

Conference Report

The third biennial *Science Matters (SciMat)* conference “All about Science” was held at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal, November 21-23, 2011.

Manuel Bicho (Rocha Cabral Institute, Portugal) and João Caraça (Science Director of the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation) gave the joint welcome address to the conference. João Caraça described the theme of the conference as multidisciplinary integration rather than fusion. The isms which are no longer relevant to the world we live in, according to Caraça, are determinism – conservation of information, and dualism – the separation of object from observer - the two cultures now being finance and society, rather than arts and science.

Lui Lam (California, USA and Beijing, China) set the scene for the conference and the thinking behind *Science Matters*, that “everything in Nature is part of Science.” The human-dependent part of Nature is about complex systems, which need to be included within science.

Robin Warren (Perth, Australia) spoke about his discovery, with Barry Marshall, of Helicobacter. The pair won the 2005 Nobel Prize for physiology or medicine. Warren described the steps which led to the serendipitous discovery and the struggle in achieving acceptance of their work by the medical profession, which resulted in a cure for stomach ulcers. Warren and Marshall worked in different areas of medicine, but it was their collaborative work which led to a successful outcome. In his talk Warren stressed the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration.

David Papineau (King’s College, London) gave an overview of realism and skepticism as it applies to science at the present time. He argued for the importance of the distinction between good science and bad. This distinction, according to Papineau, was in danger of being submerged by many philosophers of science pursuing a blanket skepticism towards science.

Peter Broks (Hereford, UK) gave a wide-ranging review of science communication and Li-Meng Qiu (Zhejiang University, China) described the introduction, into mainland China, of simplified characters into the written language, which are easier to remember than traditional characters. Kajsa Berg (UEA, UK) presented her ideas on the “contextual brain”. This concept is part of Neuroarthistory, and sees our engagement with art as a product of

human nature via our brain structure. Leonor Beltrán (Lisbon, Portugal) spoke about human nature through dance.

Synchronicity was a concept first introduced by Jung in 1952. This idea of outside events triggering unintended meanings to intentions, thoughts or perceptions, was the subject of Marta Rueda's presentation (Valladolid, Spain). She applied this concept to the scientific discovery process.

Maria Burguete (Lisbon, Portugal) explained the history of medicine and philosophy university faculties in Portugal and Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highlighting the important role of women in medicine in Portugal and Germany.

As always at these conferences, the varied mix of academics from different disciplines engendered lively debates. The conference proceedings, due to be published in book form, will provide a platform for a wider dissemination of topics and views expressed.

I apologise to other speakers I have not mentioned.

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