

I. Trust: Hawley

'Trust, Distrust and Commitment' (2014)

Initial thought: trust isn't reliance, for the familiar reasons. But in determining what we need to add to reliance to arrive at trust, we should consider distrust.

Distrust

No mere absence of trust, nor absence of reliance. The over-estimated lunch example. 'Distrust is richer than mere non-reliance, just as trust is richer than reliance' (p.3) Distrust has a normative dimension.

One little point: Hawley says that 'untrustworthy' should be understood as equivalent to 'meriting distrust'. I'm not sure about that. I think a forgetful but well-intentioned elderly aunt might count as untrustworthy given the forgetfulness, but no talk of distrust would be appropriate. A first thought is that talk of distrust entails beliefs about motive, and this is lacking in the elderly aunt. How plausible is that?

Motive won't do it

Hawley looks at two 'motive theorists' — Jones and Hardin — to see if their accounts can be extended to distrust. I take it that the idea is not that the trusted need to *have* certain motives if there is to be trust, but that the trusters must *believe* that they do. These are really 'belief about motive' accounts of trust.

Jones' 2004 account could naturally be extended so that, in a case of distrust, the distruster has:

an attitude of pessimism that the ill-will or incompetence of another will extend to cover the domain of our interaction with her, together with the expectation that the one trusted will not be moved by the thought that we are counting on her (or will be moved to frustrate the ways that we are counting on her)

Hawley rejects that kind of approach: "After all, someone who lies and cheats to achieve her goals should be distrusted, even if she does not bother to bear either goodwill or ill will to others, and does not care about other people's interests."

A general concern here: it seems easier to be guilty of a bad thing than praiseworthy for a good thing: distinguish following rules from breaking them; the former needs intention in the way the latter does not. Perhaps disregarding others' interests is good enough.

Gloomy expectations are not sufficient for distrust: the morally upright campaigner who wants me imprisoned.

Other accounts are incomplete

Holton:

He seems to suggest that where our trust in someone is limited, then so too is the extent to which we adopt the participant stance to that person. But where we distrust, rather than trust, someone in a particular respect, this marks no diminution in our tendency to hold reactive attitudes towards that person. Indeed, attitudes such as resentment are to the fore in situations of distrust.

Does he suggest that? He suggests that trust involves a reactive attitude, and that when trust is limited the reactive attitude that goes with trust must be limited in corresponding degree. Does he suggest that there could not be corresponding reactive attitudes in cases of distrust?

Jones, 2004 and 'normative expectations' as multi-stranded dispositions.

Basic problem: 'The Holton and later Jones accounts, in contrast, tell us more about the truster's attitudes than they do about the features of the trustee to which those attitudes are directed.'

So doesn't that show that they are accounts of trust, and not of trustworthiness? Or is the thought that we need to say more about the truster's attitudes?

Hawley's alternative

To trust someone to do something is to believe that she has a commitment to doing it, and to rely upon her to meet that commitment. To distrust someone to do something is to believe that she has a commitment to doing it, and yet not rely upon her to meet that commitment. p.10

Commitment is not intention. Rather something like an obligation, along the lines of a promise, 'conferred by roles and external circumstances, default or acquired, welcome or unwelcome'. (Why does she call it a commitment?)

Is this a good account of trust? Couldn't you trust even though you don't believe there is such a commitment? (You don't think there is anything like an obligation there; the person is going above and beyond.) Or fail to trust even though you believe there is? (You rely because you have no alternative, all the while actively distrusting the person, anticipating them letting you down.)

And is this the right account of distrust? It's grammatically a little odd. And can't you rely even though you distrust? Again, perhaps you have no choice.

Finally, how convincing is Hawley's argument that the commitment account is better than the obligation account?