

Editorial – Issue 1 / 2012

Welcome to issue 1, 2012 of JSTP!

It is the goal of this journal to consider our reality from a spiritual perspective and at the same time to use the tools of post-Enlightenment rationality. This is a noble goal that appears to many as the quadrature of the circle: many intellectuals still stick to a materialistic reductionism and consider spirituality as an illusory product of our brain, or perhaps psychoanalytically as self-deception to make our lives more bearable. The others, the conservative religious circles, prefer to divide the world into two spheres, where religion may exist in private and science is propagated in public, but both are supposed not to touch each other: a ceasefire at the expense of the elimination of that God who works in all things. In between are sciences such as transpersonal psychology, which is either in danger of behaving as a substitute for religion or takes the side of science and reduces everything spiritual (such as the meditation experience) as a part of the "science of consciousness" so that transcendence is explained away scientifically. For all ancient cultures, however, the world was pervaded by a secret that cannot be explained away: the existence of a deep background, a spiritual sphere beyond what is sensually graspable.

Should we not take serious the ancient spiritual traditions of all religions and their significance for contemporary human beings, and at the same time embrace science in its entirety and try to combine both seriously? An example will show what the meaning of such a transcendental psychology could be: The editor, who works as a freelance psychologist, sometimes receives calls from people who have unexpected paranormal experiences. The paranormal suddenly bursts into their lives and confuses them. In a pluralistic society like ours, all the discussed ideologies are at their disposal for explaining and coping with that experience: these people can get to a reductionist, materialist psychiatrist who holds the neurotransmitters in their brains for imbalanced. They can get to a minister or Zen teacher who advises them with an equally reduced perspective to pray or meditate on it. Or vice versa: sometimes pastors give clients the advice to consult a psychiatrist with their extraordinary religious experiences without taking them seriously. Often the persons decide to take the next exit into the

shallow world of pseudo-esotericism, where every unusual experience is hailed as "enlightenment". This strengthens one's own ego and seems uplifting at first glance. Unfortunately, from that results a fortification of the very crisis that has – fortunately – led to the spiritual experience. The ego, which can now feed itself by the "extraordinary ability", remains in its fragile, fragmented, or undeveloped form and cannot grow into a true self. Transpersonal psychologists therefore treat the weakened psyche in its crisis without rationalizing away spiritual experiences. Their aim is to enable growth beyond the crisis of the ego into a transcendent dimension. Who takes the ancient spiritual traditions seriously, moreover, has to emphasize that such a path of dissolving the ego into the divine needs to be oriented on what humanity has erected as guideposts in its old spiritual traditions. This type of transpersonal psychology, being directed towards gaining knowledge of the reality and effect of the transcendent in our lives, but as well being a scientific psychology, we have called *transcendental* psychology. Here practical issues of the clinician meet with theoretical concerns. The integration of both sides is a concern of this journal. How can, on the one hand, psychology, social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities and, on the other, the spiritual traditions unite to a common cooperation?

In the scientific part of this issue, you will find articles that speak from the perspective of Christian theology, like the reflections of Christina Bergmann on the experience of transcendence, which lies on the path of the transsexual, through the certainty of being meant by God and what is meant beyond, where in transsexuality the border is crossed to the totally different. While this paper contains personal and dogmatic, kerygmatic, and pastoral aspects, our second contribution of a Christian theologian in this issue is a highly academic work. Nikolaos Garagounis has extensively studied the development of the so-called *Filioque* in the history of the Catholic Church, and in this paper discusses the historical development of the introduction of the Holy Spirit into the dogma of the Trinity through the testimony of the images in early Christianity. In the editor's article in the scientific part of this issue, the demarcation between psychosis and spiritual experience, which is discussed in the last issue, is continued by a second, practical part.

The other parts of the magazine earn the respect of the reader as well. The essays under the heading "Meditationes" are devoted to the topics of "inner and outer" and "the message of suffering". Like usually in this section, they are not translated from their original language into English and thus available in German only. In the first essay, the editor relates the relation of inner and outer world, above and below of the mundane and the spiritual path to the necessities of a life on this planet and to the calling for spiritual renouncement. This rela-

tion is mirrored by comparing the relation between active and contemplative life, between psychotherapy and spiritual practice, between depth psychology and behavioural theory. In the second essay, human suffering is reflected as basic condition of life in this form of existence according to different religious and spiritual systems, concluding that pain is not only unavoidable but even meaningful and necessary for our development, while suffering is what we are called to overcome. The practice test this time deals with a visit to the medium Anouk Claes in Basel (in German only). Stefan Ruf's review of Pim van Lommel's, book "Endloses Bewusstsein" (endless consciousness) demonstrates the importance of this book and the entire branch of near death experience research for today's unbiased study of what constitutes the human being (in German). The category "Spirituality Check", unfortunately, remains vacant in this issue because it was not possible to find an expert to write the usual presentation of a prominent subject from the field of spirituality.

I wish you an inspiring reading!

E. W. Harnack
Editor