

ACEPS PRESENTS



ACEPS
THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE
FOR EPISTEMOLOGY AND
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

TRUST WITHOUT TRUSTWORTHINESS: A NON-DOXASTIC DISPOSITIONAL ACCOUNT OF TRUST

Nastasia Müller

3 FEBRUARY 2026 @ 11:00-12:30 SAST (UTC+2)

In the existing literature, the concepts of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' are built upon a central assumption: trust and trustworthiness are intimately linked because trust is agent-directed. The two concepts are reciprocal: all else being equal, an agent should trust the trustworthy agent. Most accounts assess trust and trustworthiness based on a normative requirement, treating them as two sides of the same coin. In contrast to these views, my account begins with the observation that trust and trustworthiness can come apart, both on the descriptive level and on the normative level. Descriptively, agents can and do sometimes trust untrustworthy agents or fail to trust a trustworthy agent. Normatively, we should sometimes trust untrustworthy agents. due to the 'feedback-loop' of trust, where trust encourages trustworthiness. Conversely, we should sometimes not trust otherwise trustworthy agents because trustworthiness is often domain- (or situation) specific.

I propose that we first understand trust and trustworthiness descriptively, as distinct phenomena. By developing an accurate descriptive account based on recent findings in psychology, I aim to provide a novel, empirically grounded metaphysical view. Once both descriptive and metaphysical accounts are established, we can then address the normative question of when an agent should trust another.



Nastasia Müller is a postdoctoral researcher at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf and a member of the DFG-funded research project Cognitive Rational Reconstruction (CoRaRe). Her current research includes a DFG-funded project titled Trust and Trustworthiness and Their Implications for Testimony and Epistemic Authority (552576003) at Technische Universität Berlin. Previously, she held a position at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in the Research Training Group Philosophy, Science and the Sciences (228914880). She completed her PhD at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests include epistemology, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics.

African Centre for Epistemology
and Philosophy of Science
11th Floor Boardroom @ UJ on Empire
University of Johannesburg

Inquiries: martinmiragoli@hotmail.com

ACEPS: <https://www.uj.ac.za/aceps>

Organisers: Martin Miragoli, Dimpho Moletsane, Shené de Rijk

The University of Johannesburg encourages academic debate and discussion that are conducted in a manner that upholds respectful interaction, safety of all involved, and freedom of association as enshrined in the law, the Constitution, and within the boundaries of the University policies.
The views expressed during events are expressed in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Johannesburg.



20 YEARS
— 2005-2025 —

Our Future. Reimagined.