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Phenomenologies of Trust

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1. *From Consciousness to Intersubjectivity: the Phenomenological Path to Social Phenomena*

Contemporary phenomenology is inaugurated by Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900/1) as an enquiry into the inner structure of consciousness under explicit rejection of the I as a centre of consciousness. The latter appears as a structured stream, an endless and centreless interconnection of lived experiences, devoid of any egological polarization. The function of 'position-taking' typically performed by the I does not play a crucial role in Husserl's early elaboration. The early Husserl is instead struck by the continuity of consciousness and its consistent inner articulation in the form of intentional tendencies and inner temporality (1904/5). It is the problem of the encounter and differentiation of plural consciousnesses that induces Husserl's revision of this anonymous model, leading to the delineation of his well known transcendental philosophy[1]. The latter provoked substantial reactions within the phenomenological circles in Göttingen and Munich, where phenomenology had been interpreted as radical realism. Despite his motto '*zurück zu den Sachen selbst*', however, Husserl never meant to leave the realm of consciousness and subjectivity. Around 1905, he begins to identify the problem of the plurality of consciousness, and faces the challenge of reciprocal recognition, relation, and individual differentiation[2]. The

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[1] A complete reconstruction of Husserl's elaboration of the concept of I is provided by E. Marbach, *Das Problem des Ich in der Phänomenologie Husserls*, Phänomenologica 59, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1974.

[2] Cf. E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass. Erster Teil: 1905-1920*, hrsg. von I. Kern, Husserliana XIII, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1973, Tx.1.

configuration of consciousness as a purely self-structured stream, flowing in all directions of experience, seems no longer to suffice. In order to realize a sense-constitutive encounter, different consciousnesses need a point of differentiation; they first need to recognize their own centripetal tension directed towards an individual ego. The I is thereby intended as a non-substantial, but actively functioning pole of individuation.

This briefly sketched development of the phenomenological understanding of consciousness allows two remarks. Firstly, the individual constitution of the I is, for Husserl, not an obvious character of subjective life, directly imposed by empirical observation. The egological characterisation of subjectivity is not a matter of fact, but the final point of a gradual process of recognition of the inner complexity of subjective life. The starting point of such a process is the reflection on the peculiar function of the ego in relation to its own lived experiences. The idea of the ego arises from – and is inseparably connected to – the recognition of its capacity to take a position, thereby providing a point of convergence, an orientation, for its manifold living experiences. The ego arises by conveying a determinate individual quality to the conscious experiences, qualifying them as 'its' experiences and bestowing a sensible unity upon them. Such an operative unity provides the basis for intersubjective recognition, which is less grounded in perceptual similarity or intellectual analogy than in an immediate experience of the unique experiential style of the other.

This leads to the second remark, concerning the widely debated issue of solipsism. This has been one of the most persistent criticisms directed towards the phenomenological theory of the subject. However, according to its own genesis, phenomenological egology is not a dogmatic starting point of the analysis, but rather appears as the unexpected result of the *intersubjective* character of subjective experience. The awareness of the plurality of consciousness and the startling presence of others marks the original discovery of status and function of the ego itself. Nevertheless, phenomenology has long been considered an abstract theory concerning an isolated subject, a "monad" enclosed in its private sphere of direct experience. In recent years, also due to the on-going publication of Husserl's manuscripts, this interpretation has been questioned by many scholars who not only investigate Husserl's seminal theory of intersubjectivity, but also explore the potential of phenomenological methods for the understanding of social phenomena and socially relevant emotions[3].

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[3]   Cf. D. Zahavi, *Self and Other. Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*, Oxford Uni-

Even more explicitly, in 2017 the official conference of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung (*Die Phänomenologie und das Politische*) was dedicated to political issues. The proceedings of the conference, edited by Thomas Bedorf and Selin Gerlek, allow a deep insight into the manifold significance that politics can assume for phenomenological research[4]. Moreover, in his 2012 contribution for *The Oxford Handbook for Contemporary Phenomenology* Klaus Held (already) stated that "the thematization of the political world [is] the task of phenomenology itself"[5]. Furthermore, one of the last volumes of the book series Phaenomenologica, written by Michael Staudigl, as well as two succeeding publications by James Dodd, are dedicated to the question of violence and devote substantial space to social and political expressions of violence[6]. In France in 1995, Natalie Depraz proposed an early interpretation of the phenomenological reduction in political terms, eventually renewing and deepening her position with a contribution from 2017[7]. In Italy also, Vincenzo Costa recently showed the potential of the phenomenological method as applied to a philosophical critique of social, political, and economical modern liberal structures focusing on the question of emancipation[8].

Finally, phenomenology seems to have fully overcome the solipsistic restriction, and to have found a privileged and promising place in the re-

versity Press, Oxford 2014; S. Rinofner, *Scham und Autonomie*, in «Phänomenologische Forschungen» (2013), pp. 163-191; T. Szanto, D. Moran, *Phenomenology of Sociality. Discovering the 'We'*, Routledge, New York-London 2016. In Italian: S. Bancalari, *Intersoggettività e mondo della vita. Husserl e il problema della fenomenologia*, Cedam, Padova 2003; V. Costa, *Fenomenologia dell'intersoggettività*, Carocci, Roma 2010.

[4] The editors start by claiming that philosophy of praxis and phenomenology draw from very different sources, eventually highlighting that some of the central acquisitions of phenomenology entail a close relationship to the concept of praxis (T. Bedorf, S. Gerlek, *Schwerpunkt: Phänomenologie und Praxistheorie*, in «Phänomenologischen Forschungen», 2, 2017, pp. 5-8). This anthology also brings further Bedorf's work on social identities, reciprocity, and social philosophy already published in 2010 (T. Bedorf, *Verkennende Anerkennung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 2010).

[5] K. Held, *Towards a Phenomenology of the Political World*, in D. Zahavi (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook for Contemporary Phenomenology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012, p. 447 (442-459).

[6] M. Staudigl, *Phänomenologie der Gewalt*, Phaenomenologica 215, Springer, Heidelberg-New York-London 2015; J. Dodd, *Violence and Phenomenology*, Routledge, New York-London 2009; J. Dodd, *Phenomenological Reflections on Violence: A Skeptical Approach*, Routledge, New York-London 2017.

[7] N. Depraz, *Phenomenological Reduction and the Political*, in «Husserl Studies», 12 (1995), pp. 1-17; N. Depraz, *Die Phänomenologie als Praxis in politisch-ethischer Hinsicht*, in «Phänomenologischen Forschungen», 2 (2017), pp. 173-184.

[8] V. Costa, *Consumo e potere. Ontologia del legame e dell'emancipazione*, Meltemi, Milano 2018. Costa discusses the role of trust in gift-based societies and in modernity (p. 104 f.).

search field of social and political phenomena. Currently, the phenomeno-
logical debate is not only witnessing a growing interest in social and po-
litical topics, but also seems to be steering towards what can be identified
as a 'political turn'. Phenomenological scholars seem more and more led
by the need to put the heuristic power of phenomenology to the test with
respect to urgent social issues. In this context, it is not surprising that the
problem of trust has also received attention from several points of view. In
what follows, I aim to compare and contrast the analyses of trust recently
published by Thomas Fuchs, Nicholas De Warren, and Anthony Steinbock
in order to highlight the further possibility of applying the genetic method
of phenomenological investigation to explore trust as a specific social mo-
tivation and to evaluate it as the basis for defining a possible task of public
ethics.

2. *Trust and the Givenness of the World*

In *Vertrautheit und Vertrauen als Grundlagen der Lebenswelt*, Thomas
Fuchs explores the first and most immediate sense of trust occurring in
Husserl's analyses[9]. According to the meaning of the terms *Vertrautheit*
and *Vertrauen* in Husserl's works, trust appears grounded in the reliabil-
ity (*Verlässigkeit*) of the world. Furthermore, trust decisively contributes to
characterizing the latter as a life-world in contrast to a mere spatial-geo-
graphical horizon. Fuchs refers to Husserl's idea of the world as a universe
of self-evident givenness (*Crisis*)[10]. His analysis shows that this is not a
late acquisition of phenomenological analysis, but rather an early insight
of Husserl's philosophy. As Fuchs remarks, Husserl already introduces
the terms *Weltglaube* and *Urdoxa* in the first book of the *Ideas* (1913) to

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[9] T. Fuchs, *Vertrautheit und Vertrauen als Grundlagen der Lebenswelt*, in «Phänomenolo-
gische Forschungen», 21 (2015), pp. 101-118.
[10] In his last work, Husserl insists on the dialectic between mathematic (geometric) and scien-
tific insights (*Einsicht*) and the original givenness of the lifeworld (*Urevidenzen*). Only a reciprocal
emendation of these two fields of subjective experience, following a so-called zig-zag movement, a
sound "science of the lifeworld" can be founded (E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissen-
schaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Phi-
losophie*, hrsg. von Walter Biemel, Husserliana VI, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1954, pp. 130-131).
On the genesis of the problem of evidence in Husserl see the in-depth reconstruction provided by
G. Heffernan, *Bedeutung und Evidenz bei Edmund Husserl. Das Verhältnis zwischen der Bedeutun-
gs- und der Evidenztheorie in den* Logischen Untersuchungen *und der Formale und transzendentale
Logik. Ein Vergleich anhand der Identitätsproblematik*, Bouvier, Bonn 1983.

describe the natural world, thereby stressing the affective and not simply cognitive value of the surrounding environment[11]. Remaining in the foreground is the diffuse experience of trusting in the persistence of the surrounding world and the possibility of foreseeing its evolution. This analysis suggests that the phenomenon of trust can be best described by observing the self-evident character of the world, its unquestioned proximity, and its obvious and almost unnoticed presence. Trust then appears as a "feeling"[12] that supersedes and compensates for the "invisibility" of the world as an encompassing horizon, allowing us to realize its presence as something more than a mere collection of single things, without ever really being able to perceive it as an object. Trust seems to be a modality of givenness that *substitutes for perception*, thereby providing the possibility of experiencing what is, and must, remain essentially invisible.

Fuchs does not explicitly highlight the problematic relationship between trust and the limits of perception, and I intend to further explore this aspect in what follows. He does, however, mention a crucial point: the explicit 'knowing-that' concerning the things in the world that cannot exhaust the implicit 'knowing-how', which concerns their proper being in the world, the ways of their mutual relations, and the consistency of their unseen horizon[13]. The description in terms of '*knowing*-how' seems to imply a strongly *cognitive* interpretation of trust. This is also confirmed by the fact that the break-down of the reliability of the world is addressed not as a form of distrust, but as an experience of doubt[14]. The rupture of trust is, however, something very different from the intellectual and detached exercise of doubt, and by assimilating trust to a form of knowledge we risk missing the passive and non-transparent aspects of this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, Fuchs' implicit cognitive interpretation of trust helps re-

[11] T. Fuchs, *art. cit.*, p. 101; E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, K. Schuhmann (ed.), Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1977, § 27.

[12] In the unpublished manuscripts of the *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins*, Husserl provides an account of feelings not only as dependent, "non-objectifying acts", necessarily grounded on perception, as implied in his first analysis in *Logical Investigations*, but as intentional experience, i.e. as an autonomous access to the world (cf. T. Vongher, *Husserl über Gemüt und Gefühl in den* Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins, in B. Centi, G. Gigliotti, eds., *Fenomenologia della ragion pratica*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2004, pp. 229-251; U. Melle, *Husserls und Gurwitschs "Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins" -Feldes*, in «Phänomenologische Forschungen», 30, 1996, pp. 111-140; M. Deodati, *L'intenzionalità all'opera. Studi sul pensiero pratico di Husserl*, Mimesis, Milano 2013).

[13] T. Fuchs, *art. cit.*, p. 113.

[14] *Ivi*, p. 114.

veal a key feature of trust itself. This is a modality of experience that addresses the sphere of the implicit without attempting to make it explicit. From the cognitive point of view, trust is therefore an essentially non-objectifying, non-thematic form of experience. It is and remains bound to the field of the implicit, but its undetected character does not indicate any kind of marginality. Trust is not simply an overlooked or ignored "feeling" (better: sense), devoid of any cognitive value. On the contrary, trust seems to provide access to what is indeed implicit, yet, more importantly, irreplaceable. This aspect derives immediately from the association between the phenomenon of trust and the specific notion of the world. While every single thing *in* the world is exchangeable, i.e., it can be replaced, shift position or be transformed into another thing, the world itself is as permanent and unique as it is unnoticed. Both the permanence and invisibility of the world result from its familiarity and trustworthiness.

In this sense, we can say that trust is what bestows a peculiar density upon the world; it is what grounds the "thick" givenness of the world, a givenness that cannot be questioned, one that binds and steers us. Poetry and narrative have given articulate expression to the disturbing consequences of loss of trust in the world, of when the world loses this thickness, its density, and is transformed into a "mere theatre", a pointless scene, or even a scary dream[15]. Fuchs tackles this phenomenon within the framework of psychopathology and stresses the connection between trust in the world and a consistent experience of its own corporeity (*Leiblichkeit*)[16]. Trusting the world means being able to rely on our gestures and movements. In Husserl's words, it means to have access to our I-can (*Ich kann*). As we can see, in Fuchs' account of trust, the subjective side of this experience emerges as a consequence, as a result, of our being rooted in a consistent and persistent world. Accordingly, entering into the analysis of trust from the side of the world's familiarity leads to a consideration of the specific figure of the trusting subject as an effect of the original givenness of the world. The subjects are therefore seen as radically anchored in the common world. This justifies an assumption that may otherwise seem problematic: the idea that trust in others implies a form of reciprocity.

Fuchs draws on Luhmann's notion of a reciprocal "expectation of

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[15] This is a recurring pattern from Shakespeare and Calderón de la Barca to Pirandello, to name just the most famous literary elaborations of the disruption of trust in the world and its consequences.

[16] T. Fuchs, *art. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

expectation"[17] that is supposed to anticipate the trust of others on the basis of one's own trust in them. Trust here is intended as a form of "corporeal resonance"[18], but this appears less as a subjective performance than as a result of the common belonging to a predictable and reliable world. We trust in one another because we all inhabit a shared life-world that sustains us and guarantees the meaningfulness of our actions. By understanding trust in terms of the peculiar and necessary solidity of the world, Fuchs can coherently state that no matter how extended and encompassing our doubts may become, we are eventually led back to trust. Finally, we are compelled to trust as long as we live in the common world that we share. This argument recalls Aristotle's refutation of scepticism in the fourth book of his *Metaphysics*[19]. Whoever obstinately refuses to trust appears to be like the sceptic who refuses to obey the law of contradiction, and therefore renounces human conversation and exchange.

This radical interpretation of trust as an ultimately inescapable mode of life in the world is supported by Fuchs' revival of the Stoic notion of *oikeiosis*[20]. The world's familiarity and reliability generate a fundamental housing (*Einhausung*) necessary for personal development. The housing and the successive realisation of a broader spiritual "homeland" (*Beheimatung*) ground our trust in the world and at the same time support our personal development. Trust, in this case, is the result of inhabiting (*bewohnen*) the world and developing stable, reliable habits (*Gewohnheiten*). The connection with the notion of habit, however, indicates a limit on such an understanding of trust. As Karl Jaspers' existential reflection highlights, every housing (*Einhausung*) risks and ultimately is damned to become a *Gehäuse*[21], a cage, a rigid box, a lifeless and constricting schema. The confidence produced by knowing how to handle things, how to react to upcoming events, what to expect and how to grasp the objects of everyday life reveals itself as the other side of a growing rigidity, an incapacity to cope with the unexpected. Trust turns into latent fear when it is interpreted in a substantially conservative way. The close relation between trust and a

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[17] *Ivi*, p. 104.

[18] *Ibidem.*

[19] Aristotles, *Metaphysics* IV, 3-6.

[20] T. Fuchs, *art. cit.*, p. 107.

[21] Jaspers introduces the notion of *Gehäuse* in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* to describe the progressive stiffening of every vision of the world through sedimentation of the same meanings, values, and intentions that once produced and called to life the *Weltanschauung* of an era (K. Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Springer, Berlin 1919).

consolidated way of inhabiting the world grounds trust essentially in past experience and in the possibility of holding on to this experience. Trust becomes a conservative measure, the product of acquaintance, a sort of inner gravity in our life within the world, and a motivation to avoid change.

De Warren's account of trust in *Torture and Trust in the World*[22] implicitly responds to this danger. Like Fuchs, he also proceeds from the consideration of the life-world as the primary horizon of trust. The root of this original kind of trust lies, according to De Warren, in the peculiar "presentness"[23] of the world, but he characterizes such a unique givenness as "complex and elusive" at the same time. The overwhelming presence of the world and its inescapable evidence is simultaneously the source of its indefinability, obscurity, and ambiguity. In this sense, we cannot actually develop a proper "habit" toward the world, since we are constitutionally unable to grasp, objectify, or possess it. Unlike the individual things within the world, the world in itself evokes a centrifugal tendency within the experience. De Warren argues that this peculiar trust in the world (*Vertrautheit*) should be distinguished from both familiarity (*Bekanntheit*) and dependability of the world in order to challenge the foundational relation between trust and the past[24]. Trust appears rather as a more fundamental relationship, as an indefinite horizon that allows further differentiations and exploration. Only on the basis of trust can we afford experimental behaviour that leads to problem-solving, new discoveries, and creativity. This seems to be De Warren's implication when he describes original trust in the world as "presentedness of unknown unknowns"[25]. Accordingly, trust is a peculiar pre-givenness of the world, which is, however, not only produced by past concordant experiences, but also directed towards the unknown and guided by openness to the future.

By focusing on the indeterminate character of trust, De Warren is, moreover, induced to advance vulnerability into the foreground as a fundamental feature of trust and therefore also of the life-world. He chooses Lukács'

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[22] N. de Warren, *Torture and Trust in the World. A Phenomenological Essay*, in «Phänomenologische Forschungen», 21 (2015), pp. 83-99.

[23] *Ivi*, p. 84

[24] *Ivi*, p. 85. Niklas Luhmann proposes and explicit differentiation between familiarity and trust claiming that while the former is a simple «fact of life», the latter has to be comprehended as a solution for specific problems and risks (N. Luhmann, *Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives*, in D. Gambetta, ed., *Trust. Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1988, pp. 94-108, p. 95).

[25] *Ibidem*.

expression "transcendental homelessness"[26] (*transzendentale Obdachlosigkeit*) to describe the loss of the world that comes from violence and specifically from torture. Basing his analysis on Améry's existential and disturbing narrative of his own experience as a prisoner of the Gestapo in 1943, De Warren powerfully shows the ethical and even ontological consequences of such a radical breach of trust in the world. His analysis makes it clear that the fragility of trust is not a simple weakness of the shared life-world, but rather represents its essence. In this way, he comes closer to a possible turn in the phenomenological account of trust. Even if he does hold on to a definition of trust that proceeds from the notion of the life-world, his analysis finally discloses it as a specifically human and subjective phenomenon. This is the path followed by Anthony Steinbock, who allows us to take a further step in the argumentation.

3. *Static Phenomenology of Trust as a Subjective Act*

Steinbock engages the question of trust in the context of a morally consistent phenomenology of the person and a multifaceted exploration of moral emotions[27]. At the centre of his approach stands subjectivity – its functions, experiences, and relations. He proceeds by distinguishing between trust and reliability on the basis of a criterion that will emerge as crucial. Reliability implies the reference to a specific functioning of the object or other subjects. It is a kind of accountability grounded in past experience and can even be justified in *causal* terms: since the object has always or mostly been working in the expected way, I am justified or even compelled to rely on it. Reliability is closely connected to a well-defined structure of expectations that allow little change or surprise. It involves a consistent correspondence to expectations which are in turn determined by effective past experience. The experience of things and persons that I rely on are pre-determined and tied to specific functions. There is little or no room for creativity, exploration, discovery, or experimentation. Steinbock describes these "relations of meaning"[28] as "instrumental" relations between subject and object. We can thereby stress the *causal* and deterministic ba-

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[26] *Ivi*, p. 87.
[27] A.J. Steinbock, *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2014.
[28] *Ivi*, p. 198.

sis of such relationships that can be considered as object-relations even when the addressed "objects" are other subjects. The latter is namely not grasped in their complex responding capacity, but rather only with reference to a pre-determined task.

The analysis touches upon a sensitive point here. What happens if this kind of trust is disregarded? If the object disappoints my legitimate expectation of reliability, I will start double-checking it. I will resort to control. The same happens in functional relationships between persons (e.g. in work-contexts). The reasonable reaction to unexpected failures is some sort of control, which, however, is not necessarily accompanied by moral judgement or even by moral feelings such as distrust or mistrust. Reliability correlates to control, thus revealing a hidden, modified, or even sublimated component of control in itself. To highlight the difference in the experience of trust, it will then be necessary to figure out the proper correlation of trust, i.e., in which kind of polarization trust can be revealed and best assessed. We will return to this point at the end of the paper.

Instead, Steinbock chooses a different line of argumentation. He seeks a positive representation of trust in terms of *freedom*. While a reliable thing or person is required to fit into a settled pattern of behaviour, authentic trust implies not only a freely trusting subject, but also the freedom of the trusted subject. Accordingly, Steinbock defines trust as "giving myself over to another in his freedom"[29]. This is a radical claim. Not only must trust be established spontaneously, i.e., it cannot be forced or considered mandatory, but it also implies freedom, unpredictability, and elusiveness from the side of the other, the trusted person. This is the direct consequence of Steinbock's decision to examine trust in connection with a phenomenology of the person. Herein lies the strength and relevance of his account of trust from a phenomenological point of view. His analysis traces trust back to the active performance of the subject. Trust does not simply come from the givenness of the world; it is not a consequence of a peculiar constellation of objective qualities. The distinctive heuristic power of phenomenological investigation lies rather in the possibility of unveiling subjective activity beyond objective givenness. Each complex phenomenon such as trust announces a determined relationship between the stream of consciousness and the position-taking of the I. In this way, by illuminating the specific functioning of a certain dimension of the experience, we at the same time disclose an intimate possibility of the subject; we reveal a further inner articulation of its power

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[29] *Ivi*, p. 200.

and capacity (*Vermögen*). By analysing trust as a social phenomenon, we allow the performativity of the trusting subject to emerge. This is indisputably Steinbock's crucial contribution toward a genuine phenomenology of trust.

4. *An Alternative Possibility: Trust as Perceptual Experience*

Despite his highly promising 'subjective turn' in the phenomenological investigation of trust, Steinbock's interpretation of the subject's performance presents some critical questions. The first concerns the alleged strong connection between trust and personal freedom. Steinbock explicates subjective freedom in terms of reciprocal transcendence of the encountering subjectivities. This approach can be traced back to his declared recourse to a "static phenomenological method"[30]. The notion of static phenomenology is connected to the static descriptive method that characterizes Husserl's early elaboration of phenomenology[31]. In this phase, Husserl focuses on high-level, fully developed, complex experiences in an attempt to identify the different layers of sense that such experiences constitute, and to detect the distinct intentional acts of consciousness at work in every profile of the thing or event investigated. From the point of view of static phenomenology, the investigation of trust requires the consideration of well-defined, coherently identified, consistent subjects who function as sources of distinct intentional acts. Accordingly, Steinbock defines trust as a "freely given and giving act"[32]. Trust appears as an act characterized by spontaneity and transcendence.

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[30] *Ivi*, p. 205.
[31] Phenomenology's initial pure descriptive method, highlighted by Husserl in the *Logic Investigations* and *Ideas I*, was flanked in the 20ies by a so-called genetic method focussing on inner process and facticity. It is discussed whether or not the static method does coincide with eidetic description. In any case, the two phenomenological approaches do not exclude or undermine each other, but rather broaden the impact of phenomenological enquiries. Mario Vergani has provided a precise introduction to this methodological question in his introduction to the Italian translation of Husserl's manuscript on static and genetic method (M. Vergani, *Saggio introduttivo*, in E. Husserl, *Metodo fenomenologico statico e genetico*, Il Saggiatore, Milano 2003, pp. 17-49). Cf. J. Donahoe, *Husserl on Ethics and Intersubjectivity: From Static to Genetic Phenomenology*, Humanity Books, New York 2004; V. De Palma, *Der Ursprung des Akts. Husserls Begriff der genetischen Phänomenologie und die Frage nach der Weltkonstitution*, in «Husserl Studies», 31 (2015), 3, pp. 189-212; D. Welton, *The Systematicity of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy: From Static to Genetic Method*, in D. Welton (ed.), *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2003, pp. 255-288.
[32] A.J. Steinbock, *art. cit.*, p. 201.

Moreover, trust is defined as a moral act in juxtaposition to cognitive acts[33]. Here arises, in my opinion, the possibility of an alternative phenomenology of trust. The radical opposition between moral and cognitive acts derives from and justifies the view of a fully developed and self-conscious subject that is reflectively able to distinguish, within the flow of its own consciousness, perceptive, explorative, and evaluative acts as belonging to different dimensions, produced by different intentional tendencies, and characterized by different inner structures. Trust qualifies as an eminently moral act not only on the basis of its observable practical value, but also on the basis of Steinbock's strong assumption of freedom and transcendence of the person as conditions of the possibility of trust itself.

Such a sharp distinction gets blurred, however, if we give up the abstraction of a static subject and instead consider the intertwined, concrete flow of experiences that characterize the living, temporal, and constantly developing person. Here the intrinsic pre-reflective but still cognitive value of trust can emerge. Not only, as Steinbock himself recognizes, is trust necessary for the collective practice of science, knowledge, and research[34]. We can also identify a more elementary sense of the interconnection between trust and the cognitive potential of the subject. Accordingly, trust can be considered a form of experience, even of *perceptual experience*. On the one hand, it is by trusting that our perception becomes receptive to the new and unexpected. Considering the process by which children progressively explore their environment, it becomes clear that trust is not an abstract pre-condition, but the proper form in which things and other persons are encountered, become visible, and can be differentiated and articulated in multiple attempts and experiments.

On the other hand, trust is not without further ado identical to sensual perception. Rather, the characterization of trust as an experience requires the identification of a specific form of subjective performance: trust can be delineated as the perception of persons or events *as totalities*[35]. When we trust somebody, we do not collect single details, aspects, or features to support our sense of trust. In trust, we rather grasp the person as a whole

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[33] *Ivi*, p. 208.

[34] Onora O'Neill has examined the essential role of trust in the field of medical scientific research, thereby discussing range and limits of the "crisis of trust" in science (O. O'Neill, *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 141 f.).

[35] Trust can also be seen as the mere presupposition of such kind of perception. However, in this context I intend to characterize the perception of situations and other persons as totalities as a crucial feature of trust itself, not as a mere consequence or result of the experience of trust.

characterized by trustworthiness. This relieves us of the burden of verifying the details of their behaviour and intentions. Totality is the specific mode of givenness of the trusted person. By trusting them, we perceive an invisible coherence of their purposes that extends towards the future and encompasses, in an anticipative performance, future possible situations[36].

This account resonates with the phenomenological analyses of trust that proceed from the notion of the life-world. In the experience of trust, the world is grasped as an evident-elusive totality. If we focus on the constitutive performance of the subject, however, the characterisation of the world as a totality is not primarily explained on the basis of its encompassing quality. It is instead understood as the result of a peculiar operation of the subject who, by perceiving the world through trust and in the experience of trust, reveals *itself* as a totality. In trust, the perceiving subject experiences first of all *itself* as a coherent, consistent, and stable totality.

The experience of trust brings a specific form of extension or temporal span to the foreground. We can recur to Husserl's concept of *Längsintentionalität*[37] (longitudinal intentionality) to describe an experience whose effects pervade the whole stream of consciousness. Trust appears here as a specific, practical and highly effective inner relationship between the stream of consciousness and the polarizing I, even before converging into a social and interpersonal relationship. In trusting, the living subject exhibits a peculiar balance between the constituting, unique I and the stream of perceptions, expectations, volitions, and memories that constitute its inner life. By living through a trust experience, the subject constitutes primarily itself as a reliable totality. Trust can then be considered as a pre-predicative experience of the immanent unity and delicate balance between polarizing ego and its flowing stream of consciousness. We trust others, but the

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[36] In distrust and mistrust we certainly follow the leads of particular disappointments, signs of unreliability a.s.o. until we are led to change our attitude toward another. However, the falling apart of trust does not simply derive from the mere summation of particular events and behaviours which can be perceived and cognitively assessed. As we know from experience, I can collect plenty of indications of the unreliability of someone without yet stop feeling a sense of trust in him/her. The emerging as well as the disruption of trust cannot be explained as a collection of proofs for or against him/her and cannot be explained in the strictly cognitive terms of verification and falsification.

[37] Husserl introduces this notion in 1909/10 in order to highlight a different, but not less relevant directionality of the intentional acts whose constitutive effects also affect back consciousness itself. By sedimenting through retention, the intentional acts constitute the inner unity of consciousness (E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* [1893-1917], R. Boehm, ed., Husserliana X, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1966, p. 380).

experience of trusting *others* reveals us to *ourselves* as a dynamic totality. Accordingly, trust emerges on a subjective phenomenological description as a two-directional experience animated by a *centrifugal and centripetal constitutive intentionality*. On the one hand, the trusting subject is oriented towards another and aims at a specific totalizing perception of the encountered other as well as of the surrounding world (centrifugal direction). On the other hand, trust cannot subsist without a constantly evolving self-perception in which the subject develops a totalizing self-experience (centripetal direction).

The double directionality of trust helps better explain what Steinbock articulates as a "decentralizing effect". Developing his phenomenology of the person, he observes: "in trust […] I am decentred, dis-positioned"[38]. This is true on a psychological-empirical level of observation. The displacing effect of trust, however, also reveals a more general, anthropological meaning that can be elaborated by a phenomenological analysis of intentionality. It is Helmuth Plessner who provides a sound phenomenological description of the human organism as the basis for an encompassing anthropology[39]. He illustrates the human subject as an ex-centric[40] subject characterized by its capacity to refer to itself from within and from without, i.e., to constantly switch the direction of its own self-grasping and to simultaneously relate to itself as a subject and as an object, as active and passive, as self-responsible centre of action and exposed element of nature[41].

This double intentionality grounds the "ex-centricity" of the human subject, producing at the same time its rootlessness, vulnerability, and precariousness, but also its creativity, openness to others, and highly complex sociality. Considered in this context, the decentralizing power of trust is no longer reducible to a more or less unwanted side effect of trusting, as a debilitation of the subject who risks losing itself in the process of reaching for the other. To the contrary, even before identifying the social exposure of the trusting subject in interpersonal contexts, trust is revealed as a grounding and self-fostering experience that discloses an essential anthropological feature. Trust as a primary social and displacing phenomenon appears

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[38]   A.J. Steinbock, *art. cit.*, p. 202.

[39]   H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch. Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* (1928), de Gruyter, Berlin 1975.

[40]   I opt for a mimetic translation of Plessner's term *Excentrizität* to avoid confusion with the evaluating and derogatory English term 'eccentricity'.

[41]   Plessner describes this capacity and unsteady position as "double aspectivity" (*Doppelaspektivität*) (H. Plessner, *op. cit.*, p. 81).

as a crucial experience within the phenomenological anthropology of the ex-centrical subject. It is not only the pre-condition for fully developed social relationships, but also the basic experience and the phenomenological starting point for the anthropological understanding of the human subject as an individuated and social, self-centered and displaced, autonomous and dependable subject.

5. *The Moral Sense of Trust's Double Intentionality*

Such an encompassing anthropological significance of the experience of trust as an ex-centrical, centripetal, and centrifugal intentionality also bears a specific meaning in the moral sphere. The connection between trust and freedom, asserted by Steinbock as a presupposition of his analysis, is not denied, but rather reframed as the end result (and not the starting point) of the analysis. The sense of freedom implied by the experience of trust can be traced back to its structural origin and explained on the basis of the intentional structure of trust. The double intentionality that supports trust allows a specific mobility, expressed by the capacity to switch between two different views of myself. In trusting, I grasp myself from within as a totality, and at the same time I perceive the other and myself from the outside. This convergence of intentional tendencies defines trust as a plural and mobile experience whose essence lies in the inner mobility of the double intentionality and in the capacity to maintain a balance based on constant displacement.

This phenomenological description shows how vulnerability, which has been identified by all the aforementioned scholars as an invariable trait of the experience of trust, is not only empirically grounded, i.e., it does not only refer to the empirical possibility that the trusted other will disappoint or betray us. Even if we were to imagine the most trustworthy person, trust would not lose its vulnerable character, since this is rooted in the fragile and dynamic balance of trust's intentional structure. In this sense, we could claim that an authentic breach of trust does not really happen "from the outside", as factual contingency, or as alien natural calamity. The emergence of distrust and mistrust, rather, is a complex phenomenon closely connected with the inner dynamic implied by trust which results in this balance falling apart and the stiffening and crystallizing of the intentional rays. Intentional analysis suggests that what is at stake in the experience of trust is not only, and perhaps not primarily, the *unity* of the experi-

ence, but rather its *mobility*, *flexibility*, and *vitality*. A trusting person is not merely one who can experience herself as a totality, as we mentioned above, and converge with her whole personality in a solid experience of the world and of others. A trusting person is also, and more importantly, a person able to engage in the constant inner intentional mobility required by trust experience, i.e., one who can face and accept the latent instability, variability, and openness of the world and of others.

This observation bears an even greater significance if we leave the dimension of face-to-face interaction and personal relationships to shift our attention toward the public sphere. Trust is, namely, not only relevant for individual morality. As the aforementioned growing interest in the dimensions of political and social life in the phenomenological debate shows, the question concerning the conditions and dynamics of trust has a substantial impact on our possibility of understanding our changing social world[42]. Intentional analysis suggests, however, that before being a "social glue" that holds societies together, trust is an indicator of the inner mobility and *vitality* of society itself. Before being a guarantee of social unity, trust is the expression of social liveliness. Trust is what allows not only single persons within the social structure, but a whole social construction, to not become fixated on a rigid self-image. This does not mean simply allowing social change, but perceiving the essence of social life as a peculiar form of inner movement, process, history, and teleology.

These terms make manifest the need for a further methodological turn. After moving from the "noematic" observation of trust as embedded in the world, to the "noetic" consideration of trust as a subjective act, we introduce the view of trust as a specific kind of perceptual experience giving the person as a totality and being characterized by a displacing double intentionality. Now we are further led to grasp trust as a teleological intentional process. This requires a phenomenological-genetic approach and challenges us to overcome the restrictions imposed by a static phenomenology of trust.

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[42] As reconstructed by Zahavi and Overgaard (S. Overgaard, D. Zahavi, *Phenomenological sociology: The subjectivity of everyday life*, in M. Hviid Jacobsen, ed., *Encountering the everyday*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009, pp. 93-115), Alfred Schütz and later Harold Garfinkel developed a complex phenomenological approach to sociology, also re-thinking the phenomenological method to adapt it to the peculiarity of the social field. Their analyses may help substantially deepen the interpretation of trust on the interpersonal and social level (see H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1967; A. Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Heinemann Educational Books, London 1932/1972; H. Ferguson, *Phenomenological Sociology: Experience and Insight in Modern Society*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London 2006).

6. *Genetic Phenomenology: Trust as Motivation*

Husserl explicitly develops a "genetic" account of phenomenology already in the work-manuscripts that will converge into *Ideas II* (1912-15). This becomes even more evident in the 1920/21 *Lectures on Passive Synthesis* and in later unpublished works[43]. On the genetic approach, the phenomenologist rejects complex and fully developed experiences as a starting point of the analysis and focuses on primary phenomena that can be identified as origins of the experience itself. The latter is no longer examined following the static layers of sedimented meaning, but exposed as a constant process, as a flowing movement in which tendencies and counter-tendencies are inseparably intermingled. The phenomenologically central notion of intentionality receives a new significance: it is no longer only characterized as a theoretical and cognitive performance of the subject noetically directed toward objects, but as a practical, volitional, desiring tendency directed toward aims and goals. Intentionality is not only aimed at perceptively capturing a given object, but it is also recognized as the inner *motivation* orienting, fostering, animating action and, more generally, all practical performances of the subject.

Husserl introduces the term *motivation* in the section of *Ideas II* that is dedicated to the person and the social world while drawing on an explicit differentiation from the notion of causality[44]. Motivation cannot be considered inner causality. Instead, it discloses a completely different regulation of the experience that helps by distinguishing the personal attitude and personal-spiritual reality from the natural attitude and its correlate, nature. The phenomenological notion of motivation, however, should also

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[43] I refer to *Experience and Judgment* (1939), *Bernauer Manuscripts* (1917-18), *C-Manuscripts* (1929-1934), later manuscripts on intersubjectivity (Husserliana XV), and the *Crisis* (1935-36). Jagna Brudzińska provides an informed comparison between static and genetic methods in J. Brudzinska, *Statische und genetische Analyse*, in E. Alloa, T. Breyer, E. Caminada (eds.), *Handbuch Phänomenologie*, Mohr, Siebeck 2019. Dieter Lohmar has reconstructed the peculiarities of the genetic method in D. Lohmar, *Genetische Phänomenologie*, in S. Luft, M. Wehrle (eds.), *Husserl-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2017, pp. 149-157. A classical interpretation of the genetic approach is provided by A. Aguirre, *Genetische Phänomenologie und Reduktion*, Den Haag 1970 and T. Sakakibara, *Das Problem des Ich und der Ursprung der genetischen Phänomenologie bei Husserl*, in «Husserl Studies», 14 (1997), pp. 21-39. In the Anglo-American debate a crucial reference is D. Welton, *Genetic Phenomenology*, in L. Embree u.a. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, Springer, Dordrecht 1997, pp. 266-270.

[44] I have presented an analysis of motivation in this section of *Ideas II* in A. Pugliese, *Motivational Analysis in Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology*, in «Studia Phaenomenologica», XVIII (2018), pp. 91-108.

be distinguished from psychological motivation intended as the psycho-
logical representation of goals, purpose (*Absicht*), intent, or aims. Genetic
phenomenology identifies motivation as a different form of directedness of
consciousness, which is neither causal-deterministic, nor instrumentally
oriented on a pre-defined goal. Motivation is rather an immanent orienta-
tion of consciousness striving toward satisfaction in a pre-thematic and
pre-reflective way.

Motivational strivings are not directed toward a pre-fixed, static tar-
get; they do not entail a theoretical representation of the pursued goal.
Motivation is rather a tendency toward forms of satisfaction and realisa-
tion that remain intrinsically undefined and undifferentiated until they are
reached[45]. For this reason, motivation underlies the lived experience struc-
turally open to a broad range of solutions and fulfilments. Genetic phenom-
enology highlights flexibility, mobility, variability, and even creativity as
the main features of motivational intentionality. Hence a genetic approach
to trust promises to disclose aspects of this phenomenon that remain con-
cealed to a static consideration and therefore deepen our understanding of
the experience of trust.

From the genetic point of view, trust appears as an on-going process, as
an evolving experience rooted in the pre-reflexive dynamics of intentional-
ity. Accordingly, trust emerges from and is therefore invariably connected
to an intentional history. The relation to the world and the recognition of
others (Fuchs and De Warren), as well as the awareness of personal free-
dom (Steinbock), are all moments of a deeper continuity and structured in-
tentional development. Trust is, then, not only characterized as a specific
form of experience – the experience of the other and myself as totality –
but also identified as a peculiar form of *practical motivation*[46].

Introducing the notion of motivation, intentional analysis confirms the
difference between trust and reliability, intended as a causally determined
relationship to objects. Moreover, trust as motivation can be distinguished

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[45] Not only in *Ideas II*, but also in the *C-manuscripts*, Husserl insists on the indefiniteness
of motivational fulfilment: «Das ursprüngliche instinktive Streben, das in Kinästhese sich aus-
strömt, ist allgemein-unbestimmt auf solche Erfüllung unmittelbar gerichtet» (E. Husserl, *Späte
Texte über Zeitkonstitution [1929-1934]. Die C-Manuskripte*, Mat. VIII, Hrsg. von D. Lohmar,
Springer, Dordrecht 2006, T. 63, p. 272).

[46] Due to his static approach, Steinbock qualifies the notion of motivation as improper to
characterize trust (A.J. Steinbock, *art. cit.*, p. 216) and rather talks about «moral invitational
lure». On the contrary, Martin Hartmann, from a non-phenomenological point of view, grounds
his approach on the idea of trust as a practical attitude (M. Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*,
Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1994).

from any functional and instrumental behaviour. As a motivational structure, trust identifies a peculiar openness of the practical dimension, a pre-reflexive and non-representational order (*Ordnung*) of the practical field. It is a pre-structuring, anticipating self-regulation of the social field that pre-defines the range of manifestation of social phenomena. Although different from any behaviour explicitly intended to pursue a purpose, trust as motivation is still regulated by what Husserl calls "immanent teleology"[47], i.e., by a directedness, a finality, that is rooted in and supported by the immanent intentional movement of consciousness, rather than steered by a transcendent goal. The understanding of trust as motivation intends to show what trust can make possible, rather than where it comes from. The description of trust as a form of motivation in the personal and social sphere allows the focusing on the inner intentional mobility that animates the experience of trust, i.e., on trust as the expression and condition of the inner vitality of social life. This provides the grounds for my last argument.

7. *Trust and Responsibility vs. Reliability and Control*

Based on his static approach, Steinbock claims that trust cannot be reached via a negation of mistrust[48]. Viewed in this way, trust is an encompassing and absolute experience that cannot be earned or challenged without losing its essence. On the contrary, from a genetic point of view and focusing on the intentional history, mobility, and vitality of the trusted and trusting social network, we are able to address all the experiences in which trust slowly comes to be. In interpersonal and social contexts, trust can – and mostly does – grow gradually and can also gradually disappear, be worn out, or be progressively deteriorated from within.

From a genetic standpoint, we maintain that, in contrast to Steinbock's opinion that trust cannot be earned[49], trust can be achieved in a teleological process. The gradualness of trust is not simply derived from *empirical* conditions. It corresponds rather to trust's intentional evolving structure, thereby displaying a *transcendental* character. Since this structure is based

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[47] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, hrsg. von W. Biemel, Husserliana IV, Martinus Nijhoff, Den Haag 1952, p. 332.

[48] A.J. Steinbock, *art. cit.*, p. 210.

[49] «The expression of "earning trust" is not really a matter of trust at all and is, phenomenologically speaking, contradictory» (*ivi*, p. 204).

on a double intentionality and on the capacity to keep the switching move-
ment between two intentional directions alive, trust can be exercised, de-
veloped, and articulated. It can grow and decline in social interaction. Cer-
tainly, the reference to an inner teleology does not imply either a guarante
of success or a constant progress. As we know from empirical observation
and from what has become understandable on the basis of the phenomeno-
logical analysis of the intentionality of trust, trust is as fragile as it is lively.
Moreover, trust's fragility is directly connected to its vitality. Hence the
question: what happens when trust is attacked and perhaps even destroyed
in times of social distress, conflict, violence, and decay?

By claiming that trust better expresses the vitality of society rather than
its cohesion and stability[50], the phenomenological intentional analysis
challenges the idea that a possible solution to unstable social trust might
be to narrow the social circle, retreating into more immediate, direct, but
delimited social contacts that may be experienced on a national, local, or
even family level. Seeking cohesion and reassurance by restricting social
interaction cannot structurally improve trust if it primarily relies on the
mobility and dynamic of social relations.

Moreover, interpreting trust in terms of motivation, and therefore as a
striving tendency and an intentional and pre-predicative source of action
and transformation, prevents the genetic account from focusing on the con-
servative aspects of the experience of trust. Trust is not a resting feeling
that has to be protected and conserved. Especially in social contexts, we
cannot simply rest on an unquestioned trust, holding on to the pre-given
and well known, and only reacting when this is put to question by external
events. The genetic understanding of trust as motivation and inner vitality
of social experience involves rather a possible task for public ethics: this
should aim not at preserving trust, but at enhancing social interaction, as
well as exploring different possibilities, in order to effectively foster and
stabilize trust. Better, the aim of public ethics consists in preserving trust
by expanding social interaction, opening the way for social change and ex-
perimentation. While reliability, as we observed above, correlates to con-
trol, so that when this is put into question, we naturally resort to closer
supervision and regulation, a genetic understanding of trust suggests a

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[50] Vitality and stability of society do not constitute a reciprocally exclusive alternative.
However, for the sake of argumentation, in what follows I will refer to the drastic situation of a
society in which the overriding concern for stability and cohesion degenerates into an increasing
tendency toward control eventually resulting in decreased social vitality.

different kind of polarization[51]. When trust is challenged, more responsibility is required[52]. As long as trust pervades society in a lively way, social exchange proceeds smoothly, almost on its own, without further attention. When this situation changes, a major investment of responsibility is required to keep social interaction alive. If they cannot trust each other spontaneously, intentional subjects have to commit to one another, explicitly taking on responsibility for one's own behaviour and in turn invoking the responsibility of others. Responsibility appears as the normative side of trust[53]. As a different but related kind of motivation, it lies at the other end of the same motivational *continuum* generated by different degrees and nuances of trust. In the light of a genetic intentional analysis of social experience, responsibility and trust belong to the same intentional history and can provide a fruitful framework for articulating concrete tasks in the field of public ethics.

Abstract

Aim of the paper is to compare different phenomenological accounts of the phenomenon of trust. After moving from the "noematic" observation of trust as embedded in the world, toward the "noetic" consideration of trust as a subjective act, we introduce the view of trust as a specific kind of perceptive experience giving the person as a totality and being characterized by a displacing double intentionality. Trust is therefore grasped as a teleological

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[51] Here the phenomenological analysis takes distance from the cognitive account of trust stating an antagonistic but necessary relation between trust, trust-building, and control (cf. C. Castelfranchi, R. Falcone, *Trust Theory. A Socio-Cognitive and Computational Model*, Wiley, Chichester 2010, p. 191 f.).

[52] The connection between trust and responsibility is deepened in the approaches that explore trust from the point of view of social cooperation. A classical and interdisciplinary account is provided by D. Gambetta (ed.), *Trust. Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1988. Gambetta's analysis of the origins of mafia in modern Sicilian society illustrates an urgent case-study that shows how trust can be misplaced and manipulated into criminally significant loyalty, if it is not vitally connected with social and personal responsibility. Also interesting is David Good's psychological research (D. Good, *Individuals, Interpersonal Relations and Trust*, in D. Gambetta, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-48) that shows the productive relation between been trusted and becoming trustworthy.

[53] Responsibility designates a broad field in moral research. A crucial reference for modern philosophy is H. Jonas, *Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1979. More recently: L. Heidbrink, C. Langbehn, J. Loh (eds.), *Handbuch Verantwortung*, Springer, Wiesbaden 2017. In Italian: F. Miano (ed.), *Etica e responsabilità*, Orthotes, Napoli-Salerno 2018.

intentional process. This requires a phenomenological-genetic approach and challenges us to overcome the restrictions imposed by a static phenomenology of trust. The genetic approach focuses on trust as a grounding and self-fostering experience that discloses an essential anthropological feature. The phenomenological analysis thus suggests that what is at stake in the experience of trust is not only, and perhaps not primarily, the unity and stability of experience and society, but rather their mobility, flexibility, and vitality.

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