

# OLGA LOUCHAKOVA-SCHWARTZ & MARTIN SCHWARTZ

## RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND COGNITION



Katedra filozofie Filozofickej fakulty Trnavskej univerzity v Trnave a Centrum fenomenologických štúdií privíta **17. 3. 2017** na svojej pôde vzácných hostí z Berkeley, USA, profesorku Olgu Louchakovu-Schwartz a profesora Martina Schwartz. Pre študentov a odbornú verejnosť pripravili spoločný prednáškový seminár venovaný téme náboženskej skúsenosti a ľudského poznania vo svetle kognitívnych, fenomenologických a historicko-lingvisticko-hermeneutických výskumov s názvom „**Religious Experience and Cognition: How Traditional Texts Enrich Our Understanding of Human Consciousness**“. ■ **Profesor Martin Schwartz, Ph.D.** (U.C. Berkeley) je expertom na iránske štúdiá, iránsku historickú lingvistiku a starobylé náboženské texty Zoroastrizmu. Medzi jeho ďalšie odborné záujmy patria stredoiránska literatúra, etnomuzikológia a výskum širších filozofických, kognitívnych a religionistických súvislostí starobylých náboženských textov. ■ **Profesorka Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, Ph.D.** (PAOI and Graduate Theological Union: Hult Business School; UC Davis School of Medicine; 1975 – 2013 Psychology and Comparative Religion at Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) sa dlhodobo venuje fenomenologicko-kognitívne výskumu náboženskej skúsenosti. Využíva poznatky a metodológiu fenomenologickej psychológie a fenomenológie života, skúsenosti z výučby komparatívnej religionistiky, filozofickej a transpersonálnej psychológie a z riadených a kvalitatívnych výskumov. Je zakladajúcou riaditeľkou medzinárodnej Spoločnosti pre fenomenológiu náboženskej skúsenosti.

**PROGRAM** ■ Piatok 17. 3. 2017

**10:00 (miestnosť 3P1)** ■ Olga Louchakova-Schwartz: **Cognitive Phenomenology, Textuality, and Christian Introspectionism**

**14:00 (miestnosť 3P1)** ■ Martin Schwartz: **Zoroaster's Oral Poetry: Cognitive Aspects of a Religious Corpus**

## RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND COGNITION:

### HOW TRADITIONAL TEXTS ENRICH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

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#### Cognitive Phenomenology, Textuality, and Christian Introspectionism

**Olga Louchakova-Schwartz**

**March 17, 2017 ■ Friday, 10 am, room 3P1, FF TU, Trnava**

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The “awakened Heart” of Moravian Pietism, “The Inner Man” of Orthodox Christianity, the Kierkegaardian “spirit-self”, and countless other references to religious introspection have been dismissed by cognitive science as arbitrary and non-verifiable epiphenomenal constructs of subjective experience. Scientific research tends to disregard religious connotations of experience, and instead, focus on the attentional strategies in secularized forms of meditation, such as mindfulness. While the studies of introspective reasoning and language are making a comeback in science, many findings regarding the straightforward “physical” consequences of religious or spiritual experiencing, such as improved resilience to stress, enhanced intellectual abilities, resilience to cognitive decline, higher rates of survival in cancer, etc., remain unexplained. In this talk, I will present the material phenomenology of religious introspection. Using material phenomenology instead of classic phenomenology allows one to link religious or spiritual experience to the structures and capacities of the brain which had not yet been placed in religious or phenomenological regard; this includes haptic perception, synesthesia, ordering in the white matter, modular organization and the large-scale networks of the brain, to name a few. I will then outline the constraints for experiential research of religious introspection, such as the need for precise analyses and suspension of the historically situated strata of accounts, as opposed to the biologically grounded structures of experience which can be translated into a neuroscientific experiment.

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#### Zoroaster’s Oral Poetry: Cognitive Aspects of a Religious Corpus

**Martin Schwartz**

**March 17, 2017 ■ Friday, 14 pm, room 3P1, FF TU, Trnava**

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The Central Asiatic Iranian poet-priest Zoroaster, who flourished ca. 1000-1200 BCE, authored 17 innovative religious poems called collectively “The Gathas”, which form the earliest stratum of the heterogeneous compositions called “The Avesta”. Although the composition of the Gathas was made without benefit of writing, a later phenomenon in the Iranian world, the poetry was preserved by a long tradition of oral recitation by mnemonist priests, and eventually consigned to writing in a specially designed alphabet. Internal evidence shows the reliability of the transmission. The fact of the oral composition of these early poems by an ingenious craftsman employing great intellectual intricacy gives us a window into how Zoroaster’s innovative religious ideas were projected in a poetic medium. Not only do the encryptive (hidden) stylistic devices cast light on the complexity of Zoroaster’s theology, but are of interest for the extent of innate human cognitive abilities, e.g. pertaining to spatiality and location. This will be illustrated together with an exposition of Zoroaster’s religious world, and will be brought to bear on broader issues of the history of religion.

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**Martin Schwartz** is Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California at Berkeley ■ **Olga Louchakova-Schwartz** is Professor Emerita of Psychology and Comparative Religion at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, and a clinical faculty member at the University of California School of Medicine at Davis.