

Trust in the Premodern World

Interdisciplinary Conference, 13th-14th January 2023

Programme and Abstracts



St John's College
Oxford



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Location:

History Faculty Building, University of Oxford,
41-47 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2BE

All keynote presentations will be given in the Lecture Theatre
All Panel A sessions will take place in the Lecture Theatre
All Panel B sessions will take place in the Rees Davis Room

Toilets:

Accessible (Unisex) - main faculty corridor

Conference Dinner (pre-booking required):
Al-Shami, 25 Walton Crescent, Oxford, OX1 2JG

Day 1: Friday 13th January 2023

9:00: Welcome and opening presentation.

Annabel Hancock and Siyao Jiang, University of Oxford

9:30: Keynote lecture 1 - Lecture Theatre

Dr Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, University of Amsterdam

Common good, common cities, common trust? The forms and functions of generalized trust in premodern urban Europe

Chaired by Siyao Jiang, University of Oxford

There are three axes of research on trust and premodern cities which will be investigated in this lecture.

- First of all, I will discuss which ideas about generalized trust in social science literature can be particularly fruitful for researchers of the premodern cities, namely trust as a choice and a process; the impact of multi-level connections in trust; and the concept of indirect reciprocity. Specifically, I will argue that these ideas can cast an interesting light on the premodern notions of the common good, the Hanseatic notion of 'common cities', and a paraphrased notion of common i.e. generalized trust in mercantile societies.
- Second, to illustrate it, I will draw on the new Cambridge History of Urban Europe. I will outline which areas of the functioning of cities can be highlighted as relevant for the study of generalized trust and the common good.
- And finally, I will use the example of the Hanse to show that generalized trust allowed to straddle political, judicial and economic boundaries between 'the common cities'.

10:30: Tea break - History Faculty Common Room

11:00: Panels 1a/b

Panel 1a: Students, Systems, and Spaces - Lecture Theatre.
Chaired by Annabel Hancock, University of Oxford

1. Teresa Barucci, University of Cambridge

Quoniam Almanus non esset: (mis)trust at the fifteenth-century University of Paris.

In April 1447, Johannes Dorloe, a Medicine student at the University of Paris, was accused of having lied about his geographical origin. His colleagues did not believe that he was born in Zeeland, as he had stated at his matriculation, and they believed that he therefore did not belong to the 'German' (Alemanniae) natio, but to the 'Picard' (Picadiae) one instead.

Similar accusations were very frequent in fifteenth-century Paris. Indeed, we can observe a clear and growing tendency to doubt and 'mistrust' what the scholars – who arrived from across Europe – declared as their geographical origin. This was a crucial aspect of the social location of a scholar, because it determined in which natio he had the right to belong to as well as a variety of other social, political, and economic issues.

This paper analyses the role that 'trust' played in the particular social space of the community at the fifteenth-century University of Paris, by focusing on its relation with the question of the geographical origin of the scholars. Due to the time limitation, the paper will be especially concerned with the diverse ways in which the university authorities and the scholars themselves not only fostered mistrust, but also restored trust – for instance by relying on the written and oral testimony of 'trustworthy' men such as bishops, clerics, soldiers, family members, friends, and even shepherds, who were the most helpful by virtue of their great knowledge about local geography and topography.

2. Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Hosking, University College, London

Trust, symbolic systems and society: a summary

Symbolic systems enable us both to gain greater understanding of the world around us and to communicate that understanding to others. They are what gives us confidence in dealing practically with the physical world and in interacting with those in our community.

The principal symbolic systems are

Language, which enables the articulation of complex concepts and thoughts.

Myth, which provides a narrative to explain the structure of the universe and the place of divine and natural forces and of human beings within it.

Religion, which continues the work of myth, and also provides a number of resources for the maintenance of trust both in people and in contingencies

Science, which establishes a maximally non-subjective framework for understanding the natural world around us, and for that purpose draws extensively on the abstract symbolic system of mathematics.

Law, which sustains a socially sanctioned framework within which personal and institutional relationships can be conducted, and when necessary enables conflicts to be settled in a non-violent way.

Culture and the arts, which establish a subjective and evaluative framework for our perception of the world and of social relationships.

All these systems have social institutions for their study, development and transmission to later generations. Examining the use of these symbolic systems and the corresponding institutions in different societies and different periods of history enables us to better understand how social solidarity is created and sustained, and also helps us to understand why sometimes social solidarity breaks down.

3. Dr Melanie Brunner, University of Leeds

Confidential spaces: secrecy, confidentiality and trust at the papal court in Avignon

The papal palace in Avignon was both a political space and a space for politics; it was also a very busy and crowded place, which could make sensitive and confidential negotiations tricky even though the building was specifically designed by successive popes to fulfil its liturgical, ceremonial and political functions. This paper will examine the ways in which the movement and position of people within the palace could be used to create confidential spaces for meetings between the pope and the representatives of secular rulers. The focus will be on the reports of envoys and diplomatic agents at the papal court; curial officials needed to establish trust quickly in order for negotiations to proceed, while at the same time the envoys had to maintain their employers' trust in their ability to fulfil their mission. The construction of both physical and metaphorical spaces around the pope and his interlocutors served to establish the pope's good faith and the confidentiality of any discussions, as well as signalling to the recipient of the report that his secrets were safe. This was essential to the establishment of trust in negotiations, especially in cases where the pope was acting as mediator, such as in the early stages of the Hundred Years' War when Clement VI hosted a number of peace talks in Avignon involving both French and English representatives. The paper will therefore shed light on the palace as a spatial setting for the creation and performance of trust and confidentiality in fourteenth-century diplomatic practice.

Panel 1b: Trade and Contracts - Rees Davis Room.
Chaired by Susannah Bain, University of Oxford

1. Sanne Hermans and Dr Jeroen Puttevils, University of Antwerp

Making the future happen in words: intersubjective trust formulae in the merchant correspondences of Cunertorf-Snel-Janssen (1577-1585) and Claes van Adrichem (1585-1597)

In line with Justyna Wubs-Mrozeqicz's call for more research into the language of trust and trustworthiness in the early modern period, we will examine what we have termed the 'intersubjective trust formula' in two late sixteenth-century Dutch merchant correspondences. The correspondence of Claes van Adrichem relates to his trading activities in the Baltic, with Gdańsk as base of operations. That of the partnership of Gaspar Cunertorf, Johan Snel and Jan Janssen concerns a wider commercial operation, between Lisbon, the Low Countries, Lübeck and Gdańsk. In shaping the future, the merchants colour their instructions – which can be direct, every so often hypothetical, or contains a list of options – with these standardised expressions of trust. Using digital linguistic research, we have found these formulae may indicate expectations ("I trust you will do well"), permission ("I leave it to your judgement"), and encouragement ("do as I entrust you"). They form a common thread throughout the correspondences and play an important role in the creation of a commercially successful future. The two correspondences offer an interesting comparison: the distances between the correspondents are larger in the case of Cunertorf-Snel-Janssen and these three correspondents are on a more equal level since they are partners whereas van Adrichem works with factors who are considered to be subordinates. The question is whether these spatial and hierarchal differences affect the type and number of trust formulations. In any case, there is one rule that the instructed correspondents must consider; their decision must be the most profitable one under the circumstances. In this paper we will show how the interpersonal gap caused by time and space can be closed through the language of trust and how this type of communication simultaneously contributes to the construction of a joint future.

2. Lovissa Olsson, University of Södertörn, Stockholm

Fundaments of trust in 16th century Baltic trade networks

Drawing on court records depicting trade- and credit relations in the Baltic port towns of the mid 16th century, this paper will explore to what extent trust should be viewed as founded on the individual relationship between trading partners, contra based on the involved individuals ties and embedment in the wider social structures of the urban communities. Trade in the Baltic region has been described as based on networks of

small-scale partnerships rather than the larger corporate structures of southern Europe. Research on Baltic trade argues that in this way, risk could be spread by having several parallel partnerships, in which trust could be built slowly by increasing investment in each partnership over time. In this paper I will explore alternative ways to understand the fundamentals of trust through the theoretical perspective of embedded economy, examining the importance of investments and ties to the local community for perceived trustworthiness and credibility. As much of the previous research in this field is based on the Hanse and Hanseatic sources, this study aims to broaden the scope by including the Scandinavian towns of Stockholm and Malmö as well as the Hanseatic towns of Lübeck and Reval to gain a fuller understanding of the social structures of the Baltic trade networks.

3. Ryan Low, Harvard University

Phantom contracts after the Sack of Marseille of 1423

This paper responds to a straightforward question about contracts: what happened to an obligation or transaction when the contract confirming it disappeared? The sack of Marseille in 1423 provides a natural experiment for answering this question. During the early evening of Saturday, 20 November 1423, thousands of Catalan soldiers disembarked on the southern side of the port and swiftly overwhelmed the few Massiliote soldiers defending the city's walls. Over the course of the next three days, the Catalans pillaged homes, monasteries, and royal offices and lit entire neighborhoods on fire. Many of these homes and workshops belonged to public notaries, and thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of contracts were lost forever.

Over the course of the next year, parties sought out the services of the very same notaries to re-confirm the details of lost contracts, and it seems as though they did so relatively easily. In some cases these disputes reached the communal civil court, leaving behind witness testimony used to prove the existence of a transaction. These sources show that the standard of proof for the existence of a lost contract rested upon the party's ability to produce reasonably trustworthy witnesses. In other words, a written contract was not necessary if one only intended to use it as proof in court. This observation calls into question what made contracts useful (let alone trustworthy), whether contracts did "revolutionize" the way people trusted each other, and if so, what that revolution actually meant.

12:30: Lunch - History Faculty Common Room

13:45: Keynote lecture 2 - Lecture Theatre

Professor Teresa Morgan, Yale University

On the evolution of Christian faith out of ancient Mediterranean trust

Chaired by Professor Ian Forrest, University of Oxford

This lecture traces the evolution of early Christian *pistis* (in Greek) or *fides* (in Latin) from its earliest meanings, which centre on relational 'trust', 'trustworthiness', and 'faithfulness' between God, Christ, and the faithful, to the much more complex meaning it develops by the fifth century, when Christian 'faith' can encompass belief, confidence, knowledge, hope, worship, and fideism.

14:45: Tea break - History Faculty Common Room

15:15: Panels 2a/b

Panel 2a: Debt and Default - Lecture Theatre.

Chaired by Professor Ian Forrest, University of Oxford

1. Dr Tony Moore, University of Reading

Forbearance in medieval England

Previous research on the importance of trust in medieval English credit has tended to focus on the initiation of a credit relationship and the role played by informal connections and institutions in a creditor's decision to lend to a particular debtor. This paper will instead examine what role trust (or the lack of it) played at the end of a credit relationship. In particular, it looks at cases in which the debtor defaulted and considers the role that trust may have played in the creditor's decision to initiate formal legal proceedings immediately or to exhibit forbearance and allow more time.

The proposed paper will draw on evidence from the certificates issued under the Statutes Merchant and Staple in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As above, historians have mainly used these sources to try and reconstruct credit conditions when the initial loan was extended rather than to assess the creditor's decisions at the point of default. One exception is the recent paper by Richard Goddard that suggests the degree of forbearance shown by creditors can shed light on contemporary business confidence. This paper will adopt a quantitative methodology – calculating the forbearance period (the

time elapsed between the due repayment date and the issuance of the certificate) for over 32,000 credit transactions, analysing any changes over time, and identifying any factors (e.g. size of the debt, shared occupations or status or locations of the parties) that could influence the creditor's trust in the debtor and thus their patience in waiting for repayment.

2. Dr Angel Rozas Español, University of Castilla-La Mancha

Trade must go on. Trust after financial collapse: the case of Toledo's commercial community at the beginning of the 16th century

At the beginning of the 16th century, Castilian society, as many other European societies, lived on credit. Castilian commercial companies were furthermore erected on complex credit networks as the few preserved company records show. Therefore, trust between companies and traders was indispensable for the development of trade. Nevertheless, we might consider that trust is a perception and it vary according to the spirit of the times. In periods of hardship trust can be just hope.

This proposal aims to analyse the continuity of credit and trust within Castilian companies between 1505 and 1520. On these years the commercial community of Toledo experienced numerous defaults, lawsuits, and violent conflicts within some of the greatest companies of the city. The financial problem affected also to Burgos' traders who were their main creditors. However, trade never stopped during these years between both Toledo's and Burgos' communities and one of the main trade flows of the Kingdom remained active. The question we want to raise is why? Did Toledo's debtors re-erect trust on them? How? Did not have any alternative Burgo's creditors?

We propose to study two cases: one of a singular merchant, Martín de Villarreal, and another of a greater collective, the family of San Pedro. In the first case we will show how a merchant who was part of the financial elite of the city had the chance to continue its business after being imprisoned twice. In the second case we will analyse how a family name supported several insolvent merchants.

3. Dr Dave Fogg Postles, University of Hertfordshire

The church, 'trust' and the laity: fidei laesio revisited

Recently, Ian Forrest has elucidated how the Church 'made' 'trustworthy men'. Apart from that contingent instrumentality, the Church also pronounced a doctrine of trust or breach of faith (fidei laesio) which was extended to the laity in a practical way in the pursuit of debt through the ecclesiastical courts. As Richard Helmholz demonstrated many years ago (Law Quarterley Review 1975) the Church effectively induced such litigation into its courts from an early date, the causes were premised on a breach of promise (rather than contract/covenant – parole not specialty), and the canon law courts retained some

influence in this arena, despite the 'rise' of Chancery and equity, until eclipsed in lay persons' eyes by assumpsit. The doctrine and its theoretical constructs are thus understood. What were the practical consequences? Examining causes in the Lichfield consistory court between 1464 and 1479 inclusive (Staffordshire Record Office B/C/1/1-2), the impact of fidei laesio is considered from the aspects of: what was the proportion of causes subtracted into the ecclesiastical courts away from secular fora, who were the protagonists, what was the nature of the breach of promise and the extent of indebtedness, and how were the causes resolved? Currently, the data collection is in progress but will be substantially complete by the end of the calendar year. An indication of the potential context is represented by the following figures: of 497 causes initiated by parties (instance) between 30 March 1468 and 10 April 1473, 157 involved fidei laesio.

Panel 2b: China - Rees Davis Room.
Chaired by Siyao Jiang, University of Oxford

1. James Wells, York University, Toronto

The moral dimensions of trust in classical Confucian thought

Trustworthiness is a prominent virtue in classical Confucian thought. However, the writings of Kongzi also suggest that an overemphasis on trustworthiness risks imperilling other important goods. In this paper, I attempt to reconcile this apparent conflict by developing a Confucian position in which trust is subordinate to other virtues – shame, filiality, and respectfulness – which constitute *uprightness* of character. Rather than *motivating* right action, establishing trust is instead instrumental to one's virtues bearing practical fruit. Consequently, when one is merely trustworthy, one's actions merely aim at practical outcomes, rather than being properly guided by an appropriate moral character.

2. Dr Yang Fu, National Taiwan University

Behaving like a trustworthy ruler: the authority of knowledge in early Imperial China, first century BCE to first century CE

Scholars of early imperial China have long been concerned with the "crises" in the first century BCE. Whilst historians have examined this process mainly from political and economic perspectives, intellectual and cultural factors that led to it should have equal importance and yet remain understudied. Related research often focuses on the spread of apocryphal texts that contained prophecies of the coming of a new sage-ruler. This approach, however, pays insufficient attention to the base on which such prophecies could in effect work.

This paper argues that a new culture of trust emerged in first century BCE China was a key to understanding how people at that time faced crises and acted as they did. Shaped by the Confucian teachings whose influence was ever-growing, this new culture of trust held that trustworthy people were those who had true, Confucian knowledge. Although this viewpoint was first articulated in the expectations of literati, it soon became a criterion to evaluate the emperor. Emperors of the Han (202BCE–9CE) were judged accordingly to be trustworthy or not, whilst the ambitious Wang Mang (45BCE–23CE) also used this idea of trust to justify himself, so as to establish the Xin Dynasty (9–23).

In delineating the attitudes to rulership, the Confucian articulation of knowledge and trust, and how these ideas interacted with political events in the first century BCE, this paper aims to further the research of early imperial China, as well as to contribute to the study of trust through historical, non-Western lens.

3. Dr Sophia Katz, Tel-Hai College, Israel

Trust and doubt in Song-Ming Confucian thought

In Chinese cultural settings, the idea of trust is expressed by the character xin 信, translated as “trust”, “faith” or “confidence”, as well as “sign” or “letter”. The character is an ideographical combination of two elements - ren 人 (person) and yan 言 (speech). As such, xin first and foremost implies the idea of trustworthiness, determined by lack of verbal deception. Whereas the trustworthiness of a person is verifiable based on the correlation between word and deed, the trustworthiness of the highest metaphysical reality, Heaven, cannot be determined, not least because in the Chinese tradition, Heaven is perceived as silent: it “does not speak” and does not deliver promises. Therefore, a concept comparable to the idea of theistic faith did not explicitly develop in pre-modern China. Yet, Confucian scholars did speak about abstract values of xin (trusting/believing), such as “trusting Heavenly principles” (xin tianli 信天理) and “trusting Dao” (xindao 信道).

I examine the meaning of xin in the scholarship of selected Song-Ming dynasty (11th – 15th centuries) Confucian scholars. Focusing on the relationship between xin-as-trust and doubt, signified by the Chinese terms yi 疑 and huò 惑, raises critical questions: Were various doubts perceived as contrary to trust? Is it possible to identify a positive approach to doubt as a stimulus for intellectual inquiry? What does trusting Scriptures, Heavenly principle or Dao mean? Answering these questions refreshes the notion of xin-as-trust and clarifies the subtle differences between trust and faith, enriching the comparative philosophical discourse.

16:45 Comfort break

17:00: Keynote lecture 3 - Lecture Theatre

Dr Nicholas Baker, Macquarie University, Sydney

Trust and time in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean

Chaired by Annabel Hancock, University of Oxford

Trust is a temporal phenomenon. It is always future-oriented. In trusting someone or something we assume that we can predict their future behavior, we believe that their future actions will conform to our expectations and past experiences. In the world of premodern Mediterranean commerce, as revealed through mercantile correspondence, the temporal aspect of trust looms large because, as Fernand Braudel observed, all such merchants were subject to tyranny of distance: in general, it took one to two weeks to cross the Mediterranean north-to-south in the sixteenth century, east-to-west voyages averaged two-to-three months. It could take up to half a year for a merchant in central Italy to learn if an agent in Alexandria or Alicante had kept or betrayed their trust. When Italian Renaissance merchants thought about trust and its limits, they were thinking about time and the future. In doing so, they thought not only in terms of the mundane hustle and grind of the marketplace but also through a web of interconnected ideas about the future inherited from Christian and classical understandings.

19:00 Conference Dinner (pre-booking required) at Al-Shami, 25 Walton Crescent, Oxford, OX1 2JG.

Day 2: Saturday 14th January 2023

9:00: Keynote lecture 4 - Lecture Theatre

Dr Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo, University of Lincoln

Trust and political communication in the medieval Mediterranean: views from thirteenth-century Iberia

Chaired by Annabel Hancock, University of Oxford

As the foundation of most social interactions involving individuals, communities and institutions, trust constituted an essential parameter for the establishment of different types of relationships in both local and translocal contexts, within and beyond cultural boundaries. Trust was also central in both political and diplomatic contexts, and it was embodied in a variety of communicative acts, including the expression and management of emotions. Particularly relevant was the role that women—as historical agents—played in shaping practices of political and diplomatic communication, suggesting that the boundaries between ‘public’ and ‘private’ spaces of negotiation were very fluid, and certainly not rigidly defined by gender, but rather by trust. This paper will engage with a comparative analysis of legal, literary and narrative sources from thirteenth-century Iberia that shed light on multi-sensorial practices of political and diplomatic communication, and on the interplay between textual representations of trust (including gestures and performance), their customary uses and expected reception. Trust and the sensorial experience were believed to be closely connected, as the evidence provided by the senses could confirm or challenge habit, tradition and in some cases even legal practices. A combined analysis of language (including references to oral and written mediation, and translations), along with gesture and performance associated with trust in political communication enhances our understanding of modes of diplomatic operation and shaping of political thinking, in which emotional rhetoric and performance were often adopted to create and promote trust, while legitimising different types of connections and exchanges.

10:00: Tea break - History Faculty Common Room

10:30: Panel 3a/b

Panel 3a: Emotion and Experience - Lecture Theatre.
Chaired by Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Hosking, University College, London

1. Dr David Manning, University of Leicester

Trust in the divine economy: the Sidney Psalter and anglophone reformation culture, c.1600

In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me (Psalm 56:4)

Trust [Strong's lexicon H982 and H2620] was inextricably bound to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In the midst of Reformation doubt and suffering, trust in God was variously truth-seeking, salvation-assuring, confession-making, testimony-inducing, heresy-making, and belief-sustaining. The diffuse and intangible quality of this kind of spiritual trust and trust in the spiritual is complicated by the ways in which it became manifest in, and over-coded by, more tangible features of social interaction and political economy. Yet, returning with new ambition to historicise trust within the divine economy is essential to any holistic understanding of trust in the premodern world.

Through early modern English translations, the book of Psalms established itself as a hotbed of trust: the incidence of the concept-word is nearly higher here than in all the other books of the Bible put together. This quirk makes the significance of the Psalms to Anglo-Protestant poetics, piety, and politics all the more fascinating.

Working with the contextualising methods of intellectual and cultural history, this paper will explore some of the meanings of trust in the Sidney Psalter (a poetical expansion of the Psalms by Sir Philip and Mary Sidney that was completed by 1594, circulated widely in manuscript, and formative to the work of John Donne, George Herbert, and John Milton). Here, there will be a rare opportunity to consider trust through the interpenetration of spiritual and material things as it informs Anglo-Protestant ideas about the ebbs and flows of Reformation political culture.

2. Dr Sarina Kuersteiner, University of Haifa

Trustworthy lovers: poems and contracts in the Memoriali Registers of Bologna

This paper examines the relationship between contracts and poems in the registers of the Memoriali office in Bologna. Beginning in 1265, anyone entering a contract worth 20 Bolognese lire or more was required to go to the Memoriali office where a notary made a second, authenticated version of the act. Among the more than one and a half million

registrations the office produced between 1265 and 1436, scholars have identified 115 poems—or rime—entered between ca. 1280 and 1330. The vast majority of poems are love poems in the Italian courtly tradition that has its roots in troubadour poetry. Some notaries also appended Latin formulas, commonly used for contracts, to the vernacular poems. Previous scholars have mostly approached the Memoriali poems from either literary or legal-institutional perspectives, interpreting them as expressions of the socio-political ideology of the popolo government or as antifraud space fillers respectively. Combining literary and legal-institutional approaches to the evidence in the Memorial, I find that the love poems share themes of trust, uncertainty, service, and reward with themes in contracts, the function of the office of the Memoriali, and the notarial profession. The poems suggest that notaries may have promoted their own trustworthiness by writing poems; they may also have thought about contractual principles through the lens of poems, and vice versa. Though marginal in the Memoriali registers, the poems were part of Italy's most fashionable art form: vernacular poetry. The presence of the poems in the Memoriali urges us to consider the possibility that a quantitatively insignificant genre of text was, in the minds of notaries, quite central to the emerging urban administration at the time.

3. Ana Carmona, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris

The dangers of trust: Pierre Bayle's critic to historians and astrologists

Known for his finesse in observing the world and his critical ability, the French philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) used indeed a strong rational critic to attack the superstitions and beliefs that led people to trust hastily certain speeches and characters. Bayle's critique shows the dangers of this trust which can have harmful consequences for societies. Two figures are the main targets of his attacks: the historian and the astrologer. Bayle strongly criticises the dangers of trusting in a false historical discourse. A professor of history himself, the philosopher knows what he is talking about.

As an exiled Protestant from the Catholic France of Louis XIV, Bayle wrote a particular work, *Critique générale du calvinisme*, to attack the false historical discourse of Catholics towards Protestants in support of the religious persecution of his time. The philosopher denounced the trust placed in the powers that be and the public in this discourse, which conveyed and justified hatred against his co-religionists. The second anti-trustworthy figure is the astrologer. Trust in this false science that is astrology grants great power to those who practice it. From kings to commoners, the astrologer has the ability, through the trust placed in him, to make entire kingdoms tremble. In our presentation, we will analyse the mechanisms of trust and the risks of trusting these types of figures and discourses in Bayle's critique.

4. Genevieve E. Caulfield, University College, London

Trustworthy sight and demonic meddling: Witelo (fl. 1270s) on illusory visual perception

The extent to which visual perception provided an accurate representation of external reality was a crucial question in thirteenth-century optical thought. While a greater emphasis on the natural fallibility of perception made absolute certainty essentially inaccessible, adequately trustworthy perception could be achieved by being aware of and identifying natural sources of visual misapprehension. Medieval analysts of natural visual anomalies could increase the trustworthiness of visual perception, not least because they could help to rule out one major source of untrustworthy visual experiences: demonic meddling.

Witelo, author of a major textbook on vision (*Perspectiva*, c.1270-78), is a prime example of a thirteenth-century scholar whose work on visual perception demystified the causes of potential demonic illusions and apparitions. In 1268, Witelo explicitly argued that demonic interference was usually unnecessary to explain visual anomalies. For instance, owing to a change in density, air could function as a mirror, causing a person to see their own face in front of them, which they might misjudge to be a demon. Witelo ridiculed such misjudgments, stating that a greater knowledge of natural sources of visual error eliminated the need to attribute visual anomalies to demonic interference.

Both Witelo's letter and his influential optical textbook were part of a significant late thirteenth-century philosophical fixation on the problem of accurately 'certifying' visual perceptions, centred around the papal court at Viterbo. Witelo's detailed model of visual uncertainty in general thus contributed to greater confidence regarding the ability to identify and overcome untrustworthy visual experiences.

Panel 3b: Credit Across Language and Identity Groups. Rees Davis Room.
Chaired by Teresa Barucci, University of Cambridge

1. Dr Tanja Skambraks, University of Mannheim

Trust and credit in late medieval Italy

Trust seems to have been an indispensable prerequisite for successful credit relations in premodern times. Two forms of trust are crucial here: interpersonal trust between business partners and trust in institutions. My paper will focus on trust in the context of the establishment of a social political project of poor-relief in late medieval Italy, the so called Monti di Pietà, which I studied in my second book. The leading question of my

paper is: how did this newly founded institution built trust with their clientele, who were often already attached to other creditors, namely Jewish money lenders?

To answer this question, I will focus on two aspects:

1. Trust created by administration and reform that took place within the numerous Monti di Pietà in the years after their foundation. This process is visible in the statutes of a number of Monti showing the reworking of institutions' administration and organisation with the aim of gaining people's trust as a credit institute, for instance by sanctioning fraud and misbehavior among the staff.
2. Trust based on religious identity: Analyzing the ethical discourse during the 1480ies and 1490ies I will show how the Monti's promoters more or less 'successfully' marginalized their most important rivals on the urban credit markets, the Jewish moneylenders. At the same time they attempted to enhance trust of the clientele in the Monti as a Christian credit institute by building an image of charitably motivated credit. I will show how the promoters of the Monti (mostly Franciscan observants), used an elaborate media strategy, including sermons, treatises and visual depictions to put this project on the sociopolitical agenda of the Italian city communities.

2. Dr Nere Intxaustegi, University of Deusto, Bilbao

Trust in the public notary office: translation and distrust among Basque speakers in the Castilian Crown (16-18th centuries)

The public notaries have been very important worldwide since the thirteenth century; not only in the apparatus of the state, but also in the daily organization of people's lives. They were in charge of writing testaments, dowries, or loans. Therefore, communication was a key element of their job since they had to write down names, dates, and personal information that the clients provided them with. However, a communication problem could arise when the clients did not speak the administrative language. In our case, the Basque territories belonged to the Castilian Crown, but Basque and Castilian are completely different languages. Basque monolingual speakers made up more than 80% in early modern society. For that reason, the public notaries in the Basque territories had more responsibilities, since they also had to perform translator-tasks, where trust played an essential role.

This paper will address these translator-tasks carried out by the public notaries and the problems that existed. Documents from the archives show that many notaries did not play fair, as they crossed out documents or translated other words, which caused trust issues regarding this Office. In order to reflect this distrust, judicial documents from the Crown of Castile are used.

3. Dr Dean A. Irwin. Independent Scholar

Trust and medieval Anglo-Jewish moneylending activities

The moneylending activities of medieval England's Jews were predicated upon trust. Trust by both creditor and debtor in documents, people, and communities. Inherently, the lending and borrowing of money required trust. The creditor had to trust that they had a legitimate chance of repayment, while the debtor had to trust that they (and their lands) were not taken advantage of. Obviously, both parties needed to secure protections which would safeguard them from exploitation and deceit, which was most obviously done using documents. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, all stages of individual transactions were committed to writing, from the lending of capital through repayment and quitclaiming. Despite this, although the Jews were accused of many heinous acts during this period, no allegation was made that they were generally forgers. This highlights a general level of trust in documents which transcended religious boundaries. That has less to do with documents themselves, than the structures which administered their production. Every person involved in the production and enforcement of these records swore an oath for their conduct in relation to it, and this was accepted irrespective of religion. These were not outsiders but leading members of the two communities who were the first arbiters of any disputes, long before cases reached the royal courts. This paper will move away from the legal cases to consider Jewish moneylending transactions in their local context to argue that credit not only fostered, but could not function without, trust and served to define Jewish-Christian relations in towns.

4. Aviya Doron, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Quick to borrow, slow to pay: default as a function of trust across social groups in Jewish-Christian exchange

Jews' involvement in moneylending transactions is often cited as the source of constant tension between Jews and Christians in medieval Europe, at times even the driver of violence against Jews. Although there is no doubt that Jews living in the German-speaking territories of the Holy Roman Empire often engaged in moneylending transactions, the extension of credit required some degree of trust between lender and borrower. These Jews supplied credit to a wide range of the urban population: from princes and bishops, through merchants and craftspeople to servants and peasants. Despite the existence of different forms of loan guarantees, credit transactions often found their way to different courts in the German Empire following debtors' defaults.

Similarly, contemporaneous responsa literature reveals how frequently Christian debtors reneged on their loans, and the ensuing problems default created among Jewish business partners. Although default on loan obligations is often perceived to represent the breakdown of trust relationships, the evidence of recurrent default in Jewish-Christian

exchange calls this assumption into question. This paper will explore how default functioned across different social groups and its role in sustaining or corroding trust. By analyzing thousands of court records from throughout the German Empire and the social networks that emerge from them, together with local legislation and Hebrew responsa, this paper will explore the consequences of default, disentangling the relationship between social standings and the consequences of default within the fourteenth century urban credit market.

12:30: Lunch - History Faculty Common Room

13:30: Keynote lecture 5 - Lecture Theatre

Professor Sheilagh Ogilvie, University of Oxford

A taxonomy of trust: contracting and conspiring in the premodern world

Chaired by Siyao Jiang, University of Oxford

This lecture probes premodern economic history to distinguish between different types of trust. Many pre-modern institutions applied identity-based rules which nurtured a particularized trust in persons of known attributes. This gave rise to both good outcomes and bad. The lecture asks how different types of trust affect behaviour, what encourages generalized trust between strangers, and how to ensure that trust facilitates contracts instead of fostering conspiracies. Premodern history, it finds, can make us more attentive to the taxonomy of trust.

14:30: Tea break - History Faculty Common Room

15:00 Panel 4a/b

Panel 4a: Trust in Professions. Lecture Theatre.

Chaired by Professor Sheilagh Ogilvie, University of Oxford

1. Fiona Knight, University of Cambridge

Little shops of horror? Fear and distrust in late medieval medical encounters

The figure of a barbarous dentist or a sadistic surgeon is a staple in contemporary popular culture - distrust of medical practitioners has an almost universal quality that has historically loomed large. And whilst a medieval patient's fears might not exactly mirror

our own, we can still understand how the financial, professional, and physical vulnerability of both patient (and practitioner) infused each medical encounter with emotive potential.

This paper will build on the work of Michael McVaugh, particularly his influential 1997 paper 'Bedside Manners'. It will examine how both surgeons and physicians in late medieval France and England responded to patient resistance to their masculine authority, and looked to dispel doubt and foster belief in their own expertise. These tactics could take many forms; in diagnosis, the use of intercessors to examine female patients helped to ward off character-based doubts and accusations of sexual impropriety. During treatment, classical authorities could be invoked, with the physician able to cite Galen from his visible belt-book in order to justify his own decisions. Recommendations surrounding pain-relief and distracting techniques are also informative in this regard.

The Chirurgie(s) of Henri de Mondeville, the Liliū Medicinae of Bernard de Gordon, and the works of John Arderne will form the core texts this paper will draw from. In the absence of first person patient accounts, manuals for medical practice and case histories are particularly suitable. In examining these, the recommended baseline for prescribed practitioner and patient behavior can be gauged, and the picture of the 'trustworthy' and resilient practitioner emerges, often in contrast to the shadowy figure of the 'charlatan'. When guidance is produced around approaches to 'difficult' patients, we can then also ask; what fears are being assuaged, how, and why?

2. Susannah Bain, University of Oxford

Between politics and priesthood: Tealdo the priest, trust, and the Genoese church in late thirteenth-century Tunis

Latin Christian merchant communities residing in Muslim-ruled Mediterranean cities were usually allowed a place for worship. These churches stood alongside accommodation, retail and storage space, and offices for political representatives. We know little about the clergy who served these sites, or how they operated in and adapted to local contexts. This paper looks at one of these clergymen: Tealdo the priest, based at the church of Santa Maria in the older of Genoa's two fondachi (commercial complexes) in Tunis in the late thirteenth century. Like many others, he was appointed by the Genoese archbishop to serve the city's community overseas.

Tealdo appears in 26 of 133 surviving documents by the Genoese notary Pietro Battifoglio, which cover Tunis in the years 1288-9. Within these, the priest takes on roles expected for the secular clergy: witnessing wills and serving as procurator for the deceased. More often, however, he appears doing less priestly things. He acts as witness for commercial transactions and is involved in political disputes between the Genoese and local officials.

This paper considers why Tealdo took on these roles, arguing that his actions should be understood through the lens of trust. On the one hand, this was institutional. He was a satellite of the Genoese church and the expectations and status this gave him meant he was trusted to fulfil certain tasks. On the other, interrelatedly, it was reflective of the personal relationships Tealdo had forged with both Genoese political elites and the more settled members of the local community.

3. Professor Sharon Strocchia, Emory University, Atlanta

Signs of trust: brands, trademarks, and medical culture in late Renaissance Italy

This paper aims to historicize the public construction of trust in early modern medical remedies by examining the development of brand names and trademarks in major Italian cities between 1550 and 1650. As part of a broader marketing strategy, the use of brand names and commercial markings was intended to convey strong messages about authenticity, value, and quality control to prospective buyers. These signifiers were essential to the evolution of product identity in the competitive therapeutic markets of early modern Italian cities and were often protected by patent privileges. Although branding has conventionally been associated with modern capitalism and the “consumer revolution” of the eighteenth century, I argue that Renaissance branding practices addressed common issues of trust that became more acutely visible after 1500. The extension of globalized trading networks, the influx of unfamiliar medicinal substances from Asia and the Americas, and the affordances of print advertising posed new challenges to managing the risks inherent in medical encounters and commercial exchange. In response to these challenges, producer-vendors increasingly relied on proprietary visual codes to build consumer trust in their products – and by extension, in local political and medical institutions. My paper examines branding as a set of trust practices that shaped Renaissance medical culture and the long-term development of Western pharmaceutical markets. I draw on a wide range of sources, including hand-drawn pictorial elements found in archival patent applications; cheap pamphlets advertising medical remedies; and printed handbills issued across the Italian peninsula between 1550 and 1650.

Panel 4b: Public Trust and Power - Rees Davis Room.
Chaired by Dr Emily Winkler, University of Oxford

1. Alastair Gardner, University of Birmingham

Material cultures of trust: money, coins, and expressions of trust in Guibert of Nogent's Monodies

Money and trust feature prominently in each other's respective literature, a connection dating back, in the modern sociological tradition to Georg Simmel. Studies of money in medieval European society usually reiterate the assumed effects of monetisation on social relations – depersonalisation and asocial behaviour. This narrative reinscribes familiar historical narratives of trust's transformation through processes of commercialisation, urbanisation, rationalisation, and secularisation, reaffirming arguments for trust's uniquely modern qualities. Guibert of Nogent's (c.1055-1119CE) treatment of the burgeoning money economy of the late-eleventh and early-twelfth century superficially fulfils this vision of money's corrosive role on pre-modern social relations. However, a closer examination of money in Guibert's thought, incorporating recent anthropological 'activating' theories of money, reveal that it was not just the experience of money in commercial exchange, but the basic material properties of and physical interactions with coins that had the greatest effects on conceptualising trust. Using Guibert's autobiography, the *Monodies*, I demonstrate how trust exists at the intersection of social practices and intellectual culture, as changed material circumstances contributed to shifts in the cultural imaginings of trust in early-twelfth century Europe. Consequently, I not only bypass stale reiterations or refutations of the presumed role of money in changes in trust from pre-modern societies to modern societies, but I also present how to think about trust and material culture more productively than questions of whether one exchange or another indicates an irrecoverable moment of trust or distrust.

2. Anna Clark, University of Oxford

'A house worthy of its rewards and happy and grateful to its patroness': portraits of female patrons as a language of trust in the sixteenth-century university

The sixteenth-century expansion of England's universities led to a growing number of opportunities to act as a patron of education. This was accompanied by rising levels of female patronage. These patrons brought with them financial investments, in return seeking the commemoration of their charitable endeavours. Nevertheless, women's agency within male-dominated university colleges was limited, and the circumstances of these female benefactors, mostly widowed or childless, amplified the importance of establishing trusting relationships with these institutions.

Alongside customary methods of trust-building, such as legal documents and letters, some female benefactors adopted new mechanisms to negotiate their relationships with academic institutions, including the increasingly popular medium of portraiture. An important example of the use of portraiture in this way is demonstrated by the picture bequests of Joyce Frankland. Written records in the archives of Brasenose College, Oxford show the kind of careful language that accompanied the donation of her portraits and those of her parents. The specificity with which she dictated where the portraits should be displayed, and under what circumstances they would be given, reveals how a previous breakdown of trust affected the commemorative choices she made.

Sixteenth-century portraits are a valuable source for exploring the dynamics of trust between female benefactors and university colleges. Similarly, trust is a fresh lens through which scholars of early portraiture can expand our understanding of the materiality of social bonds.

3. Mariia Golovina, Central European University

Knowledge, trust, and diplomacy: reestablishing Venetian-Muscovite relations in global early modern context

"The fear of being deceived makes them mature in a conversation and cautious in decisions," wrote the Venetian diplomat Alberto Vimina about the Muscovite ambassadors he met at the Polish court in the 1650s. For both the Venetians and the Russians the second half of the seventeenth century marked the reestablishment of diplomatic contacts after a decades-long break. In these circumstances, the diplomats from both sides had to negotiate in unfamiliar sociocultural settings. Both polities had their own systems of gathering and evaluating information, but how did they act when sources of information were completely new? Could a Muscovite diplomat trust the Venetian official who claimed that the Russian embassy was receiving the highest honors? Could a Venetian envoy rely on the rumors that the tsar was most probably inclined to accept the proposal of a military alliance? The definite answer to these questions was essential because major geopolitical decisions were at stake. My paper will explore the establishment of criteria for trust or mistrust in diplomatic relations between Venice and Muscovy in the period when the latter was becoming more prominent in the European arena. It will demonstrate how the two knowledge regimes incorporated new sources of information by working out strategies for checking their reliability. This paper will provide one yet very prominent example of how notions of trust and mistrust constituted the bases for political decision-making and defined global early-modern diplomatic interactions.

16:30: Conference round up: Lecture Theatre.

Can we define a premodernity of trust?

Professor Ian Forrest, University of Oxford

17:30 End of conference