

arraigadas. La autora explica, específicamente, cómo un fenómeno que en otras latitudes se suele considerar un elemento indispensable de cualquier sistema democrático bien ordenado, es decir, el del liderazgo político, es permanentemente debilitado en Japón a causa de la persistencia de instituciones tradicionales de poder fáctico, así como una cultura que privilegia el grupo en favor del individuo.

En su conjunto, los escritos aquí reunidos constituyen una pequeña muestra de lo mejor que la teoría jurídica y las ciencias sociales actuales, con un enfoque normativo e institucional, pueden ofrecer. Espero que sepan despertar el interés del lector.

RELEA  
(REVISTA LATINOAMERICANA  
DE ESTUDIOS AVANZADOS  
15 (2001) : 19 - 58

## Institutional Trust: A Less Demanding Form of Trust?

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### RESUMEN

Con el incremento de la complejidad en las redes de interacción social, se hacen necesarias nuevas formas de confianza. Aquí se presenta un análisis conceptual de las diferentes formas de confianza, es decir, confianza interpersonal, confianza en grupos y confianza institucional. Se argumenta que la confianza institucional no puede reemplazar totalmente la confianza interpersonal. La confianza institucional construye muchas más formas de confianza personal en tanto es formada principalmente en encuentros personales con prominentes representantes de la institución y presupone confianza en otros quienes confían en la institución. Cualquier forma de confianza esta fundamentada en algún principio normativo. Una persona confiada puede ser ella misma vulnerable de la acción de otros individuos por percibir que ellos actúan compartiendo objetivos y valores. De esta manera, alguna clase de virtud es prerequisite de cualquier

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<sup>1</sup> For helpful comments concerning the English version of this paper, I wish to thank Ruth Zimmerling.

forma genuina de confianza. Mientras la confianza institucional puede en algunos aspectos ser mucho más fácilmente adquirida que la interpersonal, en general esta puede padecer un problema fundamental: la confianza institucional puede ser extraordinariamente robusta con respecto a un amplio rango de experiencias de comportamiento; así, esta puede ser pacientemente mantenida, a pesar de un hecho injustificado. En la sección concluyente el análisis general ha sido ilustrado con algunas reflexiones sobre el problema de la confianza en el gobierno.

### ABSTRACT

With the increasing complexity of the networks of social interaction, new and more abstract forms of trust are needed. A conceptual analysis of the different forms of trust, namely, interpersonal trust, trust in groups and institutional trust is given. It is argued that institutional trust cannot totally replace interpersonal trust. Institutional trust builds, rather, on more personal forms of trust in that it is formed primarily in personal encounters with salient representatives of the institution and presupposes trust in others who trust in the institution. Any form of trust is grounded in some normative foundation. A trusting person can make herself vulnerable to the action of other individuals because she perceives them as acting from shared aims or values. Thus, some sort of virtue is a prerequisite of any form of genuine trust. While institutional trust may in some respects be more easily acquired than interpersonal trust in general it may bear a fundamental problem: institutional trust may be extraordinarily robust with regard to a wide range of behavioral experiences; thus, it may be enduringly maintained, although in fact unjustified. In a concluding section the general analysis is illustrated by some reflections on the problem of trust in government.

### INTRODUCTION

Sociologists teach us that new forms of social organization and social interaction go along with new forms of trust. This, they hold, becomes especially salient if we examine the modern world, a world they characterize by concepts like «progressive functional

differentiation», «disembedding» of social relationships, or «depersonalization» of role takers.

It is easy to grasp what they are pointing at. In today's complex social world, people are connected to each other by a multitude of loose social relationships. While increasing mobility facilitates establishing new social relationships, it hinders, of course, the maintenance of deeper, enduring relationships. Thus, traditional bonds erode. They are no longer a sufficient foundation for men to settle their basic problems of life. Instead, a complex and constantly changing network of relatively impersonal social relations evolves. Personal bonds may still be important for the happiness of an individual, but more and more they lose the fundamental role they used to play before, in coping with the bare necessities of life. Thus, their significance for society as a whole seems to be decreasing.

The well-being of every single individual today depends on the performance of numerous others. Whatever a person does, he or she will inevitably make herself vulnerable to the actions of other people. It is impossible to know all those people, and in most cases one will not even set eyes on them. Moreover, while in many cases a person may very well know that her welfare depends on the performance of others she may still not know which others are actually involved. Often, she will even be unable to realize which actions of others will be decisive in the course of things and how they combine in this respect. *In principle*, social reality can still be conceived as the result of individual acts. But often it cannot *in fact* be traced back to individual acts. Thus, only rarely will it be possible to let oneself be guided by knowledge about the character of those people whose decisions may considerably affect one's life if—as we can hardly avoid doing—we make ourselves dependent on them.

Sometimes we do know whom we are dependent on, but we cannot really assess whether he or she actually has the relevant qualities or not. This is especially so in the case of experts. To find our way through a complex and complicated world we must rely

on the judgments and the practical advice of people we believe to be competent. Still, experts are supposed to be characterized by just that kind of knowledge that we ordinarily do not have and for that very reason, as a rule we lack a sufficient base on which to judge their expertise. So, on what grounds can we be sure that our trust in them is warranted?

The whole analysis seems to reveal a principal problem of modern society. While in a way we are increasingly in need of some form of trust –we cannot avoid making ourselves vulnerable to the performance of many others– we lose more and more the crucial prerequisites of interpersonal trust, such as traditional bonds or enduring interactions with others, that would allow us to come to know their character or qualifications. Sociologists' response to this situation is that new forms of trust have arisen to fill this gap (Shapiro 1987; Luhmann 1989; Giddens 1990; Strasser and Voswinkel 1997).

While we often cannot know personally those whom we depend on, or cannot adequately judge their qualities, we can still rely on the assumption that others act appropriately according to their position or role and independently of their specific personal characteristics. Not having decisive personal information, one gets one's bearings by relying on what one knows about the role or position of others. As far as those others are trusted, it is trust *qua* role, not trust in personal dependability or even moral integrity. This (interpersonal) form of trust is but an effect of a more abstract institutional form of trust.

Even if we are not in a position to comprehend in detail what combination of which actions executed, by which individual others, will be decisive for the course of things, we can still get along quite well. We still do have some knowledge on the interplay of social action and the social process as a whole. We rely on those overall regularities, which we perceive to be the result of social interaction which itself is not conceivable to us in detail, and we trust in the effectiveness of social institutions in this respect.

So, the argument goes, *personal* trust, in the sense of interpersonal trust based on a relationship of some personal kind and directed to personal characteristics of the related partner, loses its social significance and survives only as a phenomenon at the margin of social reality. Instead, *impersonal* forms of trust, namely trust in institutions, or –for short– institutional trust, increasingly displace the more personal forms.

As personal trust is generally acknowledged to be part of what makes individual life valuable, one might regret such a development. Still, from a social point of view, personal trust is a scarce resource. It rests predominantly on personal affection or on the virtuous dispositions of those trusted. But personal affection as well as virtue are rather rare phenomena. So, personal trust is not easily developed. If there are alternative sources of social cooperation which can be more easily obtained, one should very well pay some attention to them. Now, trust in institutions is argued to be just such a source that is largely independent of personal attraction and virtuous dispositions.

Social institutions may be viewed as social mechanisms which guide individual conduct by forming interests and setting suitable incentives. Of course, they can do so only in accordance with the «natural» make-up of men, with their basic needs and inclinations. But it may seem that their effectiveness is in principal not dependent on virtuous dispositions. Interest-driven behavior may suffice to induce social cooperation if institutions are designed in suitable ways. Hence social cooperation based on controlling individual behavior by appropriate institutions and, thus, trust in institutions seem to be more easily obtainable, as compared to cooperation based on interpersonal trust.

In this paper I will try to show that this analysis is misleading in different respects. I will in particular argue that:

1. Although more abstract forms of trust may gain importance, some interpersonal trust independent of institutional arrangements is still a necessary precondition of

social cooperation. Institutional trust itself is fundamentally grounded in interpersonal trust.

2. There is no genuine trust without some normative foundation. So we will always be in need of honesty and some sort of virtue.
3. If institutional trust is in some respect more easily gained than interpersonal trust, it also holds specific dangers. It may gain a degree of stability that holds even though trust is in fact unjustified.

My argument will be based primarily on an analysis of the concepts of trust and institutional trust, which I will give in the following three sections of the paper. The last section is devoted to illustrating the results in discussing the problem of trust in government.

### 1. A RATIONAL BELIEF?

According to a prominent view in the social sciences, there is no fundamental difference between interpersonal trust and trust in institutions. In particular, authors of the so-called «Rational Choice» tradition generally hold that trust of any form may be understood as a cognitive expectation that another person, or a group of persons, will act in certain favorable ways. This view is based on the insight that trust serves as a decision guide in certain problematic situations of social interaction. The essential characteristic element in these situations is that an actor (the «trustor») may take a specific risk concerning the possible actions of others.

Think of a mother who asks her neighbor to baby-sit her daughter. If her neighbor accepts, but does not properly take care of the child, the little girl could be harmed. In that case, the mother herself would suffer some harm from the neighbor's actions – a harm she could have prevented by *not* trusting her neighbor and instead taking care of her daughter herself. The case illustrates

the most elementary form of a situation of trust involving two persons: a «trustor» and a «trustee». The trustor has two sorts of options. If she chooses a «trusting action», she allows the trustee to exercise a certain amount of control over matters that are of some importance to the trustor. A trusting person is *vulnerable*. She is open to injury afflicted upon her by the actions of the person being trusted. And in trusting she *intentionally* accepts being vulnerable in this way, rather than making an alternative, «untrusting» decision which could have prevented her from being harmed.

Why should anyone voluntarily make herself vulnerable to the actions of another person? There is an easy answer to this question: in trusting another person, one does not merely risk being harmed, one frequently also has good prospects of some particular benefit. Trusting behavior usually generates new options and it often opens the door to certain opportunities. Thus, the mother who trusts her neighbor with the care of her child would benefit by possibly being able to go back to work or, at least, having a bit of time for herself.

When trust is not misguided, it promotes the interests of individuals. It is, in general, advantageous to both those who are being trusted (which might seem questionable in some cases) as well as, and even more so, to those who are doing the trusting. Trust may thus be understood as a psychological mechanism that enables individuals to take risks concerning the performance of others. We cannot do without it in a world where the welfare of any individual depends largely on fair cooperation.

From a rational-choice point of view, taking risks on other individuals' actions is just a special case of decision-making under risk. A (rational) actor will choose a risky decision if and only if –given his beliefs on what the outcome of the situation might be, and given his preferences over the possible outcomes– taking the risk maximizes his expected utility. Thus, a trusting decision presupposes a belief that it is sufficiently probable that the trusted person (or persons) will act in desired ways.

It is only a short step from this analysis (which seems correct to me if «belief» is understood in the more technical sense of Rational Choice theory) to the conclusion that trust itself is essentially nothing but a belief of a trustor that allows him to take certain risks. This step is in fact taken by most Rational Choice theorists, and it coincides widely with the concept of trust used by social scientists in general. Thus, Diego Gambetta, the initiator and host of the famous King's College seminar on trust, gives the following definition of trust in a *resumé* of the discussion:

«trust (or, symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both *before* he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) *and* in a context in which it affects his *own* action» (Gambetta 1988, 217).

Trust, from this point of view, is the expectation of the trustor that the trusted person will not take advantage at the expense of the trustor. The basis of this expectation is more specifically formed by what the trustor knows about the trusted. As Russell Hardin states more precisely:

«the trustor's expectations of the trusted's behavior depend on rational assessments of the trusted's motivation» (Hardin 1991, 187).

There is an obvious way to generalize this account of interpersonal trust to trust in institutions and institutional actors. A person trusting an institution, then, is making herself vulnerable to the actions of others guided by the institution as a consequence of what she knows about the regularities of institutional behavior and about the behavioral incentives as set by the institutions. As Hardin states:

«As with individuals, the question of whether we can reasonably trust institutions reduces to the question of whether institutions can be trustworthy» (Hardin 1998, 16).

The central problem of trust, from this point of view, is basically a problem of information (Coleman 1990). To be able to trust, a person needs to have sufficient information assuring him that others will act in desired ways. In interpersonal trust, the crucial information will regard the incentives as given by the situation as well as the personal characteristics of the trusted, in particular, his interests and beliefs. As far as institutional trust is concerned, information about personal characteristics is irrelevant (and mostly not available). A person trusting in an institution is relying on information about the effectiveness of the institutional regulation of behavior either gained from direct experience of institutional behavior or inferred from what one knows about the incentives as set by the institution. But there is no essential difference between interpersonal and institutional trust. In both cases a person relies on what she knows about the expected behavior of others. And in both cases, trust is possible without any normative foundation. Regularity, not virtue, is the essential precondition of trust.

Still, although there is—in this sense—no essential difference here, there is a difference in how easily trust is acquired. In the institutional case, the basic knowledge is of a more general kind. One can argue that this is in fact advantageous to some extent, as information on general regularities of behavior is more easily obtained than information on personal merits. And, the argument goes, it is easier to generate reliable information about good conduct, as sophisticated institutional arrangements may assure desired behavior by setting incentives appropriately, even if most or all individuals act on behalf of their own individual interests only.

I believe that this account of trust—interpersonal and institutional—is fundamentally inadequate. As far as interpersonal trust is concerned, I have argued thus at length elsewhere (Lahno 1999). So I will confine myself here to a mere sketch of the main shortcomings of this theory of trust from my point of view:

1. There is a fundamental difference between pure reliance and trust (Baier 1986), but this difference is incomprehensible from the theory's point of view.

We do make this distinction in our common intercourse. If somebody merely calculates that another person will be moved by his very own interests to act in a certain way, and if the first person adjusts his own behavior to the expected behavior of the other, one would hesitate to call this trust. To be sure, sometimes we do speak of trust in such situations, but if someone were to ask us if that was «really» trust, the answer would most likely be negative. From the proposed theory's point of view, however, there is no difference between «real» trust and pure reliance. Whatever the case, the essential point is supposed to be the expected behavior of the other. Thus Hardin comments on reliance and trust:

«Is there really a difference here? I rely on you, not just on anyone, because the experience that justifies reliance is my experience of you, not of everyone. [...] Trust does not depend on any particular reason for the trusted's intentions, merely on credible reasons» (Hardin 1991, 193 f.).

Actually, from this point of view, calculating what the other will do is the more straightforward, adequate and rational way of trusting. Coleman puts it this way:

«The elements confronting a potential trustor are nothing more or less than the considerations a rational actor applies in deciding whether to place a bet». (Coleman 1990, 99).

So, whether to trust another person or not is the same problem as whether the umbrella should be left at home in the morning. This seems to fly in the face of common sense; as economist Oliver E. Williamson (1993, 463) notes: «Calculative trust is a contradiction in terms».

Still, consistency with ordinary language may not be seen as a crucial criterion for a more precise definition of a concept. But there are other shortcomings in the proposed conceptualization, which also point to an inadequate understanding of the actual problem of trust. The following important aspects of a situation in which a person may trust another are not properly considered:

2. How a potential trustor perceives his partner and the circumstances of interaction actually depends on whether he in fact trusts or not.
3. Similarly, the trustor's evaluation of the possible consequences of action depends on his trust.
4. Finally, the motivations of the person being trusted often depend on the fact that he (knows that he) is actually being trusted.

To illustrate these aspects of trust, one may think of a person *A* accused of having committed some crime. There is substantial evidence that he did in fact fail. Now, imagine *B*, a friend of *A*'s, who still trusts *A*. *B* may know all about the evidence against his friend and still trust him, even if he has no private knowledge about the case. Of course, as a friend, *B* will, in general, have some particular information of his friend's character from shared experiences, information that is not easily available to others. As far as this is concerned, the discrepancy between *B*'s trust and the common accusation may be traced back to a cognitive basis. But what if the evidence against *A* is totally overwhelming? *B* might still trust *A*. He will wonder how the evidence could possibly have arisen in some other way and try to overcome the obvious incompatibility between his knowledge of his friend's character and the circumstantial evidence against him. Thus, *B* may reflect on what other explanation for the evidence could be given without incriminating *A*.

*B* will not just evaluate the given information impartially to come to a final judgment. He will rather be moved by his special relationship with *A* to see the information in a certain light and to ask specific questions in this regard. I conclude that trust is not just having specific expectations (rationally) grounded in given information. It rather amounts to a *specific way of evaluating information* and to being stimulated to ask certain questions (Govier 1993, 1994). Hence, the expectations of a trustor are, to a considerable extent, a *consequence* of his trust, and, therefore, there are

in general no cognitive expectations «before», and independently of, his trust to which that trust may be reduced.

Because of his trust, a trusting friend will also have a special attitude toward whatever he expects to happen or not to happen. If, for instance, our friend *B* finds out that *A* did in fact fail and that his trust was thus misguided, he will not regard this as just another piece of information inclining him to reconsider his assessment of *A*. Not only will he be disappointed about *A*'s true character, he will also feel hurt and betrayed. And, of course, being *betrayed* is a different thing and much more serious than just being *mistaken*. So the motivational dispositions of someone who *trusts* another are often very different from those of someone who just *relies* on others to behave in expected ways.

Something very similar is often true of a person who is being trusted. It is easy to see that someone being trusted by a friend, or any other person, can be motivated by this very fact actually to act in trustworthy ways. This psychological momentum has been noted by many philosophers (Horsburgh 1960; Hartmann 1962; Pettit 1995), and educational scientists pay considerable attention to it when advising teachers to treat their disciples in trusting ways even if they feel that they cannot in fact rely on their pupils' maturity (Bollnow 1959, 143 ff.; Makarenko 1974, 208 ff.)<sup>2</sup>.

If all this is true, we must conclude that neither the relevant *beliefs* of those involved in trustful interaction nor their *preferences* can be determined independently of the fact that there is trust. Hence, it is in principle impossible to reduce trust to the expectations of a trustor, which can in turn be determined as the result of information given to the trustor independently of his trust. Whatever a trustor believes and whatever he prefers will in part be formed by his trust.

<sup>2</sup> See Lahno 2001 for a more detailed analysis.

## 2. PERSONS AND GROUPS

The critique of the theory of trust as rational expectation points to a different, more promising way to approach an adequate concept of trust. Trust is a psychological mechanism that makes individuals believe certain things and evaluate the actions of others in a certain way. It does so by directing the way in which a situation containing a certain risk and the person whose actions are believed to be decisive for this risk are perceived.

There is a pre-rational, emotional element in this account of trust. In fact, I believe that the idea behind the common-sense insight that «trust is an emotion» is nicely and quite accurately captured. A prominent account of the concept of emotion, which may be traced back to the work of Aristotle (Rhetoric 1378a), holds that an emotion may be characterized by the way it makes the emotional person perceive the world or some part of it<sup>3</sup>.

From this point of view, emotions are like glasses through which we perceive the world. Three aspects of how emotions shape our thoughts may be differentiated in the following ways:

1. Emotions determine how we perceive the world in a direct manner. They do so by giving us a certain perspective on the world. They guide our attention by making some things appear more salient than others.
2. Emotions determine how we think and what judgments we make on matters of fact. That is not to say that an emotion necessarily eliminates reason. Instead, it directs reason by stimulating certain associations and suggesting certain patterns of interpretation.
3. Emotions guide our evaluation of some aspects of the world and motivate our actions.

<sup>3</sup> Such a conception may be found in Calhoun 1984 and de Sousa 1987; 1980. A more detailed account of emotions and trust is also given in Lahno 2001.

As emotions guide our thought, they are sometimes confused with judgments (see, e. g., Solomon 1976). However, emotions are not just a special form of normative judgment. A judgment is usually understood as a particular act of reason, whereby a person takes on an attitude of assent or dissent toward some proposition. In contrast, emotions do not require the mediation of reason. In this respect they are more immediate. A person in love experiences the presence of his beloved as pleasant; there is no reasoning involved. If the person in love does not merely feel, but judge that his beloved is pleasant, this is simply a consequence of the fact that, being in love, he can only perceive his beloved in this favorable way.

By similar considerations a decisive difference between emotion and belief becomes clear. Beliefs are much more closely linked to the operations of reason than emotions are. Our beliefs have some influence on how we perceive the world, too. Thus, how large an object appears to be to an observer usually depends on what he knows about his distance to the object. But in contrast to emotions, beliefs are generally the result of some reflection, they are the starting point and the basis of further reflection, and they cannot be maintained when acknowledged as wrong. By comparison, if a person has doubts as to whether the world is, in fact, such as he experiences it through his emotions, the experience itself will not be changed by that doubt alone. To bring about a change, one has to alter one's perspective. One may try to achieve such a change in perspective because of some rational insight, but a change in perspective cannot come from insight alone.

Furthermore, a belief is tied to a specific content, while the intentional character of emotions is much more difficult to grasp. An emotion is not characterized by a specific content but rather by the way the world is represented in thought and by the way the contents of thought are associated with each other.

All this does not mean that emotions are completely independent of beliefs or reason. Everything we perceive is already structured by concepts. Our beliefs color our picture of the world

and, conversely, what we believe about the world is influenced, to a large extent, by our perceptions. However, the connection between the two is best understood as causal. Emotions are relatively independent of beliefs in that they do not immediately come hand in hand with our beliefs. Because they determine the contents of our thoughts, which are the bases for all our reasoning, and because they invoke particular thought patterns, they take precedence over thought. Since emotions affect our insights and, conversely, since no insight has a direct and necessary impact on our emotions, they in fact evade rational control to some extent.

All this fits in nicely with our experience of interpersonal relationships of trust. Someone trusting another perceives this other person and the circumstances of interaction with him in a way that allows for his voluntary acceptance of some vulnerability. There are two features which essentially characterize trust as an emotional attitude:

**1. The other is perceived as a person who can be held responsible for his acts**

Genuine interpersonal trust necessarily involves a personal stance or, more specifically, a *participant attitude* as defined by Strawson (1974)<sup>4</sup>. A trusting person is disposed to react to an abuse of his trust in a particular and emotional way. This is due to the fact that the other is seen as a responsive person consciously engaged in interaction with the trustor. As the author of his acts, he is held responsible and, thus, the expectations of the trusting person are normative in character. In contrast, to perceive the other from a distance, like a mechanism governed by natural behavioral laws, i. e. adopting an *objective attitude* in the sense of Strawson that would allow for pure factual expectations only, is incompatible with genuine interpersonal trust (and that is why Williamson is correct in noting that calculative trust is a contradiction in terms).

<sup>4</sup> See also Holton 1994.



## 2. The other is perceived as someone connected to oneself by shared normative convictions.

The trustor perceives the trusted person as someone driven by agreeable motives and committed to certain normative standards. This is the normative foundation of trusting expectations. He who trusts another makes himself vulnerable *because* he perceives his partner as being connected to himself by shared aims or values. Thus, for the trustor, a situation of trust is one which calls for the realization of such aims or for observing shared norms as part of a *cooperative enterprise*.

Both of these key elements in interpersonal trust, a *participant attitude* and «*connectedness*»<sup>5</sup> in interests and/or normative convictions, are emotional in character. They essentially characterize the way in which the partner and the relevant part of the world are perceived in trustful interaction. To be sure, this way of seeing things will, as a rule, make the trustor have the typical trustful expectations. So there is a causal relationship between trust and belief. Yet, by inducing certain patterns in the way in which the world is represented in thought and in the way certain contents of thought are associated with each other, trust primarily determines how a trusting person thinks. Thus, it cannot be understood as the immediate result of rational consideration, and trust should not be confused with the expectations a trusting person usually has, which are but a result of his trusting attitude.

The analysis so far has been concerned with interpersonal trust, trust in another person based on some acquaintance with his or her personal characteristics. It can be summarized in the following way:

Trust in another person is a specific emotional attitude toward that person, including a participant attitude and a feeling of

<sup>5</sup> I use this somewhat unusual term to emphasize a conceptual difference between what in German is called *Verbundenheit* (referred to here as «connectedness») and mere *Verbindung* (connection), which is not necessarily emotional in character.

connectedness by shared aims, values or norms. This attitude allows the trusting person to incur risks concerning the actions of the trusted person, as they are perceived as being guided by the shared normative foundation of trust.

There is an obvious way to generalize such an account of interpersonal trust to a concept of trust in groups. A *social group* is understood here as a collection of individuals connected by some network of social relationships, which may as a whole be distinguished from other people or groups of other people in relatively definite ways. The whole may as such be determined by common characteristics, by shared aims and/or values and normative convictions.

By analogy to the conception of interpersonal trust as given above, trust in a group implies that an individual is ready to incur certain risks concerning actions of individual group members or some set of group members. Thus, trust in a group will mostly result in single members of the group being trusted. Still, the proposition «A trusts in group B (with regard to matters C)» may not in general, without loss of meaning, be decomposed into a series of single propositions of the form «A trusts in member B<sub>1</sub> of group B (with regard to C<sub>1</sub>)», «A trusts in member B<sub>2</sub> of group B (with regard to C<sub>2</sub>)», ... etc. In particular, it is possible that someone trusting in a group has the confidence that the interplay of decisions by group members as a whole will result in a certain desired outcome, without actually trusting in the specific decisions of particular individual members.

Moreover, one would be willing to speak of trust in a group only if the trust in members of the group that comes with it is actually tied to the membership of the group, it must be *trust qua group membership*. Otherwise we would merely have simple (interpersonal) trust in different individuals who accidentally all happen to be members of the same group. To trust one or more others *qua* group membership presupposes, according to the given concept of interpersonal trust, that group members are perceived as persons and that membership in the group may be a foundation of connectedness to the group member in some form or other.

As in the case of genuine interpersonal trust, we must distinguish trust in a group from pure reliance on a group. Whoever counts merely on regularities of group behavior can possibly *rely* on the group, but does not really have *trust* in the group. Hence, I propose to speak of genuine trust in a group only if the trustor perceives himself as connected to the members of the group by shared aims, values or norms, and if this normative basis of connectedness is at the same time perceived as a decisive feature of the group. Thus, trust in a group may be defined in the following way:

Trust in a group of individuals is a specific attitude towards the group including a personal stance towards the members of the group and a feeling of connectedness to them by shared aims, values or norms perceived as characteristic for the group. This attitude allows a person to incur risks concerning the (concerted) actions of group members.

One may trust in a group both as a member of the group and as an outsider. Still, a member of the group will, as a rule, have a somewhat privileged position with regard to the normative basis of the group. If there is some such uniform and characteristic normative foundation, trust in the group and accordingly trust in other group members will be a «natural» attitude toward the group already resulting from genuine membership.

The normative foundations of behavior within a group will commonly be more general, and less strictly definite, the larger the collection of individuals who consider this foundation as binding. Not necessarily, but regularly, the connectedness through shared norms and values within larger groups will, therefore, be somewhat weaker than in most personal relationships and it will encompass fewer areas of life. Thus interpersonal trust induced by trust in a group will be accordingly weak.

There are some typical problems in transferring trust from groups to individual members of the group. The actions of an individual are generally a matter of a specific uncertainty, which is relatively independent of the group as a whole. This uncertainty

applies insofar as one does not know to what extent a particular individual is actually committed to the normative guidelines of the group. Imagine an *A* trusting a certain group and observing a person *B*, who was assumed to be a member of the group, to behave in ways which violate the trustful expectations of *A*. *A* will then not necessarily conclude that his trust in the group was not justified. He could rather come to believe that *B* is simply a wicked member of the group, who evades the group's rules and demands, or he might even think that he was entirely mistaken in thinking that *B* is a member of the group. In that case, *A* will not lose his trust in the group. The conflicting experience is simply interpreted as irrelevant, or at least as not decisive for the trust in the group.

Thus, trust in a group is in general relatively robust. It cannot be disappointed as easily as trust in individual persons. On the other hand, and for the very same reasons, trust in a group cannot offer the same degree of security as genuine trust in personal relationships can. Therefore, one will expect that individuals within a group will in the long run base their interaction not only on trust in the group. This is, in fact, what social experience shows (Fine and Holyfield 1996); trust in a group is regularly used as a foundation for the development of deeper relationships of personal trust.

### 3. INSTITUTIONS

Trust in groups rarely comes in a pure form. Think of the trust a voter places in a political party. It may be primarily understood as trust based on the normative foundations of the party, namely the shared political convictions of its members as stated in the party program or on the political interests of the social class that is considered to be represented by the party. Yet, other aspects will often also be involved. Thus, trust in a party may, to a considerable extent, depend on trust in the competence and integrity of its leading representatives, i. e., on interpersonal trust. Moreover, a more abstract institutional form of trust will most probably be involved. A supporter of the party may base his trust

on the confidence that whoever acts as an agent of the party is sufficiently controlled by the party and its agencies. The agent will act in desired ways, because the internal structures of the party will effectively guide his actions.

A political party is a prominent example of a special form of group which I refer to here as an «organization». A group is called an organization if it is characterized by one or more shared aims and if the actions of group members are at least partly determined by a set of explicit rules (often defining some sort of hierarchy). With the term «organizational trust» I refer to a form of trust that is predominantly directed to the efficacy of the rules and principles in guiding the behavior of group members. A trustor is not primarily concerned with the shared characteristics of group members but with the reliability of the institutional setting in guiding their behavior. In this, organizational trust is different from ordinary trust in a group. It is not just trust in the organization as a group, but trust in the effectiveness of the organization of the group. There is an additional institutional element in this form of trust. And, particularly, this additional element at first sight looks more like a specific form of pure *reliance* than one of genuine trust. But a somewhat deeper analysis of institutional trust shows that this is not true. As with interpersonal relations and groups, there is pure *reliance* and there is genuine trust with regard to institutions.

An *institution* is understood here as a (more or less complex) general behavioral pattern observed within a group, based on some mutually reinforcing behavioral expectations of normative and orienting character. From a game-theoretic point of view, institutions are Nash-equilibria; they are behavioral regularities combined with the (at least partly) normative behavioral expectations which are, at the same time, produced by the regularities and the very source of those regularities.

Trust in institutions is directed to the effectiveness and functionality of those behavioral tracks grounded in the institution; it is trust in the institution setting the right behavioral incentives and limits. Now, this certainly sounds as if the reliability of some

sort of special mechanism were the crucial issue<sup>6</sup> and no emotional attitude as in interpersonal trust, especially not connectedness as defined above, were involved.

Certainly, it is possible that some individual may come to reliable predictions of group behavior just on the basis of his knowledge of the guiding rules and the regularities thus produced. Such an individual can, on this purely cognitive basis alone, prepare for what group members will do and adjust his own behavior accordingly. He can rely on the group because he can rely on the efficacy of the guiding rules. Still, as long as the behavior of a person is exclusively grounded in such cognitive expectations, one should –just as in the former cases of trust– call this mere *reliance* rather than trust.

The behavioral regularities of an institution are grounded in *social rules*. Following H. L. A. Hart, a social rule is characterized by an «internal aspect», i. e., by the fact that there are at least some people who regard the rule as a general standard to be followed by the group as a whole. Hart distinguishes two different ways how a member of the group (or anybody else, for that matter) may look upon a social rule (Hart 1961, 86 ff.). From an *external point of view*, one perceives the rule as an uninvolved outside observer who does not himself regard the rule as valid and binding. From this point of view, rules are nothing but mechanisms that induce behavioral regularities, which may, of course, affect oneself, but which are not a matter of deeper actual involvement. From an *internal point of view*, on the other hand, the social rule is perceived as valid, i. e. as a rule that actually justifies demands and obligations. From this point of view, social rules are typically associated with normative –and not just cognitive– expectations. It is not only that others will most probably act according to the rules; it is also that one wishes this to be the case and considers them somehow to be obliged to act in these ways.

<sup>6</sup> That is what Russell Hardin in fact believes (see e. g. Hardin 1998).

I propose to speak of institutional *trust* only in those cases where the potential trustor takes an internal point of view toward the institution and its guiding rules. Hence, *trust in an institution is an attitude towards this institution including an internal point of view towards the crucial and characteristic social rules of the institution and allowing the trustor to make himself vulnerable to the actions of other people who he considers to be under the reign of that institution. In this way, institutional trust is characterized by the perception of being connected to the people whose behavior is being determined by the institution, in sharing their respect for the normative foundation of the institution.*

Institutional trust in that sense does not presuppose, though, that the trustor explicitly knows all the institutional rules. Therefore, it is not necessarily based on connectedness in every single normative rule involved in the institution. Just as interpersonal trust is very often not based on precise and detailed knowledge of the motivations of the trusted person, but rather on perceived connection in fundamental general values and norms, institutional trust may rest on the approval of the most general, fundamental aims and principles of the institution and the assumption that these aims and principles are realized appropriately within the institution.

Someone, for instance, who trusts in the system of science does not have to be versed in the actual rules of scientific enquiry or the established and generally acknowledged criteria of valid empirical research. His trust will usually consist precisely in trusting without further knowledge of the scientific enterprise that science all in all supplies an institutional framework that allows and guarantees true and useful insights about the real world to some considerable extent. Trust is directed here to the assumed fact that the institutional rules –whatever they might be– are adequately designed to ensure the realization of aims that the trusting person affirms in principle, for example the aim to formulate relevant questions and answer them as accurately as possible.

In the same way, someone who trusts in the legal system of some state does not have to be acquainted with all its details, and especially not with every single law or every specific regulation for the application of some law. It is just that he trusts that the legal system is grounded in the most general and fundamental principles of justice. Because he perceives these principles as justified and normatively binding, he can be said to be trusting. As compared to this, a criminal can *rely* on the legal system without trust, for instance, when he counts on a rival being caught and put out of circulation for the foreseeable future.

As with trust in groups, institutional trust is only weakly subject to the realization of some particular action by specific individuals. It is directed to the effectiveness and functionality of a whole system of action. Often such a system will just be effective by supplying suitable mechanisms for the correction of deviating behavior under varying conditions. Therefore, deviating behavior by itself cannot be understood as indicating a failure of the institution. To this extent, institutional trust is necessarily independent of particular experiences of the behavior of certain others and, as a consequence, institutional trust will not be disappointed so easily.

The fact that institutional trust may be directed to the effectiveness of social rules which the trusting person does not comprehend in detail is another factor in the relative stability of institutional trust. Such trust can in principle only be judged by the overall result of institutionally guided behavior and not by single acts. Moreover, the assessment of institutional performance will often to some extent itself depend on the attitude toward the institution. Whether a sentence is perceived as just or not is not independent of whether one trusts in the legal system supposed to guide the judge. Whether one trusts in the result of some scientific research may in the same way depend on one's general attitude toward the system of scientific enterprise. In this, institutional trust may be likened to faith in God: whatever happens will be judged positively *because* one trusts; one does not neces-

sarily trust on the basis of independent positive experience and in expecting something to happen that is positively valued independently of one's trust. I refer to forms of trust which in this curious respect resemble faith in God as *categorical trust*<sup>7</sup>.

After all, although there is some kind of connectedness involved, institutional trust may seem to be widely independent of interpersonal trust, as its dependency on individual acts by individual actors is so loose. But again, this impression is misleading.

For one thing, the fact that institutional trust does not necessarily come with specific behavioral expectations for individual persons does not imply that it is completely independent of experience with individual behavior. In general, institutional trust is mediated by personal encounters. We gain our experience with institutions to a considerable extent through our interaction with particular individuals who are perceived as representing the institution. And, the behavior of those individuals is not only comprehended as an instance of some abstract regularity, it is always perceived as an expression of their individual personal character. Think of your family doctor. For a start, he is a representative of the general system of medical care; but he is also a particular person, with individual merits and weaknesses. Your trust in him is, on the one hand, an impact of your trust in the general medical system and is, in this regard, impersonal. On the other hand, it is also entirely personal in character, in that it rests on your very specific personal experiences with him, i. e., with the consistency and success of his therapeutic measures, or with the way he devotes himself to you and your (health) problems, etc.

At such «access points» (Giddens 1990), interpersonal trust (possibly of a very personal character) combines and intertwines with institutional trust. This interpersonal trust is not just an addition which deepens the more abstract but independently given form of trust. The impression one has of an institution is to a considerable extent formed in the course of such concrete inter-

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion of categorical trust, see Lahno 2001.

personal encounters with individuals perceived as representing the institution. Our trust in an institution is significantly based on our experiences with such representatives, and often it is only these experiences which arouse trust in the institution in the first place. Thus, in many cases the general institutional trust, which in the end exceeds the specific experience with particular individuals, can only be formed and flourish on some foundation of personal interaction and personal trust. We take the integrity and trustworthiness of specific persons as a signal of the trustworthiness of an institutional setting whose complex character we cannot comprehend in detail.

Not all aspects of this sort of connection between interpersonal and institutional trust are favorable. Thus, in this way institutions may gain trust because of personal characteristics which have no relationship to the institution whatsoever. Conversely, a lack of interpersonal trust because of the personal deficiencies of some representative may jeopardize trust in the institution considerably. This is one reason why reforming an organization that has become ineffective is often accompanied, or even triggered, by the replacement of leading representatives even if these are in fact not responsible for the poor performance of the organization. Quite independently of their personal performance, when trust in an institution decreases, a loss of the trustworthiness of its representatives will ensue. Such individuals then hinder the development of new institutional trust in the reformed organization<sup>8</sup>.

Beyond this way of institutional trust being anchored<sup>9</sup> in a very personal form of interpersonal trust, institutional trust is in general bound to some more general form of trust in those individuals whose behavior is supposed to be guided by the institutional rules. This is due to the specific character of the regularities produced by an institution. These regularities are not gener-

<sup>8</sup> The German minister of health recently experienced this when in the course of the so-called «BSE crisis» ministries and the allocation of responsibilities were re-organized.

<sup>9</sup> Giddens (1990, 102 f.) is using the term «re-embedding» here.

ated in a straightforward mechanical way; rather, they are the result of a complex social process of mutually coordinating behavior and behavioral expectations. An individual adheres to the rules of an institution because it expects others to proceed in the same way and because –given these expectations– actually following the institutional rules promises adequate and successful behavior. Of course, the behavior of those others is in the same way dependent on what they expect others –in particular, the individual we focused on first– to do. Hence, trust that others will conform to the social rules given by an institution and, thus, trust in the efficacy of an institution, is principally subject to trust in others trusting in the institution in similar ways<sup>10</sup>.

So, here again, interpersonal trust is involved. And, although this interpersonal trust is less personal in character insofar as it does not presuppose deeper personal relationships and does not in general draw on individual personal merits, it does incorporate a general perception of connectedness with regard to the basic values and aims of the institution. The «disembedding» (Giddens 1990) of social interaction in modern societies is feasible only when individuals are sufficiently rooted within a society as a whole and find their personal concerns and values represented by the main social institutions. Otherwise no effective institution could possibly exist (cf. also Lagerspetz 1992). Because –and only because– we see ourselves as connected to others in sharing the aims and values of some social institution can we effectively coordinate our behavior according to the institution. That we are able to do so is at the same time the object of trust and the consequence of the fact that all or most of us do trust in this way.

To conclude, institutional trust requires the connectedness of the trusting person in the normative foundation of the institution with those other individuals that fall under its regiment. In particular, it requires (interpersonal) trust in the institutional trust of the respective others.

<sup>10</sup> This is what Luhmann (1989) calls the «reflexive» character of institutional or –as he calls it– system trust. Compare also Seligman 1997.

Hence, social institutions are fundamentally interwoven with institutional trust. From a single person's point of view, an institution and institutional trust may seem as two completely different matters. But from an overall point of view, institutional trust is a constituent of any institution. Institutions can only persist because there are people who trust in them and because they do so in mutual understanding. The mutually reinforcing behavioral expectations elicited by such consent are the core of an institution. So every institution is in need of some institutional trust. And this sort of trust is the natural attitude of the people within the reign of that institution, which itself could not persist without it.

#### 4. TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Trust in government and its agencies may serve as an illustration of the different, but interwoven roles of interpersonal and institutional forms of trust in modern society.

It is an often noted and well-known fact that political power easily corrupts its holders and that, therefore, caution in dealing with the empowered is a prudent strategy. Hume was quite right when he suggested that it should be assumed that in this kind of matter every man is a knave (Hume 1987, 42). The delegation of power is frequently associated with considerable risks. Thomas Jefferson concluded that

«confidence is everywhere the parent of despotism – free government is founded in jealousy, and not in confidence; it is jealousy and not confidence which prescribes limited constitutions, to bind down those whom we are obliged to trust with power: that our Constitution has accordingly fixed the limits to which, and no further, our confidence may go» (Jefferson 1904, Vol. VIII, 474; quoted from Jäckel 1990).

If trust in authorities is to be rationally possible, sufficient precautions against its abuse are required. Therefore, we must design our political institutions in such a way that it is in the very

own interest of political actors to serve the public interest. This cannot be done by positive incentives alone. We need the threat of effective sanctions against the abuse of political power as well.

Within a modern democracy –provided there is an effectively institutionalized public to observe the empowered– citizens keep the behavior of elected representatives under some control through the system of voting them into and out of office. However, that control alone is insufficient, as even in the most radical forms of democracy power is exercised not only by elected representatives. Thus, additional agencies of control are needed, to monitor the performance of politicians and civil servants and, if necessary, severely sanction incorrect conduct. The power of these control agencies is to be controlled in the same way. This again may be done either by a corresponding control by other agencies or by direct control of the voter. Thus, through the institutionally assured control of voting complemented by an intelligently adjusted system of mutual controls of public agencies, the prevention of an abuse of political power is attempted.

For some authors, this is the whole story about trust in government (Gamson 1971; Zucker 1986; Jäckel 1990; Hardin 1991, 1998). From this point of view, what we need is a sophisticated system of political controls, assuring that political agents will further the public interest by pursuing their private aims. We may not be in a position to rely on the virtuous dispositions of the powerful, but –so the argument goes– we do not need to if our democratic institutions are designed in appropriate ways. In a well-organized democratic society, good government rests on effective institutional control and not on the good character or material competence of its representatives. If trust is involved at all, it is institutional trust. Interpersonal trust, especially trust in government agents, seems superfluous to these authors, or at least only residual to the more abstract form of institutional trust<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Here, we have a modern version of the Hobbesian view that interpersonal trust in general is made possible only by some general effective agency of control (Hobbes 1985).

Hence, it is argued, if trust in government and generally in political actors is declining (and many have noted this currently to be the case; cf., for instance, Putnam 1995, 1996), this does not for itself give cause for concern as long as there is sufficient trust in the system as a whole (and, again, this also seems to be the case today; cf. Lipset and Schneider 1983; Klages 1990).

But it should be clear by now that some care must be taken with regard to the necessity of interpersonal trust in institutional contexts. Some interpersonal trust is directly involved in any institutional trust, namely trust in others trusting and supporting the relevant institutions. So, some connectedness and some social coherence is a necessary precondition of effective democratic institutions.

Moreover, as noted above, as a rule institutional trust is mediated by personal encounters with institutional representatives. The natural «access points» of political institutions are, of course, the politicians. Already from this, it seems to be a necessity that the citizens of a democratic polity develop some interpersonal trust, relatively independent of the institutional setting as a whole, in at least some political representatives.

In fact, it seems neither possible nor desirable to me that political action be controlled to such a degree that virtue in political matters and personal trust in political actors becomes superfluous (cf. also Brennan, 1998; Pettit, 1998).

A society with such extensive controls would be extraordinarily inflexible and could hardly adjust to ongoing social and institutional change. Any institutional change necessarily renders the release of some familiar institutional regulations, and it is not always the case that such a process can be protected by institutional regulations itself. Fundamental institutional change requires social cooperation beyond what can be grounded in institutional trust alone. The fundamental revolutions in the formerly socialist states of Eastern Europe may illustrate this. As almost all former social institutions were called into question, people were thrown back onto their ability to develop personal trust. A clear

indication of this was the significant role assigned to charismatic leaders –as, for instance, Lech Walesa in Poland– in carrying out fundamental social change.

Political events within a country are, as a matter of fact, never completely determined by its institutional setting – whether under the conditions of rapid institutional change or of relative political stability. There is always some scope for the exertion of some personal influence by political decision-makers. Public persons such as Willy Brand in Germany, Nelson Mandela in South-Africa or Michail Gorbachev in the former Soviet Union have considerably affected the destiny of each of their respective countries. To be sure, there was some institutional background allowing for this in some way or other. Still, these individuals acted from their very own personal insights, values and visions. And they obtained the energy actually to implement their ideas fundamentally from the personal trust given to them by a substantial part of the citizens of their respective countries.

Every modern democracy, for principle reasons, concedes its representatives some freedom deliberately to decide for themselves. This is also reflected in some institutional regulations, such as the constitutional rule in Germany stating that the members of parliament cannot in principal be bound in their parliamentary decisions by party regulations; every representative is responsible only to the people and to his own conscience (in other words, this is the prohibition of a «binding mandate»). It is not only impossible to reduce political actors to the status of pure gearwheels in a political machinery, it is not even desirable. Precisely because of the complexity and dynamics of modern societies, it is necessary to give some privileges to representatives in order to enable them to react flexibly. Moreover, as most of us cannot comprehend all political affairs completely or in detail, we are in need of political experts. We want their expertise to inspire solid political decisions, and we try to design our political institutions in an optimal way to guarantee this. We can erect some institutional barriers against the abuse of power, but we cannot

renounce investing at least some individual authorities with some power to decide deliberately on their own. Adequate political institutions can support political initiative and the production of innovative political ideas and visions. But ideas originate in men and cannot be produced by institutional regulations. That is why we want virtuous persons who are able to act on their own account, and why we supply them with the space they need in order to employ their expertise.

Still, the control of the powerful remains indispensable. Every working democracy depends on effective institutional controls of those in power and definitely needs effective sanctions against the abuse of power. Thus, in a democracy, obviously, we need both: the control of the powerful, and trust in their integrity. But, if we do need some virtue and some trust in politics, control and the threat of sanctions incorporate a problem: they signalize mistrust. Too much control and too many sanctions might suppress desired behavioral motivations, such as a concern for the public or common welfare –it might «crowd out civic virtue» (Frey 1997).

An adequate institutional embedding of control may alleviate this kind of problem. Control must be commonly understood and accepted as a very general practice without respect to specific persons. It must be part of a general democratic routine. If the control of authorities is perceived by everyone as an universal practice which is part of the necessary foundations of any democratic political order and is to be exercised according to clear and compelling general rules, then the implied mistrust loses its severity with respect to the person controlled and turns into a general concession to the weakness of human beings. Thereby, the control loses a good part of its de-motivating force. If mistrust is successfully institutionalized in this way, some room will be created for personal trust in political affairs to be enculturated (Braithwaite 1998).

One might still doubt whether such personal trust, going beyond the trust that can be guaranteed by institutional control mechanisms, can be rationally justified. Geoffrey Brennan pro-



poses an interesting answer to this question, which in turn draws on the specific basic institutional condition of the liberal state, that is, on its constitutional condition. He cites Madison with the following statement (Brennan 1998, 214)<sup>12</sup>.

«The aim of every political constitution ... ought to be ... to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern and most virtue to pursue the common good of society».

The emphasis is shifted here from directly controlling the powerful to controlling the selection of those in power. Following Madison in this regard, Brennan argues that the principle of representative election is ideally suited to fill positions with persons of integrity and virtue. People are, of course, interested in trustworthy representatives. Moreover, as a rule they have a considerable ability to assess the trustworthiness of others and, thus, to some extent discern trustworthy from ruthless candidates. This does not only enhance the probability that the actually elected representatives will be more virtuous than the average citizen; at the same time, it also furthers the need for would-be candidates to develop a disposition that is actually worthy of trust.

Of course, for the voting mechanism to be effective in this regard presupposes some element of direct control. The exercise of power must be sufficiently public. Only then is it conceivable that the trustworthiness of candidates can be assessed reliably and that misjudgments are correctable. Also, it must be possible to vote incumbents out of office as a result of such corrections in judgment, since only if the abuse of power may result in the loss of power can it be advantageous for a candidate to adopt a truly trustworthy disposition that actually determines his behavior lastingly.

But even if it is only on such an institutional *background* that personal trust in political representatives is justifiable, this kind of trust is not merely the result of some more abstract institutional trust. It is, after all, trust in the competence and honesty of

<sup>12</sup> The original reference is to Madison, Hamilton *et al.* 1987.

the candidate, rather than mere trust in the effectiveness of control mechanisms or trust in the ability of the voting mechanism to filter out suitable candidates. This last institutional kind of trust is important, especially if someone's trust in candidates whom he did not actually vote for is at issue. But one does not in general base a voting decision on such trust. In fact, the functionality of a voting mechanism to sort out trustworthy candidates is conditional on the voters' ability to assess trustworthiness independently of this mechanism. The whole mechanism itself rests on the fact that personal trust is a reliable indicator of actual trustworthiness.

On the other hand, in an election individual characteristics of candidates may largely fade into the background. Thus, in a system of fixed party lists we do not vote for candidates because of their personal qualities. If we feel connected to persons we vote for in such an election, it is typically only by values and aims assigned to the group or party as a whole. Here, interpersonal trust is mostly mediated by trust in the group. And even with an electoral system in which votes are cast for an individual candidate rather than for a party, the group which supports the candidate will often come to the fore. In most cases, we just do not have suitable information about the candidate's character. Thus, as a rule, candidates are determined for us as representatives of their party only.

Still, trust in groups is very similar to institutional trust in that it develops only on the basis of individual experiences with particular individuals. Hence, trust in a group can be built up and maintained only if some personal trust towards at least some individuals who represent the group in some way or other is possible. That is why it is so important to political parties who their public representatives are and how they in fact represent the party. The trust a political party may gain does not only depend on the party program and the party's abstract values and aims. It is of the utmost importance convincingly to communicate these fundamental values and aims as a credible and consistent frame of life that can be accepted and shared by those who are to vote for

the party. And, therefore, in order to gain trust as a group, a group must be able to present members who can be personally trusted.

But how may such personal trust arise if it is impossible for almost all of us really to come to know any of those representatives? The answer is, of course, that suitable information about these persons is spread via the mass media. We are all confronted with the often questionable consequences of this strategy. We observe politicians as they confidently look into the future as far as they claim to be responsible for it themselves, only to be overcome by the most dramatic worries as soon as others are entrusted with the job. We are told everything we could possibly want to know about their happy family life and about how they touchingly look after their children. All this is carefully arranged for us. On television, we marvel at politicians and how they approach their fellow citizens with a friendly smile on their face, how they rock innocent babies in their arms with loving care, or how they exchange embarrassingly passionate kisses with their wife. The message is clear: here is a person who can be trusted, someone leading a good life based on principles that are worthy to be shared.

Such demonstrations of personal integrity appear extraordinarily questionable, especially as the actual responsibilities and duties of a politician seem to be hardly at issue. This is, in fact, a necessary consequence of the complexity of political events. The determinants of political decision-making are, as a rule, hardly fully comprehensible for the ordinary individual citizen. Often he cannot even assess in hindsight whether a decision was false or correct. After all, matters are complex. Whatever happens can always be traced back to a multitude of possible causes. To the layman (and not only to him) it is therefore regularly very difficult, if not impossible, to judge what the contribution of a specific measure to some event actually was and how alternative measures would have performed. In his judgment on the performance of some such measure, he must in the end rely on the same experts which he already entrusted with acting on his behalf.

So, here is a person just like you (or perhaps just like you would like to be). Moreover, he is engaged with matters you do

not know very much about. As you feel secure in your fundamental conception of life and the world, and as you feel yourself to be connected to that person in this regard, and as you believe that all problems may in principal be solved on this foundation, you entrust him with the solution of those problems you believe him to be qualified for. The trouble with this is that often you may not be able to examine his qualification appropriately, since, of course, you do not have it yourself and, therefore, you may lack the adequate ability to judge. Hence, you must again lean on your trust, which can only be based on your general perception of connectedness. Whether such a perception of connectedness is justified can be examined to a certain extent; but you cannot know whether the actual performance of him whom you trust is adequate or even optimal. This, your trust must tell you.

In such conditions, the general trust of voters becomes very important to any political career. The extent of trust given to a politician does not only play a decisive role in determining the extent of the power given to him; it also crucially affects the general judgment about his actual performance. Whoever earns the trust of his voters does not have to worry about making mistakes now and then. Such mistakes will be perceived as just that: mistakes, and not as an indicator of a more fundamental insufficiency; and sometimes, they will not even be recognized as mistakes.

Under such circumstances, the direct control of political actors may become a most difficult and in some respects impossible venture. As far as we are at their mercy in our political judgments, our trust in politicians becomes categorical in character. Still, we must found our trust in something. Connectedness must actually be experienced to some extent. But we can experience as good or bad, as connecting or separating, only behavior which we are reasonably familiar with from our own way of life. Hence, we can only refer to general values and goals and to universal virtues such as honesty, kindness, astuteness, integrity, etc., —and politicians and their parties are well aware of this.

One might consider this a dangerous feature of modern life. Still, it is a necessary consequence of the complexity of politics

today. We are usually firmly convinced that most problems can be solved on the basis of our fundamental values, with good will and a sufficient knowledge of facts. That is why we entrust individuals, who we judge to be competent and honest, with solving the problems we do not fully understand ourselves. In this, we do safeguard ourselves through a sophisticated system of institutional controls. But our institutions cannot by themselves solve the problems. To settle our political matters, we need effective political institutions, and we need competent and virtuous politicians as well. Hence, trust in institutions is needed just as much as trust in persons endowed with power. It is only the intricate connection of both, interpersonal trust and institutional trust, that enables us to act politically in a complex liberal world.

## 5. CONCLUSION

While modern society with its complex networks of social interaction increasingly requires that people trust in social institutions, it cannot do without more personal forms of trust. Institutional trust is itself fundamentally grounded in interpersonal trust. It is anchored in trust in salient representatives of the respective institution, and it necessarily includes trust in the (institutional) trust of others. No genuine trust –neither personal nor institutional– can in the end exist without some kind of normative foundation and, consequently, without some form of virtue.

Institutional trust may in some respect be acquired more easily than trust in other persons. And for the very same reasons, it may also be more easily maintained. But from this particular stability and robustness of institutional trust even in the face of all kinds of possible behavioral experiences, a problem arises: can we trust in being justified to trust in institutions? I have no easy answer to offer. Obviously, we do trust in social institutions, and each of us as well as society as a whole cannot get by without such trust. But, of course, whether it is justifiable depends crucially on what the institutions actually are, and especially how and to whom they assign whichever social position.

So we should make every effort to keep a critical eye on the normative foundation, the functionality and the efficacy of our social institutions, as well as on those given a position of power by the institutions. Trust can be dangerous, and its critical examination is a precondition for trust to be justifiable. With institutional trust, it is sometimes more difficult to carry out such critical reflection; still, it is all the more necessary.

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## Tres concepciones sobre la autoridad del derecho

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### RESUMEN

En este trabajo se analiza la posibilidad de explicar la fuerza vinculante de las normas jurídicas (i. e. su autoridad), sin caer en el dilema del carácter o bien superfluo o bien irracional del derecho. Por una parte, se muestra que este dilema se origina en la adopción de un concepto iusnaturalista de autoridad y que las posiciones que no abandonan este concepto no pueden ofrecer una explicación satisfactoria de la autoridad del derecho. Por otra parte, se distinguen tres enfoques iuspositivistas en relación a este tema: el escéptico, el inclusivo y el exclusivo. A tenor del análisis propuesto, los dos primeros fallan en su reconstrucción del problema. En contraste, el positivismo exclusivo permite explicar la fuerza vinculante de las normas jurídicas sin apelar a la moral y, por esta misma razón, sin caer en el dilema antes mencionado.

### ABSTRACT

In this work we analyze the possibility of explaining the authority or binding force of legal norms, without falling in the dilemma of the character either superfluous or irrational of the law. On the one hand, it is shown that this dilemma is linked to the adoption