
Objectivity, Shared Values and Trust: A Pluralist Perspective on Trust in Science

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My talk deals with the nature of trust in science. Understanding what appropriate trust in science is and why it can reasonably break down is important for improving scientists' trustworthiness.

There are two different ways in which philosophers of science think about trust in science: as based on objectivity or as based on shared values. Some authors argue that objectivity actually grounds mere reliance, not genuine trust. They draw on a distinction that philosophers of trust following Annette Baier have made with respect to interpersonal trust, where genuine trust has some normative element to it that is missing in cases of mere reliance.

However, I will show that there are plural forms of trust in science: Both objectivity and shared values ground trust in science in a normative sense. I will link the trust in science debate to the literature on interpersonal trust. This is significant in that, beyond references to Baier, there is little connection between both areas of philosophy. In a pluralist reading, different trust accounts help to identify the normative elements involved in different kinds of trust in science.