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Objective Chance and the Question on the Existence of Angels

Waldzell Dialog: Paulo Coelho and quantum physicist Anton Zeilinger discuss spirituality

By Susanne Bobek

Was it coincidence or fate? The question why the Nobel Prize laureate in Medicine, Günter Blobel, missed his plane and could not attend that day, was discussed on Thursday by Paulo Coelho and quantum physicist Anton Zeilinger. At the *Waldzell Dialogs* on Science and Spirituality in the packed material physics auditorium at the University of Vienna, organized by Kurier.

**"There is no reason. I would say, not even God knows why something happens."
Anton Zeilinger**

Paulo Coelho believes in fate, Zeilinger on the other hand lays proof of "objective chance" – "the foundation" that explains all things. "There is no reason why things happen. I would say, not even God knows why something happens." Even if one always seeks the cause, for example of an airplane crash, science cannot provide really founded and comprehensive answers either.

The Meaning of Life

Albert Einstein also had to accept that the inexplicable remains incomprehensible for humans. A Danish physicist and philosopher said to him "Stop telling the Lord how he should run the world." On the other hand, Paulo Coelho explained at length that nothing happens by coincidence but by decree of fate, when for example in certain situations the "right" people come across each other. "There is a reason" – somewhere out there in the universe. Coelho to Zeilinger: "Many objective chances had to occur for me to be sitting here today."

Paulo Coelho, the successful Brazilian author and perpetual seeker of the meaning of life, got along splendidly with the quantum physicist, who called his attention to his pure subjective perception. "It only appears to be that way."

A quantum leap is the smallest energy leap. It cannot be controlled. "That's why I don't understand politicians who are proud of achieving a quantum leap." No experiment works the way you imagined it to. Inspiration and fantasy are essential. "The human being must be open."

Coelho insists that humans communicate with one another on a collective (global) subconscious level. "We are coming to a critical point. People sense that our lives cannot go on like this." The horrendous hostage-taking of the school in Beslan was an important and horrible trigger for Coelho. All cultures strive for music, beauty and dance, not despair and suffering.

"We talk about how people deal with their lives," says Coelho, whose next book, "The Zahir" tells the story of a successful author and in principle a good man, whose wife suddenly leaves him. Zahir is the Arabic word for 'obsession'. Almost an autobiography.

Anton Zeilinger skillfully parries a question from the audience on whether he believes in angels and earns applause: "If you can define what an angel is, then I will answer your question."

Zeilinger continues on a philosophical note: "In my talks with the Dalai Lama I had the feeling, but this is not sure and unverifiable, that some people come to the same conclusions using totally different approaches, as we do with our experiments."