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TIBETZENTRUM • I.H.T.S.



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DALAI LAMA

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Symposium on Buddhism and Science:
Mind & Matter – New Models of Reality

Saturday, 26 May 2012 – Audimax, University of Vienna

UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

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Mind & Matter

New Models of Reality

Symposium on Buddhism and Science

Program

Chair: Dalai Lama

9:30 **Welcome**

Heinz W. Engl
Rector of the University of Vienna

Introduction

Moderator Gert Scobel
Science journalist and program manager at 3sat

Lectures

Anton Zeilinger

*Quantum Optics, Quantum Nanophysics and
Quantum Information, University of Vienna*

Klaus-Dieter Mathes

*Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies,
University of Vienna*

Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch

Department of Philosophy, University of Vienna

Michael von Brück

Religious Studies, Ludwig Maximilians-University, Munich

11:30 Lunch Break

Wolf Singer

*Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies,
Max Planck Institute for Brain Research*

Dalai Lama

15:20 **Panel Discussion**

Conclusion and Closing

Mind & Matter

New Models of Reality

Symposium on Buddhism and Science –

Chaired by the Dalai Lama

Abstract

Buddhism and science share the common goal to truly understand the world we live in and both have developed a complex variety of models of its 'reality'. While Eastern models of reality tend to be structured around mind – one idealist current of Buddhist thought even reducing matter to mind on the presupposition that mind alone exists (cittamātra) – Western scientific models are inclined to privilege matter, to the extent that extreme proponents of scientific materialism, such as Paul Churchland, reject the existence of mind including all its mental factors on the grounds that descriptions of such (epi)phenomena have no place in a naturalistic account of the world.

However, critics of scientific materialism have been quick to point out that the denial of first personal accounts of conscious experience – of minds, which are capable of intentional engagement, critical analysis and ethical behavior – seems to be as implausible and self-undermining as the outright denial of physical reality. The grounds on which Buddhism and Science can meet, then, are models of reality that do not attempt to reduce mind and matter to each other.

The acceptance of such a view inevitably leads to the question whether, and if yes, how, mind and matter are capable of mutual interaction. Do mental states emerge from the bio-chemical processes of the brain, or/and does mind, in the form of an observer in a quantum experiment for example, exert an influence on matter? This also calls into question our common sense view of a universe built up from locally determined real entities. In this regard, Niels Bohr came to the conclusion that "isolated material particles are abstractions, their properties being definable and observable only through their interaction with other systems." In the field of neuroscience experiments suggest that compassion, mindfulness, and meditation have an effect on the structure of the brain, which again influences behavior.

A dualist view of mind and matter, or any theory involving locally determined mental and material building blocks of reality, faces a number of philosophical problems. The most eminent Buddhist philosopher of Madhyamaka Nāgārjuna (fl. 200 CE) argues that if things (such as mind and matter) really exist independently in their own right, they cannot influence each other, which would contradict the Buddhist axiom of dependent origination. Nāgārjuna's observation suggests the viability of a model of reality that equally accepts both mental and material factors of existence under the condition that they are correctly understood to be empty of an independent existence and thus capable of mutual interaction. In other words, dependent origination is inseparably linked to emptiness, i.e., the universal absence of locally determined entities.

Since his childhood H.H. the Dalai Lama has had great interest in science and scientific research, and it is his conviction that human belief should be based on a correct assessment of reality, and not on assumptions. Chaired by H.H. the Dalai Lama, the symposium "Mind & Matter – New Models of Reality" brings together leading scholars from physics, neuroscience and Buddhist philosophy, to present and discuss new ground-breaking experimental observations in quantum optics and neuroplasticity against the backdrop of Buddhist philosophy. The speakers seek an open exchange of scientific and Buddhist ideas with the goal to start a dialogue on new models of reality with a multi-disciplinary approach. H.H. the Dalai Lama has established the academic institution Tibet Center – International Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies – which promotes and shares the knowledge of Tibetan Buddhist culture in the Western world and provides a platform for dialogue among scholars. The symposium is hosted jointly by Tibet Center – I.I.H.T.S. and Vienna University, and provides a starting point for future cooperation.

Lectures

ANTON ZEILINGER

Anton Zeilinger is Professor of Physics at the University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His experimental work on the foundations of quantum physics opened up applications in quantum cryptography, quantum computation and quantum teleportation. He taught and conducted research at many institutions including M.I.T., Collège de France, Technical University Munich, and Oxford University. He is Honorary Professor at the University of Science and Technology of China. Among the numerous other prizes he received, he also was awarded the inaugural Newton medal and the Wolf Prize in Physics. He wrote the popular scientific book "Dance of the Photons: From Einstein to Quantum Teleportation".

KLAUS-DIETER MATHES

Klaus-Dieter Mathes is Professor of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna. His current research deals with Tibetan Madhyamaka in the 15th and 16th centuries. Before coming to Vienna he worked with Prof. Harunaga Isaacson (Hamburg) in a project on the Indian origins of Kagyu Mahāmudrā. His habilitation thesis (Hamburg 2004) was on Gö Lotsawa's (1392-1481) Mahāmudrā Interpretation of Buddha-nature. It was published by Wisdom Publications under the title *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*. The PhD thesis (Marburg 1994) was on the Dharmadharmatāvibhāga, an early Yogācāra work, that distinguishes between the ordinary phenomenal world and the true nature of these phenomena.

PATRIZIA GIAMPIERI-DEUTSCH

Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Vienna, corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and member of its Department for Linguistics and Communication Research. She is training and supervising analyst of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (WPV) and the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), and member of the IPA-College of Research Fellows. 2004-09 chair of the Ethics Committee of the WPV. Numerous publications.

MICHAEL VON BRÜCK

Michael von Brück is head of the Interfaculty Program of Religious Studies at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich/Germany. He studied in Germany, India and Japan. He specializes in Advaita Vedânta and Mahâyâna-Buddhism. He is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Goethe Institute and a member of the Advisory Board of Suhrkamp Verlag: Edition World Religions. Michael von Brück has written seventeen major books and about two hundred essays in journals all over the world.

WOLF SINGER

Wolf Singer studied Medicine in Munich and Paris, obtained his MD from the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, and his PhD from the Technical University in Munich. He is Director emeritus at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt and Founding Director both of the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies (FIAS) and of the Ernst Strüngmann Institute (ESI) for Neuroscience in Cooperation with Max Planck Society. His research is focused on the neuronal substrate of higher cognitive functions, and especially on the question how the distributed sub-processes in the brain are coordinated and bound together in order to give rise to coherent perception and action.

MODERATOR: GERT SCOBEL

Science journalist and program manager at 3sat