

## Editorial

Issue 2013 (1) of JSTP is awaiting you with the following main articles: *Bernhard Wegener's* psycho-historical study of the history of human fears (in German) regards fear in the context of Western culture, but mainly of the Abrahamic religions. So there is fear as a collective phenomenon in antiquity in the form of a basic fear of death, man is saved from death by the nullification of death, like, for example, in the Christian good news. Fear in the Middle Ages is understandable as a typical phenomenon of the era because of the threatening and uncertain physical and social living conditions. The Enlightenment finally creates a new form of fear in repressing the irrational, the fear of being in the world, a "world fear, boundless loneliness", and "horror vacui". The anxiety of modern man in its precarious, eccentric position in the world is an existential quality, a constitutive part of human existence in a specific cultural position. From the omnipresence of fear in the history of humankind, the author concludes that psychology does not eliminate fear as existential quality, but can only help to overcome specific fears. After reading his article, one would like to advise psychotherapy to treat specific fears by an existential perspective, by addressing the question of the final point behind all fears, and for religious people, by addressing the certainty that nothing can be threatening in the ultimate sense.

In *Sohaila Javed's* text *The dialectic of submission* we see a very good example of a modern form of mystical reflection beyond the borders of but in accordance with traditional religious determinations. The text presents a classical mystic contemplation, originating from an Islamic and especially Sufistic point of view, but including all Abrahamic traditions in a broad perspective of a unified mystic experience of the one God. The main mystical practice discussed is the practice of prayer in its forms of verbal and emotional communication, but essentially in its attitude as submission under the One.

What should a culture do if it has lost the roots of its own natural spirituality, its own indigenous shamanism? It must (re)invent it. Across Europe, indications for the earlier nature-spirituality of our ancestors are only left in the so-called superstition of rural areas. The faith of the Alps, which Paracelsus picked up and systematized, the belief in witchcraft, which in the middle of the 20th Century was still common in many rural areas of Europe, reflects the same anthropological pattern we know from other indigenous cultures. But the vast ma-

majority of the population has entirely lost any connection to the power of Mother Earth, to the souls of animals and plants, the spirit beings that live in nature, and the simple magic that works by occult laws of nature. Two articles deal with this often wrongly disavowed spiritual rediscovery: The article about modern paganism of an author, who calls himself just *GardenStone*, explains some of the basic features of *Asatru*, one of today's newly created religions on the ground of the ancestors' worshipping practices. Here, as through reading Ralf Metzner's book *Brunnen der Erinnerung* (engl. *The Well of Remembrance*), which the editor reviews here, it becomes clear that the Norse gods were anything but the immoral barbaric fiends, as which they are fixed in our collective consciousness as a heritage of the Christian mission.

In his article on the subject of *Transcendental Semiotics*, the editor continues his first article on this topic, which was published in issue 2/2011 of JSTP. The approach discussed there understanding spiritual experiences as a sign of a *different* reality is continued here in a more methodologically way stressing the problems and possibilities of individual case analysis. A hermeneutics adapted to the needs of psychological analysis of the individual case is presented as the appropriate methodology to investigate spiritual experiences. Hermeneutics is known as a humanistic method of textual interpretation since ancient times and can take many forms. The author shows that – despite of its reputation of producing no objective results – it is the best way to approach a first scientific understanding of spiritual experiences. In another article (*Encounters with Immaterial Beings*), published in the reviews section, he implements this approach by providing insight in some literature out of the many books containing reports on experiences with non-bodily beings.

In her article *The Power of Radical Acceptance*, published here in an authorized German translation of the English original, psychotherapist and Buddhist teacher *Tara Brach* shows how elements of the Buddhist practice of mindfulness and trauma therapy can be integrated. Brach focuses primarily on the acceptance component of mindfulness practice, which she calls 'radical acceptance' and uses as the primary agent of integration of traumatic experiences into the psychic structure of the client.

*Horst Peschel* in his programmatic article *Plea for a Humanization of Psychology* (in German) calls not for a Humanistic Psychology, but a spiritual anthropology in psychology. For him, the human being is constituted by his or her loving soul and a Spirit facing God. A psychology that ignores these parts of the human being, in his opinion, cannot make any valid statements about humans. Peschel, therefore, demands to return to a different psychology or to reinvent it, a theory of the soul. This reminds sometimes of Rudolf Steiner or the early The-

osophists in their efforts to unite all spiritual traditions on the matrix of Christian anthropology and this in turn with modern science.

There is a new section that we will call *Hagia Empeiria*. *Hagia empeiria* is ancient Greek and means "holy experience". The experience of the sacred is the subject of this section. Authors are here to speak, that are ready to describe their own spiritual experiences unadorned. The purpose of this section is not evaluation and theoretical reflection, but the presentation of authentic personal experiences and insights. *Laura Teske*, as the first author of this section, reports (unfortunately in German only) of her three days lasting, great mystical experience that recalls the deep experience of a mystic as Ignatius of Loyola in the sense of a monotheistic God experience. However, presumably she will not become as famous, because she is not part of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the times when spiritual experiences of this kind led to canonization seem to be over. Today, the major churches look with scepticism at the many people who talk about their own spiritual experiences such as if it was quite usual. Where would we be if everyone could have a profound mystical experience, while bishops and priests cannot likewise? Where we get is where we should be for a long time: in an age where the spiritual finds its way back into the everyday life and the reality of people.