

Contemplative experience, Science and Dialogue

- A historical-philosophical Investigation of a meeting between Science and Tibetan Buddhism with reflections on the possibility of the inclusion of Contemplation as a subject in Theory of Science by using aspects of phenomenology.

This dissertation discusses the implications of an *interdisciplinary* and *cross cultural* dialogue. It is hypothesised that similarities exist between *science* and *contemplative practices*. In order to qualify this hypothesis a definite *dialogue* between parties that could be characterised as representatives of two very different cultures of knowledge has been examined.

Since 1987 the Mind and Life Institute has arranged dialogues between *Tibetan Buddhism* represented by Dalai Lama and representatives from the *cognitive sciences*. The *interdisciplinary* aspect of the dialogue regards the challenge of making a sound discussion between cognitive science on one side and theory and practice of mediation on the other. In the introduction to the dissertation the *cross cultural* aspect is dealt with by introducing hermeneutic in general and cross cultural hermeneutic in particular. These are being related to contemplative practice by introducing a model based on Buddhist meditation that divides cognition and phenomena into three levels of subtlety, namely 'gross', 'subtle' and 'very subtle' corresponding respectively to the three types of mediation: Samatha, Vipasyana and Dzogchen. *Dialogue* is introduced as the main dynamics of *hermeneutic* and *meditation*.

In order to discover the main *philosophical* and *scientific issues* that are exposed by the Mind and Life dialogue the first two Mind and Life meetings are analyzed. *Validation* of contemplative insights and *subtle levels of consciousness* was a returning issue that the scientists in the dialogue questioned. In the effort to make a scientific paradigm that can produce research results in the area of *validation of subtle levels of consciousness*, a concept of 1.person experience with reference to Husserl's phenomenology is developed resulting in Francisco Varela's Neurophenomenology. The resulting research is briefly mentioned in the dissertation.

Inspired by the Mind and Life meetings the last part of the dissertation reflects on the possibility of discussing similar subjects as an interdisciplinary project at the University of Århus. An example of a theoretical model that could be useful as a framework to facilitate the dialogue between science and contemplative traditions among the participants in the project is Ken Wilber's article 'Eye to Eye'. It is suggested that a project is made in Århus inspired by Neurophenomenology but added a hermeneutical-cultural dimension which, in the Mind and Life dialogue, is considered weak. It is mentioned, that the European tradition has contained numerous Christian contemplative traditions and that Christian contemplative traditions are still alive outside protestant theology.

Buddhism sees the manifest world as an emergent property of very subtle consciousness and science sees consciousness as an emergent property of firing neurons, but none the less evaluating the dialogues and the resulting research of the Mind and Life Institute it seems that contemplative traditions and science have something in common regarding method and empirical evidence although the worldviews of the respective parties in other aspects are extremely different.