

Editorial

A journal such as this makes only sense if it is dedicated to the exchange of spirituality and science, but above that becomes a platform for authors from the traditional disciplines that represent a special and extraordinary vision beyond the mainstream. Previous issues have proven this trend, which is continued here. The first such contribution in the scientific section shows strange acts beyond the official religious and scientific doctrines. In Dirk Schlottmann's anthropological study at the inhabitants of the Philippine island of Siquijor, which were officially mostly converted to Catholicism, the tradition of indigenous spiritual healing practice is still active. Interestingly, according to Schlottmann, these traditional Filipino healers cannot be called shamans, mainly due to the absence of a trance practice, essential for common definitions. Apparently, their healing is – from a consciousness theory's perspective – not happening on the ecstatic and hardly the enstatic pole of consciousness shift, but is more localized in the daily waking state, similar to usual religious prayer. It would be interesting and worth further anthropological studies, whether healers and sorcerers around other continents (e.g., the African) practice with no apparent consciousness change as well.

Nikolaos Garagounis with his dogma-historical study of the theoretical and pictorial representation of the Holy Spirit in early Christianity continues the first part of his article. His contribution is a reverence of good Catholic theology to the journal. Here he presents the early church as a centuries-long struggle for intellectual and artistic comprehension of the internal structure of the divine.

Giorgio Tortelli's historical collection of facts about the witch hunt in Valcamonica of the year 1518 again demonstrates an attitude critical to the mainstream. To understand this massive pogrom that overclouded whole Europe and proved the recurring inability of Christianity to succeed the loving Christ, is not the intent of his paper. Too complex are the reasons and backgrounds: "Monocausal explanations have proven to be inadequate", write Renate Jost and Marcel Nieden¹. However, in the multi-causal, "specifically cumulative concept, the so-

¹ In: *Hexenwahn: Eine theologische Selbstbesinnung*, ed. by R. Jost und M. Nieden, Stuttgart, 2004, 8 [my translation].

called 'witch-pattern'², the current scientific debate denies any relevance of a single thesis: Apparently "... a substantialist approach that is based on a real existing witch movement of what kind so ever, today is mostly rejected"³. Certainly, the excesses that led to the horrific scene of unbridled cruelty in the German lands resulted out of many causes like mass hysteria due to vital historical threats, social envy, material benefits to the informer, and anti-feminine oedipal emotional reaction patterns. But do not other cases and other regions require to investigate more closely the substantialist thesis of the existence of a real witch-movement? Could not there have been a substantial nucleus of magical and pagan activities, which provided the rationale for many other mass pogroms?

The documents submitted by Tortelli show witnesses that appear to us as critical, unbiased observers. As part of a society whose assumptions and beliefs always are imprinted into the mindset of its individuals, nobody can be totally objective. Tortellis paper shows us examples, where witnesses were not immune against social pressure and socially constructed "witch delusions". But how fast should we judge about the people of the 16th Century that they have jumped to conclusions without the ability of distancing themselves from their thoughts? While one can find all the other social and ideological causes of witch-hunting in the case of the prosecutions in Valcamonica, there still remains a doubt: Is it possible that magic cults opposed to the Church really existed in some areas that delivered a justification for the witch hunts in other areas of that time?

Axel Leopoldts intriguing introduction to the spiritual psychology of A. H. Almaas belongs entirely to the field of transpersonal psychology, which is the special concern of the Journal of Spirituality and Transcendental Psychology. Almaas is presented here as a modern representative of a wholesome spirituality, beyond all religious restrictions, of a psychotherapeutic method for healing the soul in their spiritual dimension.

Just in time for the so-called end of the world on 21/12/2012 (the end of the calendar cycle of the current age according to the Mayan calendar) Bernhard Wegener informs (in German only) about apocalyptic ends of the world in various human cultures. With a lot of details from all over the world, he shows that the doomsday scenarios of today, according to the secularisation and materialistic bias of Western societies, show a final and therefore threatening character, while the apocalypses of religious nature regularly included hope for a transformation to something different.

² Christian Strecker, Im Namen des Anderen, in: *Hexenwahn: Eine theologische Selbstbesinnung*, ed. by R. Jost und M. Nieden, Stuttgart, 2004, 33 [my translation].

³ l. c., 34 [my translation].

Some brief essays in the other sections demonstrate the large range of topics of our journal: Angelika B. Hirsch, religious scholar and psychological coach, pleads for a concept of spirituality beyond religious establishment in "Was ist Spiritualität?" (What is spirituality; in German only). Tara Brach, internationally renowned Buddhist teacher, summarizes Buddhist principles of everyday spiritual activity in "Mit Schwierigkeiten arbeiten: Die Segnungen des REGENS"⁴. Alan Sanderson reviews a – to him – exciting book of American psychologist Tom Zinser, in which he outlines a transpersonal psychology that arises from his own experience of contact with spiritual beings. These contacts also play a role in the editor's "practice test". As an essayistic, more or less satirical contribution, the editor examines the Leibnizian theodicy problem, fittingly to the "end of the world year 2012" based on the Last Day. In the reviews, an excellent book for the everyday Buddhist practice by Thubten Yeshe and Vanamali Gunturu's well readable introduction to the Hindu sexual teachings are presented.

Edgar W. Harnack
Editor

⁴ An authorized German translation of a summary of her upcoming book *True Refuge: Finding Peace & Freedom in Your Own Awakened Heart*