

# Trust, Strangeness and Hospitality

Laurence Cornu

I was invited to think about a way of building social cohesion open to diversity, to follow *paths of thought* into the problem of coexistence. As a hypothesis, title and principle, I assumed that democracy is alive only when it is reinvented. *Experiences* are alive only when they are reinvented each time and constantly, in actions, and sometimes with the slightest differences. Acts of courage, love, speech, freedom: 'Action is fresh even when it is repeated' (Char, 1983: 186). Actualization exists only when it is replayed – never as a result or foregone conclusion – and each time in a fleeting art.

While democracy remains alive through reinvented acts of freedom and equality, in the case of 'social cohesion' we might expect societies to continue in a more inconspicuous, tacit fashion. But at least two things remind us of how difficult that continuation has become today. First, diversity as a figure of multiplicity does not automatically mean cohesion. Second, with or without diversity, social cohesion is a current issue: divisions and violence are tearing societies apart. So the challenge is to imagine a cohesion that welcomes diversity, and to do so while allowing for the possibility of a continual *reinvention* of democratic cohesion, a sort of constant creation of free cohesion of the diverse. Under what conditions would a free and equal self-inventing cohesion be thinkable and possible? Under what conditions of *political* and *anthropological* thought?

A unique diagnosis regarding current crises, a general theory and possible actions: these might be expected. But in fact, unique approaches are closely related to general theories: both have to be pursued together. Cohesion raises a problem, but so do theories of cohesion: that is why we may be attracted by a 'different' kind of thinking about cohesion based on the notion of trust. However, there are several ways of theorizing about how we connect through trust. I am interested in the theory that reinvents hospitality towards strangers.

Copyright © UNESCO 2008

SAGE: Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore, <http://dio.sagepub.com>  
DOI: 10.1177/0392192108096825

## Commonly expressed concerns and theories of cohesion

Cohesion indicates the fact of being 'closely united', fused together, and (since the 19th century) also refers to the unity of a group and in particular its unity *in action* ('a team's, government's cohesion'; Rey, 1999). Is it 'sameness', identity of being, that makes the unity of such a group? Or if there is something 'other', how should we think of its connection, its 'fusing together'?

Durkheim tried to show what makes it possible for modern societies to create cohesion: an organic solidarity based on the model of a functional solidarity between distinct and co-dependent organs. Organic solidarity in the division of social labour demonstrates what makes differences 'hang together': their interdependence, symbolized by the organs in an organism. In fact, that thought allowed Durkheim (1999) to imagine the cohesion of a society of unequal entities: a cohesion of inequalities is possible (see Donzelot, 1994: 76ff.; Donzelot, 2006), but that model does not fit very well here. The organs are not 'diverse', but *differentiated*: the sum of their differences contributes to the life of a *coherent* whole, whether biological or social, which 'hangs together' because each organ has a function. 'Diversity' is not related to the same kind of differentiation, it does not make up a whole – unless we turn diversity, which is shimmering and qualitative, into a functional system, a system of identifiable functions (and the temptation is there). And today social cohesion is being destroyed: there is no longer any common connection in the unprecedented growth in inequalities. What cohesion is still possible? What *kind of cohesion* does 'cultural diversity' require of us? What is happening to us today as far as cohesion is concerned?

## Shattered cohesion

Two commonly discussed phenomena reveal two disturbing aspects of the problem: exclusion and individualism.

The issue of social cohesion is posed in new terms by comparison with the theories of Durkheim: according to sociologist Jacques Donzelot (2006), we have moved on from the issue of inequalities to that of *exclusion*. The problem is no longer one of imagining organic solidarity, but the more serious issue of internal divisions, since 'interdependence does not produce cohesion': 'since social cohesion is not linked to organic solidarity it is turning into a major problem for all societies, rich and poor, because of both its causes and its consequences' (Donzelot, 2006: 11).

Taking the biological metaphor, it might be said that in contemporary societies we are dealing with the problem of an organism that is devouring part of itself: a section of the population, once exploited, is thrown out of work, outside the social connection, outside the circulation of exchanges, out of the town centres. This means turning those who do not fit the new functionality – the clean and lean management chart, the ultra-rational job descriptions and 'normal' behaviour, created and instrumentalized by the march of globalized capitalism – into a foreign body.

Management functionalism as it is practised nowadays is an administrative mode that not only brings normalization to bear on individuals: it rejects those who do not

fit the boxes in the management software program. It rejects as an obstacle everything that is other, alien, external, unclassifiable, deviant. It is an organism without external or internal exchange, without circulation or middle, without exterior or interior – in the last analysis a ‘mechanism’ that crushes and ends in the death of the organism and the mechanization of society. From a political or symbolic viewpoint this ‘administration’ only produces ‘the same’: it is not a living organism; the machine does not institute anything; it is *not an institution in any shape or form*.

The second commonly mentioned phenomenon records the extreme individualism that cuts human beings off from one another and individuals off from the traditional institutions that used to nurture them (family, state, school, or – according to other views – social classes or religion). A point these two phenomena have in common might lead us to a preliminary direction for our diagnosis: an absence of cohesion because of de-institutionalization.<sup>1</sup> So one of the visible dimensions is the problem of *political* institutions, the problem of the crisis of nation states. This is a political problem, among others, that leads us to seek a ‘solution’ for these issues in ‘citizenship education’. A deliberate policy should come to the aid of a shattered society and education should be the means to re-establish unity and cohesion. But when we seek theoretical aid to think about this very real difficulty – and this solution, which is perhaps one of the last legacies of the revolutionary imagination – we encounter a theoretical difficulty: ‘classical’ political thought, which went alongside the formation of ‘modern’ nation states and still inspires educational discourse, comes up against its own limits as well as those of organic solidarity.

### Theories of cohesion are the problem

The fact that a human group ‘agrees’ to create cohesion and society is a question that modern theories of political philosophy have related to the state on two antithetical grounds.

On the one hand, it has been suggested that *it is mistrust that creates cohesion*: presumed initial rivalry becomes unbearable and leads people to turn to a sovereign, who alone is able to bring about unity of the social body, according to Hobbes’s image of Leviathan, a huge human body made up of tiny individual ones under the direction of the head.

The physics of the passions which Hobbes believed in, on the model of Galileo’s physics, describes well the observable (and hateful) phenomena of clinging together out of fear and cohering in submission. However, those phenomena, whose widespread incidence we can note, also have a *self-verifying* dimension: it is verifiable that *mistrust arouses mistrust*, and that assuming it is the sole motive increases it. It is also verifiable that such mistrust serves strong powers. And thus it is obvious that this mistrust turns into a certain *regime* of trust: a *vertical trust*, a vertical recourse to a stronger person in whom we place our trust out of fear of others. A trust that comes from fear: we know such a regime ‘works’. Using fear to get an anti-democratic policy accepted is sadly illustrated every day, even by governments claiming to be democratic.

Here we need to be aware that this mode of cohesion may be strong (under certain conditions), but it is by no means a site of free equality. Some anthropological

approaches, such as René Girard's, show there is nothing like giving a group a 'scapegoat' for welding it together; that is certainly a 'natural' path down to the passions of fear. In the current crises of cohesion, 'new' cohesions may always re-emerge in an authoritarian or 'tribal' mode: 'new' but not inventive, instead repetitive, archaic, re-treading a familiar path – a perfunctory, anti-democratic form of cohesion through exclusion of difference. But the initial reductive hypothesis, like the solution proposed, does not provide an answer to the problem and even contributes to it through self-verifying fear of the worst. Indeed, desire for a living democracy makes us reject the refuge of authoritarianism. But then, in addition to the real difficulty of curbing such phenomena (and it is probably better to prevent them before they get underway), we have to ask *what kind of cohesion we are looking for and what other anthropology* allows us to think it.

On the other hand, other theories (for example, those of Rousseau) advocate a voluntarist, contractual individualism. But in fact, individualistic atomism comes up against its limits here: the bond of cohesion is not one of wills alone. Rousseau himself arrives at the question of a civil religion. Whatever the importance and interest of thinking about a contract, contractualist theories all encounter this theoretical difficulty, either by assuming the minimal cohesion – sociability – needed to set up the contract or by appealing to a bond of another kind in order to ensure cohesion by making it 'sacred'.

And so mistrust (and there are anthropologies of mistrust) probably brings about cohesions, but they are undemocratic and terrible. As for rational will, it creates contracts but not 'cohesions', so the problem, an anthropological one, remains and is unavoidable given the current reality.

Therefore we need to be aware that the issue of creating the one out of the many preceded us and draws deeply on a theory of being. The issue of social cohesion – in its relationship with the political, the cohesion of the city – is part of philosophical tradition: it was first raised by Plato as the problem par excellence of the city, of justice in the city. He shows that it implies a well-designed order and guardians, a threefold division of functions and an ordering that also involves interweaving (*Republic, Politics*, 308e): the interweaving of a mixture. (We can note in passing that tearing apart confirms the metaphor of interweaving a contrario.) So the problem of the distinctness and harmony of functions finds its rigorous philosophical expression as soon as we think in terms of functions (and there are three of them: leaders, warriors and producers).

Democracy was not Plato's preferred regime, and our world has little in common with his. We believed we were thinking differently when we promoted difference rather than the universal dominating an ideal city. Yet we may wonder whether we have really avoided Plato's way of posing the problem of relations between the one and the many, which is that it is necessary to order and discipline the many into a unity and melt the mixture down to give a seamless harmony. Philosophers who are not Platonists are undertaking that task: thinking the many as many, the plural as a challenge, and action as making a break or a deviation (for example, Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière and Hannah Arendt), thinking too about recognizing modes of formation rather than imposing the right form (for example, Georges Canguilhem and Gilbert Simondon).

To be clear for a moment: *even as we celebrate difference*, we may wonder whether we are not still falling back on a Platonic ordering solution. Promoting differences as such could simply push the issue of unity and unification down one level. The problem (and the temptation) of reducing a plurality of individuals to the unity of difference is reproduced: formatting a multiple into a unity has simply reverted towards a more particular unity. The reasoning has preserved the classifying principle, and desire for harmony has preserved the principle of unity. In addition, the power of commercial standardization imposes a global normalization that squeezes out any peculiarity. Diversity's *sensitive shimmer* is condemned to being *reduced*, either to a system of well-ordered differences or to a flicker of competing adverts, which means being destroyed as vitality and sensitive creation, as living beauty and inventive deviance.

Therefore, we need to *distinguish between difference and diversity*, or again between particularities and peculiarities, which goes along with *distinguishing between several ways of creating unity*, several ways of thinking the 'cohesion', the 'hanging together' of a human group or several.

Mistrust as a passion inspires the first political model and becomes vertical trust. The rational mistrust of the second model seeks a cohesion beyond rationality. The paradigm that remains their common substrate displays a mistrust of the sensitive diverse. Is another understanding possible? Other thoughts about what makes or can make cohesion? A thought about 'horizontal trust', as formulated by Jacques Donzelot?

We can try another hypothesis and look at *forms of trust* as one of the possible dimensions of 'sticking' together in a human society.

### **Cohesion, 'social structure' and crisis of trust**

The idea that a society hangs together through trust, or through confidence, is not a new one either. 'Society is a fiduciary mechanism': going back just as far as 1933, Paul Valéry (1957: 1033) played with all the variations ('belief, trust', 'credo, credit') in order to show the extent to which 'oath, credit, contract, signature, the relationships underlying them' are at the heart of the 'social structure', of what makes it hold or stick together – its cohesion. So we have to conclude from this that '*trusting in the human word, spoken or written, is as essential to human beings as trusting that the earth is solid*'.

This 'belief' is double-sided: credulity on the one hand, reliability on the other. Reflecting on it makes you think about what determines the rational contract: being rational assumes trusting reason, we agree a contract provided we trust in the ability to make a contract, trust another's spoken or written word or another's signature. *This interpretation makes trust – in its various forms – a condition of possibility*, whose examination might allow us to go beyond the limits of the individualistic model.

Not that trust is entirely transparent with only one face: instead, it is an enigma in its very ambivalence (like voluntary servitude and freedom). Furthermore, this 'belief' may be surrounded by mistrust: nevertheless, that is to assume a different potential other than simply mistrust feeding itself. After all, trust is also self-

verifying. This interpretation does not forget emotions or calculations, but makes it possible to imagine that if they both make people 'hang together', this occurs *through the interactions that are exchanged*, both spoken and written, by *manipulating* the regimes of trust, referring to the enigma of trust in the promise kept (precisely because deceit is possible too).

So this is a hypothesis which would allow us to 'overcome' the difficulties of the two earlier theories – not to transcend them dialectically but to bypass them by *getting into another paradigm*. We shall see whether it promises to be fruitful.

Indeed, we can read the contemporary crisis as a crisis of trust (credo, credit, beliefs); a crisis of great myths marked by the end of grand narratives; a crisis of allegiance to the great inherited institutions (state, public services); a crisis of the trustworthiness of politics; a crisis of 'vertical' trust, but also a crisis of trust between individuals.<sup>2</sup> De-institutionalization is manifested in a crisis of credibility: a crisis of confidence in institutions that might be capable of enabling society to continue, providing a welcome and *hospitality* to newcomers, who are of necessity strangers.

Because of the seriousness of certain situations, especially violent incidents, we find ourselves faced with the starkness of an emergency and the radical nature of a question that is not only sociological, but also anthropological and philosophical: what is it that '*makes society*' (Donzelot et al., 2003)?<sup>3</sup> What makes a crisis, as Hannah Arendt constantly said, is the occasion for direct judgements, and it requires not *tabula rasa* but radical treatment, radical confrontation with *issues that are humanly crucial*. Having to ask this question because bonds are being eroded unavoidably puts us in a situation of looking for another way between flight and imposing an ideal model. That of *reinvention* in fact, the route that, by relying on the immemorial vitality of every society – all humanity – would uphold its democratic forms, forms of free equality. In this case, that would be reinvention: taking hold afresh of the immemorial in a new life, not cutting the thread but weaving it in a different way, a different design, with various colours.

That trust may create forms of cohesion is a hypothesis being examined by contemporary sociologists, with Georg Simmel as their forerunner. So, on the basis of a theory of trust, can we think a 'democratic' cohesion that welcomes diversity? And what kind of cohesion?

### A relevant hypothesis

Sociology teaches us first of all that there are several sociologies and that they contain exactly the same alternatives and paradoxes as the political theories mentioned previously. It also teaches us that the trust hypothesis is a relevant one.

From Georg Simmel (1991) we have some good definitions of trust, such as 'hypothesis about the future behaviour of another person'. It is an inevitable gamble insofar as we never know the other person completely, but a gamble that involves a relationship with that person. Having self-confidence inspires confidence. We trust someone who inspires confidence, and conversely trusting someone else gives that person confidence too. The gamble is 'self-verifying' because of actions that cut through the circularities of presumed mistrust. Simmel also provides us with fruit-

ful analyses that reveal historic moments of trust, from 'traditionally' suspicious societies to modern economies reliant on trust and suggesting an analysis of credit such as we find in *Philosophy of Money*. After Simmel come extensions that distinguish not only historical modes, possibly connected with religious habits (Catholic traditions of mistrust and the Protestant tradition of trust; Fukuyama, 1995), but types of trust: a familiar trust (familiarity, whose conditions have evolved considerably); an assured trust (confidence), which today is said to be in crisis; and finally a trust itself, or the capacity for risk, which is contemporary – 'our rational actions require us to take risks' (Luhmann, 2006: 9).

But although this typology is enlightening, we have not said anything about the phenomenon of trust itself, which Niklas Luhmann (1979) defines as 'initial risky performance'. In fact, there are theories of trust that reproduce the earlier difficulties.

### Individualistic and holistic models

Here there are at least two difficulties: one 'practical', the other theoretical. The first, which is more 'real', lies in the fact that in our very assured societies (full of insurances), assumed to be confident societies, the crisis of trust directs trust in two ways: towards the 'proven' expert and towards people who are the 'same' – in social class, age group, religion, opinions, or sharing the same difference. The common point here is a mistrust of what is unfamiliar and a belief that an objective 'wisdom' will excuse us from embarking on the adventure of direct knowledge, that is, a relationship. What seems not to be working, in very different places, is a simple trust in *that other person*, the other human being present, with no prejudices, categories or classifications. It is harder to put other people – strangers – in a social, psychological or pathological category than to speak to them or just listen for a moment to what they say, to move towards their 'strangeness'. Everything changes when, instead of making them answer questions or fill out a questionnaire, we begin by offering a cup of tea,<sup>4</sup> or by simply talking to them and letting them talk too. The opposite of simple trust is a suspicion that is also a *fear* of the other (Sheets-Johnstone, 2006: 23): a suspicion first of all armed with a statistical classifying power, which is the dominant social belief nowadays, and then enflamed by the outbreak of alarms. Whereas the same and the other used to be able to weave together, the identical accuses the alien.

The other difficulty reproduces exactly the difficulties of the earlier political philosophies: methodological individualism or holistic constraint. On the one hand, some models of trust start from the consideration of rational individuals calculating their interests. It can be shown (and just as well) that trust is 'profitable', that it means a 'win-win' result – this is not accepted in all economic 'cultures', including 'liberal' ones. But can the calculating economic agent act as a model for anthropological understanding of daily life? Is the model of economic risk – the methodological utilitarian atomism of rational individuals calculating gains – the right one, the only one? Is credit the truth of credibility, or is it the reverse? What is left out is the nature of the gamble. Rational calculation assumes the reliability of reason:<sup>5</sup> far from being the model for all trust, it presupposes a condition which it does not elucidate, a pre-calculation trust.



Luhmann (1979), after some convincing analyses, ends up denying the problem of the 'subjective' initiative of trust by basing it on a systemic theory which reactivates a holism. Even if it is enlightening to define trust as a 'mechanism that reduces complexity', are suspicious prejudices not also a mechanism with the same objective? And how can the systemic model in the end dismiss the intersubjective question from which it springs?<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Habermas's critique remains within the context of a paradigm common to them both, which from the outset poses the theoretical alternative between rational subject and totality (Habermas and Luhmann, 1971). The opposition between Luhmann and Habermas turns into an incompatibility of terminology (more than a language foreignness, which would then be possible to translate) between sociology and political philosophy, and completes a division that causes an impasse. It is indeed *another thinking about the subject* and in fact about *subjectivization* – that is, what makes 'community' as well – that needs to be mobilized or built up.

Thinking trust calls for a paradigm other than the instrumental, utilitarian rationality versus the limiting frameworks of its context – not by denying strategic calculations or systems but by resisting the static one-sidedness that approaches the problem of the living and the living/speaking with inert categories. The paradigm shift is both methodological and ontological, anthropological and political. Here I shall outline the anthropological approach.

### **Anthropology of the gift: An invariant in diversity**

It is the anthropology of the gift which allows us, as Alain Caillé clearly shows, to cut through the impasses of both individualism and holism. What 'makes society' is the gift, in Mauss's sense. Making society does not mean forming a block, but making an alliance. In this immemorial dimension, because it is itself already inventive, political invention is not incompatible; it is possible provided it is not reduced to a simple voluntarist rationality.

The issue of trust can be read here very exactly: the gamble peculiar to a gesture of trust is the risk of a gift, the offer of a relationship open to a future. In his book *Anthropologie du don*, Alain Caillé (2007) shows how Mauss's analysis of the gift definitely constitutes the looked-for paradigm shift that might overcome the difficulties of both holism and individual utilitarianism. The 'total' gift consists of: giving, receiving, giving back. It is a cycle that connects. Is it the individual who makes society, or society that makes individuals? The gift theory allows us to avoid this false alternative, just as it lets us avoid contrasting philosophical idealism with a mechanistic physics of the passions: the gift is initiated by someone, who accepts the uncertainty of the return. By taking the initiative and making this gesture, that individual 'makes society' because she makes an appeal and a non-predetermined space for the other person's response, even in the form of a challenge and a first step in rivalry: she proposes an alliance, and this risk calls for a deferred reciprocity. Neither ideal nor mechanism, neither irenic nor calculated, the gift is both 'obligation and freedom', both 'interested and disinterested' (Caillé, 2007: 53, 146), both individual and social.



### A new paradigm

So we are examining not the relations between an individual 'substance' and a constraining 'whole', but *the way individuals connect*: certain gestures 'make society', because with their occurrence something circulates that precedes, escapes, links up, reinvents, restarts, makes a beginning and a beginning again.

Compared to earlier paradigms and the ontology they arise from, we are dealing with a different ontology: no longer one of substance, but of *relationship*. Not a static ontology of form (and correct form), but *a dynamic of assuming a form*. Thus there arises the possibility of differentiating forms of 'psychic, collective individuation', forms of cohesion and connection, political manners and inflections in which individual and community co-invent themselves.

The advantage of this anthropological approach to the issue is that in this way it gets rid of moralizing idealism: even if it displays a generosity (an excess), the gift (like trust) is not thought from an ideal, disinterested definition. Even if it is addressed to another person, the gift may also be full of rivalry. It is not the charitable gift that explains the gift – it is the anthropological gift that has managed to find a charitable variant.

The gift does not originate from commercial exchange, but rather the reverse. The 'truth' of the gift is neither calculated exchange nor unilateral altruism. As a 'symbolic exchange', the gift may give rise to both and be 'reduced' to either: these manifestations can only be understood based on an invariant that may have several forms: a concrete, immemorial universal. A non-static 'invariant' that is not a stationary frame but both structure and gesture – the living gesture that animates the structure, just as speech brings language to life (Benveniste, following Saussure). This invariant is the gesture already there, which calls up the gesture of deviating and appealing: a deviation compared with the exact accounting of commercial exchange, and an appeal sensitive to the other person, unlike the narcissism of the beautiful moral soul – *the deviation of an uncalculated excess and the start of an unknown bond*. Generosity is its principle: not that of a moral imperative, but one arising from an immemorial heritage; the generosity of gifts and alliances, celebrations of exogamy. That is where we should seek the principle of cohesion: in those crucial alliances, in that necessary hospitality amid hostilities. Hospitality *that is given, received and returned* is also related to the gift paradigm: whatever the paradoxes, it is the manifestation of the immemorial gift – *sensitive, concrete, gestural* – of a space for the other, a gift both many-faceted and transparent, forever meeting the challenge of turning the *hostis* into a *hospes*, the foreigner into a stranger, the stranger into a guest.

We could try the following interpretation: what is in crisis today is the fact that the gift is denied by two extreme 'variations', which, each in its own register, are typified by holding exclusive sway: the total commercialization or the total sacralization of all exchange, both of these being a way of denying the human adventure of trust by placing this trust in prices or the exclusivity of religious denunciation. This is expressed in the versions of the 'symbol' brandished as a sign of allegiance, whether this be a 'brand' or a religious sign. Brands feed like vampires on the symbolic. If everything can be bought, there is no gift. But neither is there any gift if religion rules and there is an excess of sacrifice (Caillé, 2007: 181). In both cases the symbol is what

excludes, because it brings together only the same, consumers or disciples. The crystallized symbol, the symbolic capacity, has been devitalized.

Crisis of society, crisis of the gift and crisis of the symbolic, de-institutionalization, crisis of trust: in all this we are talking about the same thing. This paradigm makes it possible to bring together those different 'diagnoses', making them intelligible and co-extensive. We can see the gain in intelligibility and the fruitful result achieved by reading trust in the dynamic of a gift and a symbolizing activity. Trust is a hospitality to what the other person says, crediting unfamiliar words with some sense.

### Mauss reinvented? Trust as a gift

An act of trust may not be named as such. It may be expressed in all sorts of situations, accompanied or not by words or the word 'trust'. An utterance naming trust may very well be carried in a mistrustful statement. Trust is also full of paradoxes and threatened by every treachery.

However, the issue, which is so complex and vast, can be boiled down to its heart: 'trusting in the human word, spoken or written, is as essential to human beings as trusting that the earth is solid' (Valéry, 1957: 1033). What do we believe in today, what do we give credit to? Figures and headlines for some people; brands and 'must-have' labels for others; less often, someone who simply says something. So the challenge would be as follows: to reinvent the circulation of speech in opposition to the signals of the market and of fanaticism, but also in opposition to social and scientific prejudices.

A democratic regime of trust is just that and nothing else. Though it is clear, classical and reinvented to see democracy as a necessary exercise of distrust of accumulated powers, or power in general, of the credulities that create authorities (Rosanvallon, 2006), the issue is to define *which regime of trust* distrust itself rests on. Distrust is not exacerbated suspicion of others, but *suspicion of situations* and in particular situations of power. But that distrust presupposes and delivers gestures of trust, and supports certain kinds of trust rather than others. There is no democracy without a certain exercise of public speech, without a certain gamble on holding to one's word: without a risky regime of trust, credibility, even criticism.

Trust in the other person's word is a hospitality; it takes a gamble on credibility, a gift of hospitality to the *possible* truth of one's judgement. When do we give credit to another person for what they are telling us? Out of prejudice, it would be on a headline or an image. But when is it just on their word? The word of a 'little person', a stranger, a foreigner? It is on direct judgement, against prejudices – as in Hennig Mankell's novel, when the little black boy brought from the desert to the Scandinavian North in an improbably wandering journey at last meets someone who believes him: 'He saw in the woman's eyes that she believed him' (Mankell, 2004: 174).

The only way to see trust as something other than an irenic idealism or a utilitarian calculation is really to see it as the structure of the gift, *the risk taken on credibility*, a hospitality to what the other person says, a space for them in the exchange. The challenge is to make space for others, for the strangeness of what they say, and to do this even though they are neither close to us nor powerful. Celebration, present,

credit, attention, gesture . . . whatever it is, the risk in the gift inspires a gift in return, with time. What circulates is an object outside of consumption, a space for the unfamiliar, a lack. And in fact, that risk creates its own path between a commercial and a sacred use of language.

So under what conditions can thinking about social cohesion avoid Plato's 'habit' of a dominant unity? On the same condition that would allow thinking about diversity to avoid a sterilizing categorization: provided the anthropological possibilities of the gift are rethought and relaunched, the gambles on trust attempt to turn hostilities into hospitality and support inventive forms which renew cultures. Between de-symbolization and over-sacralization, a reinvention of trust that circulates the *gift of lack* is possible if and every time someone risks it, reinvents it – just as the gift of speech opens up *habitable spaces* and makes each voice a possible site of *resistance to absence of thought and the tyranny of one-dimensionality*. What seems strange to us is simply unfamiliar. Giving credit to the foreigner, credibility to the other person and hospitality to the unknown, even to the unknowable, assumes acts of trust that have a flavour of the indeterminate. Trust is simply those acts, those gifts and those transitions. They come from farther back than we do. This alone may perhaps allow us to hope to reinvent an immemorial humanity and a free equality sometimes. It may inspire thinking about education (Cornu, 2005), but that is another subject.

In fact, the paradigm shift also involves action, even in the fact that it does not intend to provide a 'solution' – which does not mean that it does not inspire initiatives: 'Asystematic, the enemy of ready-made, worked-out answers, the gift paradigm is not a machine for prompting solutions but inspiring questions. In that sense it is everything except paradigmatic. It is even in one sense, and par excellence, anti-paradigmatic' (Caillé, 2007: 71). So there is no redemptive morality or effective technique to 'remake' cohesion, but the extreme importance of attention to what exists, and reinvents, and asks to be protected from being crushed – the importance of a recognition of each person's ability to act, in their vital diversity, the importance of a *way of acting, knowing how to receive and give*. To risk that anti-paradigmatic paradigm, which gives matter for thought as well as action, is to recognize those who, from some gift, rise to the challenge of action.

Laurence Cornu

*University of Paris 8 – Saint-Denis*

Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

## Notes

1. We might 'improve on the commonplace': for instance, we might follow Bernard Stiegler (2004) in diagnosing a sickly narcissism, which is what Pierre Legendre states in other words. I shall not develop this point here.
2. I have been working on this idea for many years and I agree entirely with J.G. Bidima's remark about a general 'fiduciary' crisis, which, on every continent, is tending to generate and exacerbate radical mistrust towards 'the other'.
3. In fact, the question was posed in Ligue de l'Enseignement working groups in France in 2007.
4. As the anti-psychiatrist Ronald Laing used to do in the 1970s.

5. The Prisoner's Dilemma, which is presumed to prove the rationality of trust, in fact presupposes trust (which cannot be made to spring from mistrust), as Caillé demonstrates (2007: 47).
6. The systems theory leads Luhmann into an 'anti-humanism completely absent from *Vertrauen*', notes the author of the preface to the French edition, Lukas K. Sosoe. So he abandons the 'subject paradigm'. That may be. But then it must be understood that it is a certain (rationalist) subject paradigm that is to be abandoned, which in fact is not the case in the idea of 'resolute' trust calculated by an individual. Indeed, the problems raised by the very interesting mention of an 'intersubjective operation' (p. 19) require another theory of subject to be developed.

## References

- Caillé, Alain (2007) *Anthropologie du don*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Char, René (1983) *Fureur et mystère. Feuillettes d'hypnos*. Paris: Éditions de La Pléiade.
- Cornu, Laurence (2005) 'La confiance', in Alain Vergnion (ed.), *Penser l'éducation*. Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF.
- Donzelot, Jacques (1994) *L'Invention du social*. Paris: Seuil.
- Donzelot, Jacques (2006) 'Refonder la cohésion sociale', *Esprit*, (Decembre): 5–23.
- Donzelot, Jacques, Méval, Catherine and Wyvekens, Anne (2003) *Faire société*. Paris: Seuil.
- Durkheim, Émile (1999) *De la division du travail social*. Paris: PUF.
- Fukuyama, Francis (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Habermas, J. and Luhmann, N. (1971) *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, N. (2006) *La confiance: Un mécanisme de réduction de la complexité sociale*. Paris: Economica.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1979) *Trust and Power*. Chichester/New York: Wiley.
- Luhmann, Niklas (2006) 'Confiance et familiarité, problèmes et alternatives', in Albert Ogien and Louis Quéré (eds), *Les moments de la confiance*. Paris: Economica.
- Mankell, Hennig (2004) *Le Fils du vent*. Paris: Seuil.
- Plato (1993) *La République*, trans. Pierre Pachet. Paris: Gallimard, Folio essais.
- Plato (1969) *Le Politique*, trans. Emile Chambry. Paris: Garnier Flammarion.
- Rey, Alain (ed.) (1999) *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. Paris: Robert.
- Rosanvallon, Pierre (2006) *La Contre-démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la démocratie*. Paris: Seuil.
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine (2006) 'Sur la nature de la confiance', in Albert Ogien and Louis Quéré (eds), *Les moments de la confiance*. Paris: Economica.
- Simmel, Georg (1991) *Secret et sociétés secrètes*. Strasbourg: Circé.
- Stiegler, Bernard (2004) *De la misère symbolique*. Paris: Galilée.
- Valéry, Paul (1957) 'La politique de l'esprit, notre souverain bien', *Œuvres: Variété III*. Paris: Gallimard.