Trust 1 Psych., Theol.

1. Psychological and Theological Aspects
2. Social Aspects

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1.1. The term "trust" proves, especially since E. Erikson's (1902-94) creation of the concept of "primal trust" (→ Ego Psychology; Identity), to be a mechanism for reducing both social (N. Luhmann) and theological complexity. It describes a "basic event between the human being and God. The relationship to God stands or falls with trust in God" (E. Jüngel). As a central category of theological → anthropology, it is based on the psychological idea that the infant in its first year lives in a symbiosis with the mother that is supported by the infant's innate "basic trust" (Erikson). The task of religious formation would be to detach this basic trust "from its initial connection with the parents and to give it a new direction" (W. Pannenberg, 227).

Empirical research of infancy (→ Childhood) has proved the symbiosis model, which forms the basis for this concept of trust, to be untenable. The infant is no longer seen as a predominantly passive being who receives maternal care but as an interactive partner of both parents, with differentiated competencies. With this new view of the infant it can be seen that both in the symbiosis model and in the concept of "basic trust" that evolved from it, the patriarchal model of the relationship of the sexes is implicated. Thus, with the extensive absence of the father, the woman is seen exclusively as mother, and consequently the subjectivity of the mother is denied (J. Benjamin). Furthermore, the symbiosis model neglects the entire range of unconscious fantasies of the infant (S. Isaacs), which contain archaic attacks as well as primitive imaginings of love in connection with both parents, mother as well as father. It is these extremely vital internal pictures of the unconscious fantasy life, extraordinarily frightening to the adult imagination, which constitute the inner world of humans (H. Beland). These archaic, unconscious fantasies are symbolized in the world of apocalyptic images (→ Apocalypticism).

1.2. Criticism of the symbiotic model requires a revision of the theological concept of trust. The OT word group *amn,* from which the → "Amen" at the end of a → prayer derives, corresponds to the Greek concept *pistis* (faith, trust). The Heb. *amn* designates the child in arms; its theological context, however, is the → covenant between → Yahweh and → Israel, which is oriented toward shalom (→ Peace 2.1.1), toward the intersubjectivity of both covenant partners, and it intends a relationship of trust supported "with all your heart, and with all your soul" (Deut.6:5).

In the NT → Paul refers the *pistis* concept to the connection between cross and → resurrection (Rom.10:9). With Paul, as well as the writers of the → Synoptics, trust refers to the miraculous activity of God (→ Miracle), in which trusting humans participate (Mark 11:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:8-11), which brings new → life out of → death.

Psychoanalytic assumptions (→ Psychoanalysis) correspond to this miracle of trust: the child from the beginning of its life attacks its primary attachment figures in its unconscious fantasies, in "merciless love" (D. W. Winnicott), which is the expression of its innate bodily vitality, and imagines in its early fantasy life to have destroyed the parents. If the parents neither take revenge nor deny the attack but rather "survive" it, then this infinitely repeated experience of interaction constitutes the basis of the ability to trust and to experience a feeling of → guilt. Put theologically, → sin (put psychologically, → aggression) destroys the relationship supporting the subject — before this relationship "resurrects," in transformed form, through the survival of the early attachment figures, as an action *extra nos* (outside ourselves). "God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil. We cannot go to heaven unless we first go to hell. We cannot become God's children until we first become children of the devil" (M. → Luther, *LW* 14.31). Trust thus becomes the sensibility for history: the subject sees what it has done to other subjects in the past and out of this painful insight develops hope for future opportunity for reparation.

1.3. Psychological insights into the absolutely constitutive role of early interpersonal relationships, which are the basis of trust, have an important result for → pastoral care, as well as for → religious instruction. They can see their basic anthropological assumptions pre-formed in the interpersonal experiences of relationship that are differentiated at the beginning of life and guided by unconscious fantasies. In these early relational fantasies the ability to trust arises first through the experience that the understanding of the needs of the child, which are articulated in motor-sensory ways, is accomplished in the personality of the adult reference person *(extra nos)*. The child grasps this external ability to comprehend early in the first year, always by means of its vital bodily impulses.

Seen from the perspective of the *parents,* the development of the ability to trust is grounded in the kind of behavior that offers the vital child sufficient

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opportunity for reparation (Winnicott). This can be done only by parents who do not see themselves — as in the symbiosis model — as functional objects of children's needs but who see themselves as their child's subjective interactive partner and who thus accept that their child is equipped in the same measure from the beginning of life with competence to interact. Seen from the perspective of the *child,* the ability to trust presupposes the acceptance of its personal vitality, including those elements attacking the other subject (Benjamin). It forms the basis of a theological anthropology, according to which trust represents the result of successful human experiences of aggression, a result that one constantly questions one's entire life.

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