

I. Trust: A speedy overview

What is trust?

1. Reliance

To trust someone to do something is to rely on them to do it, where that involves something like working the supposition that they will do it into one's plans. Problems: seems to make trust too mechanical. We don't trust machines that we rely on; we can rely on people of necessity while not trusting them.

2. Reliance + some appropriate belief/expectation

Rely on someone to perform an action as a result of their good will. Good response to the earlier problems. But this seems to involve believing in the presence of good will. Is that necessary: couldn't one trust without expectation of good will (surrendering in war)? Is it sufficient: couldn't one rely on goodwill without trusting (the card trickster). Or, consider a more sophisticated account: to trust is to have the belief that the person will be moved by the recognition of the very attitude of trust. Does that fall to the same worries? More broadly, what consequences does this have for the voluntary aspects of trust: sometimes it seems that one can decide to trust, but does one thereby decide to believe? Moreover, does trust require belief at all: does it even require belief in performance? The safe case.

3. Reliance + some other attitude

(i) take the extra component to be something like a reactive attitude in Strawson's sense (Holton). If reliance is betrayed one feels disappointment; if trust is betrayed one feels betrayed. Is that essentially so—what if someone is just very forgiving? Does this help with the volitional issues? And does this explain what needs to be explained, or just point to a consequence of it?

(ii) take the extra component to be a certain responsiveness to the other: I behave in a certain way because I respond to the recognition that you are relying on me (Jones; McGeer and Pettit).

(iii) take the extra component to be a belief in a commitment (Hawley). Note though that this is another belief based account

4. An alternative: Question whether reliance should be at the heart of it

First a general scepticism about analysis, esp. conjunctive analysis. ('What she said about him would be, no doubt true—if you pressed him flat like a flower in a book. But he had a thickness you had to recognise, and could not be pressed flat without losing form'—Elizabeth Bowen) But more particularly, a scepticism about focusing trust on the idea of relying on someone to do something. Reliance is essentially three place; and it is typically instrumental.. Why not start with the idea of a trusting relationship? Like friendship, that looks to be two-place. We then will normally get reliance within in, but we need not; and even if we do, the reliance will not be essential. What happens to the voluntarism here? Compare voluntarism about friendship.