MATTERS OF TRUST AS MATTERS OF ATTACHMENT SECURITY
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Abstract I argue for an account of the vulnerability of trust, as a product of our need for secure social attachments to individuals and to a group. This account seeks to explain why it is true that, when we trust or distrust someone, we are susceptible to being betrayed by them, rather than merely disappointed or frustrated in our goals. What we are concerned about in matters of trust is, at the basic level, whether we matter, in a non-instrumental way, to that individual, or to the group of which they are a member. We have this concern as a result of a drive to form secure social attachments. This makes us vulnerable in the characteristic way of being susceptible to betrayal, because how the other acts in such matters can demonstrate our lack of worth to them, or to the group, thereby threatening the security of our attachment, and eliciting the reactive attitudes characteristic of betrayal.

Introduction

I argue for an account of the vulnerability of trust, as a product of our need for secure social attachments to individuals and to a group. This account seeks to explain why it is true that, when we trust or distrust someone, we are susceptible to being betrayed by them, rather than merely disappointed or frustrated in our goals. What we are concerned about in matters of trust is, at the basic level, whether we matter, in a non-instrumental way, to that individual, or to the group of which they are a member. We have this concern as a result of a drive to form secure social attachments. This makes us vulnerable in the characteristic way of being susceptible to betrayal, because how the other acts in such matters can demonstrate our lack of worth to them, or to the group, thereby threatening the security of our attachment, and eliciting the reactive attitudes characteristic of betrayal.

I defend the account as follows: in §1 I outline how an account of the vulnerability of trust should explain the characteristic *interpersonal* importance, rather than mere practical or instrumental importance, of matters of trust. In §2, I outline how three prominent accounts of trust – those of Annette Baier (1986), Richard Holton (1994) and Katherine Hawley (2014) – have sought to explain that importance, and how ultimately Hawley's 'commitment' account appears best suited. In §3, I raise problem a type of problem case for the commitment account, using this to show why the commitment account is more generally inadequate as an account of the characteristic vulnerability of trust. In §4, I outline the shape of the attachment account, illustrating how it sheds light on the nature of betrayal. In §5, I use the account to explain the problem cases raised against the accounts of trust discussed in §2 and §3. In §6, I address a possible objection to the attachment account; that it focuses too much on trust in intimate relationships. Finally, in §7, I use it to help explain how it is true that distrust can be betrayed.

1. Seeking an account of the vulnerability of trust

What is it to trust or to distrust someone? Following Annette Baier, many authors agree that trust is fundamentally about accepting vulnerability, in some sense, to another's possible (in)action (Baier 1986 p. 235). Many also connect the concept of vulnerability at issue, to the possibility of being *betrayed* or *let down*.[1] This is as opposed to simply having one's goals frustrated from relying on the unreliable. The trust/betrayal connection is, of course, one of the reasons that trust is interesting: it is an attitude where we cast others in a moral or ethical light, but in an up-close-and-personal way; not simply praising or blaming. If I disappoint your trust, you can feel wronged by me. But it can also be true that objectively I did not wrong you, for perhaps you shouldn't have expected it of me to do otherwise. Trust and distrust spark a proto-moral response toward others, and it may be that, given how systems of moral norms appear to be influenced from the bottom up by trust relationships,[2] gaining a deeper understanding of why this is so, would help shed light on what moral judgements are about more generally.

The connection between matters of trust and betrayal is obvious. Some authors though are also quick to note that *distrust*, not just trust, can also be betrayed (Hawley 2014 p. 13; Hieronymi 2008 p. 229).[3] On this basis it seems that trust and distrust share a common moralising 'content'. Both attitudes leave their bearers vulnerable to being betrayed or at least let down, where this is a sort of interpersonal harm: a diminishing of our wellbeing at the actions of another. It follows that an account of the vulnerability of trust should also furnish us with an account of the vulnerability of distrust. And because betrayal seems to be the key notion in accounting for that vulnerability, an account of the vulnerability of trust and distrust should explain why they are attitudes that make us able to be *betrayed*, not simply frustrated.

How do we explain the vulnerability of (dis)trust: the ability to be betrayed, or 'betrayability'? What is true of a (dis)trustor that makes them betrayable? We need to first be clear on a key explanatory demand of an account of betrayability. An account of betrayability must capture the characteristic *concern* we have about the way others may act, when we trust or distrust. By concern, I mean roughly the kind of interest we have in, or the sense of importance we bestow on, how someone proceeds to act, in a matter of trust. This is the sort of concern that manifests in feelings and accusations of betrayal, should expectations be disappointed.

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[1] In what follows, I'll generally refer to betrayal in particular as the harm of disappointed trust. This should be taken as shorthand for other harms of the lesser degree, like being let down, that are in the same realm of 'personal' harms. Betrayal is simply the flag-bearer for this family of harms enabled by trusting or distrusting.

[2] E.g. in moral systems like those in religious cults, or the Mafia's 'Omertà', there is a code of not betraying others in the community to those outside of it, e.g. to the authorities of the nation state. These systems of norms tend to endorse immoral action overall, but they are sustained by the proto-morality of trust and distrust relationships, deterring against betrayal. In other words, from within the community, it feels wrong to break those codes, even if it is objectively right for members to do so.

[3] Hawley's example is that Jesus distrusted Judas, but Judas still betrayed Jesus. Another, more everyday example: you can distrust your partner in suspecting them of cheating, but still be betrayed when those suspicions turn out to be accurate.

We can of course have different kinds of concern about how others will act. As a first step, we need to be able to outline the relevant difference: that between just having a *practical* concern and having an *interpersonal* concern about how another acts.[4] The following two examples provide a contrast to illustrate this:

> *Predictable Flatmate*: John is trying to submit an essay to a journal for a deadline tonight. He won't have time to go out and buy himself some food for dinner if he chooses to do this. However, he knows his flatmate Elis will also be going food shopping himself. The food Elis puts in the shared fridge can easily be taken without Elis noticing.

> *Helpful Flatmate*: Maria is trying to submit an essay to a journal for a deadline tonight and won't have time to go out and buy herself something for dinner. But her flatmate Izzy has told her not to worry, and that she will buy Maria some food, and that Maria can pay her back later.

Predictable Flatmate is a case of simply relying on another's acting. John has an instrumental/practical concern about how Elis acts; he wants to satisfy both the goals of having his tea and also submitting the paper. How Elis acts is instrumental in achieving both.

Helpful Flatmate is a case of trusting another to act.[5] Maria has a similar practical concern to John about Izzy's going food shopping, but this concern also carries interpersonal, normative weight. It matters to Maria, in a way beyond the instrumental satisfaction of her own desires, how Izzy acts. Maria would be betrayed and not simply frustrated, should Izzy fail to do as she promises.

Setting out an account of a concept is akin to giving the terms of a database search that sifts all candidate cases for the ones we want. A key demand of an account of trust and distrust is that it not 'return' cases where individuals have the wrong kind of concern about another's acting. It must only be true of cases where individuals exhibit the interpersonal import of trust and distrust. It mustn't return us counterexamples, where the conditions we provide are also true of non-trustors.

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[4] Baier (1986) raises a number of such contrast cases. One is based on the folklore surrounding Kant's regularity in his daily routine. Kant's neighbours would – the story goes – rely on him for their own timekeeping. If Kant decided to take his walk at a different time one day, they might be surprised, and frustrated in their goals. But they would not feel betrayed by Kant. The case also supports the intuition at hand that, intuitively, there is an interpersonal concern about matters of trust, not just a practical concern.

[5] The *Helpful Flatmate* case can be turned into a case of *distrust*, if we imagine that Izzy is notoriously unhelpful or outright deceitful, such that Maria has some hesitance about taking her up on the promise of help. In that case, Maria would still have the same interpersonal concern in her attitude toward Izzy's possible acting, but it would now carry a pessimistic anticipation of non-fulfilment.

2. Baier's 'reliance on goodwill' account

Baier's own account of the betrayability of trust as 'reliance on another's goodwill toward one' (1986 p. 235) seems to get us the correct search terms for trust, on the face of it. It seems right to say that when Maria takes up Izzy's promise to buy her food for the night, she is forced to rely on Izzy's goodwill toward Maria. Perhaps, then, 'reliance on another's goodwill' captures the interpersonal concern of matters of trust.

Holton (1994), however points out that the 'reliance on goodwill' account of trust is susceptible to a counterexample. It returns some cases of the wrong type. The counterexample it returns is the 'confidence trickster' (1994 p. 65). Confidence tricksters typically elicit sympathy from marks, in order to procure instrumentally beneficial behaviour from them. For example, imagine a variant of the *Helpful Flatmate* case where Maria simply lies to Izzy about having deadlines to hit, and being too poor to pay her back for now. It seems true in that case that Maria still relies on Izzy's goodwill toward her. But it isn't true that Maria trusts Izzy, except perhaps in some deviant sense of trust (she maybe 'trusts' her gullibility). Thus, we need a better account of betrayability, than the 'reliance on goodwill' account.

2.1 The participant stance and commitment accounts

Holton's own account of trust is that it is reliance from a 'participant stance' (1994 pp. 67–8). The participant stance is in the spirit of Strawson's participant attitude; the kind of regard we take toward others when we appraise their actions in a moral way; according them e.g. praise or blame (Strawson 1974 pp. 5–6). Yet, we sometimes regard others in a way that involves treating them more like machines or instruments. In such cases we do not have reactive attitudes toward others, so do not have a participant stance toward them.

Holton suggests that the 'reliance plus participant stance' account avoids the confidence trickster case. The confidence trickster merely relies on you as he would an instrument. Thus, he does not have reactive attitudes toward you when you fail to fall for his trick, so frustrating his reliance. He does not take a participant stance toward you, and this is why we can say he does not trust you.

Hawley (2014), however, suggests that while reliance from a participant stance is necessary for trust, it is insufficient for it. Plugging in the participant stance to our database search terms does not adequately narrow down the results. This is because, Hawley argues, we can rely on others from a participant stance, so be disposed to reactive attitudes, yet not be disposed to betrayal in particular. The example she offers is of one side of a romantic partnership (X) coming to rely on the other (Y) to cook dinner. It may be appropriate for X to express gratitude to Y, about Y cooking X's dinner. Yet there is something else needed for it to be appropriate

for X to feel betrayed in case Y *does not* cook dinner (Hawley 2014 pp. 7–8). A participant stance is therefore not enough to make this a matter of trust.

Hawley's positive account is that trust and distrust involve reliance and non-reliance (respectively) on another to fulfil a normative *commitment* to acting (2014 pp. 10–2). A supposition of the other having made a commitment – akin to a promise – enables betrayal. This explains what our intuitions about the cooking dinner case hinge on. When Y makes a commitment to cook dinner, X can appropriately feel betrayed in case this does not happen. Absent commitment, it can be appropriate for X to express *gratitude* if dinner *is* cooked, but not *betrayal* if it is *not* cooked. Our inclination to label the case as one of X trusting Y, seems to hinge on the presence of a commitment by Y. Furthermore, the commitment account explains what is missing in the confidence trickster case. The mark does not make a genuine commitment to acting, so it is not appropriate for the confidence trickster to feel betrayal. This accounts for why he does not trust the mark.

What we seem to have with the commitment account is a robust account of the vulnerability of trust and distrust: we are able to be betrayed when others have made commitments to acting. Furthermore, an attractive feature of Hawley's account is that allows that commitments can be *implicit*; incurred or generated through roles, circumstances, mutual expectation and convention, unless we explicitly warn others not to rely on us (2014 p. 11). This helps explain why we can have disputes about whether some (in)action was genuinely a betrayal or not: we may dispute whether a commitment was ever made. Matters of trust can be fuzzy, and the commitment account is well placed to explain this.

3. What the commitment account leaves wanting

Is this the end of the road for our account of the vulnerability of trust? I argue that our understanding is still lacking. For one: what is left out from the commitment account is an explanation for why commitments matter to us in a way that enables betrayal. Certainly, there seems to be a tight co-variance relationship between the presence of commitment, and the presence of betrayability. But this is not as tight as we might think. There are cases where our trust, and so our betrayability, and the actual commitment made by another and accepted by us, come apart.

This passage from Judith Herman's 'Trauma and Recovery' helps illustrate the present point:

> The imagery of [traumatic] events often crystallises around a moment of betrayal, and it is this breach of trust which gives the intrusive images their intense emotional power. For example, in Abram Kardiner's psychotherapy of the navy veteran who had been rescued at sea after his ship was sunk, the veteran became most upset when revealing how he had felt let down by his own side: "The patient became rather excited and began to swear profusely; his anger aroused clearly by incidents connected with his rescue. They had been in the water for a period of about twelve hours when a torpedo-boat

destroyer picked them up. Of course the officers in the lifeboats were taken off first. The eight or nine men clinging to the raft the patient was on had to wait in the water for six or seven hours longer until help came."

The officers had been rescued first, even though they were already relatively safe in the lifeboats, while the enlisted men hanging onto the raft were passed over, and some of them drowned as they awaited rescue. Though Kardiner accepted this procedure as part of the normal military order, the patient was horrified at the realization that he was expendable to his own people. The rescuer's disregard for the man's life was more traumatic to him than were the enemy attack, the physical pain of submersion in the cold water, the terror of death, and the loss of the other men who shared his ordeal. (Herman 2001 p. 55)

In this case, the procedure to rescue officers first was an express commitment (or a consequence of one) from the veteran's side, that he understood. Yet regardless of what had been explicitly communicated, the veteran trusted his side to rescue him. The feeling of betrayal he experienced when his side in fact *followed through* on their commitment, was vivid and traumatising. What this demonstrates is that the connection between trust, commitment, and betrayability, is looser than we need it to be, if the commitment account is to explain the vulnerability of matters of trust. We can be betrayable on a matter in spite of the other's commitment to some opposed action that we, as trustors, accept.

Similar cases can be raised. Imagine a casual 'no-strings attached' sexual relationship between two people, who both agree that each has no commitment to be faithful to the other. In such cases, it's commonplace that despite a recognised lack of commitments to being faithful, feelings of betrayal can easily result on one or both sides, when it becomes clear that one or both sides have seen other people. The vulnerability of trust – betrayability – can come about despite a lack of a commitment on the others' part.

How might we respond to these cases, in defence of the commitment account? It cannot be denied that the feelings of betrayal by the subjects are genuine. Could it be denied that they are cases of trust, such that some other attitude is betrayed? This would be a stretch. If anything can be betrayed, it surely indicates that whatever was betrayed, was a matter of trust. This is regardless of whether either party was previously aware of that being the case.[6]

What we could deny is that the *actions* that violated the trust in these cases were genuine betrayals. This is because, perhaps, a genuine normatively binding commitment does not hold in these cases. There is a crucial distinction between betrayal *qua* feeling/reactive attitude, and

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[6] Matters of trust can of course be unconscious or unrecognised. Several authors note this kind of trust is required for being able to live comfortably in communities e.g. (Thomas 1989 p. 34), and is the sort of trust shattered in unanticipated or previously unthinkable violations of trust. Jones (2004) for example argues this kind of trust is what the power of terror attacks depends upon. In the casual relationship example, it might be that one party didn't even realise they regarded the other's fidelity as a matter of trust, until the betrayal is felt.

betrayal *qua* form of action. These can come apart. These are cases where the *feeling* results, but not where the action has occurred. The commitment account explains vulnerability to the action type of betrayal but not the feeling type.

But this response reveals why the commitment account is inadequate as an account of the vulnerability of trust. We are looking for an account of what gives trust its characteristic betrayability in terms of the reactive attitude. We are not seeking an account of when our reactive attitude was also the result of an action that the other can be blameworthy for. That is what the commitment account provides, but that doesn't unpack for us why the attitude of trust makes us susceptible to that proto-moralising reactive attitude. We're interested in what the psychology of trustors is that makes them susceptible to feel betrayed, in a way that is not true of e.g. John's regard of Elis in the *predictable flatmate* case, or Holton's confidence trickster. Those subjects' psychological make-up is distinct from comparable trustors in a way we seek to explain. Focusing solely on trustors whose trust is in some sense well-founded, warranted, or appropriate, is to miss what is at issue. We seek to explain the vulnerability of trust full-stop.

A related problem arises if we try to respond that in these cases there were *implicit* commitments that held. The response goes, these are not counterexamples to the commitment account: what we have are trustees betraying their *implicit* commitments to trustors. Implicit commitments are of course what Hawley supposes we can incur if we are not careful (2014 p. 11). These make it possible for us to betray others' trust, and to do so in a morally problematic way, even when we never made a corresponding explicit commitment.

However, there are several problems with this response, as a way of explaining away these cases. Fundamentally, it appears to be *ad hoc*. These are cases where we would have to suppose that *just because* a trustor trusts, there must be an implicit commitment the trustee holds. But this isn't what we want to suppose. We want to allow cases where trust is based on nothing that the trustee did to encourage it. We want to allow for groundless or unwarranted trust, and also allow that with such trust, trustors are open to a sort of vulnerability in being able to be betrayed, just not a betrayal the trustee can be blamed for.

On the implicit commitment line of response, we would also have to suppose that, in these cases, the trustees somehow have conflicting commitments. They would have explicit commitments to one course of action, and implicit commitments to the opposite course of action. But the explicit commitments are what disavow them of the implicit ones. Those explicit commitments are meant to let them off the hook. It seems right that the explicit commitments have indeed served that function, because the trustees cannot be held accountable as having betrayed the trustor, in a morally problematic way. This is so even though the trustor was still vulnerable to the trustee. Again, the problem is in the commitment account's confusing betrayability *qua* being the patient of another's morally blameworthy action, with betrayability *qua* susceptibility to a type of feeling or reactive attitude.

Finally, we can consider the more simplistic response, that the trustors in these cases have a mistaken belief that the other party has a commitment, in respect of what they later feel has

been betrayed. In the veteran case, there is the mistaken belief that his side has a commitment to rescuing him. In the no-strings-attached sexual relationship, there is the mistaken belief that there are strings. Note that this is a distinct response to imputing implicit commitments. That response says there is a genuine betrayal that has taken place. On this response we suppose no genuine betrayal has taken place, but the trustors believe that it has.

But this response mis-describes the cases. The veteran was under no illusions about what his side had committed to, and neither are the partners about each other. Yet the sense of betrayal is real. The trustors are betrayable in spite of the commitments (or lack of) that they themselves recognise the trustees to have made.

4.   The positive account: attachment concern

The account of the vulnerability inherent in matters of trust I want to propose is meant to explain both how trustee commitments *typically* elicit vulnerability to betrayal in trustors, and also how commitments and that vulnerability can become misaligned (as in the above example cases). This is because underneath commitments there is a more basic concern we have about others, which everyday commitments interact with.

Matters of trust and distrust are fundamentally concerned with, or *about*, our need for secure attachments. Particular matters of trust are emblematic of, or stand in for, the potential for the security of these attachments to be put in question. This is what gives matters of trust a characteristic betrayability: when we trust someone on a matter, and she disappoints that trust, we not only are practically disappointed, but the security of our attachment to her, or to the group we both are members of, is shaken. In other words, trust and distrust are attitudes we have in response to a kind of vulnerability we possess as social beings, that feel a need to be close to others, and to belong in groups.

The concept of attachment comes from developmental psychology and earlier 20th century psychoanalysis. In developmental psychology, Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Ainsworth (1969) used the concept to characterise the emotional bond that children and caregivers form, such that the continued presence of the caregiver is a matter of emotional wellbeing for the child.

Bowlby's studies of attachment centred on a scenario called the 'strange situation'. The strange situation involves observation of a child playing in a room, in close proximity to her caregiver. The caregiver then leaves the room, and a stranger enters. After a time of being left in the stranger's presence, generating uncertainty and wariness on the child's part, the caregiver re-enters the room. From observing different ways children respond to the caregiver upon re-entering, Bowlby and Ainsworth theorise that a child's way of responding manifests different methods of securing the continued proximity of caregivers and/or of coping with felt needs for caregivers. In most cases (in healthy, or secure styles) this involves approaching the caregiver for reassurance, to secure continued proximity in future. In other cases, the child admonishes

the caregiver for leaving, and in still others, chooses to ignore or give the 'silent treatment' to the caregiver.

4.1 Attachment as a more general phenomenon

The concept of attachment, which I'm claiming explains the vulnerability of trust, has its root in the concept outlined by Bowlby and Ainsworth. However, I am applying the concept of attachment more broadly to describe the ongoing felt need for the presence of other people, and for assurance of their non-instrumental concern about us, that persists throughout life.[7] In this respect, this more general concept of attachment takes its core meaning from the phenomenon outlined in Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory. But it also applies to matters of trust more generally. Matters of trust in the adult world, in the various of domains of interaction we have with others, are, in a sense, Bowlby's 'strange situation', writ large.

Wonderly (2016) puts forward a philosophical account of attachment that is fit for present purpose. Wonderly outlines "security-based attachment" as a rich "mode of mattering". She suggests "that the relevant form of attachment involves a felt need for its object and particular relationship between the object and the attached agent's sense of security." Furthermore, this is a distinct attitude "from the more philosophically familiar notion of caring." (2016 p. 223). Wonderly summarises the core concept as follows:

> In this form of attachment, the agent experiences a particular object as a felt need, such that her senses of well-being and general competence suffer without it. Unlike caring, this attitude is largely self-focused and marked by an integral connection between its object and the agent's felt security. (2016 p. 224)

Attachment is, like caring, a mental phenomenon implicated centrally in things *mattering* to us. But attachment involves a mode of mattering that is stronger than caring about something. Attachment is related to our proper functioning and wellbeing. As such, when we are attached to someone, this is not merely a matter of desiring the presence of the person (as per the folk-psychological concept of desire) or simply caring about her. As Wonderly emphasises above, attachment involves a *self-focused* concern for the continued presence of the object. It is not that we necessarily care about the other person, rather that *we* need her. When our felt need for another is so strong, we can in fact fail to display care about *her*; being so focused on our own need of her, that she is neglected as a result. This can give rise to goal-directed activity to secure her continued presence, when this is felt to be under threat. Precursors to this activity are glimpsed in children, in the caregiver proximity-maintaining behaviour that Bowlby and Ainsworth highlight. Wonderly summarises the overall result succinctly: "in virtue of (what I

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[7] The exception may be those with psychopathic traits, who have a largely instrumental concern about contact with other people. One could armchair-speculate that this may be connected to why so few psychopaths can treat interactions with others as matters of trust, and why interactions with psychopaths are marked by manipulation and exploitation (cf. Bosmans et al. 2010; Mikulincer & Shaver 2012).

feel as though is) my need [for the attachment object], I am tugged this way and that" (2016 p. 228).

This concept of attachment helps characterise how, post-childhood, the relationships we have with others are tied to our sense of wellbeing and felt security. Those of us with an attachment concern have a disposition to form social bonds, and need close relationships, e.g. friends, family, romantic partners.

The strong relationship between trust and attachment also finds support in cases of individuals with William's Syndrome (WS), who are 'pathologically trusting'. Such individuals find it difficult to distrust others, and are driven to approach strangers with the level of affection reserved for close friends (Dobbs 2007; Doyle et al. 2004; Järvinen-Pasley et al. 2008; Moseley 2014). Empirical evidence suggests that this results from a lessened ability to detect threat of deception or ill will in facial expressions (Ng et al. 2015; Riby et al. 2014), such that WS individuals don't have the necessary competing evidence of untrustworthiness to temper a strong drive for social approach. Such individuals also appear to have heightened levels of oxytocin – the hormone implicated in affiliative attachment (mother/child, romantic partners, friends etc.) – when around others, as a result (Dai et al. 2012). Ng et al. (2015), though, note that WS individuals are able to discriminate between trustworthy and untrustworthy individuals when reflecting on abstract examples of behaviour.

Overall, WS individuals suggest that the extent to which we trust others is guided by an attachment drive. When this drive goes unchecked to a greater extent – i.e. when the mechanism for relaying evidence of social threat is impeded – then the scope of secure attachment expands. It would follow that matters of trust expand in scope, if trust is a positive sense of secure attachment.[8]

4.2 Disrupted attachment is at the heart of experienced betrayals

The experience of a child left in the 'strange situation', who then seeks assurance from a returned caregiver, has echoes in the adult experience of disappointed trust. We can see this by reflecting on what the experience of betrayal more generally is like. Remarkably, even though authors focusing on trust often note the connection with betrayal, it is rare to find a sustained treatment of betrayal in the literature. Two exceptions are Jackson (2000) and Shklar (1984),

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[8] This needn't entail that WS individuals expand the scope of matters of trust in the sense of trusting others to perform specific actions beyond perceived competence (e.g. suddenly trusting you to be able to fix the boiler, despite having no indication you can). It does mean WS individuals are comfortable with others beyond affiliative/emotional intimacy boundaries non-WS individuals ordinarily adhere to, since those are a function of attachment security. In an unfortunate irony, this purportedly makes it harder for WS individuals to build close relationships (Dobbs 2007), because sensitivity to the dance of mutually expanding and contracting affiliative boundaries is needed to nurture intimate relationships.

who both note that literature and history, rather than philosophy, are more fruitful in attempting to understand the nature of betrayal (dramatic fiction and non-fiction, high or low brow, tends to revolve around the dynamics of trust and betrayal). Both also offer their own useful characterisations of the nature of betrayal. Here I focus on Shklar's, which draws on dictionary definitions of betrayal, in order to paint a vivid picture of the emotional turmoil that accompanies it:[9]

> Betrayal […] is to place another person "in the power of an enemy, by treachery or disloyalty," and also "to prove false to, to disappoint the hopes or expectations of." This, I think, should include breaking an appointment that means much to the other person, neglecting those who depend on our care, and talking maliciously about our friends. […] There is, as the dictionary does show us, an irreducible experience in betrayal: desertion. That brings into play the greatest of childhood anxieties, the fear of abandonment. In quitting a bonded group, an equally primeval fear is stirred: of the failure to distinguish kin and stranger, the latter almost always called "enemy" as well. To reject a blood relationship for a new and alien association, or for none at all, is to deny the most elementary of social ties. (Shklar 1984 p. 139)

Shklar points out that, at the core experience of betrayal, there lies neglect and abandonment. To feel a betrayal is to perceive abandonment by the other. This can spur responses of outrage, confusion and so on. The characteristic sting of betrayal is, at root, the sting of being rejected by someone, and so ostracised from the group. This is attachment disruption laid bare. Someone who doesn't have such an attachment need, such that it cannot be elicited by promises or expressed commitments from others, is not betrayable. We simply would not be able to experience the sting of rejection if we felt no need to belong to a group. To lack this need would amount to a kind of social *in*vulnerability.

Betrayal and abandonment, as Shklar's illustration points out, have the threat of desertion as their focus. Putting the concept of social attachment at the heart of matters of trust, explains why trust and distrust carry the threat of betrayal, and not just disappointed goals. The kind of agent that can trust or distrust in the way we do, is the kind of agent that forms attachments, and is then prone to attitudes that are geared toward preservation of attachments. Others can

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[9] Jackson's account is similar to Shklar's, in focusing on the trustor's violated expectation of loyalty and non-instrumental concern from a trustee, despite trustee assurances to the contrary. He gives an example from *Sense and Sensibility*: Willoughby's withdrawal from his relationship with Marianne, which – Jackson argues – is technically an abandonment, rather than a betrayal. However, we should resist the move of drawing a clear distinction between betrayal and abandonment (which, to motivate the attachment account, I want to suggest are roughly synonymous). It seems reasonable that Marianne would experience Willoughby's abandonment as a betrayal of trust. To give a comparable example, imagine a close friend one day refuses to speak to you with no explanation, and never again initiates contact. This is an abandonment of the relationship, but also would give rise to feelings of betrayal, insofar as continued contact, and explanation of any withdrawal, is part of what one cares about in a friendship.

threaten the security of those attachments by displaying our seeming lack of worth to them, or to the group. They can display that lack of worth in their actions toward us: showing that *they* do not care about the fact that *we* care about whatever matter they disappoint us on. This carries the realisation that we cannot count on the other to look out for us.

That is the general form of the account of the particular vulnerability of matters of trust I argue for. How does the attachment account help where the commitment account was lacking? The key issue with the commitment account was that it focused on what is required for *trustees* to be *culpable* for betrayals, not on what *trustor vulnerability to betrayal* consists in. In the next section, I use the attachment account to resolve the difficulties that faced the commitment account. First, though, I put it to work in shedding more light on the 'confidence trickster' case – why the trickster does not trust the mark – that does not require us to appeal to the 'bindingness' of the mark's commitment to the trickster, as the commitment account did.

5. Explaining the confidence trickster and misaligned commitment cases

Recall the confidence trickster case. The trickster has an *instrumental* interest in the mark's action, insofar as it would help the trickster. The trickster doesn't have a vulnerability that is characteristic of trustors. The mark failing to fall for the con doesn't amount to a rejection of the trickster, because the trickster didn't make himself vulnerable in the way he could be rejected. This avoidance of social vulnerability is an aspect of his manipulative behaviour: he manoeuvres outside of the group, being parasitic on it, but not participating in it, in a way that could then make him vulnerable to being rejected from it.

Furthermore, the explanation for why the trickster is not betrayable *qua* reactive attitude, isn't that the mark fails to make a genuine binding commitment. This is the explanation the commitment account resorted to. But this puts the cart before the horse. It is actually the case that the mark's commitment being non-binding is partly the result of the trickster not being betrayable *qua* reactive attitude; by the trickster not caring *in the manner of a trustor* about whether the mark acts as promised. Commitments bind, partly because of the possibility of causing a sense of betrayal, should they not be fulfilled.

For instance, commitments that are about things the other simply doesn't care about, do not bind. Imagine that your colleague promises to bring you a CD of his new self-produced album, because he is under the misapprehension that you really care about hearing it. But you don't care about this at all.[10] The expressed commitment your colleague makes is non-binding

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[10] I am construing the kind of process that gives rise to binding commitments as similar to that set out in Scanlon's (1990) account of promising, and Black's (2004) discussion of whether obligations can be incurred through reliance. Both involve a set of conditions that stipulate an obligation to another to φ, can only go through when X and Y mutually recognise that Y wants X to φ, and that X is encouraging (in some sense) Y to believe that X will φ. Other accounts of promissory obligation state that the obligation holding depends on X's reliance on Y being invited, on the basis that Y recognises that the

because you simply don't care; you are not made vulnerable to him in the manner of a trustor, by his promise. You couldn't truly hold him accountable, except in a disingenuous way, should he fail to bring the CD.

Alternatively, imagine that I care about having my colleague's CD, because I know I can use it to mock him with others at work. I do not elicit my colleague's commitment from deceitful means, like the trickster; I simply accept it when he makes the promise, seeing an opportunity for some fun at his expense. In this case, again, his commitment is not binding, partly because I am not taking him up on the offer in the right spirit, and am not vulnerable to a sense of social rejection and so disrupted attachment, should he fail to bring it in. My orientation toward the situation is in fact being intent on fuelling the group singling out him.

The point is that commitments do not bind *ex nihilo*. The machinery of binding commitment clicks into place when it matters to us, in a non-instrumental way, that others follow through on what they say they will do. This happens when others could display how little they care about the fact we are reliant or dependent on them for something, and for this to matter to us in a particular way. That particular way is when the security of our attachment to them, or our sense of belonging in the group, could be shaken by their (in)action. That's when the proto-moralising of trust and distrust kicks into gear.

We can also explain what is going on in the 'misalignment' cases where trustors are vulnerable to betrayal in spite of explicit trustee commitments to the contrary. To extend the 'no-strings-attached' metaphor; in those misalignment cases, it seemed that trustors tangled themselves on loose strings, that explicit commitments were meant to 'snip' away. This is because those commitments, that were clarified and even accepted by a trustor, do not necessarily have the power to override that trustor's deeper need for secure attachment. In the casual relationship case, strings can become attached (one or more participants are susceptible to becoming betrayable) despite explicit declarations that they aren't supposed to be. Over time, one side could demonstrate a lack of concern about the other's felt need for sexual fidelity, simply because it may not have been recognised (and presumably not desired) that this need had taken root. The process of affiliative bonding that sexual intercourse fuels, can of course creep up on casual sexual partners.

Similarly, the veteran was vulnerable just by virtue of being attached to his side; feeling a sense of belonging within it.[11] Even if he accepted the policy that officer's safety was priority for his side, this again does not override the basic concern he had: that he mattered to the side he was attached to. In these misalignment kind of cases, windows of vulnerability become opened, that explicitly stated or clarified commitments have limited power to shut. These windows of

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matter is practically important to X. (Friedrich & Southwood 2011; Pink 2009; Thomson 1990). The point is that promises cannot obligate promisors to actions, that a promisee just does not care about being performed. The same is surely true of commitments more generally.

[11] Military units are notoriously closely bonded, and this is often part of the selling point that the military uses in attracting potential recruits.

vulnerability open up when it is simply possible for the trustee to display how the trustor ultimately does not matter that much, and this can be possible just by virtue of the trustor becoming attached to the trustee.

In the next section, I address a possible objection to the attachment account. This is the objection from non-intimates: non-intimates can trust and betray one another but are often not attached. Therefore, the attachment account is false, because attachment is not necessary for betrayability.

6. Matters of trust with non-intimates

The objection from non-intimates goes as follows: it may seem plausible that an attachment concern underpins matters of trust with those we already have close relationships with. But what about when we trust strangers/non-intimates? It still matters that non-intimates fulfil our trust, even if those are on more mundane or practical matters, and it is still possible that non-intimates can *betray* our trust. But it seems less clear that our vulnerability is in a shaken *attachment* to those strangers, because surely, we have no prior attachment to them.

Of course, I grant we can trust those we do not have a personal relationship with. And, matters of trust can be about the relatively mundane. You can trust the plumber to fix the boiler, but you are not strongly attached to the plumber (even if you are fond of them). As such, if the attachment account is meant to explain the vulnerability of *any* matter of trust, we need to square how it is an *attachment concern* at stake, even in trust or distrust of such non-intimates on mundane matters.

My proposal here – which has been foreshadowed – is that we are (often *via* our close attachments), attached more generally to a social group. A sense of secure belonging to a group is core to our security and wellbeing. Matters of trust with non-intimates can strike at our attachment security, insofar as they reflect the security of our attachment to the group. They are windows of vulnerability where others can demonstrate our apparent lack of worth to the group. And this makes us betrayable, because we have a social dependence on the group at large.

Literature on the negative effect that social isolation has on our wellbeing supports the idea that group belonging matters in the deep sense of attachment. For example, Brownlee (2013) puts forward a defence in favour of a right to social contact with anyone – not just intimates – such that social deprivation is a violation of human rights. In defence of this she cites cases that illustrate the effects of social deprivation on astronauts, long-distance solo sailors, and prisoners left in solitary confinement. In each case, the effect of isolation constitutes not just emotional but also physical harm, such is the strength of the need for social contact. The behaviour of individuals subjected to isolation tends to become driven around the procurement of interactions with others, with long-distance sailors coming to "depend on radio and video

communications for social contact" (2013 pp. 205–6). This is the drive for securing attachment to the group, manifesting in desperate ways, in situations of extreme isolation.

Similarly, Cacioppo & Patrick (2008) argue that loneliness and social isolation have a profoundly deleterious effect on physical and emotional wellbeing. They suggest that the "special balm of acceptance that [social] bonds provide, and the uniquely disturbing pain of rejection when they are denied, is what makes humans so highly attuned to social evaluation. We care deeply what others think of us, and this is why, of the ten most common phobias that cause people to seek treatment, three have to do with social anxiety: fear of speaking in public, fear of crowds, fear of meeting new people." Like Brownlee, they note the punishment of banishment/ostracism constitutes "the most severe punishment, short of torture or death," and that this is why in modern prisons, "the penalty of last resort is solitary confinement." (2008 pp. 10–1). The lasting effects of isolation take their toll in physical health, even in cardiovascular functioning (2008 p. 31), because of the stressful effect of ongoing feelings of abandonment resulting from isolation.

In a matter of trust with a non-intimate, she has the capacity to make clear our lack of worth, so manifesting our lack of worth to the group more generally. It is in that interaction with her we glimpse the possibility of being left behind by others. If a non-intimate is in a position to demonstrate concern for us, via fulfilling our reliance on her, then that situation could become a matter of trust; we are vulnerable to her in the sense we have a need to be anchored within a wider group, of which she is also a member.

It is telling that the effect of being short-changed, let down, or betrayed, in an interaction with a non-intimate, will prompt the sort of assurance/soothing seeking behaviour descended from that we see in a child left in the strange situation, who seeks reassurance from her returned caregiver. We might appeal to those we have close attachments to, such as our friends, to validate that what the other person did to us was 'not on'. What we are doing is seeking the comfort of secure bonds, to reassure us of our worth to the group. If our *friends* don't validate us in that situation, we will be betrayed twice-over; first by the action of the unknown, then by our friends. We will likely feel rejection more strongly, as a result of the latter. The close relationships we have anchor us in a wider group.

Alternatively, we sometimes require the validation of the group more broadly. Herman (2001) notes that the shattering of basic trust experienced in severe trauma, requires validation from the community as a whole, to be overcome. When the group fails to recognise and express genuine non-instrumental concern for the victim's standing in the group, the victim can feel lingering betrayal and ongoing distress. What the group does to us, and how the group responds to what members do to us, matters to us non-instrumentally. It's plausible to suppose that the legal institutions we have to resolve disputes and rule on accusations of harm are, at some level, functions of our felt need for validation and assurance from the group. When another exploits our position of vulnerability or fails to express the non-instrumental concern we need in such a position, we seek the affirmation from the group that we do indeed matter (plus, that the other person is made to understand this). But when the group as a whole responds with indifference,

or against us, we feel betrayed, because our lack of worth to the group then is communicated clearly.

A final bit of support for the proposal that we have a need to belong to a group comes from Gudrun (2016), who notes the importance of low level gestures of goodwill and concern in neighbourhoods comprised of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Gudrun points out from an ethnographic study that, while large diverse neighbourhoods don't foster many personal trust relationships, neighbours place an importance on feeling "safe" (2016 p. 27). A large part of this feeling of safety hinges on conventions among residents of expressing minor gestures of social contact and recognition, such as nodding or greeting when walking on the same paths, fostering feelings of connection among different and relatively unknown individuals (2016 p. 31). While these neighbours don't place importance on close trust relationships with their neighbours, this isn't as important to them as the feeling that they themselves matter at a basic level to their fellow residents. This enables high levels of basic trust to be upheld, and a sense of safety as part of a group, even when surrounded by relative unknowns.

Just because matters of trust between non-intimates appear not to require prior personal attachments, this does not entail that our attachment security isn't the underlying *concern* in our interactions with non-intimates. It just so happens the attachment concern at issue can be to the group. Even in the detached exchanges of the marketplace, the possibility of such exchanges being construed as matters of trust, means they create the risk of the trustor experiencing social rejection. The marketplace, after all, is a space of shared activity, governed by rules of fair exchange, buttressed by legal institutions to enforce them. Those rules are a reflection of a concern to maintain group cohesion, to ensure that we are validated in cases of being victim to another's betrayal. We need rules that 'contain' the fallout of upset that results from selfish, disrespectful behaviour, to minimise retaliatory action, so individuals can remain assured about engaging in that shared activity. Onora O'Neill remarks that Baier's view, which emphasises interpersonal relationships, is "nostalgic," and not for "trust in a complex social world" (Lagerspetz 2015 p. 49). She fails to recognise that the beating heart of matters of trust, in a complex social world, is our need for a sense of belonging to, mattering to, a group, and the individuals within it.

The above discussion may explain how matters of trust can be had with those belonging to a group we identify with. But what of matters with those who do not belong to a group we identify with, as in a 'state of nature' case, encountering a complete unknown? My suggestion is that such an interaction can still implicate a *potential* for an attachment, either to the individual, or to the group this unknown belongs to. This, combined with the well-supported empirical claim that most of us have a disposition to seek out secure attachments (e.g. see the long-distance sailors Brownlee refers to), means that we can treat an interaction with a complete unknown as a matter of trust. On the other hand, if we are fearful, or wary, of an unknown, to the point we don't open ourselves to the opportunity to receive their help, then we may be unable to get the ball rolling on that potential attachment. But it may be that this unknown has the ability to help us out anyway, so riding roughshod over our defences that we put up, eliciting our attachment regardless.

7. The betrayability of distrust

In this final section, I use the attachment account to shed light on why we can be betrayed by those we distrust. The answer to this is hinted in the last paragraph of the previous section: it can still be important to us that we *matter* to those who we withdraw from or are wary of. This is even if our distrust is pulling us away from them and inclining us toward putting up our defences.

There is a feeling of tension in distrusting another. This partly results from an underlying concern for belonging we have, combined with the protective urge to pull away, to protect ourselves from the one we distrust. The attachment account helps explain this. Those we distrust, I suggest, have our attachment concern 'in their teeth', perhaps via promises they make to us. Consider the accompanying feeling of warmth and relief, when someone we previously distrusted, turns out to have our concerns at heart. This motivates the sort of bonding process we see, noted by Hawley, when we express sorrow for having previously distrusted another, who instead fulfils our trust (2014 p. 3). If there was no attachment concern we had about the one we distrusted, prior to being helped by her, then the follow-up process of expressing sorrow would not involve the *relief* that we *can* trust her. There would be nothing to express relief about, because how she regarded us would not previously have mattered in the way it does in matters of trust.

Attachment concern underpins distrust, and the attachment account can help explain the claim that has been noted previously, that it is possible to be betrayed by those we distrust. We can, because we can have attachment concerns about those we distrust. Felt trust is not a pre-requisite of betrayability. To illustrate this, we can consider a point that Hieronymi (2008) makes in defence of the opposite claim.

Hieronymi argues that the degree to which we trustingly believe another will fulfil our reliance on her, is also the degree to which we can be betrayed. Hieronymi compares two examples; (i) we trust a friend with a secret and "fully believe" that she is trustworthy; (ii) we have doubts about our friend who we tell a secret, and merely 'entrust' the secret to her.

Suppose in both cases the friend tells our secret to others. Hieronymi claims that in the first case, where we had a fully trusting belief in the friend, we are more betrayed than in the second case (2008 p. 230). Hieronymi also suggests that we often mitigate the possibility of betrayal by mitigating our trusting belief (2008 p. 231), i.e. we tell ourselves we never trusted the friend anyway. This is why, she argues, the case of merely entrusting the secret to your friend has lesser betrayability than the first case.

But Hieronymi gives no argument for agreeing that we will necessarily feel more betrayed in the first case than the second. While it might be right that being distrustful of another can incline us to begin the process of detaching from her, which shields us against the painful

feelings of betrayal, this is distinct from actually not being vulnerable to feeling betrayed. Put simply: distrusting another on a matter doesn't diminish the extent to which we can be betrayed on the matter. Consider Yolanda who strongly suspects her partner Xavier of cheating and is nonetheless severely betrayed when her suspicions are confirmed. Perhaps after many repeated violations of trust, Yolanda will have begun to detach to the point that the betrayals no longer sting. But this is not mitigating the extent of the trust attitude, it is mitigating the extent of her attachment.[12]

Conclusion

I have defended an account of the vulnerability of trust and distrust: the attachment account. The attachment account is well suited to explaining what the characteristic vulnerability of matters of trust is, so what trust and distrust are at a deeper level *about*. The account explains that matters of trust carry a characteristic interpersonal importance, stemming from an underlying need for secure attachments, to individuals and to a group. This attachment concern can be implicated in situations where we rely or depend on others, where we also have a practical concern about how others act. This is because in matters of trust, another can demonstrate their lack of concern about us, by failing to take into account something we care about, in their actions. Complete unknowns can elicit our need for secure attachment, through promises of help. Overall, matters of trust present to us opposing horizons. Beyond one lies increased contentment and a feeling of belonging. Beyond the other lies the pain of rejection.

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[12] Hieronymi is inconsistent on this issue, as she elsewhere claims that distrust is able to be betrayed (2008 p. 229).

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