Ring*⁴⁸), nor is there anything preposterous about a friend who tries, for the *n*th time, to quit smoking. The craving is a given. The decision, competing as it may with the whole of a person's history, seems like pure will. But to understand the phenomenon takes both some close looking, and more importantly some empathy with both human heroism and weaknesses. Hardin seems to recognize the weaknesses. But the idea of making oneself trustworthy, or even of seeing through one's commitments without coercion, seems to escape him.⁴⁹

Why are we concerned with trust? The reason for talking about trust in the first place is not just that trust needs to be analyzed as a philosophical concept but also that *trust can thereby be created and restored*. Not talking about trust, on the other hand, can result in continuing distrust. Trust, whether it involves

social or institutional constraints and sanctions or not, is not simply a matter of individual psychology ("character") or, more generally, of human nature. It presents us with an **existential** dilemma, one captured well by Fichte, who insisted that "the sort of philosophy one adopts depends on the kind of [person] one is." We should by now be tired of the once-bold but now pathological cynicism borrowed from Hobbes, et al, that employs natural human weakness and even "rationality" to explain or excuse irresponsible behavior. At risk of being outrageous, let us say, *What we believe is that philosophy makes a difference*. Believing in the viability of human commitments is the necessary first step in making ourselves trustworthy, and it is the presupposition of trusting as well. To dismiss such commitments in the absence of sufficient constraints is not just pessimistic or cynical, much less "realistic," but revealing. If someone truly refused to believe in trust and trustworthiness except as probable self-advancing moves in life according to game theory, we would not trust him or her to return a book to the library, except, perhaps, with a written contract, a list of assets and a good lawyer. Robert Frank has done some marvelous *ad hominem* empirical research in which he has found that economists, who believe as a matter of profession that people act in their own self interests, leave lousy tips in restaurants, considerably less than any of their professional counterparts.⁵⁰ His finding, that "economists make bad citizens," might serve as something of a warning in the trust literature as well. Thinking about trust in the right way may mean the difference between being able to trust and refusing to do so.

Notes

¹ This essay is one of two based on a talk given at the DePaul University conference on Trust in Business, in Chicago, Feb. 20-21, 1997. Special thanks to George Brenkert, Daryl Koehn, Ken Alpern and, especially, the terrific anonymous reviewers for *BEQ*, and to Business Design Associates in Alameda, CA. A companion piece appears in the *Journal for Professional and Business Ethics*, edited by Daryl Koehn, and both are part of a book in progress for Oxford University Press.

² Daryl Koehn, "Should We Trust Trust?", *American Business Law Journal* 34(2) (1996): 184-203.

³ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

⁴ In a recent movie about Louisiana governor Earl Long and his longtime mistress, Blaze Starr, Starr's mother warns her, "never trust a man who says, 'Trust me.'" The line occurs in the movie, starring Paul Newman and Lolita Davidovich, *Blaze* (1989).

⁵ E.g., Dick Morris on Bill Clinton's campaign strategy, *Behind the Oval Office* (New York: Knopf, 1997).

⁶ For example, Francis Sejersted, "Managers and Consultants as Manipulators," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 6(1) (1996): esp. pp. 77-78; Nancy B. Kurland, "Trust, Accountability, and Sales Agents' Dueling Loyalties," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 6(3) (1996): esp. pp. 293-295.

⁷ John Whitney's *The Economics of Trust* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980).

⁸ Nicholas Luhmann, "Trust: A Mechanism for the Reduction of Social Complexity," in his *Trust and Power* (New York: Wiley, 1980), pp. 4-103.

⁹ The most notable exception is Annette Baier, who wrote a series of provocative articles in the mid-Eighties, and credited her own interest to David Hume. Baier's recent work on Hume and on trust can be found in her *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (1990), and in *Moral Prejudices* (Harvard University Press, 1994), esp. "Trust and Antitrust," pp. 95-129. Hume's views on ethics are too often restricted to his (in)famous discussion of reason versus the passions (perhaps the weakest of his views) and the problems he raises about moral motivation. Hume's work on sentiments has only recently come back into view, for example, at the conclusion of Stephen Darwall's *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought' 1640-1740* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), but Hume's theory of the sentiments is also brought up only to take something of a pounding, for instance, in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Christine Swanton, *Freedom* (Hackett, 1986).

¹¹ Karen Jones, Russell Hardin, Lawrence C. Becker, "A Symposium on Trust," *Ethics* 107 (1) (1996): 4-61.

¹² For example, Russell Hardin, "The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust," in *Analyse und Kritik* (1992), 152-176.

¹³ Robert Solomon has defended this approach in general in my *Ethics and Excellence* (Oxford, 1991) and in my "Corporate Roles, Personal Virtues: An Aristotelean Approach to Business Ethics," *BEQ* 3(4) (1993).

¹⁴ Hardin, op cit., p. 28.

¹⁵ Russell Hardin goes on the warpath against any attempt to "moralize" trust in his "Trustworthiness," pp. 28, 42. If "moralizing trust" means that one always ought to trust, then of course, this is nonsense. But if "moralizing trust" means only some version of holding that "trust is a (morally) good thing," then it is hard to imagine someone not doing so. Honesty or generosity are not virtues *per se*, in any context whatever. As Socrates argues early in the *Republic*, to return weapons to a maniac is not virtuous but irresponsible.

¹⁶ For example, see Sisela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Random House, 1978).

¹⁷ Thus Hobbes explicitly invokes trust, along with justice, as features of society that result from the social compact rather than precede it (*Leviathan* VII, 6). See, also, A. P. Martinich, *A Hobbes Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 114.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufmann (Random House, 1967), p. 57.

¹⁹ Karen Jones, "A Trust," *Ethics* 107(1) (1996): 4.

²⁰ Fukuyama, esp. pp. 69-95.

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (S.U.N.Y., 1996), esp. pp. 134-139.

²² Becker, "Trust as Non-Cognitive Security about Motives," in the *Ethics* Symposium, p. 44f. Annette Baier also suggests taking simple trust, in particular the trusting of babies, as a paradigm, in her "Trust and Antitrust." But she makes this suggestion to counter the over-emphasis in philosophy on relationships between mature, consenting, more or less equal adults, not in order to deny the existence of more articulate and authentic trust relationships.

²³ Hardin talks extensively about "devices for commitment," for example, which, in our mind, amount to *substitutes* for commitment, or simply a denial of what is meant by "commitment" altogether ("Trustworthiness," p. 41 and *passim*).

²⁴ We are reminded here of the extensive but peculiar philosophical literature on self-deception, a phenomenon so common that no one could sensibly deny its existence. And yet the philosophers, with their crude epistemic categories of "knowing" and "not knowing,"

have spent decades wondering *if* (and sometimes *how*) the phenomena of “knowing and not knowing” can be.

²⁵ The phrase “animal faith” came into popular usage with George Santayana’s powerful argument that trusting relationships—including trust in God—should be understood as something more primitive than social thinkers and theologians were willing to allow. In our terms what he was espousing was simple, inarticulate faith, again, probably a welcome antidote to the extreme intellectualism he was attacking.

²⁶ Robert C. Solomon has argued this “kangaroo courtroom” scenario analysis in *The Passions*, Chapter 6.

²⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions* (Citadel, 1948).

²⁸ Karen Jones, for instance, discusses Othello’s trust of Iago at some length. Of equal importance and in many ways more instructive, however, is Othello’s growing *distrust* of Desdemona. The one is as blind as the other, but the latter might be viewed as a dynamic and unfolding version of distrust, whereas the former is a rather static and unthinking version of trust.

²⁹ Our thesis is akin to the thesis that Dostoyevski (and many others) have suggested concerning religious faith, that faith is not *really* faith unless it is punctuated, perhaps even pervaded by doubt. Faith is a form of self-overcoming, not simply a matter of naivete, or “blind” faith.

³⁰ There was a book by a relatively popular management guru, entitled *Love and Profits*, a few years ago. In the context of the current corporate paranoia over downsizing and the like, the very appearance of such a book begs for sociological critical analysis. But we would want to distinguish, quite thoroughly, between the importance of managers trusting their employees and the rather kinky but inappropriate suggestion that they love them.

³¹ See Robert C. Solomon, “The Politics of Emotion” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, ed. Peter French, Volume XXII, 1998.

³² Jones, p. 5.

³³ The theory of speech acts was more or less invented by J. L. Austin of Oxford, although its origins can be traced back considerably before that, for example, in the positivist conception of “pragmatics” and some of the views discernible in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings on language. We take it in its most mature conception from John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

³⁴ For instance, Becker, in the *Ethics* Symposium.

³⁵ Figures from Rep. Martin Olav Sabo, D-Minn, 5/17/97.

³⁶ Hardin’s comment that “remarkably, economic institutions...are often trustworthy,” together with his throwaway parenthetical line that “they might readily pollute or discriminate”—presented not as a possibility but rather as a probability—reflects an offensive and unfair view of corporations, which are for the most part *moral* institutions in which trust and trustworthiness are central concerns (op cit., p. 33).

³⁷ Hardin, “Trustworthiness,” p. 30.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴¹ Robert C. Solomon notes that anger often resembles a kangaroo court, in this respect, and quotes Lewis Carroll’s insightful refrain in making such points: “I’ll be judge, I’ll be Jury/Said cunning old fury” (*Alice in Wonderland*, “The Mouse’s Tail” [*The Passions*]).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Philosophical Library, 1956).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Robert S. Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions*, Chapter "The Passivity of the Passions" (Cambridge, 1988).

⁴⁶ Robert C. Solomon, "Emotions and Choice," in *Explaining Emotions*, ed. Amelie Rorty (University of California Press, 1980). Also, *The Passions* (Hackett, 1993).

⁴⁷ This raises the difficult question of *akrasia* or incontinence, knowingly doing wrong. Such behavior plays havoc with the notion of trust, for the incontinent person cannot trust him- or herself.

⁴⁸ Hardin, "Trustworthiness," p. 26

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Robert Frank, "Why Economists Make Bad Citizens," published as Robert Frank, T. Gilovich and D. Regan, "Does Studying Economics Inhibit Cooperation?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 7(2) (1993): 159-171.

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