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Full-Blooded Trust as a Respectful Attitude

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Abstract

This paper's central question is whether trust can have inherent moral value. While traditional views emphasize trust's instrumental value in extending our agential capacities, a new perspective suggests that trust is also a way to convey respect to those we trust. This paper defends the view that full-blooded trust—trust grounded in the belief that the trustee is trustworthy—always involves appraisal respect: a positive evaluative attitude toward the trustee's moral character or conduct. I argue that this respect confers a distinctive moral value on full-blooded trust, one that is absent in forms of trust without belief, such as therapeutic or recalcitrant trust, even if they may still be instrumentally valuable. Full-blooded trust is the paradigm of trust because it uniquely affirms the trustee as worthy of moral regard and serves as a kind of mirror, helping individuals sustain self-respect by recognizing themselves as worthy of trust. Nonetheless, even full-blooded trust can lack recognition respect, the respect owed to others simply in virtue of their agency. It can thus still be morally flawed, all things considered.

Keywords: Trust; Appraisal respect; Recognition respect; Belief; Trustworthiness; Self-respect

Introduction

Since Annette Baier's (1986) seminal paper "Trust and Antitrust," numerous trust theorists have sought to offer a definitive conceptual analysis of trust, trying to settle once and for all what the necessary and sufficient conditions of trust are. A central and ongoing debate concerns whether trust requires the belief that the trusted party is trustworthy. Proponents of the doxastic view argue that such a belief is necessary for trust (Hieronymi 2008; McMyler 2011; Keren 2014).[1] Others reject this, conceiving trust instead as an affective attitude (Jones 2019; Faulkner 2007) or a voluntary stance one can adopt without believing the other is trustworthy (Holton 1994; Hawley 2014).

[1] This is not to say that proponents of the doxastic accounts all think a trusting belief is *sufficient* for trust. I might believe someone to be trustworthy to Φ but never have to rely on them in a way that generates the vulnerability that trust requires (Keren 2014).

This paper doesn't attempt to settle whether trust necessarily involves a belief. Instead, it investigates the role that the belief component plays in making trust morally valuable when it is present. Of course, the question of why trust is valuable is also a contentious one. A commonly accepted view is that trust is valuable because it extends our limited agential capacities by enabling deeper forms of cooperation (Faulkner and Simpson 2017; Jones 2017). However, a new perspective emerging in the literature suggests that trust is also valuable because it conveys respect to those we trust. Recently, Marc Cohen (2023) has attempted to substantiate this claim, arguing that trust has intrinsic value because it manifests respect for the trustee as a moral agent who can be responsive to our trust. To his credit, it seems intuitive that trusting others inherently respects them, independent of any other valuable outcomes that trusting them may promote. For instance, a piano teacher entrusting a student with the key to the practice room appears to respect her as a person of integrity even if she never uses the key.

However, it isn't obvious that this holds for all behaviors we label as trust. Consider a carefree surfer who tends to trust everyone indiscriminately simply because doing so makes his life easier. He might trust strangers to watch his belongings at the beach, not because he sees them as trustworthy, but because he prefers not to worry. Similarly, a nervous patient might decide to trust a doctor they've just met to perform a risky operation just because the alternative is too frightening (McLeod 2021). These sketches are admittedly spare, but they are meant to highlight a familiar phenomenon: sometimes, we trust others not based on a belief in their trustworthiness, but because doing so serves some other objective or fulfills a psychological need. In both cases, the attitude doesn't clearly involve a specific form of respect toward the trustee, and what seems to be missing is the belief that they are trustworthy, which I call a 'trusting belief'. Thus, a key question in understanding the conceptual connection between trust and respect is the role that such a belief plays in making our trust respectful.

Thomas Simpson (2023: 132–133) further develops this idea by distinguishing two kinds of respect trust might express. Drawing on Stephen Darwall (1977), he argues that trust that is grounded in belief—what he calls 'evidence-following trust'—expresses appraisal respect, a positive evaluation of the trustee's moral character. By contrast, trust that goes beyond belief expresses only recognition respect, the kind owed to others simply in virtue of their humanity. According to Simpson, appraisal respect is a distinctive good, and when it is withheld, a key form of interpersonal value is lost. This suggests that this moral value of trust depends on whether it is grounded in belief.

My aim in this paper is to build on and refine this insight. I argue that trust grounded in a belief, which I term 'full-blooded trust', is inherently valuable in a way that other forms of trust aren't, even if they may remain instrumentally valuable. Full-blooded trust is the paradigm of trust at which trust without belief aims but ultimately falls short. The absence of appraisal respect helps explain why forms of trust without a trusting belief (like recalcitrant trust and therapeutic trust) are incomplete or defective.

Section 1 defines the notion of trusting belief and distinguishes appraisal respect from recognition respect. Section 2 argues that full-blooded trust expresses appraisal respect and argues for its moral significance. Section 3 examines cases of trust without belief, focusing on recalcitrant and therapeutic

trust, and contends that such cases do not intuitively express respect. Section 4 considers a potential objection centered on cases where one holds a trusting belief but doesn't act in a trusting way.

1. Trusting Belief and the Forms of Respect

Since my argument ties the respect of trust to the belief that the other is trustworthy, I must first specify the account of trustworthiness I will be operating with. In this section, I begin by drawing on Karen Jones's (2012) three-place account of trustworthiness to clarify what I mean by a trusting belief (1.1). I then briefly present Darwall's (1977) influential distinction between appraisal respect and recognition respect (1.2).

Before turning to that task, it's worth noting that although this paper centers on contemporary debates about trust, philosophical concerns with trust date back at least to the early modern social contract theorists. For example, John Locke (1980: 77–78) emphasized that political authority is held in trust for the people and is legitimate only so long as that trust is not violated. Thomas Hobbes (2008: 113) argued that trust is unsustainable without a coercive sovereign to enforce covenants.[2] In both cases, trust is framed as a strategic and institutional mechanism: a way to manage risk and secure compliance in the political sphere. By contrast, I examine the normative structure of interpersonal trust, a dimension largely absent from historical treatments.

1.1. What Is a Trusting Belief?

Within the contemporary trust literature, there is a strong consensus that trusting someone to Φ means that you would take it to be detrimental to you if they failed to Φ (Baier 1986: 235). Of course, the degree of risk involved for the trustor can vary greatly. It may range from the relatively minor risk of being misled when we trust a friend's testimony on unimportant matters to the serious risk of betrayal when we share a secret that could cost us our job. Because of this vulnerability, it makes sense not to trust everyone. We generally want to trust those who are trustworthy and avoid trusting those who are not (O'Neill 2018).[3] Nevertheless, there is still significant disagreement among trust theorists about what it means to be trustworthy.

One way to differentiate mainstream accounts of trustworthiness is by how moralized they are (McLeod 2021). For example, Katherine Hawley (2014: 16) advocates a fairly moralized account. In her view, to be trustworthy is to live up to one's commitments. It requires both "judiciousness in acquiring commitments" and "doggedness in fulfilling commitments already acquired" (Hawley 2014:

[2] Admittedly, trust appears far less central to Hobbes's project than to Locke's, but some contemporary readers argue that the role of trust in Hobbes's political philosophy hasn't been properly acknowledged (Baumgold 2013). I'm grateful for the anonymous referee's comment that led me to reflect more on the scope of the paper.

[3] I say "generally" because multiple trust phenomena discussed in the paper involve neither belief nor optimism that the other is trustworthy, and we might have very good reasons to trust in such a fashion. Of course, proponents of doxastic accounts of trust would deny that these constitute genuine cases of trust.

15). Although she stops short of calling it a moral virtue in the richer sense of virtue ethics, she suggests that general trustworthiness is a virtue in the everyday sense of the term (Hawley 2014: 2).[4,5] If we adopt this view, it is relatively easy to see why believing someone to be trustworthy is respectful: it involves recognizing that they possess a positive character trait.

However, for the purposes of this paper, I want to avoid presupposing any specific conceptual view of trust and trustworthiness. I aim for the position developed here to be compatible with a broad range of philosophical accounts.[6] Accordingly, I adopt the less moralized account of trustworthiness defended by Jones (2012). On her view, it is more difficult to establish a connection between judging someone as trustworthy and regarding them as respect-worthy. I aim to show that even if—as Jones (2012: 84) argues—trustworthiness is not a moral virtue, believing someone to be trustworthy still involves appraisal respect. If this can be established, I believe the claim should also be compelling for those who favor more moralized views of trustworthiness, such as Hawley's.

Jones characterizes trustworthiness as follows:

> Three-place trustworthiness: B is trustworthy with respect to A in domain of interaction D, if and only if she is *competent* with respect to that domain, and she *would* take the fact that A is counting on her, *were* A to do so in this domain, to be a *compelling* reason for acting as counted on. (Jones 2012: 70–71)

According to this definition, one central component of B's trustworthiness is her competence in the relevant domain. B may be highly motivated to respond to being counted on, yet fail to be trustworthy because she lacks the necessary skills or knowledge.[7] For example, she might overestimate her ability or underestimate the complexity of the task. The second crucial component is B's responsiveness to being counted on. B might be fully competent, but still fail to be trustworthy if, for whatever reason, she doesn't regard A's counting on her as a compelling reason to act. For instance, B might think what A is asking is immoral, trivial, or incompatible with other commitments. She might also be selfish, too busy, or simply believe that their relationship doesn't entitle A to rely on her in that domain.

Of course, these examples don't exhaust the possible reasons someone might lack competence or responsiveness in a given context. Still, Jones's criteria help us clarify what it means to believe that someone is trustworthy in a domain—which is what I refer to as having a trusting belief. On my account, A has a trusting belief if and only if they believe that B is trustworthy to Φ.[8] Using Jones's

[4] In *How to Be Trustworthy*, Hawley (2019) expands on her hesitation to classify trustworthiness as a virtue in the sense of virtue ethics. She offers several reasons for resisting this label. First, she notes that trustworthiness does not require acting from the motive of commitment, whereas virtue ethics typically treats appropriate motivation as essential to virtue (Hawley 2019: 76). Second, while virtues are often thought to be mutually reinforcing, trustworthiness can sometimes be in tension with other virtues such as generosity or kindness (Hawley 2019: 84). I thank the anonymous referee for prompting me to reflect more carefully on this aspect of her work.

[5] For the argument that trustworthiness is a virtue, we can turn to Nancy Potter (2002).

[6] However, I *do* take on board the notion that trust involves vulnerability to betrayal, which is fairly uncontroversial.

[7] Although she speaks of being trustworthy in a domain instead of being trustworthy to Φ, I believe I can safely import her considerations despite this distinction for the sake of my argument.

[8] While this paper assumes a three-place relation model of trust where A trusts B to Φ, I believe that my core argument is broadly compatible with the view that a two-place model of trust (A trusts B) is more fundamental (Domenicucci and Holton 2017).

definition, this means believing that B is competent to Φ and would treat A's reliance as a compelling reason to do so.

A central claim of this paper is that it is this trusting belief that makes trust respectful. To explain why, I now turn to Darwall's distinction between recognition respect and appraisal respect.

1.2. Recognition vs. Appraisal Respect

In a broad sense, we can think of respect as an attitude through which an agent responds appropriately to some object or person (Dillon 2022). For example, people might respect a volcano by not getting too close, or respect their partner's privacy by refraining from reading their messages. What counts as appropriate will vary from case to case. In this paper, I focus on the kind of respect that agents can have toward one another—since it is this interpersonal form that is relevant to trust. Even within this narrower scope, however, there are at least two distinct senses in which we can respect others.

First, there is what Darwall (1977: 38) calls appraisal respect. This is typically the kind of respect we have in mind when we say, "I respect her a lot." For instance, I might respect an egalitarian philosopher who donates a large portion of her income. This form of respect is evaluative: I take her actions to reflect well on her character. I might interpret her donation as a sign of integrity or selflessness—traits I regard as respect-worthy. Crucially, appraisal respect is earned by meeting some normative standard. It would not be appropriate to express this form of respect for someone merely because of attributes they cannot control, like being tall or naturally strong (Darwall 1977: 42). Appraisal respect can also be mistaken. I may later discover that the philosopher exaggerated or lied about her donations, in which case my earlier respect would turn out to have been misplaced (Hudson 1980: 72).

By contrast, Darwall (1977: 38) also identifies another form of respect, recognition respect, which we owe to others independently of our appraisal of their moral qualities. For example, we might show recognition respect for a defendant in a criminal trial by allowing him a fair opportunity to present his case. This kind of respect doesn't depend on the person's moral character or conduct, but on their status as a moral agent entitled to appropriate treatment. Even if I believe the defendant committed a terrible crime and is a morally reprehensible person, I would still think he is owed recognition respect (Hill 2000). The basis for this form of respect is not merit. Rather, it follows from my belief that human beings are equal members of the moral community together with my recognition that he is human. Of course, the idea that persons are owed respect simply in virtue of their humanity has deep roots in moral philosophy. In the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (2013) conceives of respect (*Achtung*) as the proper attitude toward the moral law and the dignity of rational beings. In this Kantian view, respect is not earned through moral excellence but is owed unconditionally to all persons as autonomous agents. Darwall's account of recognition respect can be seen as a relational development of this Kantian insight, emphasizing the role of mutual accountability and second-personal address in our moral practices.

2. Trust and Appraisal Respect

With the above definition of trusting belief and the distinction between appraisal respect and recognition respect in mind, I argue in this section that the respect inherent in full-blooded trust is best understood as appraisal respect. I first defend the claim that full-blooded trust—trust grounded in a belief in the other's trustworthiness—always involves appraisal respect (2.1). I then argue that this form of respect cannot be generated by optimism alone, even if optimism has some evaluative dimensions (2.2). Finally, I explain that appraisal respect matters from a moral point of view because it supports our capacity for self-respect (2.3).

2.1. Full-Blooded Trust Always Involves Appraisal Respect, but Not Always Recognition Respect

At first glance, recognizing another as an agent capable of being responsive to trust appears to be a minimal precondition for trust to be appropriate. In this limited sense, trust may involve recognition respect. This seems to be what Marc Cohen (2023: 119) has in mind when he argues that trust is intrinsically valuable because it respects the other as a moral agent "capable of being motivated by commitments to others and so acting on those commitments." He adds that "to trust is to respect in this sense and is more than a (mere) signal of positive regard" (Cohen 2023: 119). On his view, the recognition respect involved in trust is what makes it valuable—not the "positive regard" of appraisal respect. I argue that we should reject this view. While I agree with Cohen that trust often involves recognition respect, I believe we have strong reasons to doubt that this is either the distinctive value of trust or that it holds across all trust cases.

A first reason to doubt that recognition respect is a distinctive value of trust is that, since trusting makes us vulnerable, recognizing others as autonomous agents rarely settles whether we trust them. By contrast, we often trust others because we believe that they are trustworthy. Such trust involves much more than our recognition of their *capacity* to be motivated by commitments to others qua moral agents. It indicates something more specific about how we appraise them as individuals.[9] Indeed, in almost all contexts, saying that someone is trustworthy is understood as speaking highly of them. It reflects a positive evaluation of who they are as moral agents. Most of us want to be seen as trustworthy by others, and parents usually go to great lengths to ensure their children grow up to be trustworthy adults (Hawley 2014: 2). This makes perfect sense if, as Jones argues, being trustworthy in a domain

[9] I don't see a tension between my claim and Johnny Brennan's (2021) argument for what he calls "recognition trust," a minimal form of trust that is presupposed in our interaction with other agents. Brennan (2021: 3807) argues we trust others to at least recognize us as persons (in Darwall's sense) and treat us accordingly. From this perspective, the one who aims to be recognized as a moral agent in recognition trust is the trustor. By contrast, the appraisal respect I argue trust can carry is aimed squarely at the trustee. Therefore, I believe Brennan and I are focusing on two different dynamics that need not exclude each other.

means that we are competent and that we would be responsive to the fact that we are being counted on. Indeed, these are usually qualities we appraise positively and seek in others.[10,11]

A second reason to link full-blooded trust with appraisal respect is that being deemed trustworthy—especially by our friends—is something that we take to reflect positively on our character and that we can come to believe we merit. Indeed, a good reason to think that trust carries appraisal respect is to consider typical reactions when we expect to be trusted but aren't. When a close friend refuses to confide in us because they fear we will share their secrets, we often feel a sting. This can lead to reproaches of the following form: "After all we've been through, you still don't trust me?" In cases like these, it seems like trust is something we believe we have *earned,* and that is unfairly being denied. The discrepancy between our friend's evaluation of our trustworthiness and our own can even lead us to question the value of our relationship with them. One way to explain this reaction is that we consider their lack of trust inappropriate because they give us too little credit. In such cases, our reproach isn't tied to their failure to recognize us as a moral agent but rather to what we take to be their failure to appraise us correctly.

For these reasons, I argue that the kind of respect inherent in full-blooded trust is appraisal respect. That said, there is a further and perhaps even stronger reason to resist the view that trust always involves recognition respect: it cannot account for cases where trust appears *disrespectful*.

Take the case of the *essentialist brother* who trusts his sister to take charge of caregiving responsibilities for their aging parents. His trust is based on his belief that she possesses certain traits he deeply values in a caregiver: kindness, patience, and reliability. However, this perception is shaped by a gendered and reductive assumption: he believes these qualities come naturally to her because she is a woman. Because of this, he never pauses to consider whether she herself wants this role or feels fulfilled by it. If his trust strikes us as disrespectful, it's not because he lacks appraisal respect for her, but rather because he lacks recognition respect for her. In his trust, he fails to consider her as a fully autonomous moral agent with her own motivations and goals, and such disrespect is more significant than the comparatively lighter appraisal respect that his trust also carries. This leads us to the all-things-considered judgment that his trust is disrespectful, but we needn't deny that his trust carries appraisal respect.

Cases like this are hard to account for if we insist that trust always involves recognition respect. One could deny that the brother's attitudes count as genuine trust, given its oppressive aspect—but doing so would yield an overly moralized account that strays too far from ordinary usage. A more plausible view is that trust can involve appraisal respect without recognition respect, and that the moral value of

[10] This doesn't mean that being trustworthy is what morality always requires of us or that it constitutes a moral virtue. Indeed, trust can be imposed unfairly or used for harmful purposes, as seen within criminal organizations. Betraying trust can be morally justified or even required (Jones 2012: 79). Still, this doesn't negate the normative judgments we make about a person's character when we deem them trustworthy or untrustworthy.

[11] Of course, judging someone as competent doesn't automatically mean we view them positively as moral agents. Nevertheless, without competence, our responsiveness to being relied on will not earn a favorable judgment from those who trust us. Those who systematically signal trustworthiness while being incompetent are fitting targets of moral reproach. So while competence doesn't suffice for appraisal respect, it's essential for earning it through trust.

trust varies accordingly. Even in exploitative or objectifying forms of trust, it often remains true that the trustor appraises the trustee positively. What is missing in such cases is precisely due regard for the trustee's agency or consent. This is why we judge these cases of trust to be morally flawed: not because they lack positive appraisal, but because the trustor fails to fully respect the trustee as an equal agent.

I believe that this possibility has been underappreciated in the literature. For instance, as we've seen earlier, Simpson (2023: 132) argues that we must distinguish "between trust which goes beyond the evidence, and that which follows it. According to him, "the difference is in part the difference between saying, 'I take you to be trustworthy as a working hypothesis' and 'I believe that you are trustworthy'" (Simpson 2023: 132). He claims that only trust grounded in belief expresses appraisal respect, but that all trust expresses recognition respect. This is because cases of trust without a belief withhold "the respect that is owed to the trustworthy only" (Simpson 2023: 133). While I agree with his verdict regarding appraisal respect, cases like the *essentialist brother* should make us skeptical of his claim that trust (involving a trusting belief or not) always carries recognition respect.[12]

At this point, some might worry that if even full-blooded trust can be morally flawed, then its connection to respect is too weak to make it valuable. But my claim is that appraisal respect is inherent to full-blooded trust, not that it is sufficient for such trust to be morally commendable, all things considered. In my view, full-blooded trust always carries some positive moral weight due to its appraisal dimension, even when that is outweighed by the absence of recognition respect.[13]

The upshot so far is that trust very often exhibits both appraisal respect and recognition respect, but that there is no necessary connection between trust and recognition respect. I have also argued that full-blooded trust always involves appraisal respect because it involves a judgment that the other is trustworthy. But what kind of judgment must this be? In the next section, I consider a challenge to the view that it must take the form of belief.

2.2. Why Optimism Alone Cannot Give Rise to Full-Blooded Trust

As should now be clear, I largely agree with Simpson's view that trust carries appraisal respect only when grounded in a trusting belief. Still, it is worth asking why a belief rather than an affective attitude is necessary to support that form of respect. Couldn't optimism about the other's trustworthiness suffice? This worry gains traction from views like Bennett Helm's (2014), which hold that emotions themselves have an evaluative component, suggesting that the respect expressed in trust might arise from an affective appraisal rather than a belief.

[12] Even if the reader remains unconvinced by the essentialist brother case, the argument still holds if they accept that there are other cases in which trust involves appraisal respect without recognition respect. My aim is only to show that such cases are possible, not to defend that this particular example is the best illustration of this phenomenon.

[13] I'm grateful to the anonymous referee who pushed me to clarify my view here. For my argument that the appraisal respect inherent in trust is morally valuable, see section 2.3.

Jones (1996; 2017; 2019) is perhaps the most prominent defender of trust as an affective attitude. She argues that trust focuses our attention and directs our inquiry in a way typical of affective attitudes and emotions, not beliefs. From this, she concludes that trust is, at its core, an affective attitude. Thus, trusting someone in a domain might not be partially grounded in the belief that they are trustworthy but instead in an optimism that they might be (Jones 2019: 958). One recent motivation for this view is that optimism gives more rational latitude than beliefs (Helm 2014: 210; Allais 2014: 43). Thus, it can be reasonable for two individuals, A and B, with identical evidence regarding C's trustworthiness, to reach different judgments about C's trustworthiness. For instance, A might judge C trustworthy because of his optimism, while B might come to the opposite conclusion because of his pessimism. According to Helm (2014: 210–211), we can make sense of the fact that A and B's judgments can both be rational once we acknowledge that the rational standards of optimism, which he argues are at play in trust, are more permissive than the rational standards of beliefs. If this view is correct, the positive appraisal at the heart of full-blooded trust could be grounded in optimism rather than in a belief.

I disagree with this conclusion. While I acknowledge that affective attitudes play a role in our coming to trust others, I maintain that having a trusting belief is necessary for trust to carry appraisal respect. Indeed, I suggest that an affective attitude of optimism is not sufficiently grounded in traits of the trustee to constitute a positive appraisal of their character. It's true that optimism, as Jones (2019: 958) emphasizes, can direct attention to certain features of the trustee, such as their competence or their responsiveness to our dependency. However, I think it falls short of appraisal respect for two reasons.

First, its standards of rational permissibility are too loose. For example, in the previous case where A and B have identical evidence, the difference between A's being optimistic regarding C's trustworthiness and B's coming to the opposite conclusion isn't grounded in anything about C's specific character. What seems to be the difference maker in this scenario is A's and B's different affective dispositions. However, appraisal respect is supposed to be an assessment of C's character, not of A's optimism or lack thereof. Thus, a trusting attitude that rests solely on optimism fails to carry such respect because it says too much about A's and B's dispositions and not enough about C's character.

Second, even when directed at positive traits, an optimistic attitude, on its own, lacks the evaluative force needed to affirm that the trustee actually possesses them. Without belief, it remains an aspirational stance—a favorable outlook without the settled judgment that the trustee is, in fact, trustworthy. By contrast, a belief that the trustee is trustworthy constitutes a more robust endorsement since it involves a commitment to the truth of that evaluative proposition.[14] Appraisal respect requires such a judgment: it takes the trustee to be worthy of esteem based on their character. Thus, trust

[14] Alternatively, we might view optimism as a modulator of evidential thresholds for belief rather than as a substitute for belief. If an optimist's trust does in fact reflect a belief in the trustee's trustworthiness formed under a lower evidential bar, then I am happy to grant that such trust can carry appraisal respect. However, proponents of optimism-based accounts, such as Jones (2019: 960), argue that trust involves an affective stance of optimism that can diverge from, or even conflict with, one's explicit beliefs. This commits them to the stronger claim that optimism and belief can come apart, not merely that optimism lowers the threshold for belief. This view is the target of my current objection.

grounded solely on optimism fails to carry such respect because it isn't sufficiently grounded in the trustee's character and doesn't commit the trustor to a robust enough evaluative stance.

That said, I want to qualify this claim in two ways. First, I don't deny that there is an evaluative aspect to affective attitudes in general. I merely contend that the fine-grained evaluation of appraisal respect *also* requires a belief in the other's trustworthiness. Second, I don't deny that affective attitudes influence our beliefs. I agree that they play a role in the formation of trusting beliefs, for example, by directing the trustor's attention to certain considerations or by affecting the weight they give to the available evidence (Jones 2019: 958). My claim is simply that this interaction must ultimately lead to a trusting belief for trust to be an attitude of appraisal respect. In short, the respect involved in trust cannot run contrary to what we believe about the trustee's trustworthiness. I return to this issue from the opposite angle in Section 4, where I argue that while believing someone to be trustworthy expresses appraisal respect, it does so more weakly when not accompanied by a trusting attitude.

2.3. The Moral Value of Appraisal Respect

So far, I've argued that a trusting belief is necessary for trust to carry appraisal respect. But why does that kind of respect matter morally?

Although most of us don't expect—or even want—to be trusted by everyone, we do care deeply about being seen as trustworthy by at least some people. But why does being regarded as trustworthy matter so much? One compelling answer is that others' trust provides a powerful form of interpersonal affirmation. As Robin Dillon (1997: 244) argues, our capacity for self-respect is deeply social. We rely on others' evaluative attitudes to develop and sustain a sense of ourselves as worthy moral agents. Full-blooded trust affirms that we are not only capable of being relied upon, but *deserve* to be. This helps us see ourselves as persons who are competent, morally responsible, and responsive to others' needs and expectations. Without this kind of affirmation, sustaining a robust sense of self-worth becomes harder. In that sense, full-blooded trust is one of the various social bases for our ability to see ourselves as worthy of respect.

Here, there are multiple explanations available as to why self-respect matters, morally speaking. According to Dillon (2004: 61), self-respect is essential to our capacity to flourish as human beings. Similarly, John Rawls (1999: 386) argues that self-respect is a primary good because it is essential to carry out our life's plans, no matter what these plans are. Of course, trust may sometimes misfire—people can misread our intentions or place their trust unwisely. Nevertheless, those who systematically suffer from a trust deficit through no fault of their own are still being unfairly deprived of something valuable; they are denied solid ground for seeing themselves as worthy of respect.[15] They are denied a

[15] I should note that there is still debate about how strongly the capacity for self-respect depends on others' attitudes towards us. For example, Christian Schemmel (2019) argues that self-respect is more robust under adversity than most relational respect theorists give it credit for. Still, he doesn't deny that there might be social determinants for self-respect (Schemmel 2019: 644). Additionally, there is strong empirical evidence that people's not being shown respect in the public domain is associated with a diminished sense of self-worth (Martiny et al. 2024; Hurd et al. 2017).

mirror in which their moral standing can be reflected back to them. This harm is especially pronounced in cases where trust is withheld because of implicit bias, social stigma, or structural marginalization. In such contexts, the absence of full-blooded trust can reinforce feelings of inferiority or moral invisibility.

For these reasons, I conclude that full-blooded trust carries a distinctive moral value that other forms of trust lack. It represents the paradigm toward which other forms of trust aspire but ultimately fall short. As I argue in the following section, these alternative forms may preserve some functional or psychological features of trust, but they lack the distinctive moral value that full-blooded trust confers.

3. Cases of Trust Without a Trusting Belief

I now turn to paradigmatic cases of trust without a trusting belief to further support my argument: namely, therapeutic trust (3.1) and recalcitrant trust (3.2). For the sake of the argument, I will treat these as genuine instances of trust. However, I will show that they don't intuitively convey appraisal respect. For each case, I will also argue that they fall short of the moral value associated with full-blooded trust.

3.1. Therapeutic Trust

One category of trust without belief concerns cases where trust seems based on a voluntary choice rather than on a belief. Voluntarists about trust contend that we sometimes *choose* to trust others despite lacking a belief that they are trustworthy (Holton 1994; Hawley 2014). They support this view by pointing to common cases in which we describe ourselves as trusting, even though we lack confidence in the other's trustworthiness. For example, a parent might choose to trust their teenager in order to promote their moral development. Similarly, a nervous patient might decide to trust a doctor because the alternative—mistrust—would be too distressing (McLeod 2021). In such cases, trust is not offered because we think the other is trustworthy, but because it is seen as a means to some further end. This kind of end-directed trust is known as therapeutic trust, and whether it counts as genuine trust is an open question. My aim here is not to deny that it does, but rather to argue that such trust doesn't involve appraisal respect.

To assess whether therapeutic trust is respectful, we must distinguish between two different types of cases. There are cases, like that of the nervous patient, where the end pursued centers on the trustor. By contrast, there are others, like that of the teenager, where it centers on the trustee.

3.1.1. Trustor-Centric Therapeutic Trust

Let us start with a trustor-centric case of therapeutic trust.

> **Carefree Surfer:** Mark, a carefree surfer, trusts others effortlessly, not because he believes they are trustworthy, but because he finds that doing so simplifies his life. He routinely leaves his belongings unguarded, and lends his apartment to strangers. This approach, though seemingly naïve, has surprisingly kept him unscathed. Mark chooses to trust because he believes the ease such trust creates in his interactions far outweighs the potential risks.

Mark's trust is self-centered. Trusting others makes his life easier, and he has been privileged and lucky enough for this not to backfire too dramatically. Crucially, most of us wouldn't take Mark's behavior to involve a positive appraisal of those he trusts. Indeed, the reasons he trusts them have little to do with their trustworthiness. What matters is the benefit he gets from being a trusting person. Of course, his luck may have led him to form predictive expectations that people are *generally* trustworthy. Still, his behavior doesn't necessarily manifest any belief in the competence of those he trusts or in their responsiveness to be counted on as individuals. His trusting behavior lacks the requisite directedness. Mark could be said to trust the human species, which might constitute a general respect for humanity, but it certainly isn't a directed form of appraisal respect.

From a moral perspective, it is easy to see how Mark's behavior falls short of the moral standard set by full-blooded trust. He adopts the *form* of trust—relying on others and exposing himself to vulnerability—without taking the *evaluative stance* that gives trust its moral significance. At best, his behavior may be instrumentally valuable, for example, when it facilitates cooperation or encourages others to be trustworthy. But such outcomes are largely dependent on luck, not grounded in a genuine appraisal of the trustee's character. In other cases, his behavior may even seem mildly deceptive: he might appear to regard others as trustworthy, despite holding no such belief. This can mislead both the trustee and observers into interpreting his actions as a sincere expression of respect. Moreover, if everyone were to adopt similarly indiscriminate trusting habits, the appraisal dimension of trust would be eroded. The moral meaning of trust—as a recognition of another's merit—would be hollowed out.

3.1.2. Trustee-Centric Therapeutic Trust

Turning to a more trustee-centric form of therapeutic trust, let us consider the *Unruly Teenager* case.

> **Unruly Teenager:**[16] Omar leaves the house to his teenager, Sarah, for the weekend. Before leaving, he emphasizes that he trusts her not to throw a party on Saturday night. However, Sarah's track record prevents him from forming the belief (or even from being optimistic) that she is trustworthy in that regard. Nonetheless, he thinks that a parent sometimes ought to trust their teenager. He is also confident that Sarah can become a trustworthy individual in the future and that being trusted is integral to that process.

In *Unruly Teenager*, Omar chooses to act in a trusting fashion despite lacking a trusting belief. Plausibly, he does so in part because he takes trusting Sarah to be the right thing to do given their relationship, but also with the hope that such trust might help her grow into someone who is genuinely trustworthy

[16] This case is inspired by Jones' (2004: 5) *Trust and Terror*.

in the future.[17] It is an interesting edge case for my view because, in contrast to the carefree surfer, there is a sense in which Omar's trust tracks the potential in Sarah to be a trustworthy person. He likely wouldn't have left her in charge of the house if he deemed her a completely irresponsible person who wouldn't ever be trustworthy. Moreover, Omar's explicitly reminding Sarah of his trust only makes sense because we generally take people—and sometimes even unruly teenagers—to be responsive to such reminders (Pettit 1995). He expects that Sarah is minimally trust-responsive and that such an explicit reminder might tip the scales. Consequently, he believes that Sarah might be more likely to act in a trustworthy manner if she is aware of being trusted (McGeer and Pettit 2017).

Still, I want to resist the view that this kind of trust involves appraisal respect. Of course, Omar's behavior would make no sense if Sarah were utterly untrustworthy. However, it would still make much sense if he only perceived Sarah as being an average teenager in terms of trustworthiness. One might object that, for Omar's trust to have its desired impact, Sarah must believe that Omar's trust means he thinks highly of her. While that seems right to me, this may explain why we think there can be something manipulative in such therapeutic trust. It clearly constitutes a form of mild paternalistic obfuscation on Omar's part, although the nature of their relationship likely prevents it from being morally objectionable (D'Cruz 2019: 947). Indeed, it is a widespread belief that trusting teenagers beyond what we can reasonably expect of them in low-stakes situations is good for them, and it is even expected of parents in some cases. In that sense, Omar's trust might say more about how he views his role as a parent than about his appraisal of Sarah's merit. If Omar genuinely thought highly of Sarah in the relevant regard, his trusting behavior would be accompanied by a corresponding belief about her trustworthiness.

It's fairly easy to see that the moral value of trustee-centric therapeutic trust is almost entirely derivative of whether it leads to full-blooded trust. Omar is willing to face a significant material risk to make it more likely that Sarah will live up to that standard. He trusts her therapeutically so that others may have well-placed full-blooded trust in her in the future. In this sense, his trust is prospective and instrumental: it is offered now to facilitate the development of genuine trustworthiness—and eventually, the possibility of well-placed full-blooded trust from others. Such therapeutic trust is thus oriented toward an ideal it doesn't itself instantiate.[18] Of course, this instrumental dimension does not exhaust the meaning of Omar's trust, which is also shaped by his broader commitment to empowering Sarah and treating her in a way befitting their special relationship as parent and child.[19] However, this doesn't undermine my claim that such trust falls short of involving appraisal respect, since it is not based on the judgment that Sarah currently has the relevant traits.

[17] Additionally, this need not be understood as a case of recalcitrant trust because Omar might not even be optimistic that Sarah will live up to his trust on this particular occasion (McGeer 2008: 241).

[18] I think that similar considerations would apply to what D'Cruz calls 'Humble trust.' D'Cruz (2019: 947) argues that we sometimes should trust beyond the evidence when we become aware that our own lack of trust might stem from our own prejudices or follow "larger patterns of social exclusion." As with Omar's case, such trust may serve developmental or relational goals, but it doesn't involve appraisal respect.

[19] I thank the anonymous referee who pushed me to reflect more on this issue.

3.2. Recalcitrant Trust

A second category of trust without belief involves a tension between affect and belief. As stated in section 2.2, some argue that trust is, at its core, an affective attitude like optimism as opposed to a belief. This means that there can be a tension between the affective attitude of optimism that leads us to trust someone and our beliefs regarding their trustworthiness. Hence, Jones claims that both trust and distrust "can be held in opposition to our judgments about trustworthiness and we can experience the nagging doubts and reluctance to rely on characteristic of distrust even as we judge that the other is trustworthy" (Jones 2019: 960). This is often referred to as recalcitrant trust.

Let us turn to the *Charismatic Co-worker* case to illustrate this phenomenon.

> **Charismatic Co-worker**: In Jane's work environment, it is well-known that Max tends to overpromise and underdeliver. While Jane is aware of Max's track record, his charisma and convincing demeanor lead her to rely on him. Despite her belief that Max is untrustworthy in that regard, she remains optimistic about his promise that she trust him *this time*.

If we adopt an affective attitude view of trust, we should conclude that Jane trusts Max because she remains optimistic that she can count on him despite her opposite belief. I grant this for the sake of the argument. However, it seems intuitive to me that Jane's reliance isn't a respectful attitude toward Max. While Jane certainly believes that Max is charismatic and might even envy him for it, the respect involved in trust lies in a positive evaluation of some aspect of the trustee's moral character or conduct. Simply acknowledging Max's charisma doesn't mean that Jane thinks highly of his character. On the contrary, her belief that he is flaky and deceptive in his promises is a clear negative evaluation of his character.

In this case, Jane cannot help but trust Max despite negatively appraising him. However, if someone asked her whether they should trust him in that domain, her honest response should be that they can't. Max might mistakenly interpret Jane's trusting behavior to express respect but that doesn't change the fact that her attitude involves no positive appraisal of his character. Indeed, if she were frank with Max, he certainly wouldn't take her behavior as indicative that she thinks highly of him. Still, Max obviously doesn't have direct access to Jane's belief, and the reader might remain skeptical that something inaccessible to Max could be a difference-maker in whether her trust is respectful. But I reject this view. Just as we can be mistaken about whether someone trusts us, we can also be misled about whether their attitude toward us is respectful.

Recalcitrant trust lacks inherent moral significance precisely because, although it involves an implicit positive affective stance of optimism, it is at odds with the trustor's conscious evaluative judgment. This internal conflict prevents such trust from constituting a settled stance of appraisal. Of course, recalcitrant trust may foster cooperation or even reconciliation in certain contexts. However, its moral value is contingent and indirect—it depends on whether it leads to circumstances in which full-blooded trust could later be warranted. Just as therapeutic trust aims to build future trustworthiness, recalcitrant

trust can sometimes serve as a leap that helps repair fractured relationships. But again, this value is instrumental and future-oriented.

The upshot of this section is that trust without a belief in the trustee's trustworthiness—whether therapeutic or recalcitrant—doesn't involve appraisal respect and therefore lacks the moral value distinctive of full-blooded trust. While such trust may serve instrumental purposes, its normative significance is derivative and cannot substitute for full-blooded trust. In the final section of the paper, I consider a potential objection to my view that centers on cases of trusting beliefs without trust.

4. Trusting beliefs without trust

At this point, one might worry that what really constitutes appraisal respect, in my view, is the belief that the trustee is trustworthy, not the resultant full-blooded trust itself. But if that's so, it becomes unclear why trust—as opposed to merely holding a trusting belief—has any distinctive value. For instance, consider two cases: one in which an agent forms a belief that another is trustworthy but lacks any occasion to trust them, and another in which the agent does have the opportunity to trust but experiences a recalcitrant absence of trust despite believing the person to be trustworthy. In both cases, the trusting belief is present, but trust is absent. Am I committed to saying that these cases exhibit the same appraisal respect as full-blooded trust? That seems implausible. Intuitively, being trusted carries a value that is not exhausted by being regarded as trustworthy.

In what follows, I argue that while trusting beliefs involve appraisal respect, they manifest a weaker form of it than when a trusting attitude accompanies them. This is because trusting means making oneself vulnerable to others, and this enacted vulnerability amplifies the respect expressed by the belief. To support this claim, I examine two types of cases where trust is absent despite the presence of a trusting belief.

First, consider cases where trust cannot be acted upon. For example, a woman who is not a candidate for a vasectomy might say of a doctor she knows personally that she would gladly trust him to perform one, based on her belief that he is highly competent and responsive to patients who count on him. Yet, precisely because of her biology, she is not someone who could ever need to trust him with that particular procedure. Does her statement involve a positive appraisal? I believe it does. By publicly vouching for his trustworthiness, she reveals that she thinks highly of him. But her endorsement seems slightly weaker than the appraisal involved in full-blooded trust. This is made evident by the "easy for you to say" rebuttal she might face when affirming the surgeon's trustworthiness—a rebuttal she wouldn't open herself to if the doctor had performed the surgery on her.

This should serve as a helpful reminder that one strong consensus about trust is that it involves vulnerability (Baier 1986; McLeod 2021). Vouching for someone's trustworthiness is intelligible only against the backdrop of our broader trust practices. Vouching makes sense because we are the kind of beings who must depend on others and are therefore exposed to the risk of being betrayed. It is an

important (but imperfect) mechanism to avoid betrayals. Yet there remains an important asymmetry here. Talk of trustworthiness is relatively cheap; actually entrusting someone with something that matters to us is a more substantial (and potentially costly) form of commitment. This helps explain why public endorsement of trustworthiness that cannot possibly be acted on can raise suspicions. In such cases, we are implicitly encouraging others to take a risk we ourselves will never bear.

That said, I do not mean to imply that trusting beliefs carry no appraisal respect unless accompanied by a trusting attitude. We often care deeply about whether others perceive us as trustworthy, regardless of how we interact with them. My point is simply that making oneself vulnerable to others by trusting them represents a stronger endorsement of their trustworthiness than merely affirming it from a distance. What I want to suggest is that the behavioral component of trust amplifies the appraisal respect expressed by the trusting belief because of the vulnerability it brings about. Conversely, I also think that the expressive power of a trusting belief can also be severely dampened when one's behavior signals distrust.

This last point becomes clear when we consider cases in which someone holds a trusting belief but nonetheless finds themselves unable to trust, a phenomenon called recalcitrant distrust.

> **Jealous Partner:** Hannah loves her partner, Rosie, and believes she is trustworthy. Yet, because of traumatic past relationships, Hannah occasionally feels irrational jealousy. On some occasions, she's even checked Rosie's phone for signs of betrayal. Each time, she later feels ashamed, recognizing her actions as unjustified.

Jealous Partner is the inverse of *Charismatic Co-worker*, which illustrated recalcitrant trust. In this case, Hannah believes Rosie is trustworthy, yet she occasionally behaves in a distrustful way, driven by residual anxiety from past negative experiences. This is a case of a recalcitrant distrust where a distrustful attitude persists despite a settled belief in the other's trustworthiness. Cases like this are all too familiar, since our actions don't always perfectly align with our beliefs. In this respect, Hannah's behavior isn't unlike someone who repeatedly checks whether the oven is off before leaving home. They likely believe it's off, but a lingering "What if I'm wrong?" compels them to check again. Of course, ovens can't take offense, whereas Rosie, a person, can feel hurt and disrespected by Hannah's behavior.

Still, some might want to resist the notion that Hannah has a trusting belief in that case because her phone-checking behavior indicates the contrary. However, as Gerald A. Cohen convincingly argued in another context, "even if behavioral proofs of belief are required, acting as a belief directs is not the only type of behavior to be considered" (Cohen 2000: 8). He held that someone showing sincere regret for acting in a certain way can also indicate that they hold a belief according to which they shouldn't have done so. I find that persuasive. Hannah's shame suggests that she views her actions as unwarranted, given her perception of Rosie. It doesn't necessarily excuse her behavior, but it probably changes the appropriate response on Hannah's part. Most likely, she isn't expecting Rosie to provide more evidence of her trustworthiness because she already believes she has such evidence. Instead, she likely wants to work on becoming more trusting in practice.

This case helps clarify the expressive power of trusting beliefs. When one believes another is trustworthy yet acts distrustfully, the distrusting behavior strongly diminishes the appraisal respect expressed by the belief. Once again, the vulnerability inherent in trust helps explain this. Hannah's distrusting actions are a way to avoid being vulnerable to Rosie's potential betrayal. Even if she claims that she regards Rosie as trustworthy, Hannah's inability to be vulnerable to Rosie severely weakens the appraisal respect that her trusting belief would otherwise express. This is not to say that Hannah's trusting belief carries no appraisal respect at all. But it does suggest that such beliefs must be at least consistent with one's trust-related behavior to retain their full expressive force.

While not decisive, I think that cases like *Jealous Partner*—where belief is present but trust is absent in a way that seems morally significant—lend support to my view that full-blooded trust is more valuable than merely having a trusting belief. This shouldn't come as a surprise. Indeed, if what makes trust valuable is the appraisal respect, then it stands to reason that fuller or more robust expressions of that respect are also more valuable, all things being equal. The value, in this sense, scales with its expressive depth. Of course, this is not a knockdown argument against the view that trusting beliefs are just as morally valuable whether or not a trusting attitude accompanies them. Still, we should not overstate the significance of the disagreement. Both views share a key commitment: that trusting beliefs play a central role in explaining the moral significance of trust. In fact, the extension of cases in which trust would count as involving appraisal respect is very likely identical on both accounts, since all cases of full-blooded trust involve a belief according to my view.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that full-blooded trust always involves appraisal respect—a positive evaluative attitude toward the trustee's moral character or conduct—that cannot exist without the belief that the trustee is trustworthy. Consequently, forms of trust such as recalcitrant and therapeutic trust, which lack this belief, don't constitute respectful attitudes, even if they aren't necessarily disrespectful either. Moreover, while trusting beliefs can express appraisal respect in other ways, such as in vouching practices, their expressive power is amplified by trust and can also be weakened when paired with distrustful behavior.

This view also helps explain the distinctive moral value of full-blooded trust. When others trust us based on a genuine belief in our trustworthiness, we are affirmed not just as practically reliable but as morally competent and worthy of being counted on. Full-blooded trust, therefore, forms part of the social conditions that sustain self-respect. Conversely, those who are systematically denied such trust are unfairly deprived of a central source of moral affirmation. This also clarifies why therapeutic and recalcitrant trust, while they may serve useful psychological or developmental functions, lack the inherent value of full-blooded trust. As thinner, derivative forms, they reflect hope, habit, or strategic calculation, but not the moral appraisal that marks trust at its paradigm. Recognizing this helps explain not only why trust matters, but why it matters to be trusted in the right way.

Finally, I suspect that my account may offer a potential bridge between doxastic and non-doxastic theories of trust. While these views diverge on whether trust requires belief, both camps might agree that trust only expresses appraisal respect when accompanied by it. In that sense, expanding on my view could offer a shared normative ground for understanding what makes trust morally significant. Of course, fleshing out this proposal would require further argument, and defenders of the non-doxastic view may have principled reasons to resist it. Still, it points to a promising direction for future work.

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