



TRUST, HOPE, AND EMPOWERMENT

Ben Fan

A Literary Motivation

- McGeer starts with a passage from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* to motivate the kind of trust in which she's interested
- Dorothea exhibits "friendship trust," which characterizes the epistemic state of someone faced with a friend accused of wrongdoing
- Sir James Chettam doesn't encourage trust since he has no personal relationship with Lydgate
- Reverend Camden Farebrother fails to trust (even though he sees himself as a friend to Lydgate)
- What accounts for the difference in trust between Dorothea and Farebrother?

Substantial Trust

- Substantial trust characterized by two features
 - 1) Involves making/maintaining judgments about others or what our behavior should be towards them that go beyond what the evidence supports
 - 2) Rejects the process of weighing evidence in a cool, disengaged, and objective way
- How can this be rational?
- Perhaps trust fundamentally involves an *affective* state or attitude, like optimism about the other's goodwill and competence with regard to how they deal with us or others
- Therefore, whether or not trust is justified becomes a question of whether certain feelings towards others can be justified; these justification conditions are different from those for belief or belief-based predictions of reliability
- If this is the case, then trusting seems more like **hoping** than predicting

Substantial Trust

- Substantial trust can't just be affective, however; there are instances where we decide to trust others even though we are uncertain about the consequences of trusting
 - Example of the parents trusting teenagers with the house or the family car
- Trust doesn't depend on comfortable feelings of optimism or confidence, but it is characterized by explicitly imposing certain normative expectations on the trusted person
- These normative expectations are partly understood in terms of dispositions to experience “reactive attitudes” to others meeting or failing to meet our trust (feelings of gratitude or resentment and corresponding tendencies to praise or to blame)

Substantial Trust

- Objection: in these cases, it is not that we decided to trust, but we are acting *as if* we trusted
- McGeer thinks this objection fails because we don't hold back from making ourselves vulnerable to the other nor do we continually monitor their behavior to make sure they don't betray our trust
- It is our actions and reactions, and the intentions that guide them, that distinguish genuine trust from *as if* trust
- Trust isn't a state of believing that another is trustworthy (since you can have trust without the supporting beliefs); it is an attitude that we take towards the character of the other's agency
- Trust empowers *us* in our trust (by making it possible for us to think and act in trustful ways) and empowers *them* by stimulating their agential capacities to think and act in trust-responsive ways
- Because this state of mind is forward-looking, it is appropriately characterized as an attitude or condition of hope

Friendship Trust

- Why do we maintain our trusting beliefs despite what the evidence seems to show?
- Two kinds of trusting beliefs
 - 1) Trusting beliefs *about* our friends
 - 2) Trusting beliefs *in* our friends
- When believing *in* a trusted friend, our starting point is that we see no reason to give up our trusting beliefs about them because we anticipate their ability to answer any charges made against them
- Furthermore, we see no reason to give up our trust in them even if some of our trusting beliefs turn out to be false because we believe they have the capacity to maintain or regain our trust
- The aspirational quality of friendship trust is like the aspirational quality of our decisions to trust in the absence of prior belief, which links it to hope
- Farebrother's failure to trust rests on his lack of hope

Substantial Hope

- Hope explains how we can decide to trust in the absence of certain trusting feelings about, or beliefs in, the trustworthiness of others; it also explains how our trusting feelings and particular trusting beliefs about others can persist in the face of challenging events
- Hope has cognitive and conative (or will-involving) aspects, as well as a distinctive affective character
- Two challenges for a hope-centric account of trust
 - 1) What makes hope distinct from just having certain beliefs and desires?
 - 2) How is it that hope enables our trust and contributes to the rationality of our trust?

Substantial Hope

- Hope has a central and empowering role on human agency
- In psychology, hope is a cognitive and conative activity that involves setting goals, finding ways to achieve those goals, and tapping into one's will-power to move along the path to those goals
- However, hope and agency might not be that connected – after all, we hope when things are out of our control entirely
 - This may lead us to consider hope as a certain configuration of belief and desire
- McGeer thinks that hope is something more
 - Reducing hope to just a configuration of belief and desire outlines a sense of hope that is uninterestingly broad and superficial that fails to track important psychological characteristics that distinguish it from other cognitive-affective states
 - Insisting on these distinctive characteristics helps theorists understand how these states operate in an agent's psychic economy
- [This doesn't seem like a satisfying reply to the reduction of hope to belief and desire.]

Substantial Hope

- Hope motivates us to organize our efforts to achieve the ends for which we hope
- Hope also involves knowing that there are limits to our agency; if we were able to easily and directly actualize our goals, then hoping for those goals would be odd
- [Seems like the need for hope would diminish in this case]
- Hoping must involve organizing and sustaining our efforts toward achieving some hoped-for end even though we recognize it may not be realized despite our best efforts
- Luc Bovens – we may not be able to help ourselves, but when we hope in these situations, it gives us the illusion of agency
- This may be problematic because it compromises our epistemic rationality; it leads us to overestimate the subjective probability that the hoped for state of the world will come about

Substantial Hope

- McGeer thinks that this epistemic position isn't so bad because it conceives of hope in a narrow, instrumental way
- We ought to view it as playing a regulative role that enables us to take an agential stance towards our own limitations
- Hope is a way of positively and expansively inhabiting our agency, either in thought or in deed
- Hope is the energy that motivates our agency; it allows us to imaginatively explore what we can and cannot do in the world
- It allows us to experience our limitations as boundary conditions that we can still act constructively in the face of, which may sometimes enhance our capacities as we act out of our limitations
- Hope creates a kind of affectively charged “scaffolding” for ourselves to explore how we might exercise our capacities in new and creative ways – this is how it is self-empowering

The Link Between Hope and Trust

- If hope has this kind of character to it, then it is well suited to playing an enabling role in substantial trust
- When we trust others, we face the limitations of our own agency since it involves protecting something of value to us
- In trusting others, we actively invest in them
 - We need to exercise agential powers of self-regulation to resist monitoring those whom we trust
 - We need to be able to hold those we trust accountable
 - We need to be able to forgive to sustain relationships of trust
- Our hopes encompass the powers and limitations of those we trust in addition to our own powers and limitations; therefore, hope actively engages the powers and limitations of the self and the other

The Link Between Hope and Trust

- By trusting others, we make ourselves vulnerable to them while also actively extending a vision to them of what they can be or do
- This vision serves as a scaffolding for them to be empowered in their potential agency with the energy of our hope
- Our hoping in others empowers them to act in ways that align with how we see them, and in this way, our hopeful trust brings about an important and powerful kind of trust-responsiveness
- [There's something kind of charming about this kind of view that's starkly different from thinking about trust in something like Pettit's terms.]
- How does this dynamic work?
 - It is only effective if our hopes for others connect with their own values in and for themselves
 - This links the trusted person with looking for a laudable pattern in her own life; we see ourselves as we *might* be and become a role model for ourselves

The Link Between Hope and Trust

- Why does this dynamic work?
 - Human beings depend on others for their developmental wellbeing; we come into our own as agents through depending on the hopeful scaffolding of others
 - Investments of trust are one way of communicating these hopes to one another
- This mechanism of hopeful scaffolding involves a transfer of motivational energy that accounts for why substantial trust seems to operate as a demand and as a gift
- We give the trusted other a motivationally energizing vision of what they can do or who they can be; this explains why those who are trusted are often gratified by the trust that is invested in them

Why Hopeful Trust is Rational

- This hopeful scaffolding is the mechanism that is functioning when we hopefully trust in others and they are empowered to act in trust-responsive ways; we want them to live up to the hopeful vision we have for them, particularly with respect to showing competence and care with what they are trusted with
- This mechanism relies on a feature of human psychology: others draw motivational energy for enacting and elaborating their own powers of agency from our hopeful vision of them
- Lydgate is empowered and refreshed when he hears of Dorothea's trust in him
- Why is this kind of hopeful trust rational?
- At the very least, hopeful trusting depends on knowing something about the other's values and capacities relative to the domain of our trustful relationship
 - Beyond this, our hopeful trust may rationally depend on pretty slim evidence; instead of relying on particular knowledge about the persons we trust, we trust given general knowledge that is based on long experience with our own and others' psychology

Why Hopeful Trust is Rational

- Pettit argues for a psychological mechanism that basically revolves around the safeguard of the trusted's esteem-seeking desires to get them to act in trust-responsive ways
- This may be the case, but it cannot be the full picture for a satisfying account of substantial trust
- Pettit's view addresses how it is rational to trust beyond available evidence specific to the others' trustworthiness, but it fails to account for how trust suspends strategic reasoning
- The esteem-seeking mechanism may not turn out to be that reliable – it may be an affront to the trusted person to find that they are only being trusted because the trustor is relying on the trusted's desire for good opinion
 - This may eventually lead to the trusted's refusal to have any further dealings with the trustor

Why Hopeful Trust is Rational

- McGeer's account has an advantage in that those who trust do not need to operate in this hidden or backhanded way
- When the trustee knows that the trustor is going beyond belief based on evidence because of their hope for what trustees can possibly achieve, they are empowered to see themselves as the trustors do
- The satisfaction of being trusted comes from connecting with a sense of their own agential abilities and potential as dependable by the trustors
- Despite a failure to think in strategically rational terms, it is hopeful trust that delivers the best pragmatic returns in the literary case
- Therefore, the rationality of hopeful trust is traced to the cognitive and affective role that hope plays in our lives rather than the role played by strategic reasoning