Trust and Betrayal: A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

Vulnerability to betrayal has been identified as a distinguishing feature of trust, but there has been little direct analysis of betrayal or its implications for understanding trust. A clear account of betrayal is needed for at least two reasons: to explain the distinction between trust and mere reliance; and to explicate the challenges facing trusters who have been betrayed. If it is true that when we trust we risk betrayal, then every instance of trust involves accepting that others might betray us. The risk of betrayal may fade into the background of most trusters' interactions with others, but it will feature significantly in the cognitive and affective experiences of those who have been betrayed. Betrayal can result in distrust, loss of confidence in knowing who can be trusted, and responses such as resentment and hostile emotions. These effects can inhibit trust after betrayal, but they are not always bad. Distrust, loss of confidence, resentment and hostility may prevent a victim from trusting unwisely or too quickly. That said, these effects of betrayal can also inhibit reasonable placement of trust. And yet some victims *do* trust after being betrayed. In this thesis I analyse trust and trustworthiness and use distinctions developed in that analysis to explain betrayal, its impact on trust, and the conceptual issues raised by trust after betrayal.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Trust and Betrayal: A Conceptual Analysis” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University. I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Brennan Michael Jacoby (Student ID: 41268067)

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