

# *Actions of Trust and their Cognitive Motivation*

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## **Abstract**

In this paper I offer a systematic account of actions of trust and inquire into their cognitive motivation. I first develop the distinction and relationship between attitudes and actions of trust, and then assess Paul Faulkner's thesis that the Humean model cannot explain the cognitive motivation of some actions of trust under circumstances of uncertainty. While I will accept his diagnosis, I will contend that a weaker version of the Humean model could provide this explanation. My proposal will be an attempt to show why some doxastic characteristics of trust would allow for this analysis. In particular, I will show how the nature of the reliance relation, which constitutes actions of trust, requires that trustors believe in the possibility of accomplishing their intentions by means of the trusted party's collaboration. I will argue that this means-end belief can cognitively motivate trust even in situations where the trustor is uncertain as to whether the trusted party will prove trustworthy.

## **1. Introduction**

On the Humean account, a motivating reason for acting is a pair formed by a desire and a means-end belief.<sup>2</sup> If an agent has a motivating reason to  $\psi$ , this means that she desires X and that she has a belief representing the action of  $\psi$ -ing as a means to the attainment of X. Thus, her action could be analysed in terms of a desire-belief pair and we could conclude that, other things being equal, she acted as she did partly

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<sup>2</sup> See Smith 1987. Also, see Davidson 1963 and his notion of "primary reason".

because she was cognitively motivated to so act – it was her means-end belief that, in view of her desire, ultimately determined her to  $\psi$ .<sup>3</sup>

Now, the question may be raised as to whether all actions are necessarily motivated in these terms. For instance, could there not be a case where an agent is motivated to  $\psi$  although she does not believe that  $\psi$ -ing will make her satisfy her desire? According to Paul Faulkner<sup>4</sup>, this is at least possible when it comes to some actions of trust, as trusting can sometimes involve uncertainty about outcome - a leap of faith as it were. In some specific situations where the trustor  $A$  desires something following from the trusted party's behaviour, it can happen that  $A$  does not believe that the trusted party  $S$  will behave as expected, and so  $A$  might not believe that her action of trusting  $S$  is a means to the satisfaction of her desire. In short, it can happen that  $A$  lacks a belief of the sort 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , I will get  $X$ ' and yet that  $A$  is motivated to trust  $S$  to  $\phi$  anyway. It then follows that trustors are not invariably required to have a particular motivating reason  $R$  formed by a desire for  $X$  and a means-end belief of the type just seen.

In this paper, I shall present and assess Faulkner's proposal that some actions of trust need not be motivated by  $R$ , and inquiry into whether there is an alternative motivating reason that could cognitively motivate trust even under circumstances of uncertainty. I will agree with Faulkner that the Humean model cannot always account for the motivation of trust, but will contend that a weaker version of the model could do the job instead in those situations. In particular, I will argue that the actions of trust Faulkner has in mind can be motivated under such circumstances by a weaker motivating reason  $R_w$  partly constituted by a weak means-end belief of the sort 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , then it is possible that I get  $X$ '. My point being that when  $A$  does not need  $R$  she still needs  $R_w$ , since the belief that one's action of trust is a means that makes possible the satisfaction of one's desire is needed to trust even under conditions of uncertainty. I will base this contention on the relationship between trust, competence, and intentionality.

## 2. What is it to trust?

### 2.1 *Trust can be an attitude or an action*

Faulkner's thesis concerns the cognitive motivation of actions of trust. More concretely, his argument against the Humean concerns *actions of affective trust*, as he calls them. Before presenting his thesis in Section 2, it would be helpful to provide a

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<sup>3</sup> Recall Hume's famous sentence "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume 1739/1960, p. 415) and the fragment where he explains "according as our reasoning varies, our actions receive a subsequent variation" (Ibid., p.414).

<sup>4</sup> Faulkner 2014.

definition for this type of action. To this end, I will first differentiate actions of trust from attitudes of trust.

Trust can refer to an attitude or it can refer to a certain type of action that is done with that attitude. Thus, if trust as an attitude is defined as a state of mind where the trustor has positive expectations towards the trusted party's behaviour (e.g. Fred expects that George will pick him up at the airport, as opposed to the negative expectation that George will *not* pick him up), then an action of trust consists in an action that the trustor performs with those expectations.<sup>5</sup> In particular, *A*'s action of trust is an action that in being performed *A* relies on *S*'s  $\phi$ -ing and positively expects something of *S*'s behaviour (e.g., Fred's waiting for George or Fred's not taking of a taxi can be actions of trust, for in so doing Fred relies on George's picking him up at the airport and expects that George will do so). Remove the positive expectation and you have mere reliance; remove reliance and you have simply the attitude of trust.

I will provide a definition of reliance shortly, but the point I want to stress now is that, contrary to the attitude of trust, the defining feature of action of trust is that they involve a relation of reliance. For the attitude alone does not imply reliance but at most the *disposition to rely* on someone.

Consider a case where you trust your friend would not tell your romantic secrets to anyone, but you have not even told her yet who your crush is. In this situation, you would have just an attitude of trust towards your friend. You would simply expect that if you were to tell her any secret she would not disclose it, and although this expectation would dispose you to rely on her, you would not be relying on her yet. Now, imagine another situation where you had an urge to confess your love for someone *and* decided to confide the secret to her. As I see it, only in this latter case would you be relying on her behaviour.

Roughly speaking, reliance is as a relation where *A*'s action depends on *S*'s  $\phi$ -ing where the nature of this dependence is intention-specific. Therefore, it could be said that only if you told her the secret you would rely on your friend not disclosing it, in the sense that an intention of your telling of the secret (e.g., the intention of putting your mind at ease by privately confessing your love) would depend on your friend's behaviour (i.e., on her keeping the secret) to be accomplished. It is because her keeping the secret would help you accomplish the circumstantial intention of your action that you would be relying on her. So if in this situation you also put an expectation on her, you would be then performing an action of trust. The telling of

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<sup>5</sup> As we will see, there can be two relevant kinds of expectations when it comes to trust, namely, predictive and normative. This example here is an example of a positive predictive expectation (which consists in the belief that *S* will  $\phi$ ), but I could have equally used an example of a positive normative expectation (which consists in the belief that *S* should  $\phi$ , which negation would consist in the belief that *S* should *not*  $\phi$ ). So a positive expectation is either the belief that something will be the case or the belief that something should be the case.

your secret would qualify as an action of trust because in doing so you would be relying on your friend keeping the secret and you would expect that she would keep it.

This is why I consider actions of trust, contrary to mere attitudes, to involve an intention-specific dependence between the trustor and the trusted. Attitudes of trust do not involve this dependence in themselves precisely because when all you have is the attitude, you do not yet rely on someone. When all you have is just the attitude, you have not yet set out to accomplish any intention of yours by means of the trusted party's collaboration, so you do not yet depend on her doing anything. On the other hand, actions of trust do involve this intention-specific dependence in which reliance consists.<sup>6</sup>

I would like to make one last point to avoid confusion. As I said, trust can refer to an attitude or an action. And the problem is that this twofold conceptualization does not match our ordinary usage of the term 'trust'. Indeed, on most occasions we use 'trust' to refer to the attitude alone, as when we say things like 'I trust my colleagues –they would never let me down'. Other times we use it to refer to a situation of mere reliance, as when we explain 'I had to trust the old bridge, for I had no choice but to cross the river'. So, since we are interested in actions of trust, following our daily trust talk might be philosophically misleading, because we use the term 'trust' in situations where there is no reliance (like in the former case: you had not asked your colleagues any favour yet, and so you do not rely on their doing something), as well as in situations where there is no positive expectation (like in the latter case: you did not positively expect the bridge would resist your weight, and probably you may have expected otherwise).

## 2.2 *Trust can be predictive or affective*

Once the distinction between attitudes and actions is clear, it is possible now to define two kinds of actions of trust, namely, actions of predictive trust and actions of affective trust. To this end, I shall compare two scenarios inspired by Annette Baier's passing reflection on trust and Kant's behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Perhaps there are actions that *are* actions of trust in themselves, presumably because they essentially involve reliance and positive expectations. In any case, the fact I want to stress here is that most actions of trust can be non-trusting actions as well. For instance, Fred's not taking of a taxi can be a non-trusting not taking of a taxi if the intention with which he does it does not depend on George's behaviour to be accomplished (i.e., if Fred does not rely on George). Fred could simply not take a taxi and do so with the intention of not spending more money, instead of doing it with the intention of being picked up by George. Since only this latter intention depends on George's picking Fred up to be accomplished (as Fred could save money by taking a walk home, say), the not taking of a taxi with the intention of not spending more money would not qualify as an action of trust. This shows that the relational state of the intention goes somewhat to define the trusting nature of the action.

<sup>7</sup> Baier 1986, p. 235.

## Scenario 1 (S1)

Kant was very regular with his habits. Every day, exactly at the same time, he would go out for a walk. His neighbours from old Königsberg would regularly see him passing by the same places at more or less the same time. Because Kant was that regular in his exercise, it is not implausible to imagine a scenario where, say, the nurses of a hospital used him as a sort of reminder: every time he would pass by the hospital at a certain time, the nurses would give their patients their beverages against typhus.

## Scenario 2 (S2)

Imagine that, after a few days without news from Kant, a preoccupied nurse reaches out to him. She lets him know about how she and her colleagues have been counting on his regular walks to successfully do their job. She also tells him about some catastrophic incidents that followed his unexpected not-going-out-for-a-walk. And she goes on to beg him to please pass by the hospital each day, as the lives of her patients are at risk. The philosopher therefore dutifully accepts her demand and promises to pass by every day at the same time he usually passes by.

What are the similarities and differences between both scenarios? The first relevant similarity is that the nurses stand in a relation of dependence with Kant's doings, where this dependence consists in relying on his punctual walks. By depending on Kant's punctuality, the nurses rely on his behaviour to accomplish the intention-specific task of giving the medicines to their patients on time. And another similarity, as I will show shortly, is that in both scenarios the nurses put a positive expectation on Kant's passing by at a certain time. Therefore, in each scenario, the nurses perform an action of trust, namely, the action of giving the medicines to their patients right when they see Kant passing by the hospital. For when they give the medicines to their patients under these circumstances the intention with which they do so depends on Kant's punctually passing by.<sup>8</sup>

As for the differences, the first divergence between both scenarios can be drawn in terms of the reactive attitudes that may be prompted. Whereas in S1 the nurses might have felt "disappointed with [Kant] if he slept in one day, but not let down by him, let alone had their trust betrayed"<sup>9</sup>, in S2 they would have been entitled to present those sorts of attitudes (feelings of betrayal) towards him, after he had promised to punctually pass by everyday. And the second and most important

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<sup>8</sup> It may seem wrong to say that the giving of a medicine (or the waiting at the airport, the not taking of a taxi, the telling of a secret, and so on) can qualify as an action of trust. As I see it, this should not seem wrong as long as we agree with the Anscombe-Davidson thesis that actions are single events that admit several descriptions. My point is then that the nurses' giving of a medicine when they see Kant passing by and the nurses' action of trust are the same action, the same event, albeit described in different ways. See Davidson 1969, and Anscombe 1979 for further discussion.

<sup>9</sup> Baier 1986, p. 235.

distinction, which explains the first, has to do with the nature of the positive expectation the nurses put on Kant. I borrow concepts from Martin Hollis<sup>10</sup> in saying that, whereas in S1 the nurses held a predictive expectation on the philosopher, in S2 the expectation is rather normative.

When predictive expectations are held, the one who expects has a certain positive expectation about the expectee's future behaviour, often based on her regularity. The nurses from S1 could have thought that Kant would perform again as he regularly does (and then use him as a reminder), and may have believed something like 'Kant will pass by at  $t$ '. Indeed they may have reasoned 'we can trust Kant will pass by at  $t$ , because he always does'. Basically, they took his walks to be a regular thing for him to do, and so predicted that he would do it again in the future at  $t$  and relied on his walks at  $t$  because of this. This explains why they would have not been entitled to feel betrayed: deceived predictions do not justify that reaction, just like unexpected weather variations do not justifiably count as betrayal. Now, when it comes to normative expectations, this is rather the other way round.

When expectations of this sort are held, the expector rather assumes the existence of some normativity governing the expectee's future behaviour. In particular, the former can just expect the latter to act as expected due to a certain sort of normativity she assumes to exist, regardless of any regularity she may be aware of. Thus the nurses of S2 at  $t$  relied on Kant's passing by, and they did also expect him to be passing by at  $t$ , precisely because they assumed the existence of certain normativity in his acceptance of the demand. Arguably, they may have thought promises bound the promisor to act as promised, and so they may have grounded their normative expectation on Kant's behaviour for this reason. They may have believed something like 'Kant should pass by at  $t$  because he has so promised', and they may have reasoned 'we can trust Kant will punctually pass by, because he has committed himself to'.<sup>11</sup>

The point to be made here is that these differences in expectation account for two ways in which trust can be understood, and consequently identify each scenario with a particular kind of action of trust. Following Faulkner's terminology<sup>12</sup>, S1 concerns *actions of predictive trust* because they involve predictive expectations,

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<sup>10</sup> Hollis 1998, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Katherine Hawley (2014) has argued that the source of this normativity as applied to trust is expressed commitment. Promises or agreements, as well as social norms or contracts, would therefore justify having normative expectations. In this sense, Hawley proposes that to trust  $S$  to do something is "to believe that she has a commitment to doing it and to rely upon her to meet that commitment." (Ibid., p. 10.)

<sup>12</sup> Faulkner 2007; Faulkner 2014.

whilst S2 concerns *actions of affective trust* because they involve normative expectations.<sup>13</sup> I turn now to define each kind of action.

As the name makes it explicit, the expectation characteristic of actions of predictive trust is a sort of positive prediction. In this case, Faulkner remarks, “the expectation that the trusted will do something is just the prediction or belief that they will do so”.<sup>14</sup> Trusting in this sense is therefore “a matter of a belief about the future, an inductive inference”.<sup>15</sup> And this is precisely what happens in S1. The nurses expected Kant to pass by given his regularity in so doing: they predicted that he would pass by again at a certain time as the result of inductive reasoning. Then, actions of predictive trust may be defined thus: *A*’s action is an action of predictive trust when in so acting *A* relies on *S*’s  $\phi$ -ing and predictively expects *S* to  $\phi$ . An action of predictive trust may be the act of using a thermometer to find out one’s exact temperature, or the act of not bringing water to a meeting because there is one colleague who always brings enough for everyone, and so on.

But actions of trust can also be affective when the constitutive expectation is normative, that is, when the expectation consists in assuming that “the trusted party has certain [normative] motivations and act on the basis of these.”<sup>16</sup> This is why the distinctive thought of the nurses in S2 is not ‘Kant *will* pass by’, but ‘Kant *should* pass by’: their expectation appeals to Kant’s normative motivations to behave trustworthily rather than to his mere regular behaviour. No prediction is essentially involved there, but just a sort of demand concerning Kant’s behaviour. So here is a definition for actions of affective trust: *A*’s action is an action of affective trusts when in so acting *A* relies on *S*’s  $\phi$ -ing and normatively expects *S* to  $\phi$ . An action of affective trust may be the act of handing money to a shopkeeper to get an apple in return, or the act of giving credence to a witness because he has sworn to tell nothing but the truth, and so on.

In conclusion, then, actions of affective trust share with actions of predictive trust the fact that the trustor relies on the trusted party’s behaviour, and the fact that the former positively expects something of the latter. Where the two differ from each other is that in the first case, the trustor’s expectation is essentially normative, and so she is entitled to have reactive attitudes towards the trusted when the trusted does not satisfy her normative expectations: we can easily imagine the nurses complaining to Kant ‘we trusted you – and you failed us!’. In cases of predictive

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<sup>13</sup> Faulkner dubbed this kind of trust «affective» because of its association with the kind of reactive attitudes that occur in affective, interpersonal relationships. See Faulkner 2014, p. 1978. We will see how this reactive attitudes are characteristic of affective trust shortly.

<sup>14</sup> Faulkner 2014, p. 1978.

<sup>15</sup> Faulkner 2007, p. 880.

<sup>16</sup> Faulkner 2014, p. 1978.

trust, however, these reactive attitudes neither tend to arise nor do they justifiably arise.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. A non-doxastic view of trust

#### 3.1 *Trust and the Humean account of motivation*

Faulkner holds a non-doxastic view of trust, which means that he endorses the thesis that trust needn't involve nor entail the belief that  $S$  will  $\phi$ . Specifically, he says so with regards to *actions of affective trust* under circumstances of uncertainty: "when it comes to acts of affective trust, the problem is that  $A$  can trust  $S$  to  $\phi$  without... the belief that  $S$  will  $\phi$ ."<sup>18</sup> This is the reason why, according to him, the Humean analysis cannot sometimes account for the cognitive motivation of actions of affective trust. In a situation where  $A$  believes that  $S$ 's  $\phi$ -ing is a means to the attainment of  $X$  and where  $A$  is trusting  $S$  to  $\phi$  (and trivially believes so)<sup>19</sup>, it is clear that lacking the belief ' $S$  will  $\phi$ ' would impede  $A$  from having a means-end belief of the sort 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , I will get  $X$ ', which is precisely the sort of means-end belief that the Humean analysis would require that  $A$  have to be motivated to trust.<sup>20</sup>

In effect, the Humean analysis states that a motivating reason for  $A$  to  $\psi$  consists in a pair formed by a desire for an outcome  $X$  and a means-end belief representing her  $\psi$ -ing as a means to the attainment of  $X$ . Michael Smith proposed the following definition:

R at  $t$  constitutes a motivating reason of agent  $A$  to  $\psi$  iff there is some  $X$  such that R at  $t$  consists of a desire of  $A$  to  $X$  and a belief that were he to  $\psi$  he would  $X$ <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> It may be helpful to note that "pure" actions of predictive trust (i.e., where the expectations had are just predictive) very often involve objects rather than people. As Hollis points out, "we trust one another to behave predictably in a sense that applies equally to the natural world at large. I trust my apple tree to bear apples, not oranges." (Hollis 1998, p. 10). This would partly explain why reactive attitudes do not justifiably arise when only our predictive expectations are deceived –objects are out of the realm of (social) normativity, and so their behaviour cannot be the object of justified resentment. Basically, we cannot put a normative expectation on objects or animals. Normative expectations are restricted to interpersonal relationships, and so it is affective trust.

<sup>18</sup> Faulkner 2014, p. 1979.

<sup>19</sup> Strictly speaking,  $A$ 's trivial belief is not 'I am trusting  $S$  to  $\phi$ ', but the belief 'I am  $\psi$ -ing' where the  $\psi$ -ing is an action of trust. Thus, for instance, the nurses in S2 would trivially believe that they are giving the medicines to their patients right when they see Kant passing by the hospital. I will henceforth use the verb 'to trust' and derivatives to refer to an action of trust unless it is made explicit that the trusting in question refers to the attitude.

<sup>20</sup> The rationale is the following. If  $A$  believes 'I am trusting  $S$  to  $\phi$ ' then she cannot believe 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ ,  $S$  will  $\phi$ ' unless she also believes ' $S$  will  $\phi$ '. As a consequence, if  $A$  believes 'if  $S$   $\phi$ -s, I will get  $X$ ' then she cannot believe 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , I will get  $X$ ' unless she also believes 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ ,  $S$  will  $\phi$ '.

<sup>21</sup> Smith 1987, p. 36. Notice I changed the original symbols of the quote to make them consistent with both Faulkner's and my symbolization. This change does not alter the original meaning of the quote, and may even make it clearer.



Thus, according to this analysis, why were the nurses motivated to affectively trust Kant? In other words, why did they give the medicines to their patients when they saw Kant passing by the hospital? Simply because they had a motivating reason of the sort *R*. That is, because they desired to give the medicines to their patients on time and believed something like ‘if we give the medicines to our patients when we see Kant passing by the hospital, we will give the medicines on time’. However, Faulkner points out, this could perfectly be otherwise.

Faulkner would say that the nurses’ action could have not been motivated by a desire-belief pair of that type, because they might have lacked the kind of means-end belief which constitutes *R*. In particular, they might have lacked a means-end belief of the sort ‘if we give the medicines to our patients when we see Kant passing by the hospital, we will give the medicines on time’ because they could have been uncertain as to whether Kant would punctually pass by and, accordingly, they could have not believed that Kant would eventually punctually pass by.<sup>22</sup>

So it seems that the Humean analysis cannot account for the cognitive motivation of actions of affective trust under circumstances of uncertainty. According to this analysis, as we have just seen,<sup>23</sup> the acquisition of a means-end belief of the sort ‘if I trust *S* to  $\phi$ , then I will get *X*’ in the specific situation considered imposes the following conditions:

(C1) That *A* believes ‘*S* will  $\phi$ ’

(C2) That *A* believes ‘if I trust *S* to  $\phi$ , then *S* will  $\phi$ ’

The problem is, however, that affective trust can be motivated even in the absence of the belief ‘*S* will  $\phi$ ’ and the belief ‘if I trust *S* to  $\phi$ , then *S* will  $\phi$ ’ due to its particular, cognitive characteristics. I will now present Faulkner’s explanation of these characteristics, and in Section 3 I will show how a weaker version of the Humean analysis could accommodate them.

### 3.2 *The cognitive characteristics of affective trust*

Faulkner offers an illustration of a waiting husband to explain in detail the cognitive characteristics of affective trust:

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to notice the difference between ‘not believing that *p*’ and ‘believing that not *p*’. While the former means that one does not have a belief as of *p* (e.g., I don’t believe it’s raining), the latter means that one has a belief as of not-*p* (e.g., I believe it’s not raining). Also, while the former is not sufficient for the latter (someone may not believe that it’s raining and yet not believe that it’s not raining –say, because she is uncertain about it because she has not yet collected sufficient evidence), it seems the latter is in fact sufficient for the former (if someone believes it is not raining, then one does not believe that it is raining). As we will see, this difference will play a crucial role in Faulkner’s proposal and should be kept in mind for the remainder of the paper.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 19.

We are in the process of a messy divorce, and you were nothing but unreliable in the plans you made with me in the past, so I have no confidence you will show up today. This is not to suggest I believe that you will *not* show up; I might have no confidence you will show but if I believed that you will not show it would be wrong to describe my waiting as an act of trusting... [The husband] can decide to trust *S* to  $\phi$  *just because* trust need not involve the belief that *S* will  $\phi$ .<sup>24</sup>

The relevant point being made in this illustration is that in affectively trusting his wife to show up the husband needn't believe that she will actually show up to be motivated to wait for her.<sup>25</sup> But why so? Why can the husband be motivated to affectively trust his wife to show up even though he does not believe that she will eventually show? Mainly due to two factors: first, because in view of counter-evidence one can have a normative expectation on someone's behaviour without having a predictive expectation; second, because affective trust can be cognitively motivated solely by the presumption that the trusted will prove trustworthy.

Contrary to the expectation of predictive trust, which consists in the belief that *S* will  $\phi$ , the husband's normative expectation needn't be grounded on sufficient evidence for the belief that the wife will show. Whereas counter-evidence against the belief that *S* will  $\phi$  would make *A* withdraw a predictive expectation, the past unreliability of the wife is not (to a certain point) sufficient for making the husband withdraw the normative expectation he put on her. Simply, he can still think that the wife should show up because they have arranged a meeting even though he does not believe that she will actually show up. So having no confidence in his wife's future behaviour does not prevent him from putting a normative expectation on her, and so neither does it prevent him from affectively trusting her.<sup>26</sup> What is more, having no confidence does not prevent the husband from *presuming* that his wife will show up. And this is key to Faulkner's proposal.

According to him, the fact "that affective trust implies a presumption of trustworthiness is important, because presumption is not constrained in the same way as belief".<sup>27</sup> In particular, it is important because the presumption is not evidentially-constrained in the same fashion as belief is. Thus "A can continue, up to a point, to think well of *S* even in the absence of evidence, or even in the face of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The other point being that trust (both predictive and affective) requires not believing that *S* will not  $\phi$ . Conversely, distrust does involve the belief that *S* will not  $\phi$  –that is to say, a negative expectation towards *S*'s behaviour.

<sup>26</sup> The relation between *S*'s being unreliable and *A*'s affective trust on *S* is complex. I tried to capture this complexity with the qualification 'to a certain point' between brackets. I contend that unreliability can only make *A* withdraw her affective trust if it is sufficient to make her believe that *S* will *not*  $\phi$ . As long as it permits just not believing that *S* will  $\phi$ , *A* can still hold to her assumption that *S* should be normatively motivated to  $\phi$ .

<sup>27</sup> Faulkner 2007, p. 884.

counter-evidence”<sup>28</sup>. This is why Faulkner suggests that making this presumption about *S*’s future  $\phi$ -ing is like accepting that *S* will  $\phi$ , and not like believing that *S* will  $\phi$  –namely, because (contrary to believing) one can accept that proposition *p* obtains even in the face of counter-evidence. As Cohen explains, “a person who does not fully believe that *p* can nevertheless justifiably accept that *p*”<sup>29</sup> since to accept that *p* is just “to have or adopt a policy of deeming, positing, or postulating that *p* –that is, of going along with that proposition”.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, someone who accepts that *p* can happily ignore the evidence available about the likelihood of not-*p* and act on the acceptance that *p*, because going along with *p* simply means to act as if *p* were true. And this is what the husband of the illustration does: “in trusting his wife the husband brackets his belief that his wife will in all likelihood not show, and brackets those beliefs that give him reason for thinking this, and gives his wife the benefit of the doubt.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, the husband can think that she should show up and at the same time presume or accept that she will, even though the evidence makes him not believe that she will in fact show up.<sup>32</sup>

Then, Faulkner concludes, if the husband can be cognitively motivated to wait for her and rely on her showing up to accomplish a certain intention of his thereby, no matter how uncertain or wary he might feel about it, is precisely because he can just hold to the presumption that she will eventually show. As Faulkner remarks, “this background of acceptance then specifies a way of thinking about trusting *S* to  $\phi$ , which provides *A* with a motivation for so doing”.<sup>33</sup> Now, someone may ask whether this would “really count as trust”. The reason being that if the husband does not believe that she will not let him down, then he is not really trusting his wife. My response to this question is that the husband does trust her wife, although to merely say that he trusts her can be philosophically misleading.

Our trust talk presents two competing criteria for when to say that someone is trusting. On the one hand, for example, we say of someone that trusts when she believes that the trusted party will not let her down. That is to say, when *A* believes that *S* will  $\phi$ , she has the confidence that *S* will  $\phi$ . Is in this sense that we usually say that our friends are the ones in which we can trust. On the other hand, however, we also say of someone that trusts when she lacks certainty about whether the trusted party will let her down or not. When *A* does not believe that *S* will  $\phi$ , for instance,

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<sup>28</sup> Faulkner 2020, p. 338.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen 1989, p. 368.

<sup>31</sup> Faulkner 2014, p. 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Notice that the issue here addressed is deep down related to Michael Smith’s moral problem. The moral problem evidences how having a normative reason to  $\phi$  does not necessarily motivate one to  $\phi$ . Thus, from the belief that ‘*S* should  $\phi$ ’ one cannot derive the belief ‘*S* will  $\phi$ ’ because *S* might not be even motivated to  $\phi$ . One can justifiably believe the former and yet lack grounds to believe the latter. See Smith 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 1987.

we say that all she can do is to trust that  $S$  will eventually  $\phi$ . And this is actually something that can happen in contexts where  $S$ 's  $\phi$ -ing is normatively constrained. As Faulkner puts it, in such contexts  $A$  might not believe that  $S$  will  $\phi$  and yet believe that  $S$  should  $\phi$ , which allows us to say of  $A$  that she trusts  $S$  to  $\phi$  –in particular, that  $A$  *affectively trusts*  $S$  to  $\phi$ . So my reply is that our trust talk sometimes does not allow us to see how trust can be grounded solely on normative expectations. If we only attend to one of the criteria we may overlook the other one and conclude that lack of confidence entails absence of trust, as if there was just one kind of trust.

#### 4. Trust, competence, and intentionality

##### 4.1 *Two types of means-end beliefs*

The notion of a means-end belief as stated in Smith's schema may be ambiguous. It strikes me that it can refer to two different types of beliefs that express different degrees of certainty about outcome. I will now show why Faulkner's proposal is only correct as long as it concerns means-end beliefs of the stronger type. And in the next subsection I will argue for the claim that the cognitive motivation for actions of affective trust in the kind of situation considered could be provided by a means-end beliefs of the weaker type.

On a stronger conception, the belief would be 'if  $A$   $\psi$ -s, then  $A$  will get  $X$ '. When this belief is applied to the illustration of the husband, it could be rendered as, say, 'if I wait for my wife to show up, I will get the divorce papers signed'. And, on a weaker conception, the belief can be stated as 'if  $A$   $\psi$ -s, then it is possible that  $A$  gets  $X$ ', which is roughly rendered as 'if I wait for my wife to show up, then it is possible that I get the divorce papers signed'. The difference between these two types of beliefs should be understood thus: while the former represents the action of trust as ensuring the attainment of  $X$ , the latter represents it as merely making it possible. One who had this latter belief would therefore be more uncertain about the outcome of her action than someone who had the former.

Having established this distinction, it is easy to see how Faulkner's proposal does not apply to means-end beliefs of the weak type and, more importantly for my purposes, why it would not rule out the application of a weaker Humean analysis. Borrowing from the last section, the acquisition of the belief 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , then it is possible that I get  $X$ ' imposes the following conditions:

(C1') That  $A$  believes 'it is possible that  $S$   $\phi$ -s'

(C2') That  $A$  believes 'if I trust  $S$  to  $\phi$ , then it is possible that  $S$   $\phi$ -s'

And, as I see it, not believing that  $S$  will  $\phi$  does not impede one from satisfying C1' and C2'. Basically, lacking the belief ' $S$  will  $\phi$ ' is compatible with believing that it is

possible for  $S$  to  $\phi$ . So even in a situation where the husband lacks confidence he could perfectly believe that it is at least possible for his wife to show up, and so he could also believe that it is possible that his wife will show up if he waits for her. In turn, these beliefs would allow him to believe in the possibility of getting the divorce papers signed if he waits for her.

So, put simply, it seems plausible that even if the husband is so uncertain that he does not believe 'my wife will show up', he could still have a weak means-end belief of the sort 'if I wait for my wife, then it is possible that I get the divorce papers signed' just in virtue of satisfying C1' and C2'.

#### 4.2 Doxastic conditions for trust

If I am right, then, it seems that trustors can have this weak means-end belief even under circumstances of uncertainty as long as they can also believe in the aforementioned possibilities. But I want to contend something else, namely, that trustors in this context *need* in fact to have these three beliefs. Consequently, I want to defend that a weaker version of the Humean analysis, according to which having a motivating reason  $R_w$  to act is to have a desire and a weak means-end belief, could account for the cognitive motivation of actions of affective trust performed in these situations.

So to justify these claims I will need to explain why in affectively trusting  $S$  to  $\phi$ ,  $A$  needs to have the weak means-end belief in question, which in turn will require that I explain why  $A$  needs to satisfy C1' and C2'. That the latter holds can be seen in the fact that trust involves reliance on others' competence, and that the former is the case can be seen in the fact that belief in the possibility of the intended is necessary for intending. Let's consider each fact in turn.

I proposed that when trust is practical, and not merely attitudinal, the trustor relies on the trusted party doing something. So here I want to follow Baier<sup>34</sup> in claiming that this reliance is reliance on another's competence. Since relying on  $S$ 's  $\phi$ -ing is relying on her capabilities to behave in a particular way; and since 'being competent to  $\phi$ ' means being capable to behave in the relevant ways as to  $\phi$ , I take Baier's approach to be right. So, for instance, when the husband waits for his wife to show up with the intention of having the divorce papers signed, he is relying on her capabilities to properly behave so as to show up. In order to affectively trust her, the husband needs to believe that she is capable of showing up (thus satisfying C1') such that, since he trivially believes that he is waiting for her, he also needs to believe that if he waits for her it is at least possible that she shows up (thus satisfying C2').

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<sup>34</sup> Baier 1986, p. 259.

The first reason that I take to favour these requirements that follow from the considerations around competence and trust is that not satisfying C1' would imply that the husband is not trusting his wife, but distrusting her. In effect, if *A* were to believe that *S* cannot  $\phi$ , *A* would consequently believe that *S* will not  $\phi$  and so *A*'s attitude would be rather described as distrust. Instead of a positive expectation, *A* would have a negative expectation and her action could not qualify as an action of trust at all. And the second reason is that these requirements seem to accommodate some doxastic implications concerning normative expectations as involved in actions of trust. In cases of affective trust, where the attitude consists in the belief that *S* should  $\phi$ , it seems that *A* needs to satisfy C1' because of the intuitive principle that 'ought' implies 'can'. Believing that *S* should  $\phi$ , that *S* is somehow obligated to  $\phi$ , presupposes believing that it is possible for *S* to  $\phi$  because a true normative demand seems to require so.

I also proposed that the distinguishing feature of trust as an action is that it involves an intention-specific relation of reliance, as the trustor relies on the trusted party to accomplish an intention of hers. Since this intentionality is characteristic of actions of trust, I claim that they are doxastically constrained in a particular way because intending requires the satisfaction of a doxastic condition of some kind.<sup>35</sup> This condition, I suggest with philosophers like Moya or Davidson<sup>36</sup>, is that for an agent to intend to get *X* by means of  $\psi$ -ing it is necessary (and sometimes sufficient) to believe that it is at least possible for her to get *X* by means of  $\psi$ -ing. Thus, for instance, when the husband waits for his wife to show up with the intention of having the divorce papers signed, he needs to believe that it is possible for him to get them signed if he waits for his wife. He would therefore need to believe 'if I wait for her to show up, it is possible that I get the divorce papers signed'.

If this conclusion that follows from the relationship between intentionality and trust seems plausible to me is because it sounds reasonable that failing to satisfy the doxastic condition suggested would be enough for the husband to decide not to affectively trust his wife. In effect, just like a rational agent would not intend to win the Christmas lottery if she deemed it literally impossible to win (say, because she knew it was rigged), it seems that the husband would not trust his wife with the intention of getting the papers signed if he considered it literally impossible to have them signed thereby (say, because he knew that she suffers from an extreme psychological condition that prevents her from meeting any normative demand whatsoever).

Moreover, the conclusion also seems plausible because it is able to account for the trustors' behaviour in cases where they have been let down. For instance, it can explain why someone in the husband's shoes would insist on meeting the wife

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<sup>35</sup> This doxastic condition has taken several forms in the literature. See Mele 2010 for an overview.

<sup>36</sup> See Moya 1990 and Davidson 2002.

despite her past unreliability. Since he believes that it is possible for him to get to see her if he trusts her, even if he finds the chances quite low and does not believe that she will eventually turn up, he can still be motivated to engage in whatever compensatory behaviour is needed to accomplish his intention. He could, for example, be willing to rearrange a meeting and try his luck one more time. After all, as pointed earlier in brackets, on some occasions belief in the possibility of the intended can be sufficient to intend it, and on this occasion I would say that this belief is not only necessary but also sufficient for the husband to intend to have the papers signed by means of engaging in trusting activity with his wife.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, then, I can suggest the following weak Humean analysis of the husband's action of affective trust. Why did the husband wait for his wife to show up even though he did not believe that she would show up? Because he had a motivating reason of the sort  $R_w$ . That is, because he desired to have the divorce papers signed and believed something like 'if I wait for my wife to show up, then it is possible that I get them signed'. In view of his desire, this weak means-end belief could have cognitively motivated him to affectively trust his wife, or so I hope to have shown.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have primarily done two things. First, I have developed the difference between trust as an attitude and trust as an action, and have identified in what exact sense reliance is related to trust. I have also provided a systematic account of actions of trust, emphasizing the role of intentions and attitudes in defining the nature of the action. And, second, I have presented and assessed Faulkner's position about the practical rationality of trust. I have followed him in that trust needn't involve the belief that  $S$  will  $\phi$ , and offered the more positive proposal that it does need to involve the belief that it is possible that  $S$   $\phi$ -s. I concluded on this basis that, in order to perform the actions of trust he had in mind under circumstances of uncertainty, it is at least necessary that the trustor ascribes a weak instrumental value to her trusting.

While the husband's trust can be motivated even if he is uncertain as to whether his wife will eventually show up and prove herself trustworthy (even if he does not believe that), it cannot be cognitively motivated if he is uncertain about the

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<sup>37</sup> Moya offers an enlightening illustration to explain this point. He explains that one can intend to hit a very far target by shooting an arrow even though one might not believe that one will hit it. Thus, he remarks, "in having an intention I commit myself either to make (if I think I will be able) or to try to make (if I do not think I will be able) its content true" (Moya 1990, p. 138). The point being that even a small prospect of success (which implies belief in the possibility of succeeding, and not in its probability) can, at least sometimes, be sufficient for intending. Now, it is worth noting that this is a contentious claim and some would say that the doxastic condition proposed is too weak if considered sufficient. For instance, see Grice 1971. For further discussion see Davidson 2002.

possibilities of her showing up and his getting the papers signed if he trusts her (if he does not believe that). Otherwise put, while he can bracket evidence against her future showing up or about the unlikelihood of his having the papers signed, he cannot likewise obviate evidence against these possibilities. The fact that actions of trust involve reliance on the trusted party's competence and the fact that this reliance is intention-specific seems to me to have this doxastic impact on trustors. Having these beliefs, I claim, is a necessary and sometimes sufficient condition for cognitively motivating actions of trust under the circumstances of uncertainty that Faulkner considers.

And it is important to underscore the 'sometimes' in this conclusion. For the question may be raised as to whether having this set of beliefs is a sufficient condition for trust in any context. For instance, someone could claim that one would not be motivated to entrust her daughter to a suspicious babysitter only in virtue of having these beliefs. It is certainly plausible that in a situation where one senses ill will on the part of the trusted party one would not be motivated to trust, such that perhaps believing that the trusted party holds goodwill towards us must be also a necessary condition for trusting in situations of this kind.<sup>38</sup> Now, however interesting this issue may be, I have to reply that I did not purport to provide a set of individually necessary and conjointly sufficient doxastic conditions for every context of trust. I just focused on one particular situation characterised by the uncertainty of the trustor in relation to the trusted party's behaviour, and so I deliberately set aside any further question about necessity and sufficiency.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This is in fact Baier's proposal, which I do not consider thoroughly promising. For, as I see it, it is not clear whether every action of trust requires assuming goodwill on the part of the trusted. For example, a very influential political prisoner can trust his captors will release him if he discloses some important information about his country's tactics. The point being that he can do this even if he assumes ill will on the part of his captors. See Baier 1986.

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