This is a repository copy of *Trust and the Other: recent directions in anthropology*.

Trust and the Other

Broch-Due, Vigdis, and Margit Ystanes. 2016. Trusting and Its Tribulations: Interdisciplinary Engagements with Intimacy, Sociality and Trust. Berghahn Books.

Cohen, Robin, and Olivia Sheringham. 2017. Encountering Difference. John Wiley & Sons.

Keane, Webb. 2015. Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories. Princeton University Press.

Liisberg, Sune, Esther Oluffa Pedersen, and Anne Line Dalsgård. 2015. Anthropology and Philosophy: Dialogues on Trust and Hope. Berghahn Books.

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Robin Cohen and Olivia Sherignham's *Encountering Difference* argues in the opening pages that one of the major challenges that humanity faces is how people from different cultures get along. This concern with getting along, and its relationship to encounters and difference is central to the discipline of anthropology. Yet certain levels of encounter, and certain forms of difference have attracted more attention than others. Getting along not only necessitates thinking about the difference between cultures, but also the differences between persons as kin, as strangers, and in other forms of relatedness. These differences are filtered through culture, questions of trust, intimacy, and the modes through which others are framed. Such concerns are in many senses foundational to the social sciences (cf. Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Simmel). Twentieth century philosophers also engaged at length with the issue, for example, in Levinas' reflections on the ethical centrality of 'the Other' (Lévinas 2003), and existentialist approaches that posit the relation between self and other as foundational to normative perceptions of the self (Beauvoir 1949; Sartre 1969). Yet, as Vigdis Broch-Due and Margit Ystanes note in their volume *Trusting and its Tribulations*, anthropology has only played a small role in recent debates about trust and the question of inter-personal encounters. This is despite anthropology's long interrogation of what it means to encounter difference, and the fact that old ethnographies are often drawn upon when examples of small-scale social solidarity and well-being are cited in trust studies. The four volumes attended to in this review show how recent ethnographic work is testing the ethnocentric assumptions at the centre of how we think about trust and its correlated question of different ' Others'. These works are examples of the potential for ethnographically informed interdisciplinary approaches to trust. They also have implications for how we conceptualise ethics and difference more broadly. We can hear the echoes of anthropology's recent reflections on ethics and alterity within these texts, showing how trusting and othering, performed at different scales, is central to how we theorize contexts, realities, socialities, and worlds.

Starting at the largest scale but also the topic most familiar to anthropology Cohen and Sheringham's book masterfully summarises the lessons of the culturalist approach to encounters with 'the Other'. Providing erudite key words that define *cultural encounters*, they make a convincing argument for the revitalisation of a focus on creolisation (as opposed to hybridity or other associated terms), and a clear definition of diaspora and social identity. The body of the book provides examples from Louisiana, Martinique, Cape Verde and Mauritius, tracing the flows of people, differences and encounters that typify the cultural consequences of Europe's colonial history. Showing how different cultural groups have come to encounter, exploit and grow with each other, Cohen and Sheringham set out to show how cultures change and emerge 'from below' through a dialectics of encounter, resistance, and creolisation. Its introductory chapters and conclusions make wide theoretical arguments that help us think through difference at a transatlantic scale, but at times they risk epochal claims that would benefit from more consideration of encounters with difference beyond their own case studies. For example, making an argument for the historic specificity of creolisation and simultaneously insisting on the universal application of creolisation as a concept-metaphor, the book occasionally implies that processes of domination and mixing were only significant after European colonial expansion. This emphasis fails to take into account earlier, and often equally power-laden encounters with difference that shaped regions such as East Asia. The choice of examples also suggest that encounters with difference are largely imagined as coming from outside a given culture, raising the question of how we might understand encounters with difference at the interpersonal scale and/or within a particular cultural milieu.

Closely documented ethnographies of personal relationships (see Crapanzano 1985; Jackson 1998) have covered interpersonal encounters with difference for a while now, but theoretical engagements with trust and its relationship to encounters with difference are perhaps less developed. In recent years trust has become a policy-oriented research obsession, with trust in others acting as a common measure in quantitative studies of social connectedness, capital accumulation, and well-being (Putnam 2000). The volumes in this review represent a sorely needed anthropological contribution to theories of trust as current theorizations in cognate disciplines tend towards universalist and ethnocentric claims. Broch-Due and Ystanes' volume provides a comprehensive discussion of these issues, with an excellent summary of the anthropology of trust and its relationship to broader interdisciplinary approaches. In the early pages of their introduction they describe trust as " a social orientation towards the future nurtured by the gradual accumulation of positive experience and sometimes revealed in a leap of faith" (1). This carefully worded definition highlights the complex conceptual challenges that emerge from theorizing something so often taken for granted as 'trust'. From perceptions of the future, to cosmology and personal experience, Broch-Due and Ystanes' volume teases apart the contingencies of trust

and its related intersubjective and intercultural particularities. This volume exerts significant efforts to repair ethnocentric assumptions within extant theories of trust, which as they note, tend towards a contractual approach, assuming that the relation between self and other is that between equal persons (typically men), with greater trust equated with greater intimacy. As they note, the Anglo-European philosophy of trust shows a linguistic tendency to jump from 'I' to 'We', imposing reflections of the self onto an abstract shared humanity, while at times leaving unchecked assumptions at other scales (8).

The chapters of this volume provide case studies that complicate this picture through discussions of encounters with difference, intimacy and power. Margit Ystanes, Peter Geschiere, and Vigdis Broch-due show how intimacy and kin relations are often the greatest source of distrust and vulnerability. Paula Haas shows how trust is performative through a fascinating discussion of the Mongolian ethics of trusting the untrustworthy. Jennifer Speirs and Chris Kaplonski show the ways materials and documents effect perceptions of trust, and Misha Mintz-Roth and Amrik Heyer show how gendered contractual and compassionate relations intersect through the introduction of new financial technologies in Kenya. The final two chapters use a more historical approach to tease out the intimacies and betrayals of hierarchy, with Rhadika Chopra's reflection on relations of trust between colonial masters and servants in India, and Gloria Goodwin Raheja's account of the distrust catalysed by mining in the Appalachians. Each of these chapters reflects how "the spaces trust builds are of different scale, complexity and duration" (1) while also showing how trust, conceptualised as a verb rather than a noun, is central to other sociocultural phenomena.

In Sune Liisberg, Esther Oluffa Pedersen and Anne Line Dalsgård's *Anthropology and Philosophy: Dialogues on trust and hope* we see not only the relevance of trust as an object of inquiry, but also as a methodology. In contemplating the ethics of trust and its necessary implication of thinking about others, this volume suggests how anthropology might place trust in colleagues from other disciplines. The volume is structured as a series of dialogues between philosophers and anthropologists, each of whom writes their own short essay alongside a collaborative introduction to their specific dialogue. The volume starts with the proposition originally made by Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup that humans are born with a natural disposition to trust others, and that it is only in extreme circumstances that this disposition falters (1997). Many of the anthropological reflections in this volume unpick this statement, working alongside philosophers to develop notions of trust that take sociocultural, ecological and cosmological circumstances into account in theorizing why we might trust or distrust others in particular contexts.

Lotte Meinert interrogates why it is that in Uganda she encountered such low levels of trust, at the same time unpacking whether it is even possible to have 'generalized

trust' as has often been theorized in large quantitative studies. Michael Jackson and Thomas Schwartz Wentzer link questions of trust to the issue of hope, showing how the desire to live a better life requires both trusting others as well as entrusting fate. Sune Liisberg and Nils Bubandt argue that ambiguity complicates how we consider trust, distrust, and the politics of how we engage with others. Between trust and distrust sits a curious quantum of ambiguity where, as Bubandt shows in the case of Indonesian politics, people place trust in a government they often deem untrustworthy. Suggesting Sartre's discussion of authenticity as a conceptual add-on to concerns with trust, Sune Liisberg argues that trust may well serve as a benign form of self-deception in ambivalent contexts. Hans Lucht and Moe Rasmussen return to Kierkegaard's discussion of faith as it relates to questions of hope and the transcendent necessity to entrust the absurdity of fate. Discussing how the logics of sacrifice take on new life in West Ghanain efforts to contend with wider political economies, firstly as fishermen and later as migrants in Europe, Lucht inverts the perception that it is the exotic 'other' that makes sacrifices. Showing briefly that we too sacrifice the migrant to our own indifferent political orders, Lucht demonstrates how the logics of indifference and their absurdity share much in common with the act of hope and trust.

The dialogues within this volume are theoretically dense and ethnographically rich, each providing unique avenues of thought that would perhaps warrant books in themselves. One general insight shared by many of the dialogues in this volume however, is that trust and hope rely on a certain level of self-deception and/or imagination. This 'bad faith' (to borrow from Sartre) is not framed in a negative light however, but rather as something that makes life liveable and social worlds possible. As Liisberg argues, it is a form of magic that projects the capacity to act into the future, and serves as an important benign fiction across cultures. The narratives, tropes and syntax of these fictions differ greatly, as the anthropologists in this volume are keen to remind readers, but the act of trusting appears to be a shared necessity for social life to be possible. Perhaps because of the philosophical dialogue undertaken in this volume each of the discussions tends to emphasise two particular scales of encounter and trust, what Esther Oluff Pedersen in this volume describes as prima facie (face to face) and reflective trust. While these scales are crucially important, they leave untouched the question of how trust and hope play out in intergroup encounters with difference, such as those discussed by Cohen and Sheringham.

Webb Keane's *Ethical Life* does not solely focus on the question of trust or 'the Other'. Rather, through its efforts to develop an interdisciplinary approach to ethics, it shows how pivotal trust and the other are to human life. Within this review I will largely focus on this aspect of Keane's ambitious interdisciplinary text. In agreement with, but spending little time examining, the various authors whose work loosely falls under anthropology's 'ethical turn' (see Lambek et al. 2015), Keane lays out a conceptual schema for bridging natural and social science approaches to understanding how it is

that people become ethical Keane does not refer to a specific definition of ethics so much as a broad definition of 'ethical life' which he describes as "those aspects of people's actions, as well as their sense of themselves and of other people (and sometimes entities such as gods or animals), that are oriented with reference to values and ends that are not in turn defined as the means to some further ends" (2). Through the examples Keane provides throughout we come to find that these values are typically attached to notions of how to live well. Moreover, their interactional nature means that questions of trust, and the relation between self and other are important forms of ethical life.

The book is structured into three sections: Nature, Interactions, and Histories. The first section provides an explanation of what Keane calls 'ethical affordances', the co-occurrence of human dispositions, experiences, and perceptions that arise in given contexts. Here Keane relies heavily on developmental psychology, primate studies, and their cognate fields to argue that humans are born with certain prosocial dispositions. In contrast to popular interpretations of these findings Keane is careful to note that these dispositions are not ethical in themselves but rather they lay the foundation to be able to act and reflect upon one's relation to others in ethical or unethical ways. It is in the second section that we see trust and the other more clearly articulated. Starting from the premise that the opacity of others is a shared human ethical affordance, and drawing on Harold Garfinkel 's (1963) and Charles Goodwin's (2007) argument that trust emerges from a sense of shared reality, Keane argues that trust points to the intersection of the normative and the interpersonal. Trust is central to how we interpret unexpected actions in interactional contexts, laying bare the significance of ethical life as a site where trust and betrayal play out. Referencing fine-grained linguistic and ethnographic examples Keane emphasises the importance of communicative acts in eliciting particular ethical 'stances'. This analysis and definition of the ethical appears to compliment, and at times reflect the insights of the other two edited volumes featured in this review. Much like Broch-due and Ystanes' discussion of the scales of 'I' and 'We', Keane provides an eloquent pronoun-based model for thinking about the different stances that shape ethical life. From first-person, to second and third person frames, ethical life takes on different forms as 'I', 'thou' and 'we'. Just as both *Trusting and its Tribulations* and *Anthropology and Philosophy* call for a greater emphasis on trust as active and interactional then, so too does Keane call for a more granular approach to second-person analyses of ethical life, with particular emphasis on how trust forms.

All the works covered in this volume argue for a greater emphasis on the performative and interactional aspects of encounters with difference, moving away from extant definitions of ethics, trust and the other, and unpicking ethnocentric assumptions about trust and its relationship to intimacy, familiarity, and positive emotions. They also think across disciplines, trusting the epistemologies of other fields, and reengaging with the question of shared human traits. Each volume emphasises that understanding the question of how we move from relations between self and other, the ethical

frames that emerge from these experiences, and how these frames inform encounters with difference, is a challenge that still requires work. Keane's use of first, second, and third-person perspectives might serve as a useful analogous starting point for how we envision personal shifts between different scales of ethical life. Shifting between first and second-person perspectives captures many of the vicissitudes of trusting and othering in everyday life. But what of the encounters with difference that Cohen and Sheringham discuss? Where might trust emerge within this setting? In the third section of *Ethical Life* titled 'Histories' Keane examines the worlding effects of ethical life which manifest as a universalising stance embodied in statements of the 'we' and the matter of fact. At the same time however, he posits the ways in which this typically moral and universalizing stance also acts as a field of political and epistemological change. He connects these differing qualities to the ways first and second perspectives involve an interactive coupling, whereas the third person is more commonly a realm of reflection and the abstraction. Looking at both transformations in religious debates and feminist activism, Keane simultaneously emphasizes the transformative power of thinking about ethical life from abstract political and moralizing stances while also showing their contradictory and limited qualities. The disjuncture between these difference stances is a major vehicle for change in ethical life according to Keane, where interaction serves as the experiential foundation to reflective thinking, but reflective thinking also breaks down in everyday circumstances. Returning to the question of trust and encounters with others then, we might imagine how trust scales and transforms at the differing levels of interaction and abstraction. Depending on context, generalized trust directed towards an abstract other is privileged over encounters with difference in daily life. Conversely, a sceptical reflective stance does not take away the potential for trusting encounters in everyday life. However, it is still uncertain how we might fold this heavily cognitivist approach to trust and the other into ethnographic understandings of the ecological, geopolitical and cultural scales of difference.

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