

# The Promise of the World: Towards a Transcendental History of Trust

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#### Abstract

This paper aims at a phenomenological analysis of trust. We argue that trust has a transcendental dimension in that it functions as a condition of possibility of the basic ego-world relation. Tacit for the most part in ordinary experience, it comes forth in its problematicity in schizophrenia spectrum disorders. People experiencing psychic disturbances lose trust in the continuity and the *mineness* of lived experience and conceive the world as uninhabitable. In order to address the transcendental problem of trust, we first carry out a static analysis of trust as perceptual faith and we show that it is founded in the functioning of a transcendental ground. In a second step, we proceed with a genetic analysis drawing on Husserl's manuscripts on the awakening of the self, on early childhood, and Richir's recent phenomenological readings of D. W. Winnicott. We situate the archaic experience of trust in an originarily intersubjective and affective dimension, where the parental environment functions as a transcendental matrix for the early development of a yet inchoative self. By doing so, we aim to sketch out the major lines of a transcendental history of trust in the early stages of human experience.

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### 1 Introduction

This contribution<sup>1</sup> deals with the phenomenological exploration of trust. We show that trust, in its transcendental dimension, is a condition of the relationship of the subject to the world. It is a tacit experiential stratum—usually unquestioned—of a "basal", or a transcendental trust, that is in function (*fungierend*) in every experience.

From a psychological or moral point of view, the ability to trust someone is dependent on how reliable we believe they are: "I trust you to keep your word", for example. In this sense, trust is inseparable from a conception of the autonomous subject and the responsible individual. Indeed, it would not make sense to assume that we could keep our word if our identity was not reliable and consistent in its continuity. From a social or political point of view, an atmosphere of trust is established by just institutions and the recognition of others. Social life relies entirely on the credit that people give one another and the institutions they create. This kind of trust, which could be called ethical and psychological, is at the heart of Paul Ricoeur's thought, crossing the dialectic of sameness and ipseity (Ricoeur 1996) on the one hand, but also the foundation and the mediation of recognition of oneself and others on the other hand. Ricœur, however, does not carry out a transcendental phenomenological analysis of trust; rather, he proceeds with transverse incursions, exploring the adjacent notions of promise, gift, and hope.

In this paper, we will not directly address trust in the ethical-psychological sense. Instead, we will conduct an analysis of the transcendental dimension of trust as the basis of conscious embodied life. The transcendental, in the sense used here, cannot be dissociated from its functioning in an embodied experience, i.e. from corporeity (*Leiblichkeit*) in general. It could indeed be dangerous to understand the transcendental in a quasi-platonic way, as if it were a realm of disembodied "ideas" or even processes structuring the empirical field but being at the same time disconnected or separate (*chorismos*) from it. Historically the concept of the "transcendental" has undergone various modifications: in a Kantian conception of the term, the accent is put on the gnoseological dimension of knowledge a priori; in Husserl, it pertains to the idea of the correlation between a subject purified from its empirical contingencies and its object (the world); with Heidegger, we witness an ontologization of the transcendental through the concept of possibility and possibilization related to *Dasein* (Schnell 2010, pp. 21–22.).

The transcendental dimension we thematize here "is" invisible and unconscious (thus unportrayable and virtual), albeit the enabling dimension of experience (Schnell 2017). It is both fundamental and in function (fungierend) within

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We use quotation marks here because it is paradoxical to say that something that does not exist *is* so and so. We would prefer to make reference to an idea by Merleau-Ponty, where he speaks of *Wesen* in the verbal sense: the transcendental *west* but *is* not. (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 174–175; see also Richir 1992, p. 57).



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The present paper is a revised version and translation of our paper "De la foi perceptive à la promesse du monde. Pour une histoire transcendantale de la confiance," *Annales de phénoménologie* 17 (2018), pp. 83–116.

the experience. It is virtual in the sense of being inaccessible to sensible experience. In this sense it does not exist as such but is a negativity of being (which is not nothing). Such an understanding of the transcendental explicitly draws on a renewed vision of transcendental phenomenology where the phenomenon is always blinking between presence and absence. In Richir's work, the "phenomenon as nothing-but-phenomenon" refers to an appearance without the positing of existence. Through this virtual pulsation, the object of phenomenology is no longer the phenomenon "in itself" but the very movement of phenomenalization. With such a perspective we can speak of a radical de-ontologization of the transcendental, without recurring to a gnoseological understanding of it. It follows that transcendental trust cannot be explored as such (in itself) since it is always "mixed" with lived (immanent) experience as its virtual background. If trust can manifest itself, it is in lived immanence, and most often in its failures, fractures or growth, i.e. in its movements. Any statement that does not take the measure of this hybridity of the transcendental risks being purely metaphysical, without being anchored in concrete effectuations.

As a result of these conceptual clarifications, it can be said that it is this basal trust that allows us to live and discover the world and encounter others with the certainty that it will not radically upset our perspective, even when, for example, we travel or we fall in love. And generally this is the case when we meet others, with their individual history, their own vision of the world, which, although different from ours, remain accessible to our understanding and thus recognizable as another perspective in and of a common world. In other words a tacit certainty, beyond any proof, that we share in a certain way the same world, can be grasped: a certainty that it does not fundamentally change its face according to the perspectives, but also that it does not turn upside down with the passage of time. We believe that it will continue to be—in some way—as it has always been. Based on this belief, we can get things started in life and have projects. We can often predict the future without much uncertainty: if I plant a seed, I have good reasons to believe that it will grow and perhaps provide me enough to sustain my vital needs. Without this trust, it would be impossible to *inhabit* the world, we would be restricted to being disoriented guests, experiencing any event as an unforeseeable accident and therefore unthinkable. Without this trust, there would be no chance of culture or language, which can only be deployed on the basis of a certain concordance of human experiences. Finally, no human encounter could occur in such primordial chaos.

Trust can emerge as an individual experience that we have when facing the world. The fact that I can leave my home and depart to live new experiences already presupposes that I somehow anticipate the possibility of inhabiting the world. The world can become my world, the very place of my experiences, without me being seized by anguish every time and without it definitively losing its hospitality. This certainly does not eliminate the radical transcendence of the world which can, at any moment, arouse my surprise or my fascination in front of "the eternal silence of its infinite spaces" (Pascal), but the possibility of such a fascination shows that more often than not I experience the world as familiar. The blinking alternation of the familiarity and the strangeness of the world reveals precisely the basic trust that we aim to explore in this work.



Most of the time we can simply *let the world be* and let ourselves be carried by it, without having to watch out for possible cracks to make sure of its ground. We can forget the trust we have in the world and let it sink down, so to speak, to the bottom of our field of experience. The unexpected can therefore be explained by the contingency or the complexity of the world around me. Trust is like the foundation of everyday life, minimal and unquestioned. It can be forgotten without fear, left in the background. It grounds the very ability of *letting the world be* in a certain casual way (*lässig*). But to whom does this belong? Is it an effectuation (*Leistung*) of the transcendental *ego*? Is it a condition of the world, or of the reliability of others?

As Matthew Ratcliffe has recently emphasized in his paper, "Selfhood, Schizophrenia, and the Interpersonal Regulation of Experience" (2017), trust reveals two essential dimensions: intersubjective and individual. He also insists on the fact that even "the modalities of intentionality depend on a certain way of experiencing and relating to other people in general, which involves a primitive, affective, nonconceptual form of *trust*" (Ratcliffe 2017, p. 150)—thus acknowledging to a certain extent the transcendental dimension of trust. Indeed, if the modalities of intentionality depend to some extent on trust, and if intentionality belongs to the transcendental field of experience, then we see how trust gains here a transcendental function. The question is whether a founding relationship between the intersubjective and the individual dimensions of trust in the world can be discovered. It can, of course, be said that it is the trust that binds me to others that founds the possibility for me of dwelling in the world. But the opposite hypothesis also presents itself just as convincingly: it is by having trust in the world that I am able to trust others.

This could be called a dialectical circle, which can be described as a dynamic circle. However, such a descriptive method reaches its limit by not allowing us to isolate each of its components analytically. Either we take a step aside to see how this circle breaks down in certain psychopathological situations (and in particular schizophrenia and delusion), or we take a step back to question its conditions of possibility (static analysis) and its transcendental genesis (genetic analysis).

If trust understood as the basis of experience is ordinarily unexamined, why is it necessary to address it? This is primarily due to the fact that, for people who experience schizophrenia, trust in the continuity of experience and the coherence of the world is lost (Hoven et al. 2019). This condition implies that the world becomes inhospitable, dangerous, or intrusive (see the notion of "delusional mood" in Mishara 2010 or Sass and Ratcliffe 2017), that the person can no longer simply "let the world be" and rather sees meaningful links and coincidences everywhere (paranoid syndrome), leaving no room for chance.

We believe that basal trust is a central condition in this disorder and reveals its exclusively human dimension. Indeed, it reveals that by engaging in the world it pledges us to perpetuate itself in a more or less predictable way, that in a certain way time continues to pass and the identity of things can be maintained without needing to reduce the world to a machinery. From then on, we can live in the world and encounter others as other continuous human beings and in a certain way encounter them as already recognized and predictable despite their incommensurability. The world lends itself to becoming a common world, a livable space for young children, for example, who discover it under the eyes of their parents and who can explore



it and expand their field of experience with a complete reassurance of trust. How can one then understand that this trust, slowly integrated over thousands of child-hood experiences, can fall apart and be lost due to mental illnesses? How can we comprehend the difficult path the persons who recover from this catastrophe take to re-engage in the world with trust? (Fuchs 2015) From which heuristic device could we imagine a psychotherapeutic care of trust?

To achieve the phenomenological analysis of trust, we propose a hybrid method. In the first part, we will conduct a static analysis which will allow us to explore trust as (1a) perceptual faith (Merleau-Ponty), depending on the capacity of being somewhere made possible by the functioning (fungieren) of a (1b) transcendental soil (Husserl). We will then see that only a phenomenological genetic analysis can give access to the exploration of the a-subjective structure of trust and its (2a) transcendental history during early childhood and the first intersubjective experiences. We will propose a phenomenological analysis of (2b) child-care and of the parental environment (with Husserl, Richir and Winnicott).

## 2 Static Analysis of Trust

As the first step, we propose a phenomenological analysis of the experience of trust of the world. To effectuate such an analysis, one should first find an access to this basic and tacit dimension of human experience. The phenomenological method consists of the *epoche* of everyday experience: the suspension of the natural attitude, that is, the naive adherence to the world. In this way, it appears that there is no obvious a priori evidence of this trust that is given to the world. This trust appears at first glance as a belief in the reliability of what is perceived: "It is at the same time true that the world is what we see and that, nonetheless, we must learn to see it—first in the sense that we must match this vision with knowledge, take possession of it, say what we and what seeing are" writes Merleau-Ponty (1968, p. 4). This implies the basic certainty that what we see is something that exists, that will continue to exist in the same way, making it possible to learn to see it and to discover who we are when we engage with it. This certainty is therefore accompanied by the evidence that my experience is continuous, unified, and will persist as such. It is therefore the belief in the promise that the world will continue to be (that it will not turn upside down, crack into pieces, letting me fall into an abyss).

(1a) Perceptual faith. Trust in the world is, at first glance, graspable as faith in the things of the world, faith that we have in spite of their movement and the opacity of their alterity. I believe in the experience although things do not belong to me de jure. I could be wrong about their nature and yet this error does not shatter the certainty that they are there as they are and that it is only my thoughts or my senses that have gone astray. Moreover, the possibility of making mistakes reveals precisely this faith as such; it can then appear to me as faith. We can thus say that I believe the perceived (Ich glaube das Wahrgenommene) and that I believe perception (Ich glaube der Wahrnehmung). This faith has always already been thrown into the world, into things and events, as their coloring of truth and existence which enables me to believe what I see. Moreover, I have faith in perception, I believe that it will not



present me *stimuli* that are incoherent, making it thus impossible for me to constitute unified objects, despite the potentially infinite amount of adumbrations. This faith continues to play a role (*fungieren*) in perception: it is because I have faith in what I perceive and in perception that the experience has meaning to me.

Yet this faith must be distinguished from a conscious act. I do not *choose* to trust any particular perceived data, just as I cannot deduce this faith from arguments and empirical evidence. On the contrary, it is this very faith that opens me to the world and opens the world to me. Consider Merleau-Ponty's description:

The methods of *proof* and of *cognition* invented by a thought already established in the world, the concepts of *object* and *subject* it introduces, do not enable us to understand what the perceptual faith is, precisely because it is a faith, that is, an adherence that knows itself to be beyond proofs, not necessary, interwoven with incredulity, at each instant menaced by nonfaith (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 28).

In order to know something and to search for proof we must already be reliant on the certainty of the world, a certainty which is not a psychological feeling but a condition of possibility belonging to the transcendental field. This is not about the experience of a subject or the quality of a situation: it concerns rather "the adherence" of the subject to the world at the foundations of their relationship. Merleau-Ponty, however, adds nuance: this adherence is not a blind certainty, it is "at each instant menaced by nonfaith". This means that there is no perfect familiarity with everything I encounter. Familiarity is knit with strangeness and this is precisely the reason why we can speak here of *faith*.

There is, to use one of Marc Richir's terms, a "phenomenological blinking" (*clignotment*) of this perceptual faith, which is never saturated, won once and for all. The phenomenalization of faith resides precisely in this blinking between the poles which are—normally—never fully attained: that of an implosion of the faith, in which the feeling of complete certainty without any indeterminacy can be sensed and the explosion of this faith, leading to a feeling of its irreversible loss.

Paradoxically, this blinking does not affect the possibility of inhabiting the world. On the contrary, it seems to even make the exploration of the perceptive presence possible. Merleau-Ponty goes further:

It is said that to cover one's eyes so as to not see a danger is to not believe in the things, to believe only in the private world; but this is rather to believe that what is for us is absolutely, that a world we have succeeded in seeing as without danger is without danger. It is therefore the greatest degree of belief that our vision goes to the things themselves. Perhaps this experience teaches us better than any other what the perceptual presence of the world is: not affirmation and negation of the same thing in the same respect, positive and negative judgment, or, as we said a moment ago, belief and incredulity—which would be impossible; beneath affirmation and negation, beneath judgment (those critical opinions, ulterior operations), it is our experience, prior to every opinion, of inhabiting the world by our body, of inhabiting the truth by our whole selves, without there being need to choose nor even to distinguish between the



assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true, because in principle they are one and the same thing – faith, therefore, and not knowledge, since the world is here not separated from our hold on it, since, rather than affirmed, it is taken for granted, rather than disclosed, it is non-dissimulated, non-refuted" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 28).

Faith is therefore an archaic (i.e. not yet subjective) experience of the inhabiting of the world as a familiarization of it, an experience intimately linked with the intersubjective experience of a shared, common world. What makes this dwelling possible? According to Merleau-Ponty, it is because being in the world is an embodied condition that it does not need to be explicitly constituted in an act of consciousness. Therefore, its functioning has an apodictic dimension of which we now will elucidate the transcendental structure.

(1b) The transcendental soil. Perceptual faith manifests itself as a blinking between familiarity and strangeness on the basis of an original adherence, more fundamental than any conscious or unconscious act, more fundamental than the level of belief and disbelief. There is no major fracture in the feeling of certainty that a familiar world can be encountered. This familiarity of the world is founded at home, and the home bears the character of ground as reliability and sufficient familiarity for encountering the unexpected without too much surprise. Faith is linked to the experience of security one gains at home, the *Heimat*, which is the first familiar space of experience. Before turning to the analysis of the genesis of this very first space of familiarity, we must still specify the foundational function of this ground and we propose to do that by drawing on Husserl's later phenomenology of spatiality.

Being at home means being somewhere. To be precisely somewhere and not anywhere means to dwell in an "absolute here", that is, not to be nowhere at all (as can be seen in some cases of schizophrenia), and this "absolute here" is an ultimate point of reference from which it is only possible to speak of movement and rest, of proximity and distance, of familiarity and strangeness. In this sense, being able to be at home reveals what Husserl has described as the originary foundation (*Ur-Arche*), which is the "transcendental Earth" or "the transcendental ground".

According to the infamous affirmation of Husserl, the "Earth does not move". The analysis presented in the manuscripts published in English under the title Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature directly concerns our subject. Husserl affirms, not without provocation, that if the Earth is indeed a body (Körper) among the bodies in the cosmos, it is first and foremost for me a land that gives itself immediately as the immutable ground from which bodies are individualizable. It is the zero-point of any movement of individual bodies. The earth does not move because the empirical soil under my feet is at the same time a transcendental ground. Marc Richir interprets the Husserlian Earth as an archaic "amorphous and limitless 'support' (apeiron)" (Richir 2006, p. 269), preceding the awakening of the individual consciousness, that holds us and has always held us even before the constitution of our "absolute here" and of which we strangely retain a transcendental reminiscence. It should be emphasized that the soil resists any separation into moving bodies. As such it is a stable referent, and the perception of an individual object does not disintegrate the ground into disparate bodies:



to locate a perceptive place does not alter the "system of places" (Husserl 1981, p. 225). Furthermore we "know", implicitly, that an abyss will not open up due to the separation produced by perception. The foreground can become a background and vice versa, without the relief disintegrating into completely separate bodies. The transcendental ground that anchors our being here also makes it possible to concretely modify the layout of our house without losing its character of housing.

We are dealing with an apparent paradox: the earth can both be divided into individual bodies, regions and even be situated as one planet among other moving bodies, but at the same time it is the support of all movement and of all dwelling, and, as such, indivisible and going beyond any representation as an un-limited (apeiron) ground. This paradox, however, is only based on an apparent contradiction which disappears once we introduce the distinction between the body as Körper and the body as Leib. The original foundation of which we are speaking here is not primarily that of bodies, but that of the flesh. Husserl explains it clearly: "Consider my animate organism [Leib]. In primordial experience it has no motion away and no rest, only inner motion and inner rest unlike the outer bodies. In 'I go', in any 'I move myself' kinaesthetically whatever, not all bodies 'move themselves' and the whole earth-basis under me does not move." (Husserl 1981, pp. 225-226.) It is therefore "the earth as my basis, as the basis of my flesh" (1981, p. 227).<sup>3</sup> Now the soil of my flesh itself must be considered a soil which is leiblich. If this were not the case, the world would merely be a material and inhuman place, unknowable and uninhabitable.

It is in this way that there can be faith and reciprocity that can only be formed between an embodied self and a world that is also in some sense *leiblich*. The extremely complex status of this reciprocity can only be explored in genetic analysis and through a further clarification of what Husserl calls the "primordial". Concerning this latter point, Richir remarks that the transcendental ground should be understood as the platonic  $ch\hat{o}ra$ , a space that is not a topos, that can neither be represented nor situated, and yet it still functions as an ultimate point of reference:

In this respect, Husserl's lesson is remarkable. The primordial *Leib*, he conceives, is not a body (*Körper*), it is indivisible in bodies, it contains no body, does not move and is not at rest. It is in this sense the transcendental ground (*die Ur-Arche*) or the transcendental Earth, the formless receptacle or the nurse of becoming, the mother as transcendental matrix [*giron transcendental*], as an absolute transcendental "reference" that never leaves itself and that, therefore, never has to regain itself, which makes the primordial *Leib* non-portrayable [*infigurable*] in perception or imagination – just like the *chôra*, it cannot be object of *doxa* (Richir 2006, p. 268).

If it cannot be an object of *doxa*, it is because it is the foundation for all proof and all knowledge of consciousness already instituted in its dwelling. It is also in this sense that it is the matrix of perceptual faith: in the sense that it is in this primordial environment which is already *leiblich* that perceptive faith develops.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Translation modified: we translate *Leib* as *flesh* instead of *animate organism*.



If "it is because first I believe in the world and in the things that I believe in the order and the connection of my thoughts", as Merleau-Ponty provocatively affirms (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 50–51), we can understand this affirmation in the following way: it is because the Earth beneath me, because the transcendental ground of all of my experiences, does not move or open onto an abyss, that I can believe in the order and connection of my thoughts, or, put more radically, it is because I trust that the Earth will not turn into an abyss or chaos, that I can trust the coherence of my subjective lived experience.

## 3 Genetic Analysis of Trust

(2a) Towards a transcendental history of trust. So far, we have carried out a static analysis of what we describe as transcendental trust, functioning (fungierend) non-thematically even in perceptual faith. Such a static analysis shows that we should continue this inquiry by analyzing the affective dimension of trust. In order to do this, we will proceed genetically, with a somewhat hybrid approach. One of the greatest paradoxes in Husserl's eyes is that the I is simultaneously a subject and an object for the world, that each transcendental ego is simultaneously constituted in the world as a concrete human being with their facticity. It could thus be said that from the point of view of a genetic approach to the self, the coming into the world of this self could be described from the point of view of ipseity, but also by taking empirical observations of developmental psychology into account. It is with this hybrid approach that we will analyze the genesis of trust by focusing on Husserl's manuscripts on childhood and D. W. Winnicott's account of the development of the self of infants.

Such a hybrid approach is necessary, precisely because of the paradox of the I being simultaneously a subject and an object. From the subject's point of view the problem of the birth and early childhood of ipseity is nothing other than a limit problem of phenomenology. Husserl himself describes this phase of the life of the *ego* as a *transcendental* past (see for example, among other passages, Hua XLII, p. 5). The limit problem of early childhood is already a problem for Husserl where the transcendental and the natural-empirical dimensions of ipseity overlap in such a way that it becomes extremely complicated, if not impossible, to have a phenomenological attestation of the processes which are at play here. Indeed—to take up a motif from Eugen Fink—from the point of view of the phenomenologizing *ego* one has to deal with structures which are beyond any givenness, with dimensions that cannot originally be given in an intuition but rather have to be constructed.<sup>5</sup> Such a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> According to Fink, the phenomenological construction comes into play precisely at the point where the originally intuitive character of the phenomenological approach appears as something problematic. The aim of the doctrine of method elaborated in the *VI. Cartesian Meditation* is precisely to question the evidence related to intuitive givenness and to lay down the foundations of a constructive phenomenology that has to deal with transcendental structures that are modes of absence which, however, actively influence every phase of present experience. Furthermore, according to Fink himself, one of the domains



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This is what, in §53 of *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl calls "the paradox of human subjectivity" (Husserl 1970, p. 178).

genuinely phenomenological construction does not, however, have to be deployed without drawing on the insights of other disciplines. The observation of child development offers several possible guidelines for such a construction.

As A. Schnell points out, every phenomenological construction having as its aim the genetisation of a factum carries a special type of intuitivity which is that of an institution (Schnell 2013, p. 81). To phenomenologically construct means to "play" with the institution of a sense in the dimensions of absence and alterity in order to lay out the structures that lead to the genesis of a factum. Such a construction has to be a "zig-zag" movement (Schnell 2013, p. 82) between the pure factum and what is to be constructed. In this case, the factum is that of the functioning of a basal trust already embedded in the transcendental past of early childhood. To account for its genesis we cannot, however, stay in the first-person perspective of an ego but must focus on other elements for the institution of this genesis through a phenomenological construction. Here, the phenomenological construction can simply lay out the techniques and structure of infant-care. This latter is not a mere model or an image of something absent, but directly the condition of possibility of the factum. It is, of course, absent for the child itself, but it is obviously present for every observer or caregiver. What is described here as a hybrid approach refers to the problem as follows: in order to construct the phenomenological genesis of a basal trust in the transcendental past of early childhood, we have to draw on empirical observations and use them as elements for a genuinely phenomenological construction.

So how can we gain trust? If ordinarily we always discover ourselves as already having trust in the world, or as having lost it (in limit cases which are, perhaps, more existential than phenomenological), this can only be the case to the extent that the origin of its appropriation has "preceded" any thematic experience of it. Trust is not only found in the world by the child, nor is it just an effectuation of its *ego*. Trust has its origin in the first infantile relations with "externality", admitting of course that there is not yet a clearly fixated limit between interior and exterior, between self and otherness. In fact, the question of trust refers to the way infants already live in "their" own world; it thus has to do with the inchoative *Jemeinigkeit* or for-me-ness of the world. The relation to the world should, therefore, be explored before the position of the subject/world distinction, introduced by the awakened transcendental *ego*, or even before the fixation of the poles of the intentional correlation (ego-world).

Husserl addresses this question of the genesis of the world of a pre-I (*Vor-Ich*), which does not yet have an *Umwelt*, in one of his later manuscripts. It should be noted that, with the notion of the *Vor-Ich*, Husserl points precisely to the situation of the concrete fetus in the maternal uterus.<sup>6</sup> This notion should be extended to the life that preceded the self-positioning of an *I*, and therefore of a world. In this sense, the infant of a few days is still like a "fetus" from a phenomenological perspective,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> On the notions of a transcendental birth and a transcendental childhood see also Lee (1993) and Pugliese (2009), as well as the manuscripts now published Hua XLII.



Footnote 5 (continued)

where we need such a constructive approach in phenomenology is that of early childhood (Fink 1988, p. 70).

which means that its flesh is still undifferentiated from the flesh of its parental environment, that it still lodges in the maternal flesh (*In dem Mutterleib*). If the child relates to a world, this latter is also in a way born with it and lights up as the awakened child discovers it by throwing light on it. Husserl writes in a manuscript titled *Das Kind, die erste Einfühlung* in 1935:

The I before this awakening, the pre-I that is not yet living, yet it already has a world in its own way, in the preliminary way [Vor-Weise], its inactual world "in" which it is unliving, for which it is not awake. It is affected, it receives hyle as the first filling, first participation in the world of the awake, the living I-subjects, who are already in a living connection with each other and with whom it thus enters in a first nascent connection: it has parents and these are in a universal community of living I in the universal historical time to which they belong. The living beings awaken the non-living (Hua XV, p. 604).

This awakening refers to the transition from the pre-I to the self that, without being specified whether it is a transcendental or empirical self, is probably an intentional self and, correlatively, to the transition from an "inactual" pre-world (*Vor-Welt*) to an actual world—that is, to the first *Umwelt* in which the embodied self would be the zero-point of orientation.

This transition is a moment of the transcendental genesis that pertains even in the awakened age as a transcendental reminiscence. The concepts of a transcendental reminiscence and a transcendental premonition are notions introduced by Richir to designate a reminiscence of a past that has never been (given as a) present and the premonition of a future that will never be (given as a) present—so it goes without saying that they are without any representation (*Vorstellung*). In this interplay between transcendental reminiscence and transcendental premonition, the archaic and transcendental basis of what will become the trust in and the promise of the world can be discovered. The world opens up for the child step by step (with the horizon of a never-ending discovery related to a transcendental future), nevertheless always already as the transcendental basis of trust (having its origin in a transcendental past). In this sense it can be said, in accordance with Husserl, that "the world also has a childhood from which it grows [wächst] to a mature world—'in' the human child and in its human growth" (HuaMat VIII, p. 74–75).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Translation by the authors. The entire passage is as follows: "Die Welt selbst also hat Kindheit und wächst heran zur reifen Welt—,im' Menschenkind und in seinem Menschenwachstum—aber freilich die Weltkonstitution ist nicht die Sache dieses einzelnen erwachsenden Menschen, sondern der Intersubjek-



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Translation by the authors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Richir's sources of inspiration for the elaboration of the notions of a transcendental past and, correlatively, that of a transcendental reminiscence are without doubt Schelling (see for example Richir 1988) and Levinas (see for example Richir 1991). He insists on the fact that the notions of a transcendental past and that of the transcendental reminiscence related to such a past should be completed by the notions of a transcendental future and that of a transcendental premonition that relates non-intentionally to such a future. The transcendental past and future are the ultimate timely horizons that ground a phase of a presence, and the correlative notions of reminiscence and premonition could be conceived as the radicalization of a far-retention and a far-protention going beyond the horizons of the temporality of an awakened transcendental ego.

There is no original world, all given, or simply found by the child, but rather an original connection of the infant and the world, which grow together in a lived coherence that is phenomenologically the most archaic embodiment of the a priori of correlation, before the fixation of its poles in a subject and something it faces. This mutual growth carries the value of anteriority even though it is always being done, always in process. This is because at every moment of the development of the child, the transcendental reminiscence of a transcendental past, remaining at the same time always immature, is in function (fungiert), so that the world is lived as always already there and as something that will continue to be there. The world is always in a sense found by the infant (through the transcendental reminiscence of it having always already been there), but paradoxically it is indeed an immature "fulfillment" of their nascent ego, accompanied by a transcendental premonition of its gain through inhabitance, so it is also created in a constant anticipation. In other words, it is created to the extent that it is the very living in the world of the infant that makes the world grow into a mature world. Nonetheless, the infant also finds the world as having always already been there, outside, as soon as its self finds itself embodied as the center of the *Umwelt*. Therefore, it can hardly be argued that trust is at one point gained by the infant. It is rather born with him and the world, they grow together. Transcendental trust has its origins in a transcendental past but it has yet to be appropriated, being always imminent and never fully gained once and for all.

Since trust can be lost, this loss does not compare to losing something gained during our lifetime, as one can lose their keys for example, but it is fundamental because it can be compared to losing a "part" of our living body, as one can lose their arm or their eyesight. If we can still speak about *gaining* trust, despite this fundamental dimension, it is in a derived and almost paradoxical sense, similar to saying that one "gains" their body by living it. It is a paradoxical claim: from the child's perspective it is not gained because it has always been inapparently in function, but from the caregiver's or child psychologist's point of view it can be attested that the child has passed this stage in its early life.

Regarding the loss of trust in schizophrenia spectrum disorders, for example, this is a very complex situation because here, too, people with schizophrenia have difficulty in translating this loss into words. However, some people do manage to say something about it. For example, in the case of Anna in Wolfgang Blankenburg's *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit* (2012), the patient complains that she has lost something tiny but indispensable—she calls it "natural evidence", but it is legitimate to recognize this as what we call transcendental trust. More often than not, however, this loss is "covered" or "filled" by a delusional belief and construction. This has the merit of giving a structure (however fragile) to the experience and of protecting oneself from the anonymous anguish of breakdown. But this, in turn, cuts off possible access to that loss (Gozé 2019). The intersubjective attestation of this loss is itself also paradoxical, because it *appears* through the delusional

tivität erwachsender und schon erwachsener Menschen-wobei sich das Spiel, analogisch gesprochen, wiederholt."



Footnote 9 (continued)

structures that are supposed to cover or fill this loss. It is thus a problem in psychiatry and psychotherapy to recognize and confirm such a paradoxical experience because it is not experienced as such, but rather always in the shadow of other experiences.

Richir's anthropo-phenomenological project is partially based on the exploration of a transcendental history of the subject. This transcendental history precedes the stories in which a narrative identity (which belongs to a higher architectonic level) is embedded. By transcendental history we must not understand the history of the individual subject itself, but rather the history of the anonymous and a-subjective processes of constitution and institution of the subject, a history carried out under the eyes of other human beings and through which a world is also progressively constituted for the subject. It is also the history of the symbolic institutions (*Stiftungen*) and of the kinesthetic habitualities that sediment within infantile experiences. Richir insists on the fact that the constitution and the institution of the transcendental *ego*, on the basis of a primordial inchoative self in its relationship to the world, is far from smooth. He draws, for this purpose, on the observations of pediatricians and psychoanalysts such as Donald W. Winnicott and Melanie Klein regarding the psycho-emotional development of children and their relation to reality.

To sum up Richir's view it could be said, *first*, that the transcendental history of the subject is not the history of a constituent ego (be it primordial), but it is rather deployed from an a-subjective layer towards visibility, it is an anonymous process of subjectivation. This process becomes the history of the subject only a posteriori (through a retroactive constitution). This is a paradoxical *Nachträglichkeit*, because what it reaches back to, strictly speaking, has never been lived, since there was still no subject to live it. This retroactivity in the presence is an impossible act. We have never witnessed the birth of our subjectivity; we live it as having always already been there (the transcendental *ego* is not born). The birth of the self is a genuine unprethinkable or immemorial past, a past that has never been present. The paradox however is that this past continues to be in function (*fungierend*) in a strange way even in adulthood as its gravitational center.

Second, Richir's view recognizes that this transcendental history is not smooth: if the constituting relationship of the nascent ego to its nascent world has a history, the mutual constitution of the world and the ego does not happen without failures, without surprises. These failures are due to the offense of reality, which is initially eclipsed by the infant's illusion of omnipotence. However, as this illusion of omnipotence diminishes and exteriority is progressively being constituted as something independent, the symbolic institution has to guarantee the coherence of the sense and meaning one can make of this exteriority. Then the possible failures consist more precisely in the "glitches" of the process leading from the archaic register to the symbolic one. The role of the parental environment is precisely to respond "sufficiently" well to temper the offense of reality and thus ensure the tenure of stammering temporalizations: "the first Stiftung, from the point of view of genesis or Transcendental history, [is] precisely that of the other, with their Leiblichkeit (the first 'hominization' is that of the infant by the care which the mother brings them)" (Richir 2004, p. 302). This possibility for the environment to hold the nascent presence is established by the parental *Leiblichkeit*. Moreover, the transcendental history



of the subject is correspondent with a transcendental history of trust. It can be seen that this trust is not naive, that it is not without possible clashes. This means, on the one hand, that it is not a blind certainty that would leave no room for surprise or the unexpected. But again, it blinks phenomenologically with the possibility of its loss, on the horizon of familiarity and strangeness. This blinking does not however mean that the child runs the risk of losing trust in the pursuit of a safe experience.

The world and the self grow together, but this does not mean that there is perfect coincidence or even harmony between them. However, there is a kind of coherence insofar as the transcendental premonition is already paving the path for new world experiences. In growth, the flesh of the child expands, and as it expands it finds itself participating in a world that becomes its own and grows with it. In this movement, there is a progressive discovery of the world and of one's own self in a mutual dehiscence of the world and the self.

In search of themselves, infants find themselves in the world. Progressively the unknown world somehow becomes "recognized". It is a mystery that the strangeness encountered can be collected in the regime of the familiar and that the *Umwelt* can be configured with always greater complexity. How is it that, during the extension of the limits of its world by the child, there are no catastrophes or traumatic events that could destroy the trust he grants in this gently tainted otherness? How is it possible for the child to stand on its two legs, while under its feet the ground is trembling? We have discovered that if the earth does not move, the growing child does not stop to test this soil. What is it that sustains its function of being an original foundation at any cost?

Let us go back to Husserl's quote: he asserts that the constitution of the world is not a solitary affair but takes place in an intersubjective dimension. We would add, with Winnicott and Richir, that it is the responsibility of the parental environment to somewhat temper the discovery of the world, so that the child is never seized by its naked strangeness. How can the infant's concrete environment actually provide this transcendental security? In our view, the transcendental history of trust can only be explored by observing parental care as the first primordial world. Here, we are forced to situate ourselves in an ambiguous way between the transcendental stratum and a factual (concrete) stratum. This is clearly the case because at this stage of the development of the infant, concrete acts such as childcare techniques serve to build the foundations of the transcendental foundations of the subject who is currently in the process of being born.

(2b) Parental environment as the transcendental matrix. Drawing inspiration from Richir's recent work, who himself draws on Donald W. Winnicott's work on the development of the self and its relation to reality in order to develop a transcendental phenomenology of the formation of selfhood, we propose to take up the analysis of the psychoanalyst on maternal care in order to continue our exploration of the transcendental history of trust.

What is important for us in this respect is that in the inactual world of the pre-I of which Husserl speaks there is already affectivity and *hyle*. Husserl is clear on this: according to him, to receive *hyle* in the still nascent world is already a form of participation of the pre-I in the world of living egoic subjects. For us, this means a participation in the intersubjective environment, which at this stage is called the



parental environment. Even if Husserl clearly speaks of the child in the mother's body (*Mutterleib*) we can affirm, in accordance with Winnicott, that empirical birth does not mark a clear-cut rupture, in relation to the dependence of the infant, from the bodily invested environment. Others must lend their flesh to the infant in order for the infant to exist. The *hyle* in question here is a matter already invested by parental care, thus a matter that is, in a way, made familiar to the infant on the basis of intersubjective affectivity. The thesis that will be explored in this part is therefore the following: it is the parental environment which, by the care that it lavishes, makes *hyle* familiar to the affectivity of the infant and hence supports the movement of the growth of the latter and its world.

The parental environment is not only the totality of childcare provided with the techniques appropriate for a child, but it is already a *leiblich* area. To care is to make flesh. This flesh is still based on concrete techniques—cradling, feeding, rocking, assuring hygiene, etc.—yet these artificial acts (which are part of the symbolic institution) have a transcendental function for the human being to come. This ambiguous field (because at the limits of the contingency of the factual and the transcendental) that will bring the child to its *phenomenological* birth is the transcendental matrix. The transcendental matrix "is" a strange mixture of the *Leiblichkeit* of the parents, the care they lavish (instituted and learned), and the dehiscent *Leiblichkeit* of the child. However, this whole situation is still undifferentiated from the point of view of the infant.

"There is no such thing as an infant" declared Winnicott to the great astonishment of the members of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, "meaning, of course, that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant" (Winnicott 1960, p. 587). Initially, during the first days, the little child is not dissociable from the care he receives, as the pediatrician remarks. This is a reality so concrete that if the care is absent or deficient, the child dies. There can be no presence, even during the embryonic state, without other presences that provide, with their attention and care, the necessary conditions for life. It is therefore impossible to think of an embodied human being without an other who has brought him to life and assured an instituted an environment for its growth.

The Winnicottian statement of the baby's non-existence resonates with Husserl's claim that the pre-I is still non-living. Therefore, one can only speak of what Winnicott calls the infant-care unit, since the child's perspective itself is not yet identifiable. Winnicott argues that we must distinguish between the study of primitive mental processes and the study of early childhood. We subscribe to this methodological precaution.

From this point of view, the infant is at first in a state of absolute dependence on its environment. Winnicott emphasizes the fact that this absolute dependence is coupled with an ignorance of this dependence. "It is axiomatic in these matters of maternal care of the holding variety that when things go well the infant has no means of knowing what is being properly provided and what is being prevented" (Winnicott 1960, p. 594). If we can speak here of "double dependence" it is because this dependence is "situated" on the fold between transcendental and factual, but what makes it possible for the factual of the concrete care (called *handling* in the terminology of Winnicott) to have a transcendental function for the infant is precisely



the infant's ignorance of the factual quality of care. In other words, care is, in Merleau-Pontian terms, invisible and yet also functions as the condition of possibility of the visibility to come.

This ignorance is therefore not contingent but properly transcendental. It is transcendental because, in this case, ignorance is not a privation of something, it does not describe an accidental *lack* of knowledge that *could* be at the disposal of the infant, but such knowledge as could never—and this *de jure*—be given or possessed, since the ipseity of the infant is not yet instituted in an *ego* who disposes over instituted figures of sense. In fact, childcare provided by the environment is an integral part of this primordial infant-care unit. In the words of Martine Girard, "the infant who is carried is not aware that carrying keeps stopping him from falling" (Girard 2008, p. 1686). From a phenomenological point of view, in the case of the infant in care we cannot speak of a subject/object division capable of providing the gap that is necessary for the noetico-noematic correlation. No lived time or space could take place without there first being an "absolute here" from this whole. Thus

the unit is not the individual, the unit is the environment-individual set-up. The centre of gravity of the being does not start off in the individual. It is in the total set-up. [...] In other words, without a good-enough technique of infant care the new human being has no chance whatsoever. With a good-enough technique the center of gravity of being in the environmental-individual set-up can afford to lodge in the centre, in the kernel rather than in the shell. The human being now developing an entity from the centre can become localized in the baby's body and so can begin to create an external world at the same time as acquiring a limiting membrane and an inside (Winnicott 1952, p. 99).

It is from this primordial space, already *leiblich* but pre-individual, that individuation will take place by a displacement of the center of gravity from the early unity of infant-care towards the individual child, which means a situation of the absolute-here in the *Leiblichkeit* of the infant due to the progressive detachment of care. It is thus only *after* the institution of the separation that the *ego* can discover its ignorance of the transcendental past which has preceded its first—even minimal—auto-apperception.

We can therefore say that the primary role of parental care, in addition to the preservation of life, is *holding* in Winnicott's terminology. Richir attributes the function of holding to what he described as the *chôra* or the transcendental ground and specifies that it should be understood as the transcendental signification of maternal flesh: "the *chôra*, as *Leiblichkeit* (and *Phantasieleiblichkeit*) of all *Leibkörper* is the maternal matrix [*giron*] as transcendental, as a receptacle that receives and holds, that does not 'drop' into the abyss" (Richir 2006, p. 264).

In addition, the set-up described by Winnicott will allow parents to "present the world in small doses". According to Winnicott, the infant's illusion of "omnipotence" spares it from the offense of reality. The parental environment initially responds with the greatest precision to the needs of the child, who thus does not have time to feel the anguish of hunger. For example, when a mother puts her child in the bath, she carries the child in her arms, and without having explicitly learned it (this is the primary maternal preoccupation), without even actively paying attention,



she will touch the bath water with her elbow, assuring that the temperature is adequate so that the child never gets burned. Likewise, the importance of rocking is that the child never falls, that the rhythmic experience is never suddenly broken, which makes it possible for the child to progressively explore the sensory environment and to constitute objects without fatal interruptions. These commonplace examples show that what is at stake in maternal care is the condition of possibility of intentional constitution. Maternal care makes it possible to experience oneself and the continuity and reliability of the world in its own reflection.

If, unfortunately, the care fails—which means in our terms a failure of the transcendental function of the *chôra*—then the infant finds itself in a situation of absolute distress. When Winnicott describes the distress of an infant who loses contact with maternal care, he refuses to use the term anxiety, which seems too insignificant to him. Instead, Winnicott calls this extreme distress, beyond any imagination, "primitive agony" and describes it as follows:

going to pieces falling forever dying and dying and dying losing all vestige of hope of the renewal of contacts (Winnicott 1987, p. 86)

Already the use of the term *holding* indicates how carrying makes contact. This may include rocking and arm-carrying, but there are various forms of mothering practices in all of humanity. However, holding does not only support, it also establishes the ground for the first experiences of the child's own *Leib*. The nature of this ground is both rhythmic and tangible. We argue that holding makes up the first figure of the transcendental ground as described in our static analysis. Understanding how this ground is appropriated by the individual remains a task for us. In this respect, the psychoanalytic concept of introjection could be referred to. We argue that introjection is not only that of the mother, but it is the introjection of the parental environment itself as transcendental ground. With the migration of the center of gravity from the infant-environment unit of the care set-up to the individual body of the child constituted as an autonomous subject, the transcendental ground becomes that of an absolute-here by introjection. Correlatively the original and pre-individual trust is also introjected and becomes a transcendentally functioning trust in every experience of the world.

We must also say a word about the phenomenological status of this introjection of trust that might suggest that trust comes from outside to lodge within. In our opinion, trust arises in what Winnicott calls the "intermediate area of experience," which is a potential space:

It is useful, then, to think of a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality. This intermediate living can be thought of as occupying a potential space, negating the idea of space and separation between the baby and the mother, and all developments derived from this phenomenon. This potential space varies greatly from individual to individual, and *its foundation is the baby's trust* in the mother experienced



over a long-enough period at the critical stage of the separation of the notme from the me, when the *establishment of an autonomous self* [emphasis by authors] is at the initial stage (Winnicott 2005, p. 148).

Thus, transitional phenomena such as trust simultaneously contribute to inner reality and outer life. This area is undisputed because it asks nothing other than to exist as a resting place for the individual engaged in the endless human task of maintaining inner and external reality, both separate and connected. In other words, the intermediate area of experience has the characteristic of being hybrid. It appears to the child with the first "non-me possessions" (transitional objects). It is remarkable, from the phenomenological point of view, that the transitional object is "found/created" by the child. It is both offered by the environment and invested as such by the child. Its status—subjective or objective—is indeterminable, and it is because of this indeterminacy that, according to Winnicott, its status is undisputed and remains "unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, [and] constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience" (Winnicott 2005, p. 19).

We do not gain trust, just as we do not create it *ex nihilo*. Indeed, the found-created status of trust is due to its double, indeterminable, appurtenance in different architectural strata. Trust is always simultaneously transcendental, archaic, and empirically current. It stems from the intermediary area of experience, beyond the pure external reality and the inner realm of subjectivity. It is the very element of the adherence of ipseity to the world which allows them to grow together despite the complexifications of the separation of the self from others and from its originarily holding environment.

## 4 Conclusion

How is it that we can trust the world? How is it inhabitable, and how is it possible that it can be relegated to the bottom of my perceptive experience? What happens to a person with schizophrenia who loses this acquaintance? What remains of trust when the world does not keep its promise of security and lived continuity—for example, in trauma? Trust is most often only in function within experience, it exerts its effects from its non-positional virtuality. The task we have taken up was to open the field of virtualities, the archaic phenomenological field, in which a phenomenological description of trust in its transcendental dimension is possible.

This description cannot, however, be "purely" phenomenological. Indeed, trust, understood in its transcendental dimension, is not a psychological attribute of the self or even the transcendental ego; it is the affective character of the a priori of correlation. In order to conclude, we suggest returning to Merleau-Ponty's intuition, which was our point of departure: "it is because first I believe in the world and in the things that I believe in the order and the connection of my thoughts" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, pp. 50–51). This paradox was at the heart of our first methodological endeavour, the static phenomenological analysis of trust. In this field, we are no longer dealing with phenomena that depend on an already instituted transcendental consciousness; it is, rather, an a-subjective field that



opens up for the phenomenological gaze. As a first step, the architectural stratum of perceptual faith has driven us to recognize an affective adherence of the self to the world. We proposed to interpret perceptual faith as an affective phenomenon, beyond any *doxa*, be it even the Husserlian *Urdoxa*. Perceptual faith has thus led us to the conceptualization of an embodied trust, rooted purely in affectivity. We have also shown that the condition of possibility of such adherence is the possibility for the self to be somewhere. This possibility is grounded, in turn, on the transcendental ground that makes it possible to live in the world and to be at home in the world. Perceptual faith, as theorized by Merleau-Ponty, encloses a basic dimension of trust that is precisely trust in the world, and in the fact that it is and will go on to be inhabitable, neither falling to pieces nor opening up an abyss in which we would lose any possibility of a stance.

We arrived at the observation of a primordial coherence in the a priori of correlation, but the status of this coherence remained enigmatic because it is fundamentally anonymous and mute. It was therefore necessary to carry out a genetic analysis of the adherence of the self to the world through trust. It is from this perspective that we have proposed to describe the transcendental history of trust, starting, first, from Husserl's analysis of the pre-I and its intersubjective conditions (*hyle*, affectivity). It turned out that the role of the *leiblich* parental environment is central for the description of this primordial phenomenological field. This field, primarily undifferentiated from the point of view of the infant, is the transcendental matrix which is a coalescence of the child and of the care that is given to him. This is what Winnicott has consistently emphasized, insisting on the fact that a baby does not exist, but every time we try to describe what an infant is, we describe, in reality, a relationship: that of the all-concrete "infant-in-care".

From a methodological point of view, these analyses raise a difficult problem. Since we encountered the need to appeal to the observation of concrete care to describe the conditions of possibility of the transcendental history of the subject and of trust, the least we can say is that this method is a bizarre phenomenology: at the same time transcendental and concrete, mundane. The description of how the mother carries her child to the bath, empirically realizing the transcendental conditions of continuity of infant experience, offered an example of this method. From the point of view of the infant, we have to do with a transcendental ignorance that ignores what can very concretely be described through empirical observations. These two dimensions are, however, not completely separate; so we can, through a zig-zag movement, make inferences concerning their original coalescence.

To do this, one must (i) identify the (architectonic) transpositions between different strata, and (ii) identify the transpositions of phenomenological perspective in the analysis: not only that of the observing subject, the phenomenologist, but also that of the infant (through genetic analysis), that of the parents, and that of the adult who has been a child. Because of the coalescence of the transcendental field (from the infant's point of view) and the empirical, mundane and factual field (from the point of view of empirical observation of care), there is a constant tension between the two paths of access to the analysis of trust, but it is a productive and fruitful tension that must be assumed. There is no pure phenomenology here, but always an impure mixture of facticity and phenomenology. Future research must be conducted



to identify what remains as a trace, or "phenomenological fossil," of the transcendental matrix in adult life.

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