

## The World Buddhist University SUNDAY FORUM

### Dharmoscience



**Speaker:** Dr. Vuthiphong priebjrivat (Woody Prieb)  
**Moderator** Dr. Chris A. Stanford  
**Rapporteur** Mrs. Suttinee Yavaprapas

On the First Sunday of the Month of February, Sunday 7 2553 (2010), Dr. Vuthiphong priebjrivat (Woody Prieb) was the guest speaker of the Buddhist Forum talking on Dharmoscience. Woody, affectionately nick-named by his American friends and colleagues, is currently president of a nonprofit research institute. He was the founding president of Thailand's first credit rating agency and before that had served as vice president for corporate planning of a major commercial bank. During his academic career, Woody had taught at a prestigious university in Thailand and was a visiting professor at the University of North Carolina. He had also written extensively for academic and professional journals on topics covering economics, finance, business and public policy. His popular writings however mostly concern politics and government and include a best-selling political satire titled "Corruptology: How to Loot the People in Four Easy Lessons". A while ago, Woody spent some time as Buddhist monk. He has since extensively studied various metaphysical and religious thoughts, particularly those of eastern origin. Currently, he also gives lectures to monks at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in Bangkok. Woody received a B.S. in civil engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); and MS in environmental engineering from Stanford University; and an M.B.A and a Ph.D. in economics and public management from the University of Chicago. He has also received numerous awards including: a King's Scholarship, a Rockefeller Scholarship, a Citibank International Fellowship and a Fulbright Award.

The search for the "ultimate reality" has been the epitome of intellectual and spiritual pursuit of mankind since time immemorial. So far, those who embark on such a journey generally have to choose between two separate roads, scientific or metaphysical/religious. Woody's presentation reflects an attempt to merge the traditionally two separate subjects, science and the metaphysical/religious perspectives into one. It explains some scientific concepts from the traditional

spiritual practices based on the wisdom of ancient scriptures -- the Buddhist Tipitaka, the Hindu Vedas and Tao Te Ching-- --ranging from soul, heaven, hell, ghosts, demons, angels, karma, the karmic law, reincarnation, samsara (cycle of rebirth), nirvana, tao, moksha, dharma (nature) and the dharmic law—to the big bang, the big crunch, the cosmos, black holes, quarks, the Theory of Everything, thermodynamics, entropy, DNA, chromosomes, life, evolution, Darwinism.

In the beginning,, there was neither heaven nor earth. Everywhere was void and darkness. Then about fifteen billion years ago, a lone primordial black hole exploded into the most spectacular of five, which billions of years later evolved into a multitude of stars and galaxies that form the universe. The black hole was no longer than a pinhead but packed with the purest kind of energy that is known but rarely understood. This energy

Considering a recent emergence of only about five hundred years since Galileo or Copernicus, science certainly has made remarkable progress and impact when compared to other intellectual traditions. Science has come to be part of the contemporary culture and pervades every aspect of our everyday life. Aside from countless products and artifacts only made possible by modern technology, our way of looking at the world is also profoundly influenced by science. With this enormous success, science has virtually become the uncontested authority on mankind's quest for knowledge. Being "unscientific" has become synonymous with being "untrue". We are living in the age of "scientism" where the dominance and authority of science as the seeker of the nature's ultimate truth goes unquestioned, let alone challenged. Consequently, science has become so confident in itself (sometimes bordering on arrogance) that it tends to overlook or even ignore what other intellectual or spiritual traditions, particularly the age-old wisdom of religions and metaphysics, have to say. It is perhaps long overdue that modern science should give proper regards to the great minds of antiquity for their piercing insights; the way one esteemed scientist does to another. Those ancient great minds and spiritual leaders in essence are also scientists in their own right since all are seekers of the ultimate truth and its immutable "law of nature" just like any scientist of today. The methods, instruments and inclinations may differ; but the ultimate aims are virtually one and the same. Considering all its strengths ranging from its unquenchable thirst for knowledge, rigorous scientific method, clearly established traditions of experimentation and peer review, on top of enormous brain power within the scientific community --it is such a pity that science does not seem to extend itself beyond the boundary of material realm. The endeavor to merge modern science with the age-old wisdom of eastern religions, Buddhism in particular, will be collectively referred to as "dharmoscience", an integrated body of knowledge. Dharmoscience should benefit both modern science and dharma. The age-old wisdom of eastern metaphysics and religions can potentially open new doors for science's quest to understand nature and its immutable laws. Besides, they may help unlock the mystery behind some of the most intriguing scientific puzzles and paradoxes. The effort to combine and reconcile these two differing views would be beneficial on both fronts. While this will broaden and sharpen science; it will at the same time clarify and demystify metaphysics and religions.

Woody has offered us a history of existence. Dharmoscience provides a unique way to examine evolution and think creatively about applications of eastern philosophy.

