

## BEING HELD ABOVE THE ABYSS; SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT TRUST

1. This paper in fact is about trust, the trust we have, a person has, in which we move around safe, feeling safe, knowing with our very existence to be safe in the situation. I suppose, that this better can stay. Trust, never is a possession, it is given. It is given to me, to us, in a relationship. Just because I am in a relationship with persons, with reality I trust, I trust. I have confidence; I know I am held, that in fact nothing can happen to me, which is really dangerous. I am in this relationship, which is reliable, and so the situation is reliable. I myself become reliable. I am consoled all old experiences are forgotten. As long as the relationship persists I live in peace.

Trust has to do with truth, with confidence, with help, with reliability, with consolation. These are meanings showing up in other Germanic languages in connection with the same root, the same "origin-word". Trust too has to do with freedom. The more the person we live in relationship with, whom too trust is free, our trusting makes us free.

We very often use the word trust in another manner: We have trust in ourselves. It looks like this is not trust out of a relationship, that it is trust, built on self-confidence, on the vital energies we have, on the successes we had in life. Even if this would be wholly true, in that case too, the relationships would be vital: With those who trust us to be able to, who are afraid of us, are adoring us, for whom we are gods. And, of course, in this trust too, the foundation in the trust and the trustworthiness of another, maybe long ago, in childhood and forgotten, is, however hidden and even denied, obvious.

2. Very often we take trust for granted, especially when other people have to trust us. And nevertheless, trust is always given; it never can be taken for granted. The trust we have in our life, trust of others in us, when we are consciously experience it, always is a miracle, something from another world, coming into ours.

World and life are a chaos in which we, time and again, go under although we defend ourselves like mad. It is a fight of everybody against everybody and nobody really can be trusted. Alliances are only for a certain time and only when conditions are not changing. The world, culture, life, is an abyss, morally, intellectually, existentially, and physically. Human and other) beings just perish, in the millions, in endlessly many manners, everywhere and all around us. In fact nobody cares. We just go on. As long as we trust, trusting. Or lost too we must clearly distinguish between:

(a) Trust which is given in the relationship with a person, a reality we trust. We need not strive for it; it is just given, in the mimesis with the trusted person.

(b) Trust, which we acquire, fighting for it, winning over others and trusting that we will win again. This trust is always endangered and does not give freedom.

3. To be able to trust, for the time we trust and in the situation we trust, we might live in a reality which is stronger, mightier, than the chaos of this world we are living in, than the powers of this world which are all around us and threaten to drown us. Incidentally we can find trust by trusting a person or a reality, relying on them, who is stronger than everybody or everything we are afraid of. So the child is seeking the protection of the mother and the father, trusting them to be strong. So in the feudal times people put

themselves in the trust of a stronger person or institution. Trust, sought after in this manner, always is endangered. We have to find somebody or something, mightier than whoever or whichever threatens us. It is a trust, built on power. The power can fail will fail. There always are stronger powers. Trust, built on power, either our own power or the power of whom we trust never can really free us of fear and anxiety.

There is still another reason why this sort of trust does not work, a modern one. This trust only is possible when there are clear structures. As long as the person seeking protection, giving her, himself trusting in the hand of the other, the stronger, recognizes and accepts the position in power, the higher position of the other, seeking and finding this trust is possible. It was the case in the high days of feudal times (but very soon there came internal mimesis and rivalry). It is still the case with small children, living in eternal mediation with their parents, but nowadays not all of them and not any longer when they grow up, because as soon as they rival with their parent's trust is destroyed.

The other way round: In relationships in which there is real trust, there always is external mediation, between parents and children, in all hierarchies. Just because they all are disappearing, trust disappears. The same is true for friendships: Differences disappear, so external mediation disappears, trust disappears.

4. So, to be able to trust, it must be trust in a person or a reality, which does not belong to our world of power and rivalry, who or which is outside of the chaos of our world. It must in fact be a reality, which cannot be reached by our power, which is outside of our world of power. Which as a consequence, in the eyes of the world, must be weak, just because he, it, cannot be measured with the power-measures of this world. It is paradoxical reality, about which we all know more or less, that power cannot win over real powerlessness. And, I suppose it still is something else. They are two realities, belonging to two different worlds, so by definition power cannot overpower powerlessness. And again this too is not wholly true, because powerlessness makes power powerless.

In all this it is very important that powerless is not fate, is not submission to defeat. Powerlessness is a free decision, eventually in the following of Jesus to be powerless. Fate and defeat can bring on that way, but they certainly do not do that automatically.

5. To put it again in another manner: to be able to trust, to live in trust, we need to live with a person, a reality. In fact trusting we live in the reality of this person, of this reality. Per definition he, or this reality, does not belong to this world. So he, it is transcendent. Pure love, given to us. Faith, hope and love, given to us, in a relationship with it, which we trust, because in fact we are overwhelmed by it. God, shown to us in Jesus. Jesus himself.

Here is one of the paradoxes theology never could solve and in which the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism took different ways, being complementary to each other. It does not matter, in life everything happens exactly in the same moment. We trust and so we are trusted, and we are trusted and so we trust. We trust and so we find whom we can trust, and we find whom we can trust and so we trust.

Ideals and dreams about whatever and however "high" are not transcendent. They are of this world and aspects of us ourselves. So they don't give us trust. They can move us

forward. And in the end, very clearly, they destroy everything, life itself. That has become, in our time, extremely clear.

A girl said: "I know who God is. I know that He means to me. I know who I am". These sentences belong together. The knowing to be, that I am me, the knowing about identity, and trust belong together.

8. So trust which really holds, in which we really are safe, is a relationship with a reality, which does not belong, which is incommensurable with this world. Which, in the eyes of the world, our own eyes, is weak, a non-entity. Being with, in this relationship means being in the mimesis with a reality, which has no power at all, it means to be weak. This means again that to trust means to have the freedom to be weak. Only by knowing and accepting this weakness, which comes in fact out of another world, I can trust. And only by trusting in this manner I can be really strong. In fact invincible.

So one of the paradoxes in the life of Paul becomes clear. See 2 Cor. 12, 7-10, esp. 9-10, ending "For it is when I am weak that I am strong" (Jerusalem Bible). And here again it is not the acquired, but the given weakness, the weakness received in trust. And so the given strength. In fact it is the weakness and the strength of Jesus, in which Paul partakes, to which he calls his readers by telling his story.

7. It is clear that there is a deep relationship between trust and freedom. Without freedom there is no trust. And trust gives freedom. Again the same paradox in another form. Freedom means in fact to be outside of the mechanisms of the powerfight and powergames of this world. Trust brings us out of them.

This again means: Trust in freedom beings in external mediation. When I am able to trust somebody, not because I know that the other is trustworthy (we never are as such, being trustworthy never is something like a personal quality, it always is given), but because I am free to trust, the other experiences trust in a relationship in which there is no rivalry. So she, he becomes trustworthy.

Here is one of the most important aspects of the bringing up of children. Parents having the freedom to trust their children, who, just because of that, become trustworthy persons.

8. It is with trust as with freedom as with faith. We have it, knowing about it and about the origin of it and the possibility to have it. Maybe we live in it, now and then, carrying us further on the way in times it looks like fading away from us. And we are time and again losing it, at best on the way to it. Very deeply it is a gift and again a paradox, in the same time we have to seek, to strive for it. But striving always in the deep knowing that in the end it is a gift. Which, again surely is given to them who seek.

9. The opposite of trust is fear. Fear means that we are amidst of the powerfight and that we have the impression to lose or to run the risk to lose. Fear is only there as long as the outcome, for the fearful person, is unclear, the situation looking bleak. As soon as the fight is decided, in whichever manner, fear disappears. This fear anyway. There may be new fear for what comes next, the fighting ever going on.

Apprehension is there when everything is much more unclear. It might be that in the outcome I will lose. As soon as this becomes clearer, I shift from apprehension to fear.

Or the situation stays, for the time being, unsure, unresolved for me. I stay apprehensive. Or I win, I get out of the situation without lasting damage because I am, again for the time being, the victor. I am jubilant, licking my wounds. Or, at least, the apprehension gone.

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