



BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE

Based on a talk given by **Ajahn Brahmavamso** to lay people at the Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre, Nollamara, Western Australia, on 19th of October 2001

Sometime ago, I was invited to the West Perth Observatory as part of the Centenary Federation celebrations in Western Australia. The youth groups of W.A. organised all the events. One of the events they presented was entitled '**Our Place in Space**'. The idea was to try and find out whether the future would be one which followed science or one which would follow religion. They wanted to see how those two, so called contradictory approaches to life, would pan out into the future. So they invited representatives from a couple of religions. **I represented the Buddhists**, and a teacher from a prestigious Christian school represented the Christians. The State Astronomer and a young person from the **University of WA**, who was about to get a **PhD in physics**, were also on the panel, representing Astronomy and Physics. What they didn't know was that before I was a monk I was a theoretical physicist. So, I knew what Buddhists know and I also knew what they know. It was a bit unfair, but really good fun. **It was good fun talking to the audience about Buddhism**, religion and science, and how they come together. There are dangers in religion and science, but they can be used to help people to find a way through their lives in wise, compassionate and effective ways.

The End of the Universe

I started by explaining a few things about Buddhism that many people do not know. Buddhism is so extensive that there are still many things that people in the West don't know about this great religion, especially from the old Scriptures, the *suttas*. For instance, do you know who the first man in space was? No, it certainly wasn't Yuri Gagarin. It was *Venerable Rohitassa!* (AN IV, 45)

I think you all know that if you really get your meditation together, it is possible to levitate. One of the stories in the *suttas* tells the story of a hermit who lived alone in the forest. He developed his meditation and learned how to rise into the air and fly. This particular hermit wasn't just an ordinary levitator, he was one of the best levitators there has ever been.

He took levitation to new heights and 'raised the bar', as it were! Because he could go so fast, it was said faster than an arrow, he decided to try and find out where the universe ends. He flew for many, many, many years, and he still could not find the end of the universe. He went beyond the solar systems into deep space using the power of the mind. People often say that's just belief. It's just not real. But later on I'll mention a few facts that show that it probably was real and certainly possible. He went on for many tens of years, and died on the way, never finding an end to the universe.

Being reborn in one of the heavenly realms Venerable Rohitassa came to the Buddha and told him the story of his previous life. That as a hermit, he'd levitated and flew on "for ever and ever and ever", dying on the journey without reaching the end of the cosmos. He was not the first cosmonaut or astronaut, he was the first monkanaut! The Buddha rebuked him, saying that that's not the way to find the end of the universe. Instead, the Buddha emphatically said that the **beginning and the end of the universe can only be found by investigating within**. This gave the answer to one of the questions that people so often ask of Buddhists: "Who do Buddhists believe created this universe?" A scientist would reword the same question as, "**What is the origin of this universe?**" The answer is that the **beginning and end of the universe are to be found within your own body and mind**. You are its creator!

Remembering Past Lives

Buddhism is founded on meditation, and meditation can reveal many, many things, especially deep memories from the past. Monks, nuns, and ordinary meditators can reach such deep meditations that they can not only levitate, but they can remember previous lives! Many people can actually do this. When you come out of a deep meditation you have incredible energy. Afterwards you won't be able to go to sleep, nor will you be able to go and watch TV, because the mind will be too full of its own joy and happiness. Moreover, the mind is so empowered that you can make suggestions to it, suggestions that you would not normally be able to fulfil. But empowered by deep meditation, you can follow the suggestions. I've actually taught this special meditation to people on meditation retreats, because on meditation retreats some get deep results. People sometimes get memories of when they were babies, and then of being in their mother's womb. If they are lucky they get memories of when they were a very old person, i.e. memories from a past life! One of the important things with those past life memories is that they are very real to the person experiencing them. It's as if you are back there experiencing it. Anyone who has had a memory like that has no doubt in their mind about past lives. It's not a theory any more. Such memories are like remembering where you were this morning when you had breakfast. You have no doubts that that was you this morning, having that breakfast. You didn't imagine it. With the same clarity, or even greater clarity, you remember that that very old person was you, only it wasn't a few hours ago, it was many decades ago. It was a different time, a different body and a different life. Now if people can do that on nine day meditation retreats, imagine what you would do if you were a monk or a nun, who meditates not just for a weekend, or for nine days, but nine years, twenty-nine, thirty-nine, or fifty-nine years. Imagine how much power you could generate in that meditation. Now imagine how much more power you could generate if you were a Buddha with an Enlightened mind.

Now you know what to do to discover for yourself if you've lived before. Meditate. I don't mean just meditating to get rid of stress and make your self calm. I mean really meditate, deeply. Meditate to get your mind into what we call the *Dhānas*. Those are deep states of absorption, where the body disappears. You don't feel. You can't see. You can't hear. You're absolutely inside the mind. You have no thoughts but you are perfectly

aware. You are blissed out. The method, the instructions for the experiment, are very clearly laid down. Even in my little book "*The Basic Method of Meditation*" all the steps are there. Follow them, and invest the resources necessary for doing that experiment not just one weekend retreat, but many weekend retreats, and sometimes many years of meditating. If you want to follow that '**scientific method**', you have to enter into a *Dhāna*. And then, after you emerge from that state, you ask yourself, "What is my earliest memory?" You can keep going back in your mind, and eventually you will remember. You will see for yourself the experience of past lives. **Then you know. Yes, it is true!** You have had the experience for yourself.

The Buddha said he did remember past lives, many past lives, many aeons of past lives. He said specifically that he remembered ninety-one aeons. That's ninety big bangs, the time before and the time afterwards, huge spaces of time. That's why the Buddha said there was not just one universe, but many universes. We are not talking about parallel universes as some scientists say. We are talking about sequential universes, with what the Buddha called *sanvattati vivattati*. This is Pāli, meaning the unfolding of the universe and the infolding of it, beginnings and endings.

The *suttas* even give a measure for the lifetime of a universe. When I was a theoretical physicist, my areas of expertise were the very small and the very large; fundamental particle physics and astrophysics. They were the two aspects that I liked the most, the big and the small. So I knew what was meant by the age of a universe and what a '**big bang**' was all about. The age of a universe, the last time I looked in the journals, was somewhere about seventeen thousand million years. In the **Buddhist suttas** they say that about **thirty seven thousand million years is a complete age**. When I told that to the state astronomer he said yes, that estimate was in the ball park, it was acceptable. The person who was the convener of the Our Place in Space seminar made a joke about the fact that a hundred or two hundred years ago, Christianity said the universe was about seven thousand years old. That estimate certainly *isn't* acceptable, the Buddhist one is!

It is remarkable that **there was a cosmology in Buddhism** twenty-five centuries ago that doesn't conflict with modern physics. Even what astronomers say are galaxies, the Buddha called wheel systems. If any of you have ever seen a galaxy, you will know there are two types of galaxy. First, there is the spiral galaxy.

The Milky Way is one of those. Have you seen a spiral galaxy? It is like a wheel! The other type is the globular cluster, which looks like a wheel with a big hub in the middle. 'Wheels' is a very accurate way of describing galaxies. This was explained by someone twenty five centuries ago, when they did not have telescopes! They didn't need them, they could go there themselves!

There is a lot of interesting stuff in the old *suttas*, even for those of you who like weird stuff. Some times people ask this question, "Do Buddhists believe in extra terrestrial beings, in aliens?" Would an alien landing here upset the very foundation of Buddhism? When I was reading through these old *suttas* I actually found a reference to aliens! It's only a very small *sutta*, which said that there are other world systems with other suns, other planets, and other beings on them. That's directly from the *Anguttara Nikāya*. (AN X, 29)

The Ghost in the Machine

During the seminar at the West Perth Observatory, one of the audience put their hand up and asked, "Why is it that when I look through a telescope I feel that my religion is challenged?" She was a Catholic. She explained that she felt scared when she looked through a telescope, because what she saw did not agree with what she read in her bible. As a Buddhist you don't need to be afraid. I took that question and turned it back on to the scientists by asking, "What if you looked through the opposite end of the telescope to investigate the one who is looking? I think you scientists would be scared. You would be afraid if you turned the telescope inwards and looked into yourselves, and asked who is looking at all of this?" Part of the problem with science is that it is all 'out there'. It's always a person looking through the telescope, looking at the apparatus, but never reflecting back to see who is actually looking at all this. Who is doing this?

When the discussion was starting to get a bit dull, I decided to stir up the State Astronomer by talking about life. Any scientists here would know that quantum mechanics, or quantum theory, describes the world as composed of wave functions. The wave function specifies the probability of an observable event. However, when life gets involved, when an observation is made, the wave function collapses and reality as we know it occurs.

There has to be observation, a life there, to make it happen. The quantum theory needed an observer, a life, to give meaning to the equations. After the quantum revolution in physics, an objective universe, independent of life, became nonsensical.

Another fundamental law of physics is called the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which says that entropy always increases. In other words, life gets more disordered, even more chaotic. However, recently someone won the Nobel Prize for proving an exception, that when there is a closed system that includes life, entropy decreases! Life gives order to chaos. That disproved the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Because of life we get organisation rather than disorder. The universe is a closed system and it has got life in it. That's why there is organisation.

When I was at university, life was what the physicists called, the 'ghost in the machine'. The 'ghost in the machine' is what messed up all the objective theories. This ghost scared the lab-coats off many a scientist!

Following Beliefs Blindly

This method that we take as science in the universities, in the labs, and in the hospitals often suffers from the same disease as religion dogmatism. You know what religious dogmatism is like. We have a belief and whether it fits with experience or not, whether it's useful or not, whether it's conducive to people's happiness, harmony, and peace in the world or not, we follow it just because that's our belief. But following beliefs blindly, dogmatically, is just a recipe for violence and suffering.

One of the beautiful things about Buddhism that encouraged me to become a Buddhist when I was young, and which keeps me as a Buddhist now, is that questioning is always encouraged. You do not need to believe. In one of the tales from the ancient texts the Buddha gave a teaching to his chief monk, Venerable Sariputta. After giving the teaching, the Buddha asked his chief monk, "Sariputta, do you believe what I just taught?" Sariputta, without any hesitation, said "No I don't believe it, because I haven't experienced it yet". The Buddha said, "Well done! Well done! Well done!" That is the attitude to encourage in all disciples, either of religion or science. Not to believe, but to keep an open mind until they've had the true experience. This attitude goes against dogmatism,

it runs counter to fundamentalism, which one doesn't only see in religion, but which one also sees in science.

'The eminence of a great scientist', the old saying goes, 'is measured by the length of time they obstruct progress in their field'.

The more famous the scientist, the more prominent they are, the more their views are taken to be gospel truth. Their fame stops other people challenging them; it delays the arrival of a better 'truth'. In Buddhism when you find a better truth, use it at once.

The Problem with Dogmatism

There is an old story, from the time of the Buddha, about two friends who went looking for treasure in a town that had been abandoned. (DN 23.29) First they found some hemp and decided to make two bundles of that hemp and carry it away. They would be able to sell it when they got back home. Soon after they had made these big bundles of hemp they came across some hempen cloth. One of the men said, "What do I need the hemp for? The cloth is better". The other man said, "No this is already well bound up, I've carried it for so long already, I'll keep my load of hemp". Then they found some flax, some flaxen cloth, some cotton, and some cotton cloth, and each time the man carrying the hemp said, "No, the hemp is okay for me", while his friend changed his load for that which was more valuable. Later on they found some silver, and then some gold. Each time one man would always change what he was carrying for something better, but the other man stubbornly kept his bundle of hemp. When they got home the man who carried the gold was very popular with his family. As for the man who carried the hemp, his family was not happy with him at all! Why don't we change our views, our ideas, when we see something better? The reason we don't do that is because of attachment. This is *my* view. We are comfortable with the old views, even though we know they are wrong. We don't really want to change. Sometimes our self image is bound up with those views. Like the scientist who is bound up with his achievements, bound up with what he's seen so far, he or she resists new ideas.

This is the problem called dogmatism. Sometimes when I talk about levitation, people say levitation doesn't exist, it's just myth.

Wait until you see someone levitate! If you saw someone levitate, if the three monks here rose up about two or three feet, wouldn't that be challenging?

Sorry, we can't do that in public. It's against our rules. One of the reasons we can't demonstrate psychic powers in front of people is that if we did, someone would probably record it on a video camera and send it to a television channel. Then everybody, even from overseas, would come to Perth. Not to listen to the *Dhamma*, not to hear about Buddhism, but just to see the monks do their tricks. Then we would be pressured into giving demonstrations all the time. It would be like a circus, not a temple. The point is that **monks are not here to demonstrate tricks**.

Even if a monk did perform a miracle, many people would say: "This is just a trick. It's done with special effects. They are not really levitating". If you don't want to believe it, you won't. This is the problem with dogmatism. What you don't want to see, you do not see. When you don't want to believe it, you go into denial. This is why I say that many **scientists are in denial about the nature of the mind**.

The Boy with No Brain

This is a well known case that throws a **challenge** to **modern science**. It's the case of Professor John Lorber and the student with **no brain**.^[1] Professor Lorber was a neurologist at Sheffield University who held a research chair in paediatrics. He did a lot of research on hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. The student's physician at the university noticed that the youth had a slightly larger than normal head, and so referred him to Professor Lorber, simply out of interest. When they did a brain scan on the student they saw that his cranium was filled mainly with cerebrospinal fluid. The student had an IQ of 126, had gained a first-class honours degree in mathematics, and was socially completely normal. And yet the boy had virtually no brain. This is not just a fabrication; research has found other people with no brains. During the first world war, when there was such carnage in the trenches of Europe. Soldiers had their skulls literally blown apart by bullets and shrapnel. It is said that the doctors found that some of the shattered heads of those corpses were empty.

There was no brain. The evidence of those doctors was put aside as being too difficult to understand. But Professor Lorber went forward with his findings, and published them, to the great disturbance of the scientific community. Billions of dollars are going into research on the brain. Current views hold that imbalances in the brain are causing your depressions, your lack of intelligence, or your emotional problems. And yet here is evidence that shows you don't need much of a brain to have an excellent mind.

A doctor friend in Sydney discussed this case with me once. He said he'd seen those CT scans, and confirmed that the case was well known in the medical community. He explained that that boy only had what was called a reptilian brain stem. Usually, any baby born with just a reptilian brain stem, without the cortex and the other stuff, will usually die straight away or within a few days after birth. A reptilian brain stem is not capable of maintaining basic bodily functions such as breathing, heart or liver. It's not enough to keep the higher brain functions going. It's not enough for speech, not enough for intelligence, certainly not enough for being an honours student in mathematics. This doctor said, "Ajahn Brahm, you wouldn't believe the problem that this is causing in my field of science."

It shatters so much past research. It is challenging so many drug companies that are making billions of dollars in profits". Because **dogmatic scientists can't understand how a person with virtually no brain can be intelligent**, they are just burying the findings at the back of the filing cabinet, classifying it as an anomaly. But truth just won't go away.

The Mind and the Brain

As soon as you start to include the mind, this 'ghost in the machine', in the equations, scientists tend to become discomfited. They take refuge in dogma, and say, "No, that cannot exist". I really took the Sate Astronomer to task over such dogmatism in science.

As far as **Buddhism is concerned there are six senses**. Not just the five senses of science, namely sight, sound, smell, taste and touch but in addition the mind. From the very beginning in Buddhism, mind has been the sixth sense. Twenty-five centuries ago, the sixth sense was well recognised. So this is not changing things to keep up with modern times; this was so from the very beginning. The sixth sense, the mind, is independent of the other

five senses. In particular the mind is independent of the brain. **If you volunteer to have a brain transplant with me you take my brain and I take your brain I will still be Ajahn Brahm and you will still be you. Want to try it?** If it was possible and it happened, you would still be yourself. The mind and the brain are two different things. *The mind can make use of the brain but it doesn't have to.*

Some of you may have had out of the body experiences. These out of the body experiences have recently been the subject of mainstream scientific research. Out of the body experiences are now a scientific fact! I like to stir people up by saying things like that. Recently I saw that **Dr. Sam Parnia**, a researcher from the University of Southampton Medical School, has given a paper, stating that consciousness survives death.^[2] He said that he did not know how it happens, or why it happens, but, he says, it does happen. His evidence was gathered from people who have had out of the body experiences in his hospital. Dr Parnia, investigated and interviewed many, many patients. The information which they gave him, as a cool headed scientist, said yes, those people were conscious during the time they were dead. What was especially very convincing was that often they could actually describe to the doctor the medical procedures that were done during the time when they were clinically dead. They could describe it as if they were looking at their body from a position above the table. But how that happens Dr. Parnia can't explain. Why it happens he can't explain. But other medical findings also support the above. Finally, their findings replicated the work done earlier by Dr. Raymond A. Moody in the United States.^[3]

The evidence proved to those hard nosed doctors that out of body experiences do happen. But how could they happen? If we agree that the mind can be independent of the body, then we have a plausible explanation. The brain doesn't need to be functioning for a mind to exist. The scientific facts are there, the evidence is there, but a lot of scientists don't like to admit those facts. They prefer to close their eyes because of dogmatism.

Come and See for Yourself

If you had just one person who had been confirmed as medically dead who could describe to the doctors, as soon as they were revived, what had been said, and done during that period of death, wouldn't that be pretty convincing?

When I was doing elementary particle physics there was a theory that required for its proof the existence of what was called the 'W' particle. At the cyclotron in Geneva, CERN funded a huge research project, smashing atoms together with an enormous particle accelerator, to try and find one of these 'W' particles. They spent literally hundreds of millions of pounds on this project. They found one, just one 'W' particle. I don't think they have found another since. But once they found one 'W' particle, the researchers involved in that project were given Nobel prizes for physics. They had proved the theory by just finding the one 'W' particle. That's good science. Just one is enough to prove the theory.

When it comes to things we don't like to believe, they call just one experience, one clear factual undeniable experience, an anomaly. Anomaly is a word in science for disconcerting evidence that we can put in the back of a filing cabinet and not look at again, because it's threatens our worldview. It undermines what we want to believe. It is threatening to our dogma. However, an essential part of the scientific method is that theories have to be abandoned in favour of the evidence, in respect of the facts. The point is that the evidence for a mind independent of the brain is there. But once we admit that evidence, and follow the scientific method, then many cherished theories, what we call 'sacred cows' will have to be abandoned.

When we see something that challenges any theory, in science or in religion, we should not ignore the evidence. We have to change the theory to fit the facts. That is what we do in Buddhism. All the *Dhamma* of the Buddha, everything that he taught, if it does not fit the experience, then we should not accept it. We should not accept the Buddha's words in contradiction of experience. That is clearly stated in the *Kālāma Sutta*. (AN III, 65) The Buddha said do not believe because it is written in the books, or even if I say it. Don't just believe because it is tradition, or because it sounds right, or because it's comforting to you. Make sure it fits your experience. The existence of mind, independent of the brain, fits experience. The facts are there.

Sometimes, however, we cannot trust the experts. You cannot trust Ajahn Brahm. You cannot trust the scientific journals. Because people are often biased. Buddhism gives you a scientific method for your practice. Buddhism says, do the experiment and find out for your self if what the Buddha said is true or not. Check out your experience. For example,

develop the method to test the truth of past lives, rebirth and reincarnation. **Don't just believe it with faith**, find out for yourself. The Buddha has given a scientific experiment that you can repeat.

Until you understand the law of *kamma*, which is part of Buddhism, *kamma* is just a theory. **Do you believe that there is a God** 'up there' who decides when you can be happy or unhappy? Or is everything that happens to you just chance? Your happiness and your suffering in life, your joy, your pain and disappointments, are they deserved? Are you responsible or is it someone else's fault? Is it mere chance that we are rich or poor? Is it bad luck when we are sick and die at a young age? Why? **You can find the true answer for yourself**. You can experience the law of *kamma* through deep meditation. When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, the two knowledge's he realized just before his Enlightenment were the knowledge from experience of the truth of rebirth, and the knowledge from experience of the Law of *kamma*. This was not theory, not just more thinking, not something worked out from discussions around the coffee table **this was realization from deep experience of the nature of mind**. You too can have that same experience.

All religions in the world except Buddhism maintain the existence of a soul. They affirm a real '**self**', an '**essence of all being**', a 'person', a 'me'. Buddhism says there is no self! Who is right? What is this 'ghost in the machine'? Is it a soul, is it a being, or is it a process? What is it? When the Buddha said that there is no one in here, he never meant that to be just believed, he meant that to be experienced. The Buddha said, as a scientific fact, that there is no 'self'. But like any scientific fact, it has to be experienced each one for themselves, *paccattam vedītabbo viññūhī*. Many of you chant those Pāli words every day. It is basic scientific Buddhism. You have to keep an open mind. You don't believe there is 'no self', you don't believe there is a 'self' *both* beliefs are dogmatism. Keep an open mind until you complete the experiment. The experiment is the practice of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *pañña*, (virtue, meditation and insight). The experiment is Buddhist practice. Do the same experimental procedures that the Buddha did under the Bodhi tree. Repeat it and see if you get the same results. The result is called Enlightenment.

Men and women have repeated that experiment many times over the centuries. It is in the laboratory of Buddhist practice that the Enlightened Ones, the *Arahants*, arise. The *Arahants* are the ones who have done the experiment and found the result. That's why Buddhism always has been the scientific way. It is the way of finding out for your self the truth of Enlightenment.

Buddhism is also the scientific way of discovering the truth about happiness, what most people are interested in. What is happiness? Some students from our local Islamic school came to visit our monastery a short while ago. I performed a little party trick for them, which was also an illuminating way to demonstrate the existence of the mind. I was trying to explain Buddhism, so I asked them:

"Are you happy? Put your hands up if you are happy now".

At first there was no response. Then one person responded and raised their hand.

"Oh! You're all miserable?" I said "Only one person, come on! Are you happy or not?"

More students put there hands up.

"Okay, all those people who put their hands up saying they are happy, with your index finger can you now point to that happiness? Can you give it coordinates in space?" They couldn't locate that happiness.

It's hard to locate happiness, isn't it? Have you ever been depressed? Next time you are depressed, try to point to that feeling with your index finger! You will find that you cannot locate depression, or happiness, in space. You cannot give it coordinates, because these things reside in the mind, not in the body, not in space. **The mind is not located in space.** That's why after a person dies, if they become a ghost they can appear all over the world immediately. People sometimes ask me, "How can that happen?" How can a person who dies, say in New York, appear immediately in Perth? It is because the mind is not located in space, that's why. This is why you cannot point to happiness, you cannot point to depression, but they are real. Are you imagining the happiness? Do you imagine the depression? It's real.

You all know that. But you cannot locate it in three dimensional space. Happiness, depression, and many other real things, all live in mind-space.

The mind is not in the brain, it's not in the heart. We have seen that you could have no brain but still have a mind. You could take out your heart, and have a bionic heart, or a heart transplant, and you would still be you. This understanding of the mind is why Buddhists have no objection at all to cloning. You want to clone me, go for it! But don't think that if you clone Ajahn Brahm that you'll be able to have one Ajahn Brahm who goes to Singapore this evening, another one who stays in Perth for next Friday night's talk, plus one who can stay in Bodhinyana monastery, one who can go to Sydney, and one who can go to Melbourne. If you clone me, the person who looks like me will be completely different in personality, knowledge, inclination, and everything else. People clone Toyota cars in the same way. They look exactly the same but the performance really depends on the driver inside the car. That's all cloning is, it's just a replicating a body. Sure it looks the same, but is the body all that a person is? Haven't you seen identical twins? Are identical twins the same personality? Have they got the same intelligence? Have they got the identical inclinations? Do they even like the same food? The answer is usually no.

Why do people have this problem about cloning? Clone as much as you want. You are just creating more bodies for streams of consciousness to come into. Those streams of consciousness come from past lives. What's the problem? You would never be able to predict the result. Suppose you took Einstein's brain, extracted some of his DNA, and cloned a new Einstein. He might look the same, but I guarantee he won't be half as clever.

If people want to proceed with stem cell research, which is going to help humanity, then why not? In stem cell research there is no 'being' involved. The 'being' hasn't come in yet. In Buddhism, it is understood that the 'being' descends into the mother's womb at any time from conception until birth. Sometimes it doesn't even go into the womb at all and the foetus is stillborn. The objections to stem cell research are dogmatic, unscientific, and uncompassionate. They're foolish as far as I'm concerned. I think sometimes that I would tear my hair out if I weren't a monk.

If you want to look at the scientific evidence for rebirth, check out Professor Ian Stevenson. He spent his whole life researching rebirth on a

solid scientific basis at the University of Virginia.^[4] Chester Carlson, the inventor of xerography, (encouraged by his wife) offered funds for an endowed chair at the University to enable Professor Stevenson to devote himself full-time to such research. If it weren't for the fact that people do not want to believe in rebirth, Dr. Ian Stevenson would be a world famous scientist now. He even spent a couple of years as a visiting fellow of Magdalene College in Oxford, so you can see that this is not just some weird professor; he has all of the credentials of a respected Western academic.

Dr. Stevenson has over 3000 cases on his files. One interesting example was the very clear case of a man who remembered many details from his past life, with no way of gaining that information from any other source. That person died only a few weeks before he was reborn! Which raises the question, for all those months that the foetus was in the womb, who was it? As far as Buddhism is concerned, the mother kept that foetus going with her own stream of consciousness. But when another stream of consciousness entered, then the foetus became the new person. That is one case where the stream of consciousness entered the mother's womb when the foetus was almost fully developed. That can happen. That was understood by Buddhism twenty five centuries ago. If the stream of consciousness doesn't enter the mother's womb, the child is a stillborn. There is a heap of evidence supporting that.

Science and Buddhism

When a Buddhist looks through a telescope, they are not scared by what they might find. They are not scared of science. Science is an essential part of Buddhism. If science can disprove rebirth, then Buddhists should give up the idea of rebirth. If science disproves non-self, and shows there is a self, then all Buddhists should abandon non-self. If science proves there is no such thing as *kamma*, but instead there is a big God up in the sky, then all Buddhists should believe in God. *That is, if it's provable science.* Buddhism has no sacred cows. However, I encourage you to do those experiments for yourselves. I'll bet you will find out that there is no one 'in there'. You will find out about *kamma*. You will find out you've been here before, that this is not your first life. If you don't behave yourselves in this life,

you'll have another life to come yet. Do you think you are finished with nappies, with school? Do you really want to go through all that again? If not *be careful*.

So, here is my thinking about science and Buddhism. I think that Buddhism is pure science, a science that doesn't stop 'out there', but also investigates the mind, the 'being', the 'ghost in the machine'. And it doesn't disregard any anomalies. Buddhism takes everything as its data, especially experience, and looks at it scientifically. It is incredibly successful.

One of the reasons why people celebrate science is because of all of its achievements in technology. One of the reasons why Buddhism is growing these days is because of all of its achievements in the 'technology of the mind'. It solves problems. It explains mental difficulties. Buddhism succeeds in solving those inner problems because it has all these strategies, these ancient 'gizmos', which actually work. If you try some of these Buddhist gizmos, you will find out for yourself that they produce the goods, they solve your inner suffering and pain. That is why Buddhism is growing. I think that Buddhism will supplant science!

Thank you very much.

[1] See the article 'Is Your Brain Really Necessary?' *Science*, Vol. 210, 12 December 1980, by Roger Lewin on Professor Lorber's findings.

[2] Sam Parnia and Peter Fenwick, *Resuscitation Journal*, Vol. 52, Issue 1, January 2002, pages 5-11. 'Near death experiences in cardiac arrest: Visions of a dying brain or visions of a new science of consciousness'.

[3] Raymond A. Moody, *Life after life*: The investigation of a phenomenon Survival of Bodily Death. Alexander Books: Alexander NC, USA, 1981

[4] Dr. Ian Stevenson, *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect*. 1997, Praeger Publishers, New York, USA.

