

„The Leap of Courage”
Death Anxiety and Social Trust

PhD thesis

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1. Introduction

Although neither the (social) sciences, nor philosophy paid much attention to the topic of trust until fairly recently, it became a true ‘hot topic’ since Luhmann’s *Trust and Power* (1979) at the latest. The social sciences have since recognised that trust is one of the fundamental determinants of individual as well as social existence, integration, and (mental) health. The fact that the human is a *trusting being* is the predominant and most peculiar feature of human sociality. Perhaps due to the relative ‘rootlessness’ of the concept of trust, a universally accepted definition does not exist yet. Serious (self-)contradictions and unresolved issues all the more so – the ever-emerging new accounts lead to a ‘conceptual confusion’ (Lewis, Weigert 1985, Misztal 1996) in which the various attempts on definition usually reflect the personal theoretical positions of their authors (Misztal 1996).

Consequently, our understanding of the phenomenon is ambiguous, moreover, a sufficiently thorough trust concept that would be necessary for a robust operationalisation is not available. The lack of an appropriate concept questions the validity of the results of any empirical study on trust. Given the richness of the literature on the concept of trust together with the depth of the problems to be solved, the challenge of a satisfactory conceptualisation extends far beyond a subchapter of a dissertation. Therefore, the aim of the dissertation is not to present some dubious empirical research, rather to develop a trust concept that is fitting to be the basis of a future operationalisation of a more valid, reliable, and accurate measurement of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the conceptualisation of the trust phenomenon calls for a theoretical research, which can be accomplished by elaborating on a new aspect whose importance has been guessed by some, but discussed in sufficient detail by none.

This aspect is the introduction of probably the most elaborate concept of the existential (death) anxiety, which fundamentally determines, and is in close dynamic relationship with trust, namely, Paul Tillich’s theory of the courage to be. Its background, the history of thought on the topic of the fear of death and death anxiety and some further inferences are discussed – due to length constraints – in the related publications of the author (Mújdríca 2015a, 2017, 2020b) as well as in an external working paper (Mújdríca 2020a) that is to be counted as an integral part of the dissertation.

Although the systematic discussion of the topic of trust began in the 20th century, it has been present in Western thought throughout the ages from the very beginning. Without trust, society and the majority of human relationships would disintegrate (Simmel 1978), and only very simple, elementary forms of cooperation would be possible (Luhmann 1979), for trust

‘lubricates’ cooperation in societies as well as the inevitable frictions of social life (Dasgupta 1988, Putnam 1993, 2000). Hence, trust is the basis of the central element of the social phenomenon, i.e. all kinds of cooperation (Baier 1986). Accordingly, any form of trust can be considered inherently social (Balázs 2002), even though some interpret the notion of social trust in a narrower sense (e.g. Putnam 2000, Csepeli et al. 2004). The vast literature on (social) trust can be categorised in multiple ways. However, the categorisation in two major schools: cognitive and non-cognitive approaches fits to the purpose of the conceptual focus.

There is a great diversity of theories within the cognitive branch, but they are generally based either on the (mis)conception of the simple economic, transaction-focused, interest-driven, rational, or at least rationalisable human agency or on a corrective attempt of that, such as the Social Exchange Theory (SET) or Friedman’s ‘update’ of neoclassical economics. In line with these, cognitive trust theories are typically related to risk-taking and calculative behaviour (Balázs 2002). This trust is essentially a strategic decision, a means to deal with the uncertainties arising from situations that are considered risky in our relationships with others. Uslaner (2002) calls it *strategic* trust. This trust is three-place: ‘A’ trusts ‘B’ to do, or with respect to, ‘X’ (Hardin 2006). It generally assumes uncertainty and risks, aims at reducing the transaction costs of information required for complete certainty, and it is experience- and knowledge-based. It is thus a rational decision or expectation based on information and past experiences on specific persons, and is extremely fragile. Cognitive/strategic trust is hard to build but easy to destroy (Uslaner 2002). The ‘hardcore’ rationalist accounts (e.g. Dasgupta 1988, Good 1988, Coleman 1990, Offe 1999) consider trust as a result of an assessment of costs and gains based on purely cognitive, rational calculation, rational choice (Marková 2004): a variety of uncertainty-reducing, risk-handling means, a substitute for certainty based on past experiences (Balázs 2002), which is a more or less conscious, profit maximising behaviour (e.g. Dasgupta 1988, Yamagishi, Yamagishi 1994, etc.). This trust is like placing a bet (Coleman 1990, Sztompka 1999). The critique of this approach has already appeared in Luhmann’s (1979) work. According to him, such a definition describes nothing but sheer calculation that leaves trust no room. Hardin’s (1993, 2006) ‘encapsulated interest’ concept emerged from another critique of the same idea, although he seems to have misunderstood the phenomenon even more. Improving the early rationalist approach, he defines trust as a rational expectation. It entails that the trustor has reason to believe that being trustworthy will be in the trusted person’s interest, so the trustor’s interests are ‘encapsulated’ in the interests of the trusted. This account, however, seems to identify a shady, shrewd, cunning, manipulative, selfish, beguiling relationship of

interest instead of trust (Pettit 1995, Lagerspetz 2015), and it can only give rise to a mutually distrustful cooperation (Lagerspetz 2015) even in a ‘best-case scenario’.

Although even Luhmann (1979) himself considered trust risk-based, he took a softer stance in comparison with the (f)rigid economic accounts. He thought that trust is irrational on the individual level, and it is rational only on the level of the social system. One of the main branches of the ‘softcore’ cognitive approaches seems to have developed from Blau’s (1964) SET, their apparent lack of reflection on it notwithstanding. It describes trust as emerging gradually out of pure self-interest in the course of recurring cost-benefit calculations in (social) exchange situations. Putnam’s (1993, 2000) concept and the ideas of Hollis (1998), who further developed the former, added the notion of generalised reciprocity – based on Gouldner’s (1960) work – to Blau’s idea of trust. This way they created a concept much more sensitive to the social nature of trust, whose core, as they suggest, is a continuous exchange relationship in which individuals do for others, even for strangers, without the expectation of *immediate* reciprocation. Its basis is their conviction that someone will *return* the favour in some way. However, this is also an inherently interest-driven agency: a combination of short-term altruism and long-term self-interest (Putnam 1993, 2000), so it also seems to be suspiciously manipulative. The robust and self-affirming, cumulative nature of trust (Good 1988, Gambetta 1988, Dasgupta 1988) remains unclarified in this approach as well, and it cannot explain persuasively the trust in *complete* strangers despite Hollis’ (1998) grand efforts in this regard.

Giddens (1990, 1991), Sztompka (1999), and Möllering (2006) established the most developed cognitive approach based on an alternative assumption, whereby they got quite close to the non-cognitive accounts: they treated trust as a mainly emotional, unconscious phenomenon, which is cognitive only to a certain extent. According to them, trust brackets, suspends risks, and they suggest – inspired most probably by Friedman (1953) – that in trust, we act *as if* the risks did not exist, *as if* we knew the future. This, however, seems to describe a *mimesis*, an imitation of trust, and is much closer to naïveté than to trust. The explanations of the ‘as-if-trust’ based on Axelrod’s (1984) Prisoner’s Dilemma or other Game Theoretical experiments seem also to be mistaken in the light of Lagerspetz’ (2015) arguments. According to him, the role of trust in the Game Theoretical model is only secondary without taking the social context into account, and since this model presupposes trust, it cannot account for that. Furthermore, enhancing the *as if* approach, Giddens (1990, 1991), Sztompka (1999), and Möllering (2006) introduced ‘the leap of faith’ as a key factor of trust, identifying it as the cause of the suspension of risks and lack of information.

However, on the one hand, faith cannot complement insufficient knowledge (Tillich 2009), and on the other hand, ‘the leap of faith’ is a conceptual ‘black box’ in their theory that indicates a total failure of the explanatory power of this approach. But this concept can only be considered as a description of naïveté even with this black box or of *reliance* without it. For when trusting is not despite, but because of a reason, trust becomes a reasonably taken risk, consequently, unreasonable, and it can only be considered as reliance (Balázs 2002). Thus, the cognitive/strategic account seems to identify reliance with trust mistakenly. The difference of the two phenomena lies in the fact that while the trustor may be betrayed, or at least, let down in their trust, the failure of calculative reliance can only make the person ‘relying on’ disappointed (Baier 1986, Bernstein 2011, Lagerspetz 2015). Moreover, in contrast with trust, reliance is goal-oriented (Hertzberg 2010), and treats the other as a *means* unto its goal (Lagerspetz 2015). Therefore, if trust would be risk-taking in a state of uncertainty, it would either be *ill-advised* or redundant, if we have certainty regarding the situation. To sum up: the cognitive accounts *do not speak about trust*: they describe reliance or naïveté in the best case or either a manipulative, selfish, cunning relationship of interest or a feigned, blufflike pseudo-trust in the worst case.

The non-cognitive accounts (Baier 1986, Govier 1993, Becker 1996, Jones 1996, Bernstein 2011, Lagerspetz 1998, 2015)¹, rooted in Moral Philosophy, challenge the cognitive approaches from the very beginning. While the representatives of the cognitive concepts strived for getting a grip on the ‘everyday’ trust experience, the authors of the non-cognitive schools aimed at a deeper phenomenological understanding of the phenomenon. Different schools developed within this group of theories as well, but with less variability in comparison with the cognitive approach. The non-cognitive approach is rooted in Annette Baier’s (1986) article. Baier’s concept, as well as Trudi Govier’s (1993) and Karen Jones’ (1996), were more of forerunners of the fully fledged non-cognitive perspective, for they still contain cognitive, reliance-like elements. Uslaner’s (2002) notion of moralistic trust can be considered as a systematic summary of the non-cognitive trust conceptions, but it transcends them in one aspect. While the strategic/cognitive accounts formalise trust as three-place and the majority of the non-cognitive theories as two-place (‘A’ trust ‘B’), Uslaner’s moralistic trust is only one-place (‘A’ trusts). Hence, it disposes not only of the instrumental and transitional

¹ The dissertation does not count some renown figures among the key authors of the non-cognitive theories, such as Dunn, Hertzberg, the Yamagishis, or Uslaner, for their importance lies in their inspirational or summarising role instead of theory-building.

characterisation of the trusted, but dependence of trust on the trusted also disappears from it, so trust becomes a value for its own sake.

In contrast with the hardcore rationalising position, the majority of the non-cognitive theories consider trust to be saturated with a certain affective warmth (Baier 1986, Becker 1996, Jones 1996, Bernstein 2011). However, the Wittgensteinians, Hertzberg (2010) and especially Lagerspetz (2015), went beyond the emotional characterisation of trust as they rejected the idea of narrowing it down to any specific state (of mind). They interpret trust as a universal, omnipresent pattern. Accordingly, they do not reject the possibility of an affective attitude in trust, but they do not limit their understanding of trust to that. Along these differences, two main non-cognitive approaches can be outlined: concepts emphasising the emotional character or the irreflective, unconscious nature of trust. This is only a difference in their emphasis, though, for both recognise the other's basic assumptions, that is, the authors regarding trust as an emotionally defined phenomenon also assume that it is typically unconscious. A further common feature in all of the non-cognitive accounts is the presence of a benevolence-/goodwill-assuming optimism in the trustor. Besides these, there are other author-specific elements in the definitions, such as the assumption of competence (Jones 1996) or conscientiousness and reciprocity (Bernstein 2011).

The main problem with Baier's approach is that she introduced the element of 'accepted vulnerability', which assumes the perception of risk and a certain suspicious, wary reliance instead of trust (Jones 1996, Lagerspetz 2015). It is probably not by accident that the suspiciously similar element of the *willingness* to be vulnerable became popular in works of a cognitive character (Mayer et al. 1995, Rousseau et al. 1998). We can agree with Lagerspetz (2015) that we do not feel more, but less vulnerable in our trustful relationships in comparison with those without trust. Lagerspetz solved the vulnerability issue by developing the concept of 'shared vulnerability'. It assumes that vulnerability cannot only be something to avoid, but also something that we actively seek at some level of our being, finding true community in each other by it. We are 'freely offering up ourselves to each other' (Lagerspetz 2015:64), whereby we share our vulnerabilities with each other. This can be regarded an important value in itself. Besides Baier, Govier's (1993) and Jones' (1996) accounts have also gotten too close to the notion of reliance. The reason for this in their case – apart from their three-place formalisation – is their introducing the element of optimism about the competence of the trusted (Becker 1996).

Following Baier (1986) and Jones (1996), Bernstein (2011) and Lagerspetz (2015) perfected the assertion of the irreflective, imperceptible background-characteristic of trust. Its essence, on the one hand, lies in that it reaches awareness only when it is already damaged or broken – consequently, we are usually unaware of our actual, intact trusting, which may be broken down by information on the trusted. On the other hand, however, trust is particularly resistive to information, for the trustor interprets them in the light of their trust. Hence, trust acts as an interpretive filter, which introduces a bias in the interpretation of the information on the trusted in their favour. It explains the robust nature of trust. The reason for this is that from their point of view, the trustor does not perceive the situation to be as risky, uncertain, or potentially threatening as it appears to be objectively: when we trust somebody, we do not assume the possibility of their betrayal (Lagerspetz 2015). Therefore, to understand trust, we have to be aware of its ‘positionality’, the lack of which helps to make sense of the failure of the accounts approaching the phenomenon in an objectivising way (keeping in mind that the *lack* of risk perception is not to be equated with its ignorant *suspension*).

Therefore, trust only appears when it already disappeared or is in the process of breaking down – moreover, becoming aware of trusting entails its breakdown. This is what Lagerspetz (2015) calls the ‘dys-appearance’ of trust. Considering trust so – as a fundamentally unconscious phenomenon – is in conflict with the everyday trust experience. That is, there are situations (e.g. in case positive affections towards the trusted are present, such as love), in which getting aware of trusting does not result in its destruction. Moreover, although the non-cognitive theories separated trust from reliance properly, and they were able to explain trust in complete strangers as well as the robust nature of trust, they did not distinguish their concepts from naïveté. Therefore, their definitions of trust describe naïve and trusting relations at the same time, which runs the serious risk of conflating the two phenomena. However, they provide an undeniably better starting point for the conceptual aim of the dissertation than the cognitive theories.

It has to be noted on the one hand that trust, in line with Uslaner’s one-place formalisation, is not only possible as a two-sided relationship involving mutuality, but also as a non-mutual, one-sided relation (Balázs 2002). Although mutuality is possible, it cannot be a criterion of trusting. On the other hand, the doctoral research settled the debate on the ‘origins’ of trust, based on evidences from recent findings of the life sciences on oxytocin-accompanied stress response. Rejecting the early learning hypothesis, the research verified the assumption of trust being an innate capacity. Furthermore, in accordance with the relevant principles of

Michael Polányi (1966), it also rejected the possibility of a reductionist conception of trust based on any biological, social, or cognitive processes as well as all kinds of their interplay.

2. Aims

The aim of the study is to develop a novel definition of trust, which may enable valid empirical research of the phenomenon. In addition to the conceptualisation of trust, the length constraints of the dissertation allow unravelling only the most important of the related phenomena (naïveté, distrust, lack of trust, etc.) and the everyday trust experience as well as the discussion of some social scientific issues to which the concept is relevant.

3. Methods

Due to its conceptual focus, the dissertation applies systematic theoretical argumentation and critical analysis of the available literature instead of an empirical method. The literature discussed in the dissertation was collected by using a mixed approach following the suggestions of Greenhalgh and Peacock (2005) and Randolph (2009), prioritising ‘traditional’ offline methods over online services. The methodological frameworks were those of the *theory adaptation* method as described by Jaakkola (2020), enhanced by the *typology building* and *theory synthesis* methods.

4. Results

Oxytocin-accompanied stress response is correlated with prosocial, cooperative behaviour and trust, and it is a neuro-hormonal reaction in the state of threat generated by anxiety and fear. Thereupon it is reasonable to surmise that the precondition of trust is the state of fear/anxiety. The assumption that anxiety and fear are related to trust is confirmed by the trust concept literature as well, and not only in its superficial, self-evident meaning that the state of fear/anxiety would destroy trust (Erikson 1977, Good 1988, Dunn 1988, Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994, Uslaner 2002, Marková 2004, Marková et al. 2007, Layard 2007, Figal 2010, Kopp and Skrabski 2009). Bauman’s suggestive analysis stands out of these texts. He considers strategic trusting a desperate reaction of lost trust, which breeds anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and opacity, and cannot strengthen social relations. Beyond the unidimensional approaches regarding fear/anxiety the antitheses of trust, they appear as the existential state that *enables*, requires trust in Luhmann’s (1979), Giddens’ (1990, 1991), and Sztompka’s (1999) works. These works imply that existential anxiety is the background for trust. Giddens (1990) interprets trust as a psychological need that blocks off anxieties, while Luhmann (1979) and Sztompka (1999) highlight that without trust, we would be unable to carry out even the most basic actions,

falling prey to paralysing fears and terrors. Although neither of them seems to recognise, their assertions suggest unmistakably that trust is *truly* relevant in the (social) conditions defined by anxiety, darkness, opacity, paralysis, or at least in case the conditions are perceived as such. Therefore, fear and anxiety cannot only be the destroyer, but also the background, the basis of trust. This assumption is further reinforced by Giddens' (1990, 1991) view of anxiety as the 'arena' in which the Eriksonian basic trust develops, even though he treats trust and anxiety as antitheses. Giddens (1991) considers infant's basic trust as an emotional inoculation, a protective cocoon, and a defensive carapace, which enables coping with everyday threats and risks. It creates a sense of invulnerability and unreality, and it is the basis of the bracketing of the negative possibilities and of the leap into uncertainty. This self-deception (Lagerspetz 2015), however, seems to describe naïveté rather than trust. As a matter of fact, trust is only possible by taking off the armours (Bauman 2006), that is, by getting out of the Giddensean cocoon.

The hypothesis of trust as a psychological need (Giddens 1990) is backed up by Fukuyama's (1995) finding that trust in family strengthens in societies with low levels of general trust. Uslaner (2002) connects this introversion with the fear from calamities, strangers, and exploitation. It leads to the conclusion that fear and anxiety do not destroy trust, they only divert it. This hypothesis is in line with the hypothesis of trust being a psychological need: the threatened psyche 'seeks' a circle in which its 'need for trust' can be satisfied. Whether narrowing the scope of trust in this way is pathological will be answered in the conclusions of the dissertation.

The assumption of the relationship between fear/anxiety and trust seems to be reasonable from the considerations above, even though the nature of this relationship is yet to be clarified. Given that fears derive from anxiety, existential (death) anxiety in particular, (Becker 1973, Yalom 1980, Kübler-Ross 1988, Solomon et al. 1998, Tillich 2000, Békés 2004), the latter has to be focused on. Anxiety is a basic human characteristic (Becker 1973), which is present even in earliest childhood (Yalom 1980). In contrast with fear, anxiety has no definite object: it pertains to nothingness (Kierkegaard 2014), its object is the absolutely unknown after death that cannot be eliminated (Tillich 2000). The obscure relationship between trust and death anxiety can be disentangled on the basis of Paul Tillich's (2000) theory on anxiety and the courage to be.

Trust is an innate, built-in faculty of the human being that allows no reductionist determinism (Mújdríca 2019a). Lagerspetz (2015) considers the core of trust the inborn, good-

expecting attitude, which survives, invincibly, in the human being *in spite of* all experiences of evil, as Simone Weil (1957, 2005, 2009) described it. Its ‘despiteness’ is of ultimate importance, for death anxiety that may spawn distrust and antisocial behaviour can also be the basis of trust and prosocial behaviour. The very factor that makes it possible is none other than *courage*. The relationship between trust and courage is also confirmed by a number of small, sketchy remarks in the trust literature. For example, Kohn (2008), Khodyakov (2007), Løgstrup (1997), and Lagerspetz (2015) all touch on it more or less explicitly. The most explicit representative of the relationship of trust, anxiety, and courage is Giddens (1991) again – though his related ideas are rather rudimentary. He mentions, albeit apparently misunderstands, Tillich’s idea on the courage to be as a phenomenon positively linked to trust (he might be the only such author). A ‘despite-character’ similar to Weil’s also appears in some works on trust, that is, in the assumptions that trust would emerge in spite of the possibility of disappointment (Bakonyi 2011) or of the lack of knowledge (Möllering 2013). These draw the attention to an ultimately important element of the trust phenomenon that, on the one hand, very few have addressed so far, and on the other hand, opens up the possibility to develop a novel concept that can solve the problems of the cognitive and the non-cognitive trust theories alike. Thus, rephrasing Möllering’s (2006:191) well-known agenda: ‘[u]nless we contribute (...) how the [‘despiteness of trust’] is possible, we miss the point of trust and explain anything but trust.’

Accordingly, we do not trust due to some reason, neither do we feign it – rather, we trust someone precisely *in spite of* the fact that we have no reason to do so! Trust emerges in spite of nonbeing, which carries the primordial terror of the threat of nothingness, as well as despite the lack of any identifiable reason for it. This ‘*in spite of*’ character is drawn into the phenomenon of trust by courage, which is, simply put: action *in the presence of* but *in spite of* fear (Pury and Woodard 2009). Death anxiety, trust, and courage are similar in that none of them is dependent upon rational decision, and they cannot be created intentionally (Luhmann 1979, Baier 1986, Tillich 2000). The orientations of anxiety and trust are also alike: both are directed on nothingness, the nonexistent, which is, in case of trust, the not-yet-existing future. Furthermore, trust and death anxiety are mostly unconscious, irreflective background phenomena.

Tillich (2000) defines the courage to be as the self-affirmation of being in spite of the threatening possibility of nonbeing. He – like Sartre (1978) – considers nonbeing as a denial of being, hence a derivate of being. Being has within itself its possibility of nonbeing, therefore nonbeing as well. The source of anxiety is the threatening possibility of nonbeing that belongs

to existence inescapably – it is unavoidable. Tillich defined three closely interrelated types of threat (ontic, spiritual, moral) and their related pairs of anxiety: the anxiety of fate and death, of emptiness and meaninglessness, and of guilt and condemnation. They are intertwined with and complement each other. So, all anxieties carry the possibility of total ontic, spiritual, and moral destruction. Accordingly, anxiety is an unavoidable feature of existence. We can overcome it by the self-affirming courage to be in spite of the threat of nonbeing – for the other alternative is despair. However, pathological anxiety is unable to do this, and attempts to avoid nonbeing by avoiding being: it escapes into neurosis and builds a limited, unrealistic, castle-like self-affirmation. This self-affirmation is analogous to the Giddensean protective cocoon, which therefore can be considered pathological, together with naïveté.

Tillich (2000) calls the self-affirmation of courage ‘the power of being’, and faith is a non-cognitive acceptance of this power. According to Tillich (2009), the basis of faith is independent of intention – it is a non-cognitive *openness*, the state of religious grace: an essential, universal, necessary possibility of the human being. The source of the courage to be is the *absolute faith*, which transcends all other types of faith, has no special content, and is undirected. Accordingly, neither the courage to be nor its source, faith, are necessarily conscious phenomena. They can be perceived cognitively, but do not require it: they are (re)cognisable but not cognitive. Like anxiety and faith, the courage to be can also be recognised in certain special states (Tillich 2000). Consequently, trust can also be recognised in similarly special cases, although its fundamentally unconscious, non-cognitive character seems to be beyond doubt.

Now, formulated after the courage to be, the notion of *the trust to be* can be created. In essence, it does not only affirm itself, but the whole world, deeming the entire world benevolent in the spirit of Weil’s passages. It is different from the courage to be in that it extends the power, i.e. the affirmative element of the courage to be to the beings independent of it – thus, the trust to be is *the relationing of the courage to be to the world*, turning the dynamics of the courage to be to the world, that is, to being. Although one who has the trust to be is not free of anxieties, they do not indulge in self-deceptions, do not retire into a cocoon. It is precisely anxiety that enables and triggers their courageous self-affirmation, the affirmation of their own being and of the entirety of being *in spite of* the threat within anxiety. This courageous affirmation gives rise to the trust to be. Lagerspetz’ (2015) background-trust, which is a general pattern in human existence and is independent of action, calculation, information assessment, decision as well as of the state of the trustor can be identified in the notion of the trust to be. The trust to be is thus

the ‘remanation’ of the power of the courage to be from the existing to being – therefore, it is also the sharing and extension of the courage to be. This makes possible the Lagerspetzian (2015) sharing of vulnerability as well. Consequently, trust can be regarded as a unique *adventure*, according to the relevant passages of J. Endre Nagy (2013). In the adventure of the trust to be, *we are offering up ourselves freely to being*, we ‘travel’ to the other instead of distancing ourselves from being and from other beings by locking ourselves in either Giddens’ cocoon, naïveté, calculations, or manipulative, interest-based relationships.

In contrast with the courage to be, the trust to be is impossible as an individual act: society always assumes trust, and vice versa: where there is trust, there is society as well (Balázs 2002). Trust always assumes (though not necessarily specifies) the other to whom it pertains to: hence trust is *always* social. The courage to be becomes social in the trust to be, which is not limited to specific persons or groups, rather it encompasses the whole being. This is *engaging courageously in fellowship with the entirety of being*, as it were. The affirmative element is shared as well by the extension of the courage to be, and it carries the affirmation of the other – this is the reason for the benevolence- and goodwill-assuming optimism in trust. Furthermore, this trust is *unconditional*, for it is rooted in the trustor only. The extended affirmation affirms the trusted in their own being and against their own existential anxieties, so it is an unconditional, active contribution to their self-affirmation. This is why trust can be the strongest bond of social life and relationships (Locke 1954), and the lubricate of cooperation (Putnam 1993, 2000), because by trust, the anxiety of nonbeing becomes a common, social problem from an individual, solitary trouble. Sharing the triumph of our own self-affirmation can also help the other to face their own anxieties. The socialising power of the fear of death/death anxiety (Berger 1969, Yalom 1980, Mújdricz 2015b) is thus enabled by trust. Therefore, anxiety creates trust together with the ‘catalyst’ of courage, and united they form the basis of the social phenomenon.

Accordingly, trust does not mean a simple lack of suspicion or fear (e.g. Lagerspetz 2015), rather, it is the courageous reaction in the presence of but in spite of the existential anxiety – and this is precisely what sets it apart from naïveté, for instance. Distrust and suspicion can be regarded as the consequences of the breakdown of trust. The optimism of the trust to be is without a definite content, for it can be traced back to the absolute faith. This lack of a definite content manifests in the lack of the expectation of a fixed good outcome: the trust to be expects *good in general*, and does not define it further. Based on Kolakowski’s (1992) idea, the trust to be can also appear in rationalist people who reject religious faith, but maintain their faith in

human dignity. The courage to the inconsistency of this faith is the basis for *atheist courage to be* and optimism, whose sharing and extension may well be the source of atheist trust to be.

The place of the notion of *hope* must also be defined in the concept. Many associate hope with the phenomenon of trust, and the attempts on its definition are also similar to those of trust. The cognitive approach can be rejected here as well. Although the aim of the dissertation is not a full conceptualisation of the notion of hope, following Bloch (1996), it can be identified with the beginning of the expectation of goodness, the element that enables a closed attitude to turn into openness. Hope thus appears on the inflection point of the self-affirmation within courage turning outwards, as it contains the crucially important characteristic of turning towards the world. Trust, however, is not strong hope (Balázs 2002), because its courageous self-affirmation does not necessarily result in trust. Hope in itself is ‘not sufficiently brave’ to be trust, therefore, strong hope remains *hope*, as its strengthening implies equally intensified anxiety and courage. Courage has to prevail for hope to become trust.

Similar to the courage to be, the trust to be is not necessarily conscious, for their source, anxiety, is typically not conscious. It is due to the fact that the human mind cannot bear anxiety for a long time (Tillich 2000). The courage that faces the possibility of nonbeing and trust, however, are not some sort of deterministic ontological necessity. They are the results of a peculiar, non-cognitive, prerational, and prelogical *decision* that can be found in Sartre’s (1978) *choix originel* (original choice). This is the choice of our basic position towards the world, which is nonintentional and not a rational choice. Furthermore, this choice is not based on knowledge: it is derived from being and is the cause for its own way of being. The notion of the original choice has to be complemented with Tillich’s (1951) revelative decision, which gives up the claim to be the right decision. This leads to the non-cognitive decision on trust that is not threatened by ‘the revenge of excluded possibilities’, i.e. that after the decision is made, other decisions may appear so that they might have been better or truer. In case trust proves to be wrong, it does not cease to have been trust precisely for this characteristic. Complementing the original choice by the feature of the revelative decision results in the noncognitive ‘ur-decision’ or *prevolition*, which lacks the claim to be the right decision. This prevolition is the basic noncognitive decision on the courage to be as well as on the trust to be. It can only be changed if the Self is totally shaken.

These all can be summarised shortly in the following definition of trust:

Trust, as a consequence of the non-cognitive ‘ur-decision’ or prevolition in the presence of but in spite of the fundamental existential anxiety stemming from the possibility of nonbeing, is the

emanation and sharing of the courageous, self-affirmative reaction, engaging in fellowship with either the whole being (trust to be) or a specific being (trust). It manifests in a basic good-expecting attitude and enables the sharing of vulnerability: offering up oneself freely to being.

Contrarily to the opinion of the representatives of the non-cognitive theories, the betrayal of the trust to be may not only lead to losing trust, but to the *suspension* of trust as well. This is a conscious, cognitive reaction on the perception of threats breaking through the interpretive filter of trust. Suspension of the trust to be appears as distrust only from the outside, for the trust to be is in constant readiness behind it. This active refraining from actualised trust is thus not only an act of self-protection, but it also preserves the trusting disposition towards being in potentiality. Ignoring the perceived danger would turn trust into naïveté, therefore it would eliminate trust. But if the threat goes away, suspension can be ended, and the basic trusting attitude can be restored in its actuality.

However, trust cannot only be extended to everything and everyone but also particularly to certain beings and groups. This particularised courageous trust, which lacks the trust to be, does not differ in its quality, only in its extension from the latter. Now, the recognition of trust is enabled by such strong positive affections as love, appreciation, respect, etc. They can strengthen trust, so it can stand the possibility of threat implied in anxiety, which is unavoidably recognised together with the recognition of trust. Similarly, reliance-like, experience-based functions may also support trust, but neither positive affections nor reliance can *generate* it in themselves. Thus, the everyday trust experience can be described as a complex interplay of the basic, courageous trust core and affections strengthening as well as experiences supporting it. Analogously, negative affections can weaken and negative experiences might hinder trust.

The possibility of a *conscious* decision on trust also arises, in the case of the brave counterreaction (cognitive distrust of cognitive trust) *despite* the fundamentally trusting or distrusting position. It is enabled by the dissonance of the trustful disposition in case this disposition appears inadequate even in the light of the subjective interpretation of information. However, maintaining it requires either the continuous supply of such information or a constantly growing investment of resources due to the ‘gravitational’ force of the opposite, primary trusting/distrusting disposition. This strategic agency has the self-protective function of fear in the case of *brave distrust* opposing a trusting disposition. If the stream of information causing the trust dissonance dry up or the mental resources of the brave (dis)trustor are depleted, the cognitive (dis)trusting position fades away, and the (dis)trustor relaxes back into their original non-cognitive disposition. The brave cognitive trust opposing the fundamental distrust

differs from reliance at least in that it is not *based* on information, rather on the distrust it opposes. This heroic cognitive trust is characterised by the ‘despiteness’ of courage instead of the calculative ‘because of’-characteristic.

The reason of the total noncognitive loss of the trust to be is the experience of *the betrayal of being*, which amounts to giving up extant, self-affirming being-potential. A prime example of the betrayal of being is the early, untimely, or pointless death of one’s most important significant others or of her/himself. This leads to an all-pervading state of the *loss of the world* that might shake the trust to be and the courageous affirmation within. As a result of this, the individual may fall in one of the states that form in the absolute lack of the trust to be. From the aspect of the trust definition above, four such alternative states and a further supplementary possibility can be identified. These ‘courageless’ states are characterised by the active or passive nature of the existential disposition towards the threat of nonbeing, and by the presence, lack, or the opposite of the ‘in spite of’ characteristic.

The first alternative is the active but courageless (timid) substitute for trust, i.e. the pseudo-trust of reliance (strategic/cognitive ‘trust’), which is unable to trust in the lack of courage. It tries to trust ‘because of’ instead of ‘in spite of’, escaping into the illusory world of certainties: the empire of experiences, rationality, calculations, and interests. The second alternative is naïveté, which is active, ‘in spite of’, but it ‘overlooks’ anxiety. Due to the fact that its ‘in spite of’ factor is not a reaction to anxiety, its ‘despiteness’ is empty, and, becoming an end in itself, turns on its carrier. Thus, the naïve person’s faith distorts into self-dimming blind faith and their courage into temerity. Such existential ignorance or negligence is analogous to the unintentional affirmation of nonbeing, therefore it poses a danger to the naïve person as well as to the public. Its emanation generates an *uninhibited optimism*, a *dumb exposition of the self* instead of freely offering it up, and it expects specified goodness. Overlooking the threat of nonbeing in a passive, non-cognitive way, that is, *ignorance* creates innocent, infantile naïveté, whereas disregarding it in an active, escapist way results in the cocky naïveté of *negligence*. Naïveté is similar to trust in that it may act as a central core for affections and reliance surrounding it, and its opening point can be described as a certain naïve hope. However, it cannot be suspended, for that would require courage which is not present in naïveté. Naïveté constantly exposes the naïve to perils, therefore it can be considered pathological. However, its collapse may precede not only distrust or apathy, but the emergence of true courageous trust as well. The third alternative, distrust, is characterised by existential cowardice, which, unable to self-affirm, submits itself to the power of nonbeing. Distrust can

also act as an interpretive filter, and it can also be strengthened or weakened by affections and reliance. It may be particularised or generalised, and in the former case it may well have a positive self-protective function as an adequate reaction on threats that cannot be overcome, but in the latter case it amounts to a paranoid distrust to be. The fourth alternative is the state of trustlessness, whose active form is the above-discussed suspension of trust. Its passive form, however, is the frozen, inactive, apathic, passive disposition paralysed by the cold terror of anxiety and of the power of nonbeing. A supplementary alternative is the (self-)destructive agency of the *active, intentional affirmation of nonbeing*, which means acting against being by the active affirmation of nonbeing. It is characterised by *viciousness* instead of courage or temerity and by *unscrupulous malevolence and malice*. This emanation of viciousness is the dangerous, literally antisocial, true antithesis of trust.

It has to be noted here that this concept of trust does not rule out the impact of early-age experiences on maintaining the basic trusting disposition or on its further development. The concept rejects only the hypothesis that they would *generate*, determine trust entirely, for trust is a constant human potential, possible in spite of all experiences.

5. Conclusion

The concept may lead to novel conclusions on a number of fields where the phenomenon of trust is central. It might be relevant in a broad range of possible uses, from the revision of the related theories to the redesign of empirical measures as well as to the research of willingness to respond on population surveys (Mújdríca 2019b, 2019c). The popular goal of ‘trust building’ seems to be possible in one of two ways in the light of the concept: by generating external threat, which is, however, a double-edged sword that could well result in antisocial behaviour, and by trusting *in advance*. The latter affirms the other in their being by sharing the affirmative characteristic of trust, thus enabling (but not demanding) the appearance of their trusting disposition. It accepts the freedom of the other, even the lack of reciprocation. Feigning it, however, cannot create stable trust, for only *true* trust has this potential.

Fukuyama’s (1995) observation, the strengthening of trust in the family by the decline of generalised trust, can be considered pathological, for the narrowed but intensified trust rises from a society-wide neurosis in Tillich’s (2000) sense. Trust supported by the strong positive affections and reliance of family ties may engender the expectation of these from the outside world as well. It runs the risk of the society getting ‘bogged down’, as it were, in the pathological state of generalised distrust.

Theories on social capital consider trust their central notion (e.g. Coleman 1990, Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, Putnam 1993, 2000, Arrow 1999, Albert and Dávid 2005, Ahn and Ostrom 2008, etc.). Revising it by the novel trust concept confirms the hypothesis rejecting the ‘capital characteristic’ of trust (Arrow 1999, Solow 1999), and questions the assumption that trust would be an investment (e.g. Lin 2008). Nevertheless, trust – understood as non-economic and non-investment (re)source of power – extended to the entire network of the trustor increases the own trust potential of the nodes of this network, thus it may generate a virtuous circle of trust in the entire trusting network (and vice versa, a ‘vicious circle’ of distrust might also be similarly triggered; see Putnam 1993, 2000). Therefore, courageous trust gives rise to further trust as well as to social capital (calling it ‘capital’ after all these seems to be mistaken, though). Two further options have to be mentioned as important directions for future research. First, studying the relationship between the trust concept developed in the dissertation and the relevant sociological theories on social solidarity. Second, improving our understanding of the network approach, especially the ‘strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973) in the light of the concept.

All things considered, the paradoxical, irrational leap within trust is in the ‘in spite of’ characteristic of courage. It is of ultimate importance, for the dynamic leap of courage is the radical, transformative act of the lonesome, terrified, anxious individual into the social, optimistic human: the *trusting being*.

6. List of own publications

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