



Wilton Park

Programme

The Big Bang and the interfaces of knowledge: towards a common understanding of Truth?

Monday 23 – Wednesday 25 June 2014 | WP1316

In 2012, CERN and Wilton Park hosted the pioneering international conference “The Big Bang and the Interfaces of Knowledge: towards a common language?”. It gained global attention.

The 2012 conference report reads that “...although it is possible to access a measure of common language this conference has shown that words like truth, proof and faith have divergent meanings in different disciplines. Nonetheless all participants seem to have a common passion for rationality and awe along with a sense that as a human family we need to address our common problems”.

The report also concludes that: “the interfaces of language are complex and subtle and theologians, philosophers and scientists all need to work hard to firstly understand what other disciplines are saying in their own terms”.

This 2014 conference proposes to continue the dialogue following one of the key themes that emerged during the first meeting – the nature and the understanding of “truth”. The purpose of this second conference is to widen the spectrum of scientists, theologians and philosophers involved and to deepen the dialogue towards a common understanding of truth.

**In partnership with the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN)
With support from Sir Halley Stewart Trust
To be held at Château de Divonne, France**

In partnership with:



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Sir Halley Stewart Trust

Monday 23 June

1200-1330

Participants arrive

1400-1430

Welcome and introduction

Richard Burge

Chief Executive, Wilton Park, Steyning

Setting the scene

Emmanuel Tsismelis

Senior Physicist, European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva

1430-1600

1. Can philosophy, science and religion speak a common language?

What were the main conclusions of the 2012 conference? Where were the main stumbling blocks in the conversation? In what ways has the dialogue continued and developed? Have any new insights or challenges emerged?

Mikael Stenmark

Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Uppsala University

Dominique Lambert

Professor, University of Namur

1600-1630

Tea/coffee

1630-1800

2. Do philosophical or secular ethical approaches strengthen the common ground on which to encourage harmonious dialogue?

In what ways might philosophy or secular ethics strengthen the common ground for dialogue? Are they able to assist when nature of the 'truth' is so contested? Or are philosophy and secular ethics as much a part of the problem as religious/theological approaches?

Cornel du Toit

Head, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria

Bikash Sinha

Scientific Researcher, Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre, Salt Lake

Harry Collins

Distinguished Research Professor, Cardiff University

1830-1900

Drinks reception and dinner

Tuesday 24 June

0800-0845

Breakfast

0900-1045

3. The nature of the 'scientific' method: is science a homogenous concept?

What are the parameters of the 'scientific' method? How do they relate to the search for truth? In what ways might science benefit from strengthened dialogue with religion and philosophy?

Andrew Briggs

Professor of Nanomaterials, University of Oxford

Heather Brunskell-Evans

Member, Central Committee of Quaker Peace and Social Witness; Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Medical Humanities, University of Leicester

Nathan Aviezer

Professor of Physics, Bar-ilan University, Ramat-gan

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1300

4. How do the major religions or traditions of belief have a dialogue with science?

Is dialogue with science equally important to all the major world religions and traditions of belief? Why do some religions/traditions invest in the dialogue more than others? Why do others reject it? How might different religions or traditions of belief benefit from dialogue with science? What presuppositions does this question make about the nature of truth?

Muhammad Zaid

Research Consultant, Society for Research and Sustainable Development (SRSD); Religious Scholar (Imam, Religious Studies and Science Lecturer), Ever Green Public High School, Batkhela

Marcelo Gleiser

Appleton Professor of Natural Philosophy, Dartmouth College, Hanover

1300-1430

Conference photograph followed by lunch

1430-1600

5. The heart of the question - in what areas might religion and science further dialogue?

Four 'discussion' papers should be prepared and each will be supported by an introductory presentation (10 minutes maximum). Each presentation should be followed by questions of clarification.

i. Truth, discovery and revelation: what is the relationship between faith/experience/experiment/observation/reason?

Carl Feit

Professor of Biology, Yeshiva University, New York

ii. How are authoritative decisions made about Truth? Or is everything arbitrary?

Eduardo Cruz

Researcher and Professor of Religion and Theology, Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo

iii. What are the boundaries to knowledge and or faith? What might determine their limits? Are they self-limiting by definition?

Kusum Jain

Professor of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur

iv. Why CERN is reflecting on this issue? What are the challenges or risks for a scientific establishment that does not reflect on the philosophical or theological implications of its work?

Emmanuel Tsesmelis

Senior Physicist, European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva

1600-1615

Tea/coffee

1615-1745

6. Working groups: the heart of the question - in what areas might religion and science further dialogue?

Group i

Truth, discovery and revelation: What is the relationship between Faith/Experience/Experiment/Observation/Reason?

Group ii

How are authoritative decisions made about Truth? Or is everything arbitrary?

Group iii

What are the boundaries to Knowledge and or Faith? What might determine their limits? Are they self-limiting by definition?

Group iv

Why CERN is reflecting on this issue? What are the challenges or risks for a scientific establishment that does not reflect on the philosophical or theological implications of its work?

1745

Travel to CERN for dinner

1830-1900

Reception

1900

Dinner

After dinner speaker:

Tom McLeish

Professor of Physics and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Durham University

Wednesday 25 June

0800-0845

Breakfast and checkout

0900-1030

7. Feedback from working groups: the heart of the question - in what areas might religion and science further dialogue?

Feedback from working groups

Chair: Richard Burge

Chief Executive, Wilton Park, Steyning

1030-1100

8. Concluding session – working towards a common understanding of truth? Taking the dialogue forward

How have the conversations progressed? Where have we made new connections? Or gained new insights? Have we managed to nuance different positions? Which themes are most fruitful for us to develop? What are our conclusions?

Round up of the previous sessions and questions to think about for plenary session after the break.

Stuart Clark

Science Journalist, Letchworth

Gerald Schroeder

Professor, College of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem

1100-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1215

8. Concluding session continues

1215-1230

9. Closure of conference

Richard Burge

Chief Executive, Wilton Park, Steyning

Rolf Heuer

Director General, CERN, Geneva

1245

Participants depart