

Statement of Purpose:

A New Journal for a New Paradigm

Thomas Kuhn's idea of incompatible paradigms is the most appropriate theory for the clash between religious experience as well as spiritual aspiration and science. In this context, both science and the spiritual person consider themselves the superior part: the first one claims to belong to the rational form of humanity, whereas the second one claims to own the connection between the transcendental sphere and humanity. This very incompatibility is getting increasingly critical at the turn of the millennium. So, consequently a turning point in history seems to rise up. This is because of the gap between the old paradigm of the materialistic doctrine of science, i.e. the key perspective of the 19th and 20th century, and the new perspective which is marked by spirituality. The last-mentioned however, slowly begins to shake the old worldview, although it is as old humanity itself. There are actually two gaps: the first one being the gap between the academic elite (including theology and all the other fields) and popular religion; the second one slowly rising within the academic elite itself.

The first gap, i.e. the gap between the academic elite and the crowd which is not wholly indoctrinated by the academic mode of thinking (including also a large part of degree holders), is quite complex and intersected by the second one. However, in most cases the so called scientific elites are also still high priests of materialism and thus mistake the criteria of science for an ideology. In public lectures, publications and internet portals the stupid mob is taught that: „This isn't science, because it's parapsychology“; „he's not a scientist, because he's not recognized by the scientific community“; „this is non-scientific, because it's a contradiction of today's world knowledge“, but these are actually non-scientific criteria which are not qualified to distinguish between real science and charlatany: the reputation among fellow academics has never been an argument against the genius of scientific innovators and the same applies to the equation of a certain discipline (e.g. parapsychology) and a lack of scholarship which is solely based on non-scientific criteria of a personal *weltanschauung*. With regard to the third paraphrased argument, we have to add that if we already knew everything about the world, we would not need science at all. That is the reason why we must take seriously the anomalies of the prevailing scientific paradigm thus making sure that a proper understanding of science should try to comprehend these anomalies in a theoretical way, rather than attempting to eliminate them.

So do we agree with the majority of psychologists who are thinking that only a real experimental design can provide proper scientific statements? Have we pondered upon

the basis of scientific thinking in a sufficient way, i.e. are we in the position to decide whether objectivity is reality or just an illusion, or do we rather have to commit ourselves to the idea that intersubjectivity is the only appropriate criterion? However, regarding the real scientific practise, must we not rather reconsider scientific honesty (e.g. the manipulation of research results; the common practice to dismiss undesired research results and irritating questions), instead of thoughtlessly equating university research with science? So do we have to accept that a materialistic worldview is the condition to make yourself heard to the scientific community? The reason why there is a deep gap between common people and scientists and their different notion of truth is not only the fact that the average citizen is unable to think scientifically, but also because of the fact that today's scientists are caught up by a distorted picture of science which is rather difficult to understand for outsiders.

However, also the second and intra-scientific gap will get deeper and deeper. For some the 20th century already appears to be the dark ages, in which materialism in all its forms became the prepossessing ruler of most people's lives and minds. Materialism used to be the political doctrine of the so-called socialist systems, i.e. western capitalism was free to claim that there was no such connection between its typical characteristics (like attachment to superficial satisfaction, consumption, external values as a replacement for internal ones) and materialism. Calvinism even provided the justification for unification between materialism and a theological doctrine: the idea of the divine chosen ones, i.e., the wealthiest.

Nevertheless, the incontrovertible pillar of materialism is the almost axiomatic taboo subject for 20th century's science, i.e., the disapproval of transcendency as a working hypothesis. However, materialism in the sense of an anti-transcendental view is not a privilege of natural science. In *Geisteswissenschaften*, even in theology, it is at least equally present. Wherever nowadays spirituality is spoken or written about in a serious academic manner, this occurs under the pre-condition of the idea of Enlightenment of non-accessibility to the transcendent. As long as this non-accessibility leads to a methodical agnosticism, it might be harmless, even if short-sighted. But everywhere it leads to ideological atheism, which means materialism, because not even the possibility that transcendence could exist in spite of its rational non-accessibility is left unconcealed. Above all the non-accessibility of the transcendent from the Kantian criticism of rationality is mistaken with the human capability of experiencing transcendence, which was given at all times in human history. Transcendence therefore is not transcendent in the Kantian sense of the unknowable *noumenon*. Transcendence influences the immanence and through its influence it becomes apparent and accessible to study, it is knowable and explainable.

Therefore, when modern scientists write about spiritual phenomena, this only and exclusively occurs under the premise of exclusion of transcendence out of the scientific discourse. This also and especially becomes apparent where scientists of the arts and social science - for example religion-sociologists, religion-scientists, historians, but also theologians attend to spiritual topics. The historiography of mysticism, the historiography of spiritual doctrines is always practised by operating under the assumption that medieval

and antique authors of spiritual theology like Origines, Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita or the Victorines had invented their doctrines. Nowadays no serious author at a university writes as if he would suppose that the authors would write through divine inspiration, through experience with the transcendent. The same lines and forms of tradition-transmission of knowledge and theories are being constructed as they fit today's scientific practice. Whereas something is being projected onto the medieval and antique authors who solely represent the shallowness of today's science but was unknown to the pre-enlightened human. He was much more aware about not being the ingenious author of his work, but participating in the divine. He overcame the narcissist illusion of the achievement of the own creation by placing the name of a great idol in front of his work. He recognized knowledge as revealed, as for Augustus we think through the illumination of God.

The scientist of today presents everything in the light of his methodical agnosticism in which his personal atheism mixes itself with materialism non-severed. When nowadays we read a book in which about angels (e.g., Vorgrimler et al. 2001) or about near-death-experiences (e.g., Dinzelbacher 1992) is spoken in a learned way, it will certainly be written about in a way that the human belief in angels, or near-death-experiences appear as an exotic form of behaviour, comparable to the mating-rituals of ostriches. That it could be possible that angels exist, that spirituality contains a reprimand for another reality or that in near-death-experiences another reality shines through, is excluded of the contemplation because of methodical agnosticism and the real materialism.

Exactly this exclusion of the actual object of matter means that everything is allowed to be said except that what is relevant for the discussion. Who reports about people believing in angels without asking the question if angels actually exist or if there is another possibility to explain the phenomenon of people seeing or hearing angels, suggests with all truism that this is not the question at hand *because angels of course cannot exist*. This premise exactly though is of an ideological nature. It is exactly this premise that must be second-guessed if we really want to understand the phenomenon "Berta sees angels". An unprejudiced science would not only be interested in the question if Berta sees angels since she was abused by her father (psychological) or if she sees angels in a certain form that matches this or that art-historical classification (historical) or because she lives in a context of modern esotericism (sociological), first of all it would be interested in *what* Berta actually sees.

As we can assume that humans at all times and in all cultures witness phenomena which traditionally were explained spiritually, we must ask ourselves today if the reductionist-materialist explanation of these phenomena hasn't slowly but surely proven itself to be nothing but a mere magic-trick. Though the phenomenon can often easily be dismissed through the eye of the beholder who did not witness it, its numinosity and its reprimand-character towards something higher will hardly be removable from that person's mind who witnessed it. That is independent from the educational standard or critical reflection-capability of the concerned as Charles Tart's collection of spiritual experi-

ences amongst university-academics proves. To indicate spiritual phenomena as unwelcome side-effects of a brain or social and other materialistically explainable processes is not only the product of an outer-scientific preliminary decision but it does not live up to the phenomenon itself either and does not make its extra-ordinary being understandable.

However, the materialistic paradigm starts to disintegrate. For decades now, it is undergoing a nearly imperceptible decay, which can hardly be ignored. This very theoretical materialism, held by some neurobiologists and philosophers does not differ significantly from the everyday materialism of a broker, a consumer, a militant or naive atheist, or any hedonist: it can be defined as clinging to a concept of matter which is already obsolete for the relevant scientific field, i.e., particle physics. All these kinds of materialism unite in one single idea, which implies that matter (in the way we imagine and experience it) is the only reality existing. But if physics, as the one scientific field endowed with priestly authority by materialists, firmly and increasingly denies the validity of this concept of matter one can say that materialism has proofed its own absurdity.

Considering this and Karl Poppers thesis, according to which man or at least the scientist is being driven by logic, all the other consequences of the materialistic world view should begin to sway as well. However, there is one last resort for the materialist and his meta-theory, or in other words, he is using the following ‘woolly’ immunization as an argument: “That may well be true, but it’s still physics and not metaphysics (which is something I reject completely)”. But he does not understand that he abandons his materialistic position in favour of a non-local, entangled, non-causal probabilistic, probably multidimensional, string-like world, just because it still seems to be physics to him. However, this kind of physics is becoming more and more a mathematical and precise kind of metaphysics, which has nothing to do with his antiquated definition of materialism. On the other hand, his definition of religion would be an intolerable insult of his narcissism, educated by the Age of Enlightenment’s maxim that “everything may be ruled by reason”.

Anyway, this applies also to the identifying narcissism of the religious believers and their narcissistic self-expansion, i.e. „God“, which is questioned by science now because – at least in physics – science is starting to *include* the secrets formerly reflected by religion. For this reason, the believer also needs an apparent salvation, claiming that these fundamental shifts had nothing to do with his religion. However, even this hope only appears to be a salvation, because a religion which doesn’t want to retreat to the foundations of its believe (e.g. the Bible or the Koran, i.e. becoming a fundamentalist one), has to provide guidance at any time, i.e. it has to provide refutable and arguable statements about the subjects of our lives. Against the backdrop of these anomalous and religious experiences (such as visions, auditions, the unio mystica, the different experiences of enlightenment, the feeling of guidance and providence), both spirituality and religion as well as science have to recall their principles and positions. A further difficulty has come by the fact that traditional religion is challenged by globalization and the pluralism of religious systems. Suddenly, it becomes apparent that religion is always the same thing (i.e., the reflection and systematization of human experiences), and consequently the return to subjective spirituality provides an evidence for the individual, which cannot be

denied by any materialistic science or religious doctrine. On the other hand: from the spiritual point of view (with regard to the personal experience and the search for the numinous secret), we have to ask ourselves what is the meaning of today's spirituality, and how can it be integrated into traditional religious ways of thinking as well as into the scientific paradigm and where not. We should reconsider the dialogue between spirituality and science and thus daring to practise science from a spiritual point of view.

The main task of the journal presented here, is to examine the phenomena of spiritual or religious experience. The Journal for Spirituality and Transcendental Psychology is dedicated to present the unique quality of spiritual and religious experience, without putting them down to the reductionist approach of a materialistic world view. Regarding the scientific reflection of this experience (including social sciences and arts, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, history, theology and philosophy as well as the natural sciences) we have to watch out that the spiritual experience of people today, from the past and from different societies shall not lose its numinous character, but will rather be examined from within this very numinous quality. But if spiritual experience is reflected under the premise of being a testimony of transcendence, we define a paradigm shift for scientific research.

Berlin, 31st March 2011

E. W. Harnack, Editor

Literature:

- Dinzelbacher, Peter (1992): An der Schwelle zum Jenseits. Freiburg: Herder.
- Kelly, Edward F. & Kelly Emily W. (2007): Irreducible mind. Toward a psychology for the 21st century. Lanham. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Knoblauch, Hubert (2009): Populäre Religion. Auf dem Weg in eine spirituelle Gesellschaft. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Tart, Charles (o. J.): The Archives of Scientist's Transcendent Experiences. <http://www.issc-taste.org>
- von Brück, Michael (2009): Wie können wir leben? Religion und Spiritualität in einer Welt ohne Maß. München: C. H. Beck.
- Vorglimler, Herbert; Bernauer, Ursula & Sternberg, Thomas (2001): Engel. Erfahrungen göttlicher Nähe. Freiburg: Herder