

A relational theory of trust

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1 MOTIVATION

"Granted that men's theories of obligation need supplementation, to have much chance of integrity and coherence, and that women's hypothetical theories will want to cover obligation as well as love, then what concept brings them together?

My tentative answer is — the concept of appropriate trust" (Baier 1985, 57)

- Trusting relationships vs. Trust.

2 CENTRAL THESIS

- **Central question:** What do we trust others with?
 - **The relational theory of trust:** to trust someone is to rely on them to follow the norms constitutive of the relationship.
 - More precisely, trust is the composite of:
 - A belief that the other is a trustworthy participant in the relationship;
 - Reliance grounded in that belief.
- As a belief, trust is responsive to evidence; as reliance, it is made effective.
- **Object of trust:** the norms constitutive of the relationship.
 - **A Razian conception of relationships:** "constituted by norms which determine what conduct is appropriate between people in the relationships, between, for example, parents and children, as well as towards other people's children, etc." (Raz 2009, 316).
 - The nature of relationship norms.
 - **Dissertation Structure:** Defends the relational view through three standalone papers, each addressing a different puzzle in the trust literature: trustee-discretion; broad trust; and the role of reactive attitudes.

CHAPTER 1

NAVIGATING VAGUENESS: RULE-FOLLOWING AND THE SCOPE OF TRUST

(Forthcoming, The Philosophical Quarterly)

- **Problem:** Explaining the terms and boundaries of trustee discretion (*The Friend-Caregiver case*).

- **Solution:** shift the object of trust from particular actions to the rules constitutive of the relationship.
- Rules are general, and thus, they do not entail any particular actions.
- Rules are grasped through communication and engaged practice: One is not born trustworthy; one becomes trustworthy by participating in relationships.

CHAPTER 2

"I TRUST YOU!" SURE, BUT WITH WHAT? UNDERSTANDING BROAD TRUST

- **Problem:** Explaining **Broad Trust (BT)**: trust expressed in open-ended ways ("I trust you," "I trust her blindly") that feels unconditional yet remains bounded.
- **Two- vs. Three-place views.**
- **Solution:** When we say, "I trust you," the "you" implies the trustee's participation in the relationship, while the relationship's normative content provides the particular expectations and limits.
- Trustworthiness is assessed from within a normative practice/relationship.

CHAPTER 3

BREAKING TRUST AND RELOCATING REACTIVE FEELINGS

(Forthcoming, Episteme)

- **Problem:** Reactive-feelings views, despite their prevalence, are problematic and pose a challenge to doxastic views of trust.
- **Solution:**
 - Under the relational view, trust is a doxastic mechanism. Violations directly call only for epistemic reassessment of trustworthiness.
 - Reactive feelings are responses to relationship impairment, not to trust violation *per se*.
- Whether one feels betrayed or merely disappointed depends on the relationship and the importance of the violated norm.

CONCLUSION

- A liberal view; normative in a thin sense.
- The view accommodates trust under non-ideal conditions, such as those involving exploitation, coercion and unjust power dynamics,
- **Looking ahead:** Political (dis) trust and how it builds/corrodes democracy.