



# Hope and Trust as Conditions for Rational Actions in Society: A Phenomenological Approach

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## Abstract

In this paper I examine the structure of hope and trust from a phenomenological perspective in order to analyze the kinds of beliefs, valuings, and practical dispositions involved in them. I claim that there are some basic aspects of the social world that would be inconceivable without the feeling components of these attitudes. However, since these attitudes are only rational in as far as they involve rational beliefs, valuings, and practical assumptions, a complex theory of reason that deals with these three domains is necessary to understand what is at stake in them. Accordingly, I attempt to sketch central aspects of the Husserlian pluralistic conception of reason and highlight the way in which, when they are rational, the valuings involved both in hope and trust open new possibilities to act in rational or meaningful ways. This leads me to stress the role of the feelings involved in these attitudes, for I claim that such valuings or axiological assessments are based on them. I argue that hope allows us to act rationally in the face of uncertainty and what lies beyond our control. In the final part I elaborate on the idea that trust is founded on hope. I examine what happens when hope is expressed and how being found trustworthy by others implies being capable of establishing all kinds of social relationships, including relationships in which the trusted one is dominated. This opens the possibility of raising ethical questions concerning trusting and responding to the trust of others.

In this paper, I will aim to show that attitudes that can be identified with hope and trust are necessary conditions for some forms of rational or meaningful actions.<sup>1</sup> I conceptualize hope as an emotional attitude because it involves a gaze, apprehension, or direction of interest that can be characterized as centered in feelings.<sup>2</sup> While

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding this concept of attitude, see Husserl (1952, pp. 8, 179) and Kessler and Staiti (2009).

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trust is fundamentally a practical attitude, I will claim that it entails hope and can be conceived as founded on the latter. This means that there are at least some basic aspects of the social world that would be inconceivable without the feeling components of complex experiential attitudes such as hope and trust. It also means that the incapability or unwillingness to adopt these attitudes in certain contexts, or in relation to certain people, groups, or institutions, limits our capacity to act rationally.

Trust and hope also involve beliefs and practical dispositions, but I will argue that a complete account of trust and hope cannot abstract from their feeling components. In his intentional analyses of consciousness, Husserl acknowledged that some beliefs have structural relationships with certain kinds of feelings, and that these complexes of beliefs and feelings also have structural relationships with volitions and actions. More importantly, these analyses are inseparable from his claim that there is a kind of rationality that pertains to feelings insofar as they make possible value assumptions: a rationality that concerns our capability to make sense of our feelings and that lies between the rationality of beliefs and the rationality of actions.

In the following, I will attempt to set forward some elements that are necessary to identify certain possible emotional attitudes as attitudes of hope and trust. It is important to mention that my descriptions are not to be understood as complete characterizations of the concrete ways in which the attitudes identified with these names and their respective translations take place in different cultures. They are mere general descriptions of possible attitudes, although I think that they bring forward elements that are at the core of concrete attitudes adopted by people of all cultures. This claim is not the product of a rushed generalization, but a consequence of a thesis that I will try to elaborate here—namely, that very basic aspects of the intersubjective dimension of our world and our existence are inconceivable without assuming that we are capable of trusting and hoping.

### 1 Three dimensions of reason

Husserl's conception of emotional or affective life resembles some relatively recent theories that consider emotions to involve experiences or mental states (such as judgments, perceptions, phantasies, memories, etc.) in which we grasp aspects of the world (or of possible worlds) and at the same time claim that feelings make possible the manifestation of axiological qualities (see Goldie 2002; De Sousa 1987; Johnston 2001). However, to appreciate the conceptual strength of Husserl's account, it is necessary to keep in mind his understanding of the relationship between experience, reason, meaning, and world.

Husserlian phenomenology requires that philosophical reflection be based on experience, but it also demands an account of the meaning of the world, ourselves, and our place in it. In his best-known works, Husserl attempts to show that the being of the world is inseparable from the way in which it manifests itself in our lived experiences. In his lesser-known lectures and manuscripts on ethics and axiology, Husserl attempts to make conceptually explicit that the world also has axiological and practical meaning for us—that is, he attempts to make explicit that the world is a horizon of objects and states of affairs whose meaning also involves an appeal to us

as desirable or undesirable in different ways, as well as invites us to deal with them through different actions.

It can be said that Husserl's experiential approach to questions of meaning is linked to the following claims. First, consciousness is always intentional in the sense that it is always consciousness *of* something (Husserl 1991, pp. 70–72). A perception, for instance, is always a perception of a cup, a tree, a riot on the street, etc. This claim stems from the descriptive psychology of Brentano, but Husserl goes beyond this when he argues, second, that all intentional lived experiences are structured synthetically. To have intentional consciousness of something is to be conscious of it in a multiplicity of actual and potential lived experiences that point to it in a synthetic manner. For example, a single cup, tree, or riot can be perceived in multiple lived experiences that are intertwined insofar as they exhibit one and the same object or state of affairs. The consciousness of the passing of time is also a form of synthesis, one in which present lived experiences are intertwined with other lived experiences that “sink” into the past and with other possible experiences that are passively anticipated as future. Therefore, Husserl writes that a characteristic of the stream of consciousness is to have a synthetic structure that is analogous to the syntactic structure of languages but also more original than them (Husserl 1977, pp. 272–75). The last claim, which follows from the first two, is that intentional syntheses are sense-bestowing operations [*sinngebende Leistungen*]. Already in *Ideas I*, Husserl acknowledges the necessity of broadening the concept of meaning [*Sinn*] to use it to describe a characteristic of the stream of consciousness (Husserl 1977, p. 285).

It is important to keep in mind Husserl's distinction between three interwoven forms of consciousness and three corresponding dimensions of the world: the doxical, axiological, and practical. Husserl thinks that rational or meaningful practical intentions are founded in rational lived experiences of valuing and that the latter cannot take place without rational beliefs or judgments about some object or state of affairs which is valued (see Husserl 1991, pp. 220–22; 1988a, pp. 70–157; 2004, pp. 277–83, 315–31).

An instance of a practical intention would be a resolve to do something or an action in which something is done. Notice that the object or state of affairs *of* which we are conscious when we have the will to do something is precisely the deed that will have been done when such actions are successfully carried out—for instance, having retrieved a forgotten object by going back to look for it at the park where I accidentally left it. An instance of a lived experience of valuing would be the evaluative consciousness of the forgotten object as something that I value as beautiful, useful, morally relevant, etc. However, such an object can in turn be known or conceived in different judgments and perceptions: I can think of it as a mere notebook, or as the notebook in which I wrote thoughts and memories, or as the notebook that contains between its pages a letter that was given to me by a dear friend on a special occasion.

In short, Husserl claims that a practical intention is only rational or meaningful if it is feasible and valuable for the agent. It is only rational to attempt to go back to the park if such action is feasible and if the deed of having recovered the forgotten object is valuable for me. It wouldn't be rational to go back to retrieve something worthless to me. However, because values are abstract qualities that cannot be

conceived without reference to things or states of affairs, assumptions of value are only rational or meaningful if they come together with a correct perception or an evident understanding of these things. If I misjudge the fact that the forgotten notebook contains an important message, then my valuing of it is misplaced.

In relation to his theory of knowledge and ontology, Husserl highlighted that when we grasp the world and the beings in it we do so by recourse to their givenness in perception or in an intellectual ideation based on perception, recollection, or imagination.<sup>3</sup> His view on values is, however, more complicated. For Husserl, values are qualities that are originally given in “value receptions” (*Wertnehmungen*), a neologism that literally means “value taking” or “value grasping” and that resembles the German word for perception, *Wahrnehmung*. Value receptions are intentional acts that can be broadly characterized as likings (*Gefallen*) and dislikings (*Missgefallen*) and that apprehend feelings in synthetic unities (Husserl 1952, p. 9; 2004, p. 223). In *Ideas II*, Husserl uses a metaphorical expression to characterize this grasping of values as a “savoring abandon” (*geniessende Hingabe*). And he adds: “Thus in the sphere of feelings what is meant by this talk of savoring is precisely that feeling in which the Ego lives with the consciousness of being in the presence of the Object ‘itself’ in the manner of feelings” (Husserl 1952, p. 11). Accordingly, Husserl considers values as unitary qualities that can be identified in an object or a state of affairs, but precisely as qualities that manifest in multiple ways through feelings or emotional lived experiences. This means that the experience of valuing something entails a certain kind of “grasping”—in Husserl technical terminology, an apprehension (*Auffassung*)—that is irreducible to the doxical grasping of the being of the thing or state of affairs that has this quality. This difference can be indicated by pointing out that the grasping that renders the givenness of values draws precisely on feelings and not sensations, as in perception, or objects already apprehended upon sensations, as the intuition of an ideality on the basis of multiple perceptions or acts of imagining (Husserl 2004, pp. 71, 74, 223, 326–327; 1952, pp. 8–9).<sup>4</sup> While I can grasp through sensations what the notebook is, a physical object that is blue, soft, and light, for instance, I can only grasp its value through a set of feelings: liking it involves a set of feelings, disliking the fact that I lost it involves another a set of feelings. In this case, both sets of feelings manifest in different and contrasting ways that the notebook is valuable for me.<sup>5</sup>

The difficult topic of the grasping of values is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to notice that Husserl himself seemed to have changed his mind about it at different moments of his life (see de Warren 2017 and Melle 2007), and it has been further elaborated from other complementary angles (see Villoro 1997). In some late manuscripts where he discusses Scheler’s concept of love and the way

<sup>3</sup> This view can be found more clearly exposed in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*. See Husserl (1974).

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that in several passages where he writes about *sinnliche Gefühle* (sensuous feelings), Husserl suggests that value receptions apprehend a mixture of sensations and feelings. See Husserl (1984, pp. 401–11), Husserl (2004, pp. 326–27), and the manuscript A VI 12 II/22a. This is compatible with the view that axiological qualities are always founded on and thus mixed with doxical ones.

<sup>5</sup> For a phenomenological account of valuing that stresses the way in which we usually grasp positive values through the negative experience of lacking, see Villoro (1997).

someone can find value in taking care of the people they love, Husserl distinguishes between pleasure-values (*Lustwerte*), which are grasped in likings, and love-values (*Liebeswerte*), which are acknowledged in a different way. According to him, taking care of what we love provides a kind of self-satisfaction that cannot be characterized as a savoring abandon and that is fundamentally different from a liking (Husserl 2013, pp. 309–13, 343–47).

Regardless of these doubts concerning the way values are given, here I would like to highlight an important Husserlian insight—namely, feelings and emotions are essential components of the experience of the meaning that the world has for us, and particularly for its meaning as a world with upheavals, to use an adjective Martha Nussbaum (2001) reserves for thoughts, of different sorts of positive or negative values. For the moment let me use the expressions “feeling” and “emotion” loosely to refer to that wide range of lived experiences and experiential components that we wouldn’t consider beliefs or practical engagements. What I have just said does not mean that values are feelings or feeling sensations but only that we would not have an experience of values without feelings in the same way as we would not have an experience of things without perceptions and sensations.

Moreover, similarly to what happens with mere beliefs, where we can speak of states of affairs that we are not currently perceiving or even understanding, it is possible to have in mind the value of something while not having this value given itself. These are empty axiological intentions. I can speak of the value of something, or evoke it in memory or imagination, without being fully in its presence in the manner of feelings. I can also have empty assumptions of value without even expressing them.

A third irreducible meaning component of the world is its practical determinations: its forceful plenitude of meaning, to borrow an expression of Husserl (2004, p. 293). Performing an action is the paradigmatic lived experience of willing because all the other kinds of lived experiences in this domain can be analyzed as modalizations or variations of it. Thus, a resolve is an empty, unfulfilled, act of willing that can be understood as the practical positing of a future action. As such, a resolve is analogous to the former cases of being mindful of an object or of its value in their absence—that is, of what Husserl called empty doxical and axiological intentional acts respectively. Something similar can be said of a decision, which is characterized as a kind of resolve that has the form of a practical answer to a practical problem (Husserl 1988a; 1988b, p. 119). Notice in passing that empty or unfulfilled volitions are quite different from mere beliefs, for it is not the same to decide to do something tomorrow as to merely imagine or anticipate it.

According to Husserl, practical lived experiences are closely related to intentional acts of valuing because to value something is already to be disposed or motivated to take actions, or at least to behave in a certain manner, in relation to it (Husserl 1988a; 1988b, p. 86). This close relationship was stressed by Paul Ricoeur, who argues that we can only grasp values once we are resolved to undertake actions (Ricoeur 1949, p. 73). However, here I side with Husserl in his conceptual distinction by pointing out that we can value or desire things without taking any practical resolution in relation to them and, inversely, that we can undertake actions without valuing their goals. Having the will to do something involves a kind of positing

that is specifically practical and that Husserl calls, following William James, a *fiat*, which is not a condition for valuing to take place (Husserl 1988a; 1988b). This has consequences for the theory of reason that I am defending here—namely, (1) that we can attempt to undertake unfeasible and thus irrational actions that are nevertheless based on rational beliefs and on rational valuing and (2) that we can have rational valuing without being consistent or having enough courage to perform the actions that are demanded by them. An example of the first case would be to attempt to recover a notebook in circumstances in which the achievement of this goal is impossible, like when it has been destroyed. This irrationality holds even if I have solid reasons to believe that the notebook contained important information and if I am emotionally certain that it is valuable. An example of the second case would be refraining out of laziness from attempting to do the same thing when I am capable of it.

To avoid any naïvely realist misinterpretation of this conception, let me note in passing that Husserl observed that the only admissible way we can make objective claims about values and rational actions is by making reference in these claims to the agent and their entire practical and axiological contexts. Thus, an objective claim regarding a value assumption or an action would be one that aims to be acknowledged as valid by anyone, but that would have a form of this sort: “It is rational for such person to value such thing or to do such thing in such concrete axiological and practical context” (see Husserl 1988a; 1988b, pp. 80–89; Marín Ávila 2018). This context includes also the personal traits of the respective subject. Moreover, it seems only logical that it should also include the person’s vocational or ultimately ethical form of life: the concrete way in which they arrange their life and preferences in view of the goal of living the best possible life for them (see Husserl 1988b, pp. 3–94), as well as the things or persons which they are individually compelled to love and care about and which they are not able to sacrifice for other goods without feeling an irreparable loss (see Husserl 2013, pp. 297–332), as Husserl tended to stress in his later ethics.

In what follows, I understand the expression “rational or meaningful actions” to refer to actions that are not only feasible and based on rational beliefs but that also aim at goals whose value is rational because what is valued can be given to the agent in the manner of feelings. Only actions that fit this triple criterium of rationality can be considered rational or meaningful.

## 2 Hope

In this section, I will draw on the previous characterization of the doxical, axiological, and practical dimensions of experience and rationality to examine the attitude of hope. What I wish to show is that hope is a necessary condition for acting rationally or meaningfully in a social world.

Let me define preliminarily hope as an emotional attitude that involves a willingness to act motivated on the expectation (however indeterminate or improbable) that something good can happen. In this sense, hope entails an expectation that something that lies beyond one’s control might be realized, preserved, or avoided, but it

also entails a value assumption and a willingness to act, even if it is only to resist or to not give in to the paralyzing mood of despair or hopelessness.

From such a definition, it is clear that the willingness to act distinguishes what I am identifying here as hope from wishful thinking.<sup>6</sup> It is therefore important to stress the difference between hope and mere expectation: it is possible to hope something while at the same time expecting that it is more likely that it will not come to happen. Suppose I forget my beloved notebook along with my wallet or purse on a bench at a crowded park. When I realize my mistake, I might expect, and with good reasons, that I will not find my belongings where I left them. However, at the same time I might hope that I will get them back. The experience of hoping is indeed necessarily intermingled with a belief in a possible and more or less determinate future state of affairs, but the intentional object of this experience—the central direction of interest—is something different from that mere expectation. Furthermore, the hoped recovery of my belongings is not something merely wished, since it is intended in as something that motivates my action of going back to the park.

Alluding to this possible opposition between what is expected and what is hoped for, Anthony Steinbock has argued that hope should be phenomenologically described as an attitude that entails a peculiar kind of belief about the future that is not strictly speaking an expectation. This leads him to argue that the future orientation of hope is a kind of belief, but not a modalization of an expectation. By the latter he means that it cannot be described as a belief about the future that is based on other beliefs, especially past experiences (Steinbock 2014, p. 164). While I agree with Steinbock that the way we are oriented to the future when we have hope cannot be described as a kind of expectation, I think there is indeed an expectation involved in this emotional attitude, even if it is indeterminate or improbable. The fact that this expectation can conflict with other expectations that seem more probable only attests to the fact that hope can arise in contexts of possible doubt and—since a decision is a practical answer to a practical question—of possible decisions. It is precisely in these contexts of doubt where hope usually emerges because uncertainty and a sense of lack of control over the future are essential features of it, as Steinbock has pointed out (Steinbock 2014). Moreover, it is impossible to identify an attitude as one of hope without this element of uncertainty: if one is sure that something will happen, it makes no sense to hope that it will indeed happen. If I was certain that I would find my belongings in the park, then it wouldn't make sense to claim that I "hope" to find them. In this context, I would rather say that I "know" or "expect" that I will find them, much in the same sense as I would say something similar if I had left them in a desk in my apartment.

Moreover, this uncertainty and indeterminacy that is involved in hope relates it to fear. This has been noted by many other thinkers, among them Spinoza, Bloch,

<sup>6</sup> By "wishful thinking" I understand the mere expectation that something desired will happen. As I mentioned earlier, I am following Husserl's distinction between desire—which is an axiological intention—and volition, a distinction that is not always considered nor accepted in phenomenological literature. According to it, for instance, many types of lived experiences that Sokolowski identifies with wishes (by drawing on the Aristotelian concept of *boulesis*) would be volitions and not mere desires or wishes (Sokolowski 2008, pp. 238–52).

and also Husserl (see Husserl 2013, pp. 300–301; Spinoza 1996; Bloch 2006; Nussbaum 2001 and 2018; Lazarus 1999). Fear is an emotion that constitutes its object as something to which we are motivated to respond as a menace. The most natural response to a fearsome situation is to fight against it or flee away from it. We seem to be biologically conditioned to react in such a manner to danger (Lazarus 1999, p. 43). This is also perhaps an original response in the sense that we don't need additional motives to fight or to flee in the face of an imminent danger, while we might need other motives to have a different rational practical response. The latter is usually only the case when the menacing event has some peculiar traits, such as not being imminent or as being unconceivable, and then this emotion becomes what some authors call anxiety (see Lazarus 1999). Fear entails thus the expectation that something bad might come to happen or, negatively, that something good might not come to happen or might cease to exist.

Hope is therefore an attitude that involves the expectation of something good but at the same time contains this expectation as something uncertain. This uncertainty implies the acknowledgement of the menacing possibility that the good will be spoiled or will not come to happen and that the bad will occur. In other words, where there are reasons to hope, there are reasons to fear and vice versa. However, the relationship of hope and fear is not a matter of waging the probability of whether something good or bad will happen. The attitude that I am calling hope is rather a matter of holding to the possible good, even when it is also possible that it will not happen. In this sense, hope is not the flip side of fear,<sup>7</sup> but something that can come together with fear and that, if it is rational, should be accompanied to some extent by it, for otherwise it would amount to some kind of bad faith or self-deceit, that is, it would be irrational insofar as it is based in a belief that is not fully acknowledged. As an attitude, hope entails the resolution or decision to act despite this uncertainty. In this sense, rational hope involves an apprehension of fear: fear becomes embedded in a more encompassing attitude that bestows a peculiar meaning on the world of which its menacing character is only a part.

Here it is important to stress that if hope can open possibilities of acting rationally or meaningfully that would be otherwise closed by fear of the uncertain, this has to do with feelings. Given that the relation of hope to fear is not a matter of waging probabilities, we can inquire into how an uncertain future is felt when it is intended in a hopeful attitude and the fear that corresponds to it is apprehended with a different meaning. What is relevant here is the positive assessment of acting to bring about the desired outcome—or to hold out for it—as something worth doing despite the uncertainty. And this assessment can only be rational if the value of the hoped situation is given in the manner of feelings. Consequently, the concrete feelings that will exhibit the value of pursuing what is hoped for will depend on the kind of value in question and on the situation itself from which hope arises.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> On this rejected view, see Nussbaum (2018).

<sup>8</sup> For a phenomenological account of some of the relationships that obtain between certain kinds of feelings and kinds of values, see Scheler (2014, pp. 135–49, 407–26).



The axiological assessment of hope is a positing of a value, and this value is a quality or determination attributed to the resolve to pursue the object of hope with all its risks and with all the fearsome possibilities implied in it. To hope for something is to value it as a goal. Thus, the feelings that verify the rationality of this assessment must include those that exhibit the authentic value of the hoped for situation and that depend on its nature. Insofar as the hoped thing is something future and has not come into being, it can only be given in a nonoriginal presentation [*Vergegenwärtigung*] by remembering or evoking in imagination some of the joyful feelings that manifest it, as well as by savoring the original presentation of feelings of woe or suffering that exhibit the disvalue of the situation of lacking the hoped for thing. For instance, someone who hopes to eat or drink soon might remember or imagine joyful sensuous feelings of eating or drinking something and become aware of the feelings that come along with thirst and hunger and that manifest the disvalue of their current situation. In other cases where the hoped for thing is something that has never been enjoyed or even when it is extremely indeterminate, one can also live in their imagination joyful feelings that would take place after the experience of lacking disappears and the craving is satisfied.<sup>9</sup> However, belonging to the feelings that are apprehended in the assessment of hope, we should also count those that exhibit that the concerned person is taking a resolve that is worth taking if she aims to act in a fully meaningful way. Perhaps these are the same sorts of feelings that provide the kind of self-satisfaction that Husserl attributes to fulfilling the duties imposed by love and absolute values (Husserl 2013, p. 311).

At this point it can be said that even though hope is an emotional attitude and thus its main direction of interest is centered in feelings and therefore axiological, it is an assessment that involves a resolve to act or behave in a certain manner under the assumption that something desired, but which is not under one's control, can come to happen. In the most extreme cases, such as having hope in the face of a terminal illness, this resolve can consist in merely holding on, in behaving as if life can be meaningful despite imminent death. This is why it is more fit to oppose hopelessness or despair to hope rather than fear. Hopelessness or despair understood as the opposite of hope would be an emotional attitude and assessment that involves an unwillingness to act on uncertain grounds with the aim of fostering something desirable.

Allow me to say here a few words regarding the possibility of facing inevitable evils or misfortunes with hope. As noted by Steinbock and other thinkers such as Bloch, hope makes it possible to intend—or be oriented to—a possible future that cannot be conceived through mere expectations, at least if with this term we allude to beliefs about the future that are only based on what we already know from past experiences (Steinbock 2014, pp. 161–62; Bloch 2016). Moreover, I believe that

<sup>9</sup> On the possibility of experiencing feelings in imagination or in nonoriginal presentation see Goldie (2012, pp. 82–83) and Husserl (2004, pp. 66–67). How can one imagine feelings and thus values that have never been given in original presentation because the corresponding situation of the value has never taken place? The question of the sources of these “creative” experientially imagined feelings and of the possibility of an intransitive hope (Bloch 2016, 84–86) points to genetic analyses that focus on the instincts or drives that make possible feelings and values.

Bloch and others such as Luis Villoro have been right to point out that hunger and the suffering of privations are great sources of the kind of hope that aims at bringing about new things (Villoro 1997). For hope can be as vague or indeterminate as to merely intend something different from what we are currently facing, even when this something else is not yet imaginable. As such, actions born out of mere hunger or mere privation can be thought as practical intentions that entail a belief in a vague state of affairs that is only characterized as being different from the one rejected, and consequently, as a vague state of affairs with an indeterminate positive value that can only be characterized as the disappearance of the concrete negative value of having hunger or suffering a privation. In this sense, when there is no object of desire in the world at hand, to act out of mere hunger or out of the mere suffering of a privation is already to seek to bring about a new and yet undetermined state of affairs with a new kind of value.<sup>10</sup>

With this in mind, we can understand why hope is possible and even frequent in situations that are extremely adverse, and why in many of them it can be rational to be hopeful. Let's think of cases such as feeling hopeful vis-à-vis being diagnosed or having a loved one diagnosed at an old age with an advanced phase of a terminal disease. If we have reasons to be certain that we or our loved ones are going to die soon because of the disease, it would be irrational to hope that such thing won't happen. To have reasons to believe that something most certainly will happen and nevertheless cling to the belief that somehow it will not happen can only be explained as a form of self-deceit or bad faith, even when this belief is born out of an attitude of hope. That being said, in such extreme cases, hope can be rational insofar as it involves betting or rooting for a different future and cultivating it, one which is better than the future that we have reasons to consider most likely or even imminent. To remain with the same example, it would be irrational to hope for a future in which we escape from death, but it could be rational to have hope in a future in which this imminent possibility occurs in a way that is not so bad or that is even relatively good. It could be rational to hope for a future in which death by disease is embedded in a horizon of meaning with desirable aspects—for instance, to hope to come to terms with something or someone, to hope to be prepared for such event, or to hope to be able to understand new possibilities on the basis of facing death. Here one does not deny the rational belief in the imminent death but seeks to assess and bring about a future that includes it in a different and more meaningful way.

It should be noted that even though hope involves a resolve to act, the uncertainty that is essential to this attitude entails that such volition is necessarily insufficient. The hoped for thing cannot be fully explained as the object of one's

<sup>10</sup> My account of hope is more indebted to Bloch (2016) than what might appear from what I explicitly discuss of him. The reason for this is that Bloch focuses on the instinctive roots of this affect. Let me note, however, that I find compelling his characterization of hope as an affect that has as its object something that is not at hand, that implies a practical dimension, and that opens the possibility of an authentic, truly new future. A phenomenological account of the instinctive roots of hope and of valuing in general—that is, of how the possibility of grasping values presupposes being driven or projected by instincts—would have to resort to genetic analyses and take static analyses like the ones presented here as preliminary guidelines.

volition. To go back to the first example: when I act out of hope of retrieving the things that I forgot in the park, my volitional intention to retrieve them is insufficient because I don't have control over the unknown people that can easily take them. It is up to them to leave them, to hold them for me, to give them back, or to take them away. Something similar can be said regarding the more extreme examples of hope in having a meaningful future vis-à-vis a terminal illness. A trait that characterizes something hoped for—and that distinguishes it from something straightforwardly willed—is that it is necessarily grounded in the tacit or explicit acknowledgment that it is beyond one's control. In this sense, I can hope for things that are beyond what is feasible for me alone.

Here I would like to call the attention to the fact that hope of states of affairs that depend on actions of other persons seems to be a pervasive experience and a condition for a human, intersubjective, meaningful existence. The pervasiveness of this experience has led some thinkers such as Steinbock to describe it phenomenologically as a strictly interpersonal emotion. According to him, this emotion is directed toward a future possibility in which one is engaged but in a way that one is not in control to bring it about because its actualization depends on other persons—or ultimately on God (Steinbock 2014, p. 167).

I don't think that hope is necessarily directed to the actions of other persons: after all, an atheist can very well act out of hope that good fortune—that is, mere chance or luck—will favor them. However, I do think that this kind of hope that relies on the actions of others, interpersonal hope, involves an interesting set of complications and peculiarities that make it convenient to consider by itself. Thus, I think it is correct to claim with Steinbock that interpersonal hope “expresses an experience of some power greater than my own as a power upon which I am dependent for occasioning the hoped-for event; it evokes a relation of dependence” (Steinbock 2014, p. 168). In Husserlian jargon: the intentional object of the volition entailed in the attitude of hope is a state of affairs that will possibly exist as a consequence of the volitive positings of the one who hopes and other agents.

Of course, the vagueness and uncertainty of the hoped for state of affairs also concerns the very way in which we are supposed to act to bring it about. This is why I think that the relevance of hope as an emotional attitude that can open new possibilities of rationally intervening in the world can only be fully appreciated when one takes into consideration its interpersonal form. We have seen that the things that are hoped for—the hoped for goods—entail uncertainty. And this uncertainty cannot be limited to the question of their feasibility, that is, of whether they are achievable or not. If we don't know how a volitive act will be fulfilled through concrete actions, we cannot anticipate the concrete deeds that will result from it. And when I hope for things that depend on others, I don't know how these others will assume and continue my actions and deeds, how they will make sense of them, how they will incorporate them in their own practical reasonings, according to their own practical intelligence and capabilities. To this extent, this emotional attitude also opens the possibility of acting in rational or meaningful ways to bring about states of affairs or goals of which we cannot be aware in beliefs that represent them in a clear and determinate manner.

Hope is truly relevant for the constitution of new social states of affairs. It is irrational to pursue a goal that is both not feasible and that cannot be clearly conceived (see Husserl 1988a; 1988b). However, these efforts become rational when they are performed with justified hope, which includes the assumption that they will be continued by the actions of other persons that will contribute to bringing about their goal as something that cannot be clearly anticipated by me because its form is also dependent on these other subjects. The same is true of any effort to produce works that can have a temporality beyond our individual lives, including theoretical and artistic ones. It would be irrational to undertake all these actions in an emotional attitude that excludes hope.

To stress this point, let's consider another example: the case of resisting and opposing an abusive authority or institution or laws or policies that are perceived to be unfair. Without hope, it would be irrational speak up or undertake individual actions of open confrontation against an authority or institutional order that I perceive to be unfair but that I know I am nevertheless incapable of changing in this manner. If I don't have hope, such actions are unfeasible because they aim at goals that are unachievable by me alone. In such a situation, to speak out and advocate for my rights only has sense when this action is embedded in an attitude of hope regarding the possibility of being heard and supported by others who might contribute to bringing about the desired change. And here it is important to note that if a person has reasons to believe that it is likely, even if uncertain, that her own efforts to realize something desired by her will be supported by other persons, then this belief is a reason to apprehend her desire in an attitude of hope. This means that when we express our hopes, we contribute to creating environments in which it is rational for others to be hopeful about the same things.

Nevertheless, for hope to be rational it is not enough that it is based on rational beliefs. I have described hope as an emotional attitude characterized by an axiological direction of interest: the assessment that it is desirable to engage in a practical disposition to foster or cultivate the possibility of bringing about an uncertain future, or at least to endure while it comes. The observations that I have set forward suggest that the specifically emotional component of this attitude is the axiological assessment of the practical engagement to bring about an uncertain future as something worth doing despite its uncertainty. Precisely this valuing—this assessment of a possible practical disposition as desirable despite the risks of assuming it—is what gives a rational or meaningful character to actions whose feasibility and goals are uncertain. Regarding this point, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that the rationality of valuing can only be verified by savoring the corresponding feelings.

Thus, the fact that hope can open new possibilities of undertaking meaningful actions doesn't mean that it is always rational to act out of hope. The uncertainty without which hope could not be conceived implies that it is always intermingled with fearsome possibilities. With this I don't mean that it would be convenient for the hopeful person to experience fear constantly but that she should also perform the kind of assessment involved in this emotional experience. Fear is an ingredient of rational hope, but it becomes relativized and remains a background feature under the main direction of interest of hope and its assessment. Therefore, if it is rational, a resolution to be prepared and to act with a hold on a possible and uncertain hoped

good, and thus to foster it, should also entail an awareness of the complementary fearsome possibilities and a resolution to be guarded against them and actively avoid them.

### 3 Trust

It is convenient to reflect on trust at this point because we can set forward its structure by distinguishing it from that of hope. It is not only the case that trust shares many of the traits of hope, it is also clear that it is not possible to trust someone without at the same time hoping that they will honor this trust by acting in a certain way. To this extent, trust can be said to be based on hope. In other words: the axiological intention that is prominent in the emotional attitude of hope is a component of a practical attitude that can be identified as trust.

It has been pointed out by several thinkers that to trust someone implies necessarily becoming vulnerable before them and giving them the possibility of betraying this trust (Steinbock 2014, pp. 197–222; Baier 1992, pp. 110–12; Ozar 2018, pp. 139–41; see also Luhmann 2017, pp. 27, 46). This element is so central to trust that I would like to suggest that it can be preliminarily defined as the practical attitude of making oneself vulnerable before another person for the sake of some hope. This means that, in contrast to hope, which can merely be disappointed, one cannot trust without making oneself available to betrayal.<sup>11</sup>

When I claimed that trust involves hope, this implied that it also entails an uncertainty regarding something that might happen and that is valued positively. However, the definitory element by which I am trying to distinguish this attitude from hope is to be found in the practical layer of meaning. For when we trust we are disposed to favor with our behavior the hoped for state of affairs, and we do so by means of making ourselves vulnerable before someone who we assume to be willing and able to bring it about or to preserve it. Both hope and trust are complex attitudes that involve beliefs, valuings, and practical intentions. However, while hope entails a gaze or a direction of interest that is predominantly emotional and axiological, in trust this direction of interest is predominantly practical. Hope is an emotional and thus axiological way of experiencing the world—even though it also entails beliefs and practical dispositions that are not the primary focus of interest of whoever assumes this attitude. Trust is a way of acting—which also entails emotions and valuings as well as beliefs.

Let's say that I have to do something important that makes it inconvenient for me to go back immediately to the park to look for my forgotten things and that a friend offers to do it for me. I cannot be sure that she will look for my lost belongings with

<sup>11</sup> From the above preliminary definition is already clear that the kind of possible attitude that I am identifying with trust has an interpersonal dimension. This is not to say that we cannot trust ourselves, trust our relationships with other persons, and ultimately trust the world. However, these can only be objects of trust insofar as our attitudes toward them are inseparable from our trust in other persons, which means that their betrayal can destroy these other trusting relationships. See de Warren (2020, pp. 15–42).

the same concern and acute sight as I would. Thus, if I accept her offer, I make myself more vulnerable in comparison to the alternative of going to the park myself, and the hope of retrieving my things comes to be integrated in an attitude of trusting her in order to produce the hoped for outcome. Another example of this situation, one that is more suitable to illustrate how the actions motivated by hope can already be characterized as trusting attitudes, is the above-mentioned case of speaking up or taking individual actions of open confrontation against an authority or an institutional order that is perceived as abusive or unfair. Since in this case the very actions involve assuming the risk of being sanctioned or punished, once I undertake them, I become vulnerable and available to the betrayal of the people that I hope will favor my initiative.

What does it mean here to become vulnerable before another? It is important to note that this vulnerability should not be thought of as a naïveté because it is not an epistemic act but a willingness to remain under the power and depend on the free will of the trusted one (see Baier 1992, p. 112; Steinbock 2014, p. 202). Moreover, this vulnerability can be specified in terms of a renunciation to be guarded against the ill will of the trusted one and a renunciation of agency or practical intelligence to bring about the hoped state of affairs (Baier 1992, p. 145). To trust *is* to do something or to be resolved to do something that can be characterized as such a kind of renunciation before someone for the sake of some hope.

In this way, trust necessarily creates a relationship in which the trusted one is empowered by the one who trusts. And if power is the main corruptor of trust, as Anette Baier has claimed (Baier 1992, p. 148), then it contains the seeds of its own destruction when it is not balanced as reciprocal trust or limited by checks to sanction betrayals. However, it would be a mistake to assume that it is not possible nor common for someone trusted to be dominated precisely by the one who trusts her.<sup>12</sup>

Why do we trust? When addressing this question, we should be careful not to assume that we always come to trust after making a decision. I don't know if such thing as deciding to trust is even possible,<sup>13</sup> but I will leave this problem open. However, it would seem that insofar as we initially accept the sincerity of the speech and actions of our fellow human beings, we are originally disposed to trust them.<sup>14</sup> It makes no sense to ask for the reasons we might have to be habitually trustful, while in contrast we are usually compelled to look for motives when we find out that we are constantly mistrustful of someone in particular or of certain kinds of people in certain kinds of situations. From a biological point of view, this original disposition

<sup>12</sup> It is worth remembering that research on gender inequality and sexual violence consistently shows that relationships of trust can be asymmetrical and foster exploitation, abuse, and even extreme forms of violence toward those who are trusted. See for example Segato (2010) and Fraser (2014). In connection with the point that trust has an impositive character, which I will discuss soon, Steinbock has shown from a phenomenological perspective that one can trust someone with the purpose of making them feel obliged and thus manipulate them into doing something (Steinbock 2014, pp. 212–17). Because of this, I am not convinced by Ozar's claim that an essential trait of trust is that it involves valuing the trusted person in a moral and nonstrategic way (Ozar 2018).

<sup>13</sup> This possibility is defended by Pereda (2009, pp. 72–74).

<sup>14</sup> On this idea, see Steinbock (2014) and Baier (1986).

to trust can be explained by the fact that we cannot survive without trusting those close to us (Tomasello 2016, pp. 45–51, 64–66, 88), and in the everyday world it can be observed in the fact that children have to be taught not to trust strangers.

Nevertheless, it is fruitful to inquire into why we trust when we ask what the assumptions are that go hand in hand with this attitude and that reflection can bring about. This question concerns the possibility of undertaking trusting attitudes that would be rational in the Husserlian sense of having a reflexive understanding of what we are doing and what is at stake in them.

To make oneself vulnerable before someone else is only rational if we have sound beliefs that the trusted person has a good will toward us, that she will advance our welfare or care for what is important for us, and that she is capable of doing it (Baier 1992, pp. 111–12). However, if the practical disposition of becoming vulnerable before another person is to be rational, it also has to be based on the emotional insight that it is done for the sake of something valuable for us. In other words, the practical attitude of relying on the good will and capabilities of someone we trust must be not only feasible, but also valuable. If trust is not assumed for the sake of some hope that can be made explicit, then it is not rational. And here it is important to remember what we said previously about the axiological assessment involved in hope: it is only rational if the corresponding value can be given in the manner of feelings.

Let me call the attention to the fact that trust in other persons allows us to greatly magnify what we can know, value, and do and that this magnification can itself motivate us to value the possibility of trusting and thus of making ourselves vulnerable before other persons. From a sociological point of view, trust makes it possible to enhance cooperation by reducing the complexity that comes with freedom of action and information sharing (Luhmann 2017). But not only does trust enhance our capability to cooperate to conceive, preserve, or bring to existence almost all kinds of goods; there are some goods—that is, some valuable states of affairs—that are dependent on trust in a stronger sense because the trusting relationships in which they unfold are inseparable parts of them, such as conversation, friendship, and all kinds of social affective bonds. It is important to mention that some of these goods seem to be part and parcel of the kind of intersubjective conditions without which we couldn't conceive central aspects of our existence.

To begin to set forward some of the implications of this idea, allow me now to say a few words about the importance of this attitude for any account of who we are as social and political beings. It is important to pay attention to the fact that trust is a necessary component of the kind of interactions that Husserl and Adolf Reinach called “social acts,” that is, those interactions that, drawing from another tradition, Austin famously conceptualized as “speech acts” (See Husserl 1973b, pp. 192–235; Reinach 1989; Austin 1962). Examples of such acts are communications, promises, requests, orders, and declarations.

On the one hand, communication cannot be successful without trust in the other's sincerity, which is a necessary condition for understanding. On the other hand, the experiences that entail trust forecast the demands and obligations that are born in a more explicit way when promising. To trust someone implies creating an interpersonal bond out of which a feeling of obligation is born, that is, a feeling of having

to answer to a demand. In this sense, Steinbock claims that trust has an impositive character (Steinbock 2014, p. 215). One of his examples is a situation where he trusts a stranger to look after his bag while going to the bathroom at an airport. Here, the trusting person can expect that the stranger won't steal his bag or leave it abandoned, but this expectation is based in the fact that he has become vulnerable before the stranger and imposed upon them a kind of demand by this very fact. Steinbock's example involves making a verbal request, but we can think of a case in which the person who trusts the stranger to look after his bags doesn't say anything and limits himself to establishing eye contact. When we are trusted, we feel obligated to act accordingly. Trust motivates a behavior that responds to it. This is why we don't trust someone based on the previous expectation that they will behave in a certain predictable manner, but on the contrary, such expectations are consequences of trust itself and of its imposition on the trusted person (Steinbock 2014, p. 214).

If trust means becoming vulnerable for the sake of some hope, then in view of the previous considerations it should be added that trust turns the hope presupposed by it into a form of demand or imposition. This adds complexity to the kind of pondering that must be done to determine whether it is rational or not to trust someone. Since trust motivates its addressee to behave precisely as they are trusted to behave, it could be rational to trust someone even when past experience suggests that they could act in a way that is incompatible with this trust.

I want to stress that these features of trust of imposing an obligation and of having to respond to a demand pertain also to promises. Furthermore, it seems that the expression of responding to a demand imposed by being trusted is already a promise, at least when this obligation before the trusting person is assumed willingly, in an act of volition. If the person trusted to look after the bags says something as simple as "Don't worry!" this can already be considered a promise. To be a promise, this expression must be communicated to the trusting person, who thereby acquires a right to claim and to free the trusted person from her obligations.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, a promise certainly creates a new state of affairs that goes beyond the emotional attitudes that correspond to trusting and being trusted, even though it seems to originate out of the latter. We could say that, precisely because we inhabit the world in the emotional attitudes of being disposed to trust and to be trusted, we are also originally disposed motivationally to receive and make promises.

What changes when trust is responded to with a promise? To begin with, it makes explicit what the trusting person can count on the trusted to do (Baier 1986, pp. 244–47, 250). And if we consider contracts as complex forms of promises, we can say that they also specify what could be expected in return for the promised deeds and the sanctions to be expected should the trusted person not comply with her word (Baier 1986, p. 250). I don't think it can be said that promises are the social artifacts that make it possible to trust at will, because to be able give a promise that would be taken as valid one already has to be perceived as trustworthy by its addressee.<sup>16</sup> However, insofar as they make explicit and limit what we count on the trusted

<sup>15</sup> For this way of understanding the promise as a social act, see Reinach (1989, pp. 169–75).

<sup>16</sup> On this rejected view, see Baier (1986, p. 245).



people to do, promises certainly make trust possible in contexts where it wouldn't be without them, for in most cases we don't trust other persons to do just anything for us, but only certain specific things which we assume they are willing to do and capable of doing.

The centrality of promises for any account of who we are as social beings has been acknowledged by many philosophers. Nietzsche famously wrote: "To breed an animal with the prerogative to promise—is that not precisely the paradoxical task which nature has set herself with regard to humankind? Is it not the real problem of humankind?" (Nietzsche 2007, p. 35) However, I want to pick up here on a suggestion of Reinach that sheds light on the relevance of clarifying the conditions under which it is possible to promise. The suggestion is that promises are the foundations of all the other kinds of social acts or speech acts (Reinach 1989, pp. 171–72), and consequently of all the social relationships that are constituted through them, which comprise the totality of what some have called the social world and others the institutional realities.<sup>17</sup> This idea follows directly from the observation that, of all the social acts out of which obligations and rights to claim originate, promises are the only ones that need not be accepted to be effective. Consequently, the acts of acceptance that are needed for other social acts can be thought of as promises of different kinds, such as the promise to do what is requested or the promise to obey the orders or prescriptions issued by someone thereby acknowledged as an authority. This means that trustworthiness is the very fabric of the social, intersubjective meaning of the world and of our existence, and it also means that it is only because we are found trustworthy by others that we can promise them all sorts of things, including the obedience that makes it possible to enter into all kinds of social bondage.<sup>18</sup>

It follows from the above that the demand that a person imposes on others by trusting them can be characterized as the awareness in the trusted ones of receiving the capacity to engage in social relationships with the trusting person, a capacity which, when it is valued by those who receive it, makes them feel obliged and motivated to honor it.<sup>19</sup> Since trust involves hope, it can only be rational to trust someone when we have reasons to make ourselves vulnerable before them with well-grounded hope that they in turn hope to engage in the same kind of social relationship as we do. All the same, it is only rational to honor the demand imposed by the trust of others insofar as we share the hopes that led them to trust us. These problems cannot be fully understood if the question of axiological rationality and its relation to feelings is set aside.

What I have developed in this paper shows the importance of conceptualizing hope and trust from a phenomenological perspective. Inquiring into the

<sup>17</sup> On the constitution of the social world through social or speech acts, see Husserl (1991, pp. 159–60), Husserl (1973a; 1973b; 1973c, pp. 98–110), Husserl (1973b, pp. 192–235), Husserl (1973c, pp. 461–79) and Marín Ávila (2015a, 2015b). See also Searle (2010).

<sup>18</sup> This is not to deny that domination is often if not always based on violence, but it does have the implication that violence can only deliver servitude instead of mere destruction and death insofar as it is capable of forcing the trustworthiness that is needed to be obedient.

<sup>19</sup> Regarding this conception of normativity as related to valuing, see Husserl (1998 and 2004) and Vil-loro (1997).

doxical, axiological, and practical intentions of these emotional and practical attitudes advances our understanding of what it means to act rationally in concrete, intersubjective contexts. I have argued that hope and trust expand the possibilities of acting in rational or meaningful ways in uncertain and intersubjective contexts. This rationality cannot be fully explained when we abstract from their axiological components. However, the specific way in which emotions contribute to this rationality is often overlooked. Conceptualizing emotional and practical attitudes like trust and hope from a phenomenological perspective can open the possibility of inquiring into the beliefs, valuings, and practical assumptions involved when we behave in contexts of uncertainty and when we engage and are asked to engage in social relationships of all kinds, which always call for particular ways of being vulnerable and depending on others. This deserves our attention, as it is the ground on which we can raise important ethical questions.

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