After trust


Alberto Corsín Jiménez

University of Manchester

Everybody talks about trust these days. Or rather, everybody talks about a crisis in public trust and its fatal consequences for the institutional organisation of society (e.g. O'Hara 2004; O'Neill 2002). Trust, so the argument goes, is one of our most precious social virtues and its disappearance or misuse threatens not only our moral order but the very foundations of our polity. The crisis in trust is indicative of the general crisis-society in which we live today (Strathern 2004a), and it is perhaps the social forms that this crisis-awareness and responsiveness has taken (e.g. audit cultures, evidence-based policy, interdisciplinary research), that has spawned the idea of a concomitant breakdown of solidarity, cooperation and moral responsibility, of which trust appears to be their epiphenomenal expression.

A parallel development of the crisis in trust is the rise of knowledge and risk management industries (Power 2004). Because trust and social crises are presented as natural enemies, the former rushing out when the latters draws in,

social robustness has been equated to a kind of omniscience, the capacity to know everything, in particular future events. Robust knowledge, of the kind that can be trusted, is therefore knowledge that is socially aware of itself (Strathern 2005). Such knowledge is not always easy to track, unless, of course, it can become self-evident, which is to say self-deliverable. As it turns out, the market is the paradigmatic provider of self-deliverable knowledge, because in the marketplace knowledge is delivered as it takes shape (in the form of market signals).

This article explores some of the assumptions behind the current valency of the notion of trust and in particular its entanglement in discourses of social robustness, the management and reporting of knowledge, and its underlying culture and systems of responsibility. I do not, however, see the article as making a contribution to the growing sociological literature on trust (e.g. Misztal 1996; Seligman 1997; Sztompka 1999). The argument is not about trust itself but about the kind of social theory that we need to resist the temptations of a sociology of trust. Much of the new literature on trust simply recasts our sociological tradition by rewriting the canon using trust as the organizing category. This will not do. As mysterious as the concept of trust may be (Cf. Möllering 2001), the question today is not what trust is but what kind of work does the notion do. What gets done when the term is used? And what gets eclipsed when we deploy the notion of trust as a sociological given? The question of trust calls for a social theory that

elucidates not its place in (robust) society but its very movement as a social asset. The argument itself moves through classical and recent anthropological studies on moral responsibility to outline the kinds of displacements that our own trusting society is effacing. It concludes with a note on the dangers of making all descriptions afford transparency, and with a word of praise for good descriptions that remain opaque.

Responsible analogues

> Every aircraft in the world would be grounded if air traffic control relied on the same type of system that companies use today to report their information. Air traffic controllers must receive vast amounts of highly technical, constantly changing information reported to them quickly in a format they can understand and use immediately, and they must have absolute trust that the information is complete and accurate every time. Imagine the consequences if those controllers could only get their information from an observer on the ground who scribbled a few notes, printed them on an old-fashioned press, and mailed the information to the control tower once a quarter? (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 129)

DiPiazza and Eccles' analogical economy (made up of technology, accurate and robust informantion, and trust) echoes an observation made by Max Gluckman

over thirty years ago in an essay on magical and secular solutions to moral crises. Commenting on why certain African societies resorted to divination to understand moral uncertainties, Gluckman noted that a possible answer might lie in 'the limits of their technical knowledge.' These societies have 'much less knowledge of the empirical causes of misfortune and good fortune, present and past. They also have less surety about the future.' (Gluckman 1972: 4) Knowledge, Gluckman was implying, works in a temporal register (past, present, future), a reliance itself dependent upon moral qualities. Gluckman's observation tied in with the classical anthropological literature on cultures of suspicion and blame in Africa, of which Evans-Pritchard's work on the Azande was the precursor (Evans-Pritchard 1937). In revisiting this tradition, Gluckman wanted to understand what makes responsibility tick: on what bases do people make themselves accountable to, or demand accountability from others. Many are the idioms and channels, but Gluckman focused on one: the occult. Take the case of the Zulu. An agnatically organized society, competition for land, cattle and social status is resolved by singling out women as potential culprits in the event of conflict. Women marry into groups of agnates with the duty of bearing sons that will consolidate and perpetuate their husbands' groups. Shift perspective, however, and what women do is give birth to men who some day will compete with one another for scarce resources, thence sowing the seeds for the eventual breaking-off of the group. Women stand in the middle – in the middle, that is, of two irreconcilable structural tendencies: the unity and the division of the group.

Hence the characterization of witchcraft, and other forms of occult evil, as an inherent evil propensity of women.

The occult works in ways that are hidden, but not invisible. Azande witches, for example, are known to have a black substance in their intestines, which can be seen after an autopsy. The substance is innocuous unless activated by vicious feelings. Only then is witchcraft set to work. Witchcraft is inherited in the patrilineal line, which is why men are not held accountable for possessing this power. Responsibility lies not in the person, but in her actions towards others. By unconcealing the work of the occult, Azande thus displace responsibility away from individuated persons and onto systems of moral adjudication. They blame not people but (particular kinds of) relationships.

Gluckman's description of how Zande or Zulu people invocate and set the notion of responsibility to work through relationships – through, say, idioms of patrilineal inheritance, women's fertility or male competition for resources – contrasts with DiPiazza and Eccles' description of the accountability of air traffic controllers, which is said to depend exclusively on the availability of information. Robust information makes the system morally robust, that is, trustworthy. Poor information, on the other hand, flaws the system, because it prevents proper reporting and exposes air traffic controllers to perils not of their own making. Morality emerges thus not as an aspect of human relationships but

as a feature of the infrastructure of information. If we make our information more robust, we strengthen our morality.

I noted above that the occult works in ways that are hidden though not invisible. Today the Information Age has produced its own veil of visibility-obsessed discourses, of which the rhetoric of 'transparency' is perhaps the most famous (Strathern 2000). 'Information' and 'transparency' emerge as complementary analogues in our turn-of-the-century fascination with the institutionalisation of trust (Cf. Braithwaite & Levi 2003; Tsoukas 1997). DiPiazza and Eccles' manifesto for building a culture of public trust in corporations and capital markets draws out the basic analogical economy informing this vision. Here trust and information/communication are being hailed as two sides of the same coin, namely, moral robustess.[1] What follows is my reading of all such suggestions for revamping the infrastructure of the information economy around the idea of a kind of information that is morally self-sufficient and trustworhty.

---

[1] I construct my argument around DiPiazza and Eccles' work because of its recency and its impact on corporate circles. Theirs**['] is a significant addition to a topic of **[delete 'of'??] that is otherwise burgeoning in the world of management, and has been doing so for some time (e.g. Galford & Drapeau 2003; Handy 1995; Joni 2004). My comments should be read against this tradition at large.

Reporting

Following the Enron and WorldCom financial scandals, trust in capital markets floundered. Investors placed trust in corporations that misreported their financial records. A gap opened between what investors were told and what the corporations knew. Information, poor information, was the name of the gap.

Control of information thus emerged as a fundamental principle dictating how corporations ought to organize themselves. In July 2002, for example, the US Government signed into law the Sarbanes-Oxley corporate-reform act, which has been described as the most significant change to federal financial laws since the 1930s. In the UK, the Financial Reporting Council published in July 2003 the Combined Code on Corporate Governance. This document includes the Code itself and related guidance: the Turnbull guidance on Internal Control, the Smith guidance on Audit Committees, and various pieces of good practice guidance from the Higgs report. DiPiazza and Eccles' work is written in the spirit of these reforms. Central to the consolidation of an information economy, they argue, is the building of a robust architecture through which information must flow. They call their own framework the Corporate Reporting Supply Chain (CRSP).

The notion of 'reporting' brings an interesting twist to the work that information is said to do. The term is illuminating because it suggests that information is always gathered for external consumption. The corporation keeps 'externalising'

itself – emptying itself out for others. This is also why DiPiazza and Eccles define 'transparency' as making available information that investors would want (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 4).

Take for instance the case of corporations' environmental agendas. Upholding an environmental agenda is not something that corporations do for society but what makes the corporation 'social' in the first place: a corporation that 'does' the environment is a socially responsible corporation. The perverse effect of this is that society is only seen to appear at certain points in corporations' self-representations. More importantly, it shows that the current obsession with reporting and information is one such point of corporate social self-consciousness:

> The only way a company can know if it adequately meets the information needs of stakeholders is to ask them through surveys, for example, or direct dialogue. Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies seeks input from its stakeholders about how well the company is meeting its commitment to sustainability… If this is accomplished, the company will know that it knows what stakeholders want, rather than imagining that it knows. (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 113, emphasis in the original)

When knowledge and information become the claims a company can make to social robustness, a number of things follow. Robustness, for one, conflates information with knowledge. If information stands for society, then our

informational base stands for our moral choices: We are our information, which is why our information needs to be unbiased, pure, elemental.[2] This is why the future of corporate reporting – of information – lies in 'descriptive data', that is, 'descriptive information about the information' (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 132), or information that self-describes itself. This new 'universal language' for data management is in fact already in use and is called Extensible Business Reporting Language, XBRL.[3]

Funds of trust

Having come this far in my description of the current usage of the imagery of information in corporate circles, let me return to the question of trust.

In her closing statement to the introductory essay in Risk and Blame, Mary Douglas coins a turn of phrase that throws new light over the preceding dicussion on corporate reporting and the self-description of transparent

---

[2] These are the very terms which DiPiazza and Eccles employ to describe the future of corporate reporting: 'If [new forms of reported] data are to be properly used by investors and other stakeholders to support their own decision making, independent assurance will be required at the more granular "data element" level.' (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 167).

[3] 'XBRL is a dialect of XML (Extensible Markup Language), a new Internet language that defines and names data. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recommended XML as a standard for Internet-based information in February 1998. It is potentially the most important Internet standard developed since the adoption of HTML, which gave birth to the Internet. XML enables the exchange of data between disparate software applications through the use of informational tags that self-describe what a piece of information is.' (DiPiazza Jr. & Eccles 2002: 134)

information. 'Blaming', she writes, 'is a way of manning the gates through which all information has to pass.' (Douglas 1992: 19) The image of blaming as a fund of information that circulates around society is an economic image. It is another way of saying that blaming is an information-resource used by society to reallocate its funds of responsibility. Economists would see this stretching of their discipline as a stretching of the imagination. But anthropologists would know otherwise. Anthropologists know Mauss.

Marcel Mauss' analytic on giving economies can be profitably applied to the study of the way modern capitalist society funds its trusts of responsibility. The study of hunter-gatherer societies has in fact benefited from this use of the Maussian framework for quite some time now, as in Tim Ingold's description of hunter-gatherer's relationship to the environment as an economy of trust (Ingold 2000) or  Nurit Bird-David's notion of a 'cosmic economy of sharing' (Bird-David 1992). Implicit or explicit in these accounts is the idea of trust as a form of sociability, one prevalent among people where the environment has not been exclusively objectified as a resource. Here I would like to stretch the theory of trust that underpins these analyses by reading it against the descriptions of corporate relations that went before. What follows draws its theoretical impetus

from Rane Willerslev's extraordinary ethnography of Yukaghir hunting cosmology.[4]

Hunting transactions

The Yukaghirs are a small group of indigenous hunters living in the basin of the Kolyma River in northeastern Siberia. They hunt for elk and sable, which are the two pillars of their hunting economy. (They also hunt for other meat and fur-bearing animals, such as wolves, wolverines and reindeers, but these do not add up to make distinctive economies of their own.)

Willerslev tells us that the Yukaghirs run a 'demand sharing' economy, where people are expected to make claims on other people's possessions, and where those who possess are expected to give freely without expectation of repayment. This moral economy of obligation applies most forcefully to the distribution of meat. Meat is shared among hunters in the forest; it is shared again amongst kinsmen in the village; and once again amongst members of the household once it has been cooked. Principles of sharing are even sustained as principles of negative freedom, as when 'hunters claim that to store meat brings bad luck in hunting, because it disinvites the generosity of the game-rulers (spirits), which is best assured by objectively needing meat to eat.' (Willerslev 2003: 46-47)

---

[4] My thanks to Rane Willerlslev for sharing/giving/trusting his knowledge of the Yukaghir hunting world with me and for allowing me to use unpublished material.

When sharing becomes a principle of moral coercion, 'giving' acquires a second, more profound profile than that of simple 'obligation'. Yukaghirs recognise that the personal relations between spirits and humans are laden with the same resentments and ambiguities that make up all social life. Willerslev tells us the story of an elderly Yukaghir woman, Akulina Shalugin, who lost a friend and the latter's son to the jealousy of Khozyain, the master spirit. Khozyain fell in love with Akulina's friend, Igor, and kept sending him animals to hunt. The animals kept coming to Igor, who could hardly believe his luck. Yet Igor's overhoarding of animals eventually enabled Khozyain to stake out his own claims, which he enforced by dragging the ayibii (soul) of the couple's son and thus killing him. Igor's luck in hunting had translated into an overaccumulation of the ayibii of Khozyain's children (the souls of animals). In claiming Igor and his son's life back, Khozyain was merely holding them accountable to the very same principles of 'demand sharing' that govern all human sociability. Akulina ends her story by warning Willerslev: 'if you are too lucky and animals keep coming to you, stop hunting at once. It might be Khozyain, who wants your ayibii.' (Willerslev 2003: 51) The moral is clear: things are not what they appear, and moral virtues mean nothing unless referred to specific social strategies of accountability.

The prey-predator oscillation (Willerslev 2003: 52) that underscores Akulina's story finds parallels in other dimensions of Yukaghir hunting and social life at

large. In fact, Yukaghirs' own strategic engagement with the inherent dangers of this cosmic economy of sharing is by means of what they call pákostit, meaning 'to play dirty tricks' in Russian (Willerslev 2003: 54). This game of trickery takes place in terms of what Willerslev calls a process of 'sexual seduction', the playing of an 'illusion of lustful play' through which hunters hope to make spirits believe 'that what is going on is not a premeditated kill but a "love affair" with the hunter.' (Willerslev 2003: 54-55). The game of seduction is in fact set in motion several days before the hunt itself. Hunters start by attempting to conquer their human smell by going to the sauna. Other tactics of seduction include avoiding the language of hunting altogether and feeding vodka and tobacco to the fire in order to get the master spirit into a slightly drugged and lustful mood. The drugging of the spirits is the first step in the final seduction movement, which takes place the evening before the hunt (Willerslev 2004: 642-643). On that night, hunters will travel in their dreams to the house of the spirits and make love to them. Willerslev sums the process of seduction thus:

the feelings of sexual lust that [a hunter's] ayibii evokes in the master-spirit during their nightly intercourse are somehow extended to the spirit's physical counterpart, the animal prey. Thus, when he locates an elk the next morning and starts imitating it, the animal will run towards him in the expectation of experiencing a climax of sexual excitement, and he can shoot it dead. Thus, what we are dealing with is in principle two analogous hunts:

the 'visible' hunt of the hunter seducing the elk, and preceding this, the

'invisible' hunt in which his ayibii seduces the animal's master-spirit.

(Willerslev 2004: 643)

Deceit does not end up with the death of the animal but is carried over into the

time after the killing. A hunter will for instance try to avoid an attack from the

animal's disappointed spirit by making a wooden miniature model of himself

and painting it with blood from the dead animal. On leaving the hunting

grounds, the hunter will leave the figure behind, in the hope that the spirit will

think that the murderer is still around (Willerslev 2003: 128).

Eclipsed in the economy of trust and sharing there is therefore an economy of

deceit and deception. This is not to say that the principles and relations of care

and duty that are upheld in the former are therefore reversed by and reducible to

the trickery expressed in the latter. Human and spirits work out their

relationships by placing their trust on particular transactional registers (Cf.

Strathern 2004b), of which kinship, wealth, love, lust and deceit are emerging,

displaceable forms. Each one of these may signal to, even take the form of trust.

But trust itself resides in no one of them, but in the movement through which

relationships out-place themselves and extend themselves into new analogical

forms. The visibility and invisibility of which Willerslev speaks is part of this

recursive and reversible movement: an appearance of trust in the disappearance

of other forms, and viceversa. Trust thus emerges as the forever self-eclipsing relationship through which people re-place themselves into new relationships.

Re-versible and in-visible trust

In a report on the Canadian government's recent reform of its internal auditing architecture, Basil Orsini, director of the project, comments: 'Many auditors are wrestling with what [the evaluation and improvement of the governance process] means in practice and how to audit governance, so much of which is intangible.' (Orsini 2004) The idea of the 'audit of governance' evokes a curious image: the making 'transparent' (audit) of that which is already radically transparent (intangible governance). Making transparent that which is already transparent entails a kind of reversible or oscillatory movement: like revealing a container's inside not by emptying it out but by turning it inside out. Whereas the former keeps somethings hidden (the container's interior), the latter aspires to reveal it all.

The reversibility of transparency evoked by Orsini's quote echoes Willerslev's description of the strategic movements of Yukaghirs in and out of the visible and invisible hunting economies. The Yukaghirs, like the auditors, know that (human and non-human) persons struggle to make their relationships to one another knowable. Relationships are always clothed in thin robes, and more often than not their concrete qualities disappear from view. They move in and out of

tangibility and intangibility, and it is the very fact that this is possible that allows people to keep their social life alive in the first place. There are things that are better not known, which is why they are transacted in an invisible idiom. Willerslev talks about two hunts: one which takes place in the invisible realm of dreams, one that takes place in the visible realm of bloody physical encounters. I would like to suggest, however, that although at some level these are indeed distinctive realms, at another level the visible and the invisible play out as reversible idioms within any one realm. Take the game of seduction. Hunters first make their killing intentions invisible to spirits by drugging them with alcohol and tobacco; they also hide their own human smell by bathing in the sauna, and encode their hunting language in metaphor and figurative language. These are all transactions that take place in the physical world of human persons. People relate to other people visibly in order to make their motivations invisible to their invisible kinsfolk (spirits). This game of reversible intentions takes a further twist when the hunter dreams himself into the invisible world of spirits. Here the second hunt takes place, clothed this time in the idiom of sexuality. Hidden in the sexual act are the real intentions of the hunter, which will only reveal themselves the following morning, when elk and hunter meet again in the visible world of humans. Yet not even this encounter is terminal, for hunters must once again revert to the idiom of invisibility, covering their culpability by leaving a miniature model of themselves behind.

Intangibility, time and value

Why, then, do auditors, unlike hunters, want to make all knowledge visible? And what consequences may this have for knowledge itself?

In a recent contribution to property debates in Melanesia and beyond, Melissa Demian has observed how, more often than not, occult in the objectification of property claims are the temporal registers through which claims come-to-be in the first place (Demian 2004). Taking as her starting point Rose's insights into the visual properties of property (Rose 1994), Demian asks herself what it is that we 'see' when we strive to make intangible relations, such as intellectual property rights, visible. She provides a Melanesian answer, suggesting that we see persons, combining and recombining with other persons, seeing through their own combinations in terms of the temporal investments they make. Moreover, her ethnography does double duty because it also shows how the work of time often requires of the occult to be seen to have an effect at all. The example she provides refers to the practice of udi, a set of ritual restrictions through which Suau men (tau'udi) aim to increase their personal authority and charisma. The practice involves secluding oneself in a sealed room next to a fire for up to a month and includes prohibitions on washing, types of food and liquids to be eaten and drank, and sexual relations. After this time, the man emerges weakened but spiritually empowered. Demian adds that at this point a man 'would be perceived as exceptionally trustworthy and persuasive… people would

give him anything he asked for… and… he had also achieved a more powerful state in which to perform magic.' (Demian 2004: 74-75, emphasis added) The efficacy of udi is displayed through the amount of pigs that people will surrender to tau'udi, the power achieved thus shown to be effective through its visible effects upon others. Revelation of the potency of udi therefore indicates 'not only an assertion of the success of knowledge and relationships, but an assertion of the success of the passage of time itself.' (Demian 2004: 76, emphasis added)

Social relationships require different temporal registers to play out their potency in full. Yukaghirs cannot just go and hunt elk. They need and take time to seduce the animal. Suau people cannot just go and ask for pigs. They require time to build up the charisma and trustworthiness that will coerce pigs out from their fellowmen. The requirement of temporality is perhaps surprising in light of the emphases that DiPiazza and Eccles' auditors place on real-time transactions and knowledge. Real-time knowledge fits of course with the paradigm of self-described information that DiPiazza and Eccles speak about. Both 'real-time' and 'self-described information' are ultimately and radically 'transparent', because they refer to no temporal or informational domain except their own. All information is forever present in its self-description, and all knowledge is forever tied up to its unique moment of revelation. This is another way of saying that institutional life is being reorganized around the credibility of isolated value-

episodes, such as data delivered in XBRL self-sustained format or transactions that are real enough because they happen now.

Isolated value-episodes do not make connections. Like the pure, free gift, which makes no friends (Laidlaw 2000), transparent information and real-time knowledge have no social life. The institution that organizes itself around these dictums is in danger of institutionalising a 'dialytical' form of social organisation, one which keeps purifying itself by forever removing itself from its own conditions of existence (Corsín Jiménez 2004). Dialytical organisations place no premium on intangibility: all things intangible need to be known, all occult relations brought to the fore. The fore is, of course, the market. The kind of knowledge that obtains from linking up market signals is of a very particular kind, not least because relationality in a market model tends to zero out temporality from the substance of the intangible. I return to this point in the conclusion.

The organisation of institutions around dialytical principles further makes for a particular kind of decentralized sociality. I noted earlier that if socially robust knowledge is given by market information, then knowledge makes itself available through a form of 'outward implosion': its self-displayable format (and that is what XBRL is all about) serves only a purpose insofar as there is someone out there that can use the knowledge. Knowledge is always knowledge for

external consumption. This is why organisations keep 'externalising' themselves, that is, they keep out-sourcing their internal operations to external agents (consultants, sub-contractors, auditors, etc.). The assurance or certification of this continuous and ongoing emptying-out of knowledge and relationships is what in corporate circles today appears to go under the name of 'trust'. Trust is thus said to be in place only if people can make information/knowledge that belongs to others work for themselves. Trust, in other words, as an object of proprietorial claims.

Conclusion

An intriguing play of analogical conversions between the opaque and the diaphanous appears to be at work in the New Corporate Ethics (corporate reporting, global governance, corporate social responsibility). Transparency, accountability and trust (diaphaneity) have been mobilized against the dark forces of secrecy, uncertainty and risk (opacity). The movement in and out of opacity and diaphaneity further works on a particular temporal thrust: the 'reality' of time, and thus the 'reality' of relationships.

In this paper I have looked at the new vocabulary of ethics by comparing it with earlier anthropological interest in the allocation of responsibility, what Mary Douglas termed 'forensic theories of danger': how risk, sin, misfortune or blame are distributed across society. Here some 'relationships' are cast as being outside

'reality', for they play out in the order of the occult, which has its own temporality. I then moved on to examine the work that relationships do when moving in and out of the occult, and contrasted various anthropological accounts with the kind of temporal work that capitalism demands from relationships to remain diaphanous. This work, I suggested, has its own re-versible direction, one that is characterised by a continuous emptying-out of relationships and that I call 'dialysis'. Under conditions of dialysis social knowledge is subjected to a constant externalisation of itself through its breaking down into ever narrower constituents. In this light, the notion of trust works too as a 'dialytical' concept: a concept that requires to breakdown (or purify) its own context of action to convey meaning. Trust works by creating its own preconditions of existence, which must in turn be certified as trustworthy.

The Yukaghirs hunting economy is both an economy of trust and an economy of mistrust; it is about sharing and about deceiving, about making relationships visible and invisible, all at once. I tried to capture this recursive movement of social knowledge in and out of its own analogical conversions by saying that social relationships amongst the Yukaghir were re-versible. Reversibility is founded on knowledge's own knowledge of its instability and ambiguousness. The Yukaghirs don't hide this, which is why their social transactions constantly enfold motifs of hiddenness and trust unto themselves. Another way of saying this is that they manage the unity of their social world through the

administration of its disunity or division. This is also the lesson that Gluckman urged us to draw from the African material. We need divisions and disruptures to know what unites and integrates. We need the occult to know why somethings are worth making visible. We need a realm that lies after trust to make trust meaningful. There is, in a sense, no trust in society except in an 'after-trusting' mode.

Despite the almost commonsensical nature of this proposition, trust, today, is being made to stand for only one kind of world, the world of cooperative relations (Cf. Gambetta 2000). People relate to one another in a trustworthy mode or they do not; you can have one or the other, but you cannot have both. This radical simplicity can only make sense in a world where relations connect abstract, asocial events. In a world, for instance, where a hunter stands for nothing else but himself: a man with no connection to other men, other hunters, a spiritual world, a ritual tradition, a sharing economy. A man that refers to himself, like information is suppose to self-describe itself in the marketplace. A man, in other words, emptied-out of his intangibility.

My larger point is that the image of trust that is put to work in this kind of descriptive analyses is one where market (i.e. self-descriptive) relations stand for social relationships. By this I do not intend to mean that the market is encroaching all aspects of social life. Rather, what I want to suggest is that the

very idea of a 'social relationship' is being reduced to the terms through which a particular (neoliberal) conception of market relations work themselves out. The thrust of transparent self-description is colonising what description means, and how social relationships are to be described. If we want to resist the analytical encroachment of market ideology on our social descriptions, then we should perhaps start thinking about new ways of describing how people make themselves available to others. Much like the Yukaghirs reversible knowledge, social critical analysis is in desperate need of an analytical vocabulary that keeps displacing itself; that out-places every relational element with a non-relational one. Ethnographic description provides us an analytical vocabulary with which to do this. For it is a good thing to know that we can trust our analyses; but it is perhaps even more reassuring to know that we can displace them too.

References

Bird-David, N. 1992. Beyond 'The original affluent society': a culturalist reformulation. *Current Anthropology* **33**, 25-47.

Braithwaite, V. & M. Levi (eds) 2003. *Trust and governance*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Corsín Jiménez, A. 2004. Knowledge travels and ethical remainderings: University of Manchester.Unpublished manuscript.

Demian, M. 2004. Seeing, knowing, owning: property claims as revelatory acts. In *Transactions and creations: property debates and the stimulus of Melanesia* (eds) E. Hirsch & M. Strathern. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

DiPiazza Jr., S.A. & R.G. Eccles. 2002. *Building public trust: the future of corporate reporting*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Douglas, M. 1992. *Risk and blame: essays in cultural theory*. London and New York: Routledge.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1937. *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Galford, R. & A.S. Drapeau. 2003. The enemies of trust. *Harvard Business Review* **81**, 88-94.

Gambetta, D. (ed.)) 2000. *Trust: making and breaking cooperative relations. Electronic edition*. Oxford: http://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/papers/trustbook.html, Department of Sociology, University of Oxford.

Gluckman, M. 1972. Moral crises: magical and secular solutions. The Marett lectures, 1964 and 1965. In *The allocation of responsibility* (ed.)) M. Gluckman. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Handy, C. 1995. Trust and the virtual organization. *Harvard Business Review* **73**, 40-50.

Ingold, T. 2000. From trust to domination: an alternative history of human-animal relations. In *The perception of the environment: essays in livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London and New York: Routledge.

Joni, S.-n.A. 2004. The geography of trust. *Harvard Business Review* **82**, 82-88.

Laidlaw, J. 2000. A free gift makes no friends. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **6**, 617-634.

Misztal, B.A. 1996. *Trust in modern societies: the search for the bases of social order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Möllering, G. 2001. The nature of trust: from Georg Simmel to a theory of expectation, interpretation and suspension. *Sociology* **35**, 403-420.

O'Hara, K. 2004. *Trust: from Socrates to spin*. Duxford: Icon Books.

O'Neill, O. 2002. *A question of trust. The BBC Reith Lectures 2002*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orsini, B. 2004. Auditing governance: the Canadian government offers an audit tool for addressing the risks in implementing management reform. *Internal auditor*, 89-91.

Power, M. 2004. *The risk management of everything: rethinking the politics of uncertainty*. London: Demos.

Rose, C.M. 1994. Seeing property. In *Property and persuasions: essays in the history, theory and rhetoric of ownership*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Seligman, A.B. 1997. *The problem of trust*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Strathern, M. 2000. The tyranny of transparency. *British Educational Research Journal* **26**, 309-321.

—. 2004a. *Commons and borderlands: working papers on interdisciplinarity, accountability and the flow of knowledge*. Wantage: Sean Kingston Publishing.

—. 2004b. Transactions: an analytical foray. In *Transactions and creations: property debates and the stimulus of Melanesia* (eds) E. Hirsch & M. Strathern. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

—. 2005. Robust knowledge and fragile futures. In *Global assemblages: technology, politics, and ethics as anthropological problems* (eds) A. Ong & S.J. Collier. Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.

Sztompka, P. 1999. *Trust: a sociological theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tsoukas, H. 1997. The tyranny of light: the temptations and paradoxes of the information society. *Futures* **29**, 827-843.

Willerslev, R. 2003. In-between self and other: hunting, perception and personhood among the Upper Kolyma Yukaghirs of northeastern Siberia: University of Cambridge.

—. 2004. Not animal, not *not*-animal: hunting, imitation and empathetic knowledge among the Siberian Yukaghirs. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* **10**, 629-652.