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JUST GOING ROUND TO THE SHOP

The kitchen is in full steam; pans hiss and spoons clatter, plates are slapped onto trays and sauces marshalled; the parent animating all these objects leans across and opens the breadbin—which, being empty, stops the cavalcade in its tracks. She steps out to reach for her coat, then pauses again; instead, she calls to summon her child, causing a hiatus in another sphere of activity, whose clattering, marshalling, and animating constitute the equally busy domain of play. She hands him some coins and sends him out, down the street and across the road to the shops. Within a few minutes he returns, carrying a loaf; behind in the shop he has left the payment and a recorded video image of himself. In this brief and everyday episode, the two of them have negotiated or touched upon most of the basic dimensions of trust.

Two transactions have taken place: the one between parent and child, the second between child and merchant. The second belongs to the class that has preoccupied many theorists of trust, those whose vision is set in the marketplace, and who conceive of trust primarily as an issue that arises between individuals idealized as rational, free, and equal. Starting here, within the home and the family, we get our priorities in order.

Trust begins, or should begin, between parent and child; it is upon the basis of trust thus established that individuals can go out to become actors in a marketplace. And starting here, with a child offering a coin to a shopkeeper, we set off aware that for most of the transactions of everyday life, trust must inhere in relationships between agents who are significantly unequal in power, resources, or autonomy.[1]

Before the child sets off out of the door, there must be trust between him and his mother. On his part, this is based on the unconditional and total trust that arises—unless suppressed by neglect or gross distortion of parental roles—as a founding condition of childhood. He is old enough to be able to disagree with a parent about the details of where his interests lie, but his sense of his place in the world rests upon his absolute confidence that his parents have his fundamental interests at heart. He is sure that his mother would not send him into a world in which he would be in peril. More than either of them are consciously aware, his sense of basic security is created and sustained by the routines of life: the Saturday breakfast, more relaxed than on weekdays, with its menu compiled by the family's various members, the iterated children's games that put a familiar cast of characters—plush, plastic, or pixels—through variations upon a basic repertoire of parades and adventures. All these affirm that the world may be treated as if it were constant, reliable and secure.

That goes for his mother too. Her everyday decisions must be based on a sense of normality; that the world is constant enough for its risks to be intuitively assessable. She must feel a basic safeness underneath the inevitable risks; she must feel

some degree of basic trust in people whom she does not know personally or at all.

She must also trust her child, in two successive respects. First she must be sure of his competence to do what she asks of him. He must be old enough to be capable of the task. If so, he is also old enough to be left in the house while she runs the errand herself. Indeed that's her initial impulse, and would probably be simpler, but she has strategic considerations to weigh. He needs to learn how to go out and act in the world; she must learn to trust him to do so. She must enable him to become trustworthy.

Once she trusts in his competence, she must trust him to apply that competence in her interests. She trusts him not only to collect the change but to return it to her in full; she trusts him to buy what she has specified rather than what he might prefer. Her faith in him may be augmented by norms that he has absorbed, from school or other public sources as well as his parents, encouraging him to pick up a brown loaf instead of a sugar-laced white one or a carton of doughnuts. His choice is underwritten by his keenness to do what she wants him to do; her interests are thus incorporated in his.

She must also trust him not to trust. Her watchword will be 'Take care crossing the road, and don't talk to strangers.' Distrust of strangers is regarded as a precondition of independent ventures into public space; and even road safety involves awareness that relates to trust. At the crossing the child must remember that cars may not always stop when the lights change. When he looks up at the security camera overlooking the till—or the street—he will see a reminder

that public spaces contain untrustworthy people. And these include children. The shopkeeper is prepared to trust him on his own, but would not if he came in with a few of his friends—'No more than four schoolchildren at a time' is the quota stipulated on the door.

Nevertheless, these anxieties rest upon a thick carpet of trust. All concerned trust that the traffic lights will not suddenly malfunction and send vehicles off into collisions. The shopkeeper and the customers trust that the till calculator will reckon the bills correctly and that the banks will record the resulting changes in balances accurately. They trust the money; which is to say that they trust the immense and mysterious network of systems and institutions that guarantee the banknotes' promises to pay their bearers what they say they are worth. This implies that whatever complaints they may have about the government, they have a basic confidence in the functioning of the state and the economy. Impersonality seems to promote trust in many contemporary contexts. The customers will ignore the automatic camera, but if they saw the shopkeeper photograph the child himself, they would probably call the police.

We can recognize this as a distinctively contemporary cameo not just because of the presence of a security camera, but because it is infused with a sensitivity to risk that would seem neurotic to earlier generations. Contemporary analyses of trust emphasize its intimate connection with risk, and some go so far as to depict trust as a specifically modern phenomenon arising from a preoccupation with risk that has arisen as this particular phase of history has developed. Trust does not

arise when tradition dictates each person's place and how they shall conduct themselves in it. When your actions are determined by your station in society, your gender, your parents, their parents, and their parents before them, all implementing a universally accepted, pitilessly enforced body of rules that prescribe your actions in any situation you are likely to encounter, then what's to trust?

The answer is that life is never so ordered or choices so forced that the need for trustworthiness can be eliminated. A society may be segmented by rank and bound by codes of honour, yet allow Machiavellian individuals to flourish—not least Niccolò Machiavelli himself, in Renaissance Florence. In any society there will always be scope among peers, such as friends, siblings, or trading partners for choices about the extent to which one takes another's interests into consideration. That would have been the case when people all gathered or hunted their food, rather than growing or buying it. Questions of trustworthiness arose as humans became human, if not before.

That is not to deny a distinctive character to modern relationships, and the questions of trust that arise in them, however. They differ from traditional ones in number and duration. Throughout human prehistory, most of history, and large areas of today's world, people have generally tended to interact with small numbers of other people over extended periods of time. For the most part they would spend their time with people of their own small group, and their contact with outsiders would be limited. In the modern world the reverse is becomingly increasingly true. People range further, in person

or via electronic networks, and frequently have encounters with people they never meet again. Their circles of acquaintance are continually being updated.

At the same time, the numbers in the inner family circle have fallen. Perhaps the child sent to the shop has siblings; perhaps they're out with their father; but there'll only be a few of them compared with the traditional chorus. This, rather than bureaucratic angst, is what sets the terms for contemporary assessments of risk. Large parts of the world are now reliable enough to permit people to have very few children, and to concentrate on them enough to enable them to take advantage of the opportunities that the world now presents. People no longer accept that they should have many children and expect to bury one or two of them; they need to believe that the few children they have will grow up safely to live lives that should be long, healthy, comfortable, and rich in experience. The risks both of loss in an absolute sense and of lost opportunities are unconscionable, and periodically fray the fabric of public trust.

Often what picks it apart is food. Buying a loaf requires implicit trust in the systems that ensure the safety of food. It need not be absolute trust: a parent who prefers a brown loaf to a white one may also be bothered about the addition of various chemicals to the bread. But it is sufficient . . . until the food in question becomes the focus of a health scare, at which point ambient trust may be replaced by incandescent suspicion. Blame will then find its way to the government, as inevitably as water flows downhill, highlighting the mistrust of political institutions that helps to define the modern political

condition. Much of the attention devoted to trust in public discourse revolves around the public's suspension of belief in political theatre. This may, however, be a problem for politicians rather than for democracy, whose structural foundations are actually based on mistrust. Liberal states take as given that those with power will be tempted to abuse it, so the powers of the state are separated into divisions intended to check and balance their exercise.

Negotiations between presidents, premiers, parliaments, and courts are relatively clear, from the public's point of view, if remote. Alarms about health and safety are more disturbing, because they raise questions not only about governments and bureaucrats but about the expert systems on which modern life depends. Wrangles in the upper strata of power, for instance between a government and the judiciary, appear usually to be over values rather than facts. Health scares throw facts into question. They raise doubts about networks that are even less comprehensible than the money system, involving industrial processes and scientific investigations into the effects of substances or pathogens. The public would like to see these systems as disinterested and reliable, like bank transactions or air traffic control, but is uneasily aware that experts differ, science proceeds by debate, and commercial and political interests are inevitably at work. When public alarms arise in specifically medical contexts, where people feel that their lives are in professionals' hands, mistrust may rapidly flare into a sense of betrayal.

The child has come back from the shop with a loaf and a trail of actual and potential issues of trust. They begin with

the original trust between parent and child; they resolve into questions of competence and commitment; they include a background of trust in expert systems; they touch upon anxieties about malevolence and dishonesty in public spaces; they point to the volatility of public trust in certain institutions. The scene works as a three-hander—parent, child, trader—but in doing so poses questions about the rest of the cast. The other parent could be round the corner, or could be anywhere. Others with varying degrees of significance could be part of the family network. Families and intimate relationships are short of certainties and full of possibilities these days, their variety of forms creating a new variety of demands for trust.

Making sense of trust requires deciding what trust is. Many theorists have devoted themselves to this task over the past two or three decades, and have arrived at many different conclusions. Instead of trying to resolve their differences, it may be helpful to reflect briefly upon the community of meanings labelled 'trust'; to inquire whether its various senses are close kin, tightly bound factions or passing acquaintances. At this stage description and definition may be equally useful.

We might begin with an attempt to specify the formal terms of a trusting relationship: A trusts B to do X. Envisaging trust as a relation between two particular parties, concerning a particular action or range of actions, this formulation (by Russell Hardin) will define trust for the purposes of this book.[2] But instead we'll start with what trust feels like. Even the word has the gift of warming the heart and dissolving its tensions. Very few other words have that power. 'Grace' is one, but remains available only to those who have retained

the necessary religious faith. The other is 'love', which is often related to trust, and akin to it in quality.

Like love, trust is involuntary. You can't help whether you love or trust someone; you either do or you don't. Although situations may arise where one says, 'I'll just have to trust you then', that is not really trust. Rather it means 'I'll just have to take the chance that you will act in my interests,' or 'I will have to act in the same way that I would if I really trusted you.'

These reserved declarations, however, may be steps on the way to trust. Sometimes one says, 'I'll just have to trust you' ironically: it is an opportunity to acknowledge that A already trusts B, though it may not have been explicit up to that point. In other circumstances 'I'll just have to trust you' is an invitation to prove yourself trustworthy. These subtexts are initiatives undertaken in the hope of establishing or deepening trust. Although you can't make yourself trust, you can act in ways that help trust develop; as is also the case with love.

Involuntary feelings are often passionate ones, and that is true for certain celebrated forms of trust, such as those between lovers or comrades. Trust may be unconditional too—but rarely so outside the special relationships between parents and young children. Normally trust is conditional and limited. It is a practical attitude rather than a transcendent passion. At the same time it is also, of course, optimistic. Trust is an expectation, or a disposition to expect, that another party will act in one's interests.

It could be termed confidence, or reliance, as in the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first definition of trust: 'confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or

the truth of a statement'. Some theorists distinguish between trust and confidence, reserving trust for agents with intentions and confidence for things or processes. 'I do not trust the sun to rise each day, at least not in any meaningful sense beyond merely having great confidence that it will do so,' observes Russell Hardin; who is also careful to distinguish between trust and trustworthiness, the latter being what is indicated by qualities and attributes.[3] But although some might find it wanting in precision, the *OED*'s definition is not at odds with the view that trust is an expectation about the actions of others. Its last part serves as a reminder that of all the actions that trust is concerned with, few are more critical than the act of telling the truth.

When we expect others to act in our interests, we do not expect them to act against their own interests. As Russell Hardin proposes in his 'encapsulated interest' model of trust, we must believe that their interests incorporate ours.[4] When a parent sends a child on an errand to buy a loaf, the coincidence of interest is all but total. Both are concerned before all else with the safety of the child; both want to obtain the loaf, which they will both consume. The potential conflicts of interest are marginal and matters of interpretation: the child might prefer not to bother, or might prefer the tastier white bread over the healthier brown, but his mother will readily make the case for why doing as she asks is good for his health and character. Negotiations such as these will help to embed her preferences within his.

We can be sure about trust and the intertwining of interests in this case because we can be in no doubt that there is a

relationship between the parent and the child. There may well be relationships between each of them and the shopkeeper too: he is likely to know his local customers at least by sight; he may enjoy his day-to-day encounters with them; and he will certainly consider that it is in his commercial interests to keep their custom. If the relationships between trader and customers remain healthy, the latter's interests will be at the heart of the former's.

Out in the street, however, interactions are usually too brief to be described as relationships. Road sense must be based around a precautionary principle of mistrust. The child must learn that signals and actions do not always correspond: occasionally a car will go through a red light, and cars turn without signalling all the time. But people frequently seem to cite driving as a striking example of trust in strangers. We are impressed at our readiness to take our chances among columns of massive steel projectiles, each controlled by a mind of its own. It is true that driver A's interests incorporate driver B's to the extent that each wants to avoid colliding with the other. They do not normally know each other, however; they may not communicate with each other, and in most cases are only peripherally aware of each other's presence. If one considers that trust involves particular expectations about particular agents, drivers don't trust each other. Their trust is placed in the technical systems that control the flow of traffic; their confidence is built by the range of punishments that traffic systems threaten against drivers who break the rules; and they usually assess the risks of driving as acceptably remote. In some circumstances some drivers may be deterred from

making journeys because they consider that either roads or drivers are likely to be more dangerous than usual: in fog or on Saturday nights, for example. But these are essentially perceptions about how other drivers balance their own interests, between the urge to arrive quickly and the risk of not arriving at all, when their judgement is tested by poor visibility or impaired by alcohol. Under those conditions driver A is even less aware of driver B than usual.

Although trust may require a meaningful relationship to satisfy its more demanding analysts, it need not require goodwill. When A is a person and B is a bank, A may trust B to keep her money safe although she does not imagine for a moment that the bank feels warmly disposed to her, and she may well suspect that it will assert its interests at her expense when it gets a chance to levy charges or manipulate interest rates. If A enters hospital and is examined by Doctor B, she may trust B's professional expertise and integrity even though B appears indifferent to her as a person. Until relatively recently indifference on the part of medical professionals, or plain rudeness, was if anything regarded as a sign of trustworthiness: it implied the objectivity needed for expertise, and asserted the superior status that medical expertise conferred.

Trust can even be achieved between parties who are at war with each other. On the Western Front in the First World War, where armies were stopped up in immobile trenched lines for years, units facing each other negotiated covert truces. These were covert because they had to be concealed from the high commands on each side, and they were often negotiated by

gunfire. Artillery shells would be fired into empty ground or at regular times; riflemen would shoot high or wide. Observing such signals a soldier could come to believe that the man facing him across the lines 'ain't a bad feller'.[5] Soldiers came to trust their opposite numbers not to attack them unless forced to do so by senior commanders. These informal arrangements (of which more later) were possible when units faced each other long enough for relationships to develop, even though these were relationships based on exchanges of fire.

Elsewhere in the Great War, trust in enemy soldiers was officially organized. One former prisoner of war later recalled how his German captors permitted officers to leave their camps on 'honour walks', having signed forms stating that they would not try to escape. On their return the officers would hand in the forms—and would be released from their undertaking.[6] Between these two examples we can see the old order passing and a new modern order being born. The First World War dealt traditional codes of military honour a blow from which they never recovered: the imprisoned officers whose word was sufficient to underwrite their privileges were among the last to enjoy such benefits. In the trenches, the rank and file had to work out for themselves how to create trust under modern conditions. They had marched to war in a state of patriotic enthusiasm that approached ecstasy; and found themselves in an unprecedented situation that differed radically from what they had been told they were entering. They set aside jingoism, propaganda, and unquestioning obedience in order to respond to conditions as they found them. The modern world made a mockery of traditional authority.

Presenting new and unpredictable situations at every turn, it demanded pragmatism and negotiation case by case.

Already it is clear that we can speak of trust in a great variety of circumstances, and with varying degrees of conviction. Trust that is part of intimate and loving relationships—parents and children, partners who are also good companions, confidants, close friends—feels like the real thing. So in its very different way does the kind of trust that takes impersonal systems—banks or airline operations—for granted. It is related to a more diffuse confidence in the trustworthiness of people and other agents that are encountered in the course of normal life, such as shop assistants or passers-by from whom one asks directions. At a further remove stand the kind of expressions of trust, or distrust, elicited by opinion surveys probing people's attitudes to organizations or their personnel, such as the police, doctors, or politicians. Then there are the colloquial usages, in which one might speak of trusting other drivers or 'having to trust' someone, that fall short of a firm purchase on trust's core meanings.

Those core meanings themselves become harder to grasp the more one tries to specify what degree of freedom makes trust possible. It is easy enough to agree that the word 'trust' is applicable in situations where the trusted party has some choice over whether to behave as the truster expects, and that it lacks conviction in the absence of such choice. A slave-owner in the Americas might have been completely confident that his slaves would act in his interests, but that confidence would be based on control. For many authors, the meaning

of trust centres upon the willingness to accept vulnerability, the risk of suffering injury or loss if the trusted parties do not act as they are trusted to do; whereas slave-owners had chains and weapons to ensure their invulnerability.[7] Men living in certain traditional cultures today may be confident that their daughters will not form relationships with men except when they marry, which will be as their families decide and their cultures' rules dictate. Women who refuse to comply may be subjected to draconian punishment, including murder. That these punishments are an ordered element of traditional discipline, rather than uncontrolled explosions of anger, demonstrates that the system is not based on trust.

They also show that choice is possible, even though it may incur the ultimate price. Intuitively, such situations seem utterly different from ones in which people are free to choose their partners without fear of murder, but on the scale of constraints it is hard to draw a line separating situations where choice is possible and ones where it is not. Although European slave-owners may have needed chains in the Americas to control people abducted from Africa, that was because they had not sufficiently colonized the minds of their captives. The Catholic schools in Ireland that became notorious for their brutal regimes exercised day-to-day control by means of beatings, but they achieved far greater effects by the inculcation of guilt, which could last a lifetime.

The beatings helped to inculcate the guilt, though, and likewise it is impossible to separate the effects of physical violence and mental pressure, coercion and the willing

internalization of norms. The constraints imposed by rules, obligations, customs, living kin, and dead ancestors raise not just the question of what to trust, but of whether trust really exists. People living in traditional cultures are likely to have a set of constraints on their choices of action that seem stifling to those accustomed to a culture that makes its rules up as it goes along. It is not immediately clear, however, that a person in one group is in a qualitatively different position from somebody in the other. The constraints in the traditional culture may be more limiting and the sanctions for transgression harsher, but the way norms work in any culture are similar. People are inhibited from certain courses of action, and induced towards others, by their beliefs about what is right, wrong, proper, and improper, by their desire to be good according to their culture's lights, their desire for respect and acceptance, and their abhorrence of shame.

Similar issues arise in the closest of relationships. We may say that a parent may be trusted never to harm her child, because we believe that she loves her child as parents should, that she is competent to raise a child, and that her behaviour will remain consistent because she is mentally stable. Her child is dearer to her than anything; she could not bear the child to come to harm, or the thought that her actions could put their relationship at risk; she believes that her duties to her child are her greatest responsibilities; she believes that the neglect or abuse of children are among the most abhorrent of wrongs; and she can imagine the shame and the ostracism that they would bring down upon the offender. So does she really have

a choice in the matter? If not, how meaningful is it to describe her as trustworthy?

We could continue this line of questioning until it became clear that the question of whether trust really exists is a local instance of the question of whether there is such a thing as free will. The idea of trust depends on the assumption that agents really do have choices. Trust is an expectation about another's actions, based on the understanding that the other has the capacity to create mental models of possible courses of action, and to evaluate them within a framework that can incorporate interests besides the other's own. It is accompanied by the perception that the other's conclusions are not foregone, that genuine choices are being made. We cannot help but think this way. Even if lengthy philosophical analysis persuades some of us that free will may be an illusion, it still feels real. The perception of agency is fundamental to human understanding of the world. Within the realm of human relations, trust is one of its most significant effects.

Trust varies greatly in quality and degree. Much of the effort to analyse trust over the past several decades has been directed towards understanding which circumstances will promote trust and which will stifle or twist it. Plenty of significant factors will become apparent as the child walks round to the shop, starting with the fact that he lives close enough for it to be a neighbourhood shop. The more convenient its location, the more often he, his family and his neighbours will visit it; increasing the frequency with which neighbours meet each other and are encouraged to feel themselves to be a community. As regular customers they will become part of

the shopkeeper's community, which should—all things being equal—encourage him to trust them.

The less equal things are, however, the worse become the prospects for trust. Cities in wealthy nations contain areas of relative poverty in which there are significant everyday risks from individuals or groups who pursue their interests by threat, theft, or force. Gangs intimidate their way, often simply by their presence, into monopolies of public space. Individuals or groups steal from shops or in the street, either covertly or through coercion. The threat of unprovoked violence may be increased by the presence of intoxicated or mentally disturbed people, in a setting that does not make it easy to moderate their behaviour. In such neighbourhoods it is unwise to assume that people are trustworthy. Many of them surely are, to the extent required for the quiet enjoyment of everyday life, but relations between them are inhibited by the pressure to avoid encounters with the untrustworthy ones. People are placed permanently on the defensive, particularly when, as in the case of shopkeepers, their daily lives consist of encounters with large numbers of individuals who are largely unknown quantities.

Uncertainty tends to be countered by assumptions. People make predictions about the character, disposition, and likely behaviour of others by regarding them as members of groups with defining and predictable characteristics. They may consider some groups to be threatening, some to be genial, some to be lazy, some to be industrious. Shops may become the focus of ethnic tension, especially when they are identified

with a particular ethnic group. Resentment against such minorities, typically involving accusations of exploitation or disrespect, may sometimes erupt into riots. One section of the population finds grounds to agree, to cooperate, and to bond, by turning against another part of what might otherwise become a community.

This process, of developing solidarity within a group by identifying other groups as enemies, seems to be fundamental to human societies. Rooted in a sense of kinship, actual or imagined, it may create a kind of secure perimeter within which mutual interests are asserted and trust may develop. People who feel they share values and customs will tend to feel that they can predict each other's behaviour, and will be correspondingly confident that they can judge when others are trustworthy. If they feel that they have interests in common, they should be inclined to trust each other on matters arising from these mutual interests.

A sense of shared attitudes and interests, contrasting with those held by outsiders, may be promoted by stereotypical perceptions, popular prejudice, or propaganda. As unpopular governments often appreciate, one of the most effective ways for a faction within a group to obtain support from unsympathetic or antagonistic members is to engineer conflict with another group. By ensuring that there is a genuine threat from outside, the faction creates genuine and dominating common interests for all members of the group. The graver the threat, the greater the common interests: the potential for trust is correspondingly increased, though in practice it may only partly

offset the mistrust that may arise over conflicts for scarce resources or suspicions that some are shirking their duties to the group.

Where antagonism results in physical separation between neighbouring groups, trust may flourish and doors be left unlocked within each perimeter. The inhabitants of each neighbourhood are not safe to cross the line, even though they may be all but indistinguishable to outsiders and even to each other. Aggressive sectarians in Northern Ireland have little to go on if they are seeking victims outside established Catholic or Protestant areas: names, addresses, and football allegiances are all cues that can be concealed or faked. The scarcity of reliable signals makes questions of trust particularly fraught for taxi drivers, who face additional hazards on top of the risks inherent to their occupation. They must make snap decisions about the trustworthiness of their fares, who may be aggressively sectarian, dishonest, members of illegal paramilitary organizations, or indeed all three. As an absorbing study by Diego Gambetta and Heather Hamill illustrates, Belfast taxi drivers must learn as much about trustworthiness as they do about street maps. Yet one of the researchers' most striking findings is that Belfast taxi drivers are more trusting and confident than their counterparts in New York. Belfast drivers have a sense of place and belonging. The province's ingrained patterns and adamant rules are the foundation of both their hazards and their security. New York taxi drivers, by contrast, are often recent immigrants with meagre community roots. The threats they face are hard to assess, lacking the rhyme or the reason of sectarian strife.[8]

Despite its apparently narrow basis, Northern Ireland's communal division has proved formidably sustainable. Although the main armed groups have discontinued their campaigns, and institutional biases against Catholics have long since been redressed, the social separation between working-class Catholics and Protestants has if anything grown deeper. At the political level, the Democratic Unionist Party has approached the 'peace process' with the utmost suspicion, and has become the leading party in the province. DUP leaders scorned their Ulster Unionist Party rivals' preparedness to take the secessionist Republican movement 'on trust', demanding proof that the Irish Republican Army had 'decommissioned' its arsenal as agreed.[9] They made it abundantly clear that although they might be prepared to cooperate with the Republican politicians of Sinn Féin, they could not imagine trusting them enough to take their eyes off them for a second. This radical mistrust is one of the reasons why nine years elapsed between the Good Friday Agreement, which established the terms of a political settlement, and the formation of a governing executive in which the DUP shared power with Sinn Féin.

Northern Ireland's peace process illustrates how cooperation need not require trust, but may struggle to proceed without it. We are right to warm to the word 'trust'. It denotes a condition that people desire in the same way that they desire love, and which is a fundamental element in any vision of a good society. It can readily be shown to improve social and political interactions, and to enhance the quality of everyday life. But it is not always good or necessary. Not

only may trust be placed in error, as parents point out when they warn children not to take friendliness from strangers at face value, but it may also provide support for parties that do bad things. A Northern Irish pensioner may trust the paramilitaries who dominate her neighbourhood to deal with the young tearaways who are harassing her, but their trust-confirming response is likely to be brutal and their larger effect on society malign. To understand the value of trust, it is necessary to develop a sense of where it belongs and where it does not belong. We also need to develop an understanding of its relationship to other phenomena that are felt to be generally but not always desirable, such as cooperation and solidarity.

Theorists of trust have worked hard, particularly in the past twenty years or so, to develop precision in the understanding of trust and its relationship to allied phenomena. They have applied the theory of games to formal models and to experiments; they have conducted anthropological fieldwork; they have attempted to measure trust in public life; they have sought to clarify the concepts involved. The project is social science with an admixture of philosophy, applied mathematics, and influences from other fields, including biology.

The latter domain offers the opportunity to begin at the beginning. To address the fundamental problem of trust—how it can develop in a society of competitive individuals so richly endowed with the means to deceive or otherwise exploit each other—it is sensible to start with individuals and their interests, and to see where these may lead.