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From Academia

## The only thing we have to fear...

*Fear is an important primal, physiological state that enables us to maintain limits of safety; it is a driving force of our actions and stimulates our development. But sometimes it can become pathological, turning into anxiety. Science and medicine try to unravel this mechanism, striving to **decipher fear**; we write about this in articles on pp. 4 and 24.*

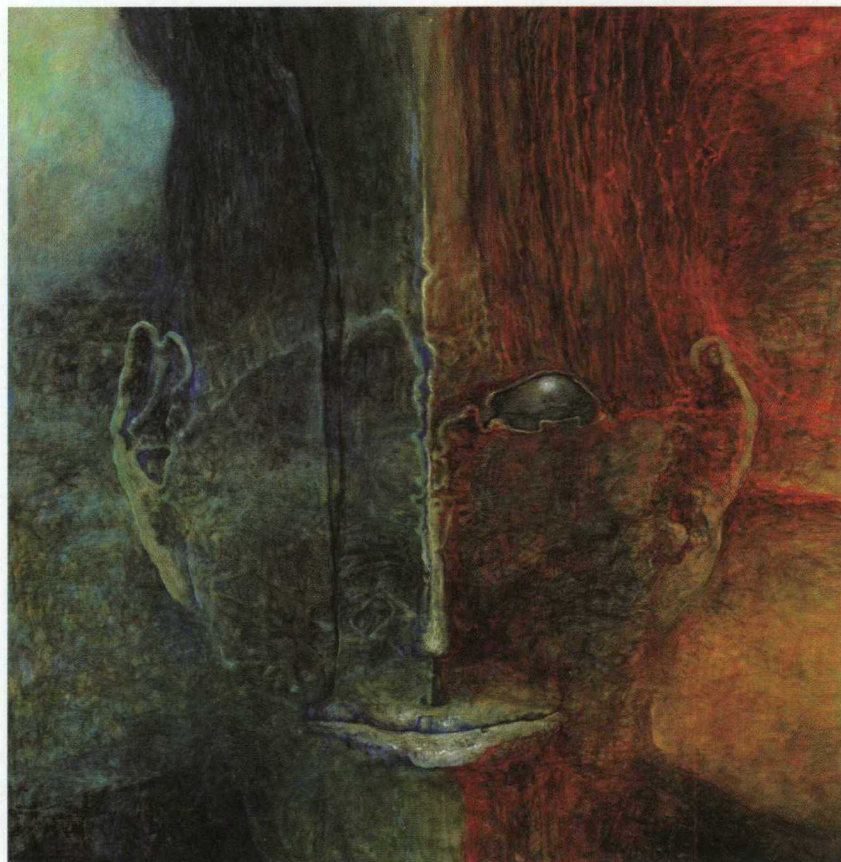
*Certain fears have played a role in human evolution, such as **arachnophobia** and the fear of **graves and tombs**, but today they seem irrational and we try to tame them - of course with the help of scientists (pp 16 and 35). From time immemorial, humans have been afraid of the awesome power of nature, and rightfully so. This fear is one of the motivations for natural-science research. On p. 40 we write about **mercury pollution** and on p. 12 we take a look at how to cope with radioactivity from **the Fukushima accident**.*

*Sometimes strong anxieties can have very serious, real underpinnings, such as **poverty** (p. 38). Problems left unresolved for long years and mounting social unrest can spark the kind of crisis now evident in the Middle East, where **Arab Spring** revolutions have already claimed thousands of lives (p. 20).*

*Fear lies at the source of many terrible, even gruesome phenomena. On p. 28 we ponder the **mechanisms of anti-Semitism**, and on p. 8 we look at the dangerous societal emotions involved in the escalation of **ethnic conflict and genocides**.*

*As a kind of counterbalance to all these difficult topics, this issue also offers an soothing interview with **Prof. Andrzej Szczeklik**, a fascinating doctor with a humanist bent, who speaks of medicine as a part of culture, about the meeting of doctor and patient, and about inspiring role models (p 42).*

ACADEMIA staff



Historical Museum in Sopot

**Zdzisław Beksiński (1929-2005)**, an avid painter, also produced sculpture, drawings, photographs, and computer graphics. He never gave names to his grim, catastrophic images, so that anyone could name them as they saw fit. Exhibited in prestigious galleries around the world, his works also sparked interest from the broader public and touched off strong emotions