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Paulo Coelho, in addition to acclaimed Nobel Prize winners and artists: Singular meeting embracing the topic of the "Search for Meaning" at Melk Abbey in September.

## The Congress of the Brightest Heads

*By Heinz Sichrovsky*

The principle of the seminar is as easy as the question which shall be addressed is difficult: Only the wisest, greatest and most charismatic heads in the world today shall attend: intellectuals, humanists, philosophers from all cultural fields, those who can change and enrich the world. Between 10 and 12 September they will meet in the spiritual atmosphere of Melk Abbey in Lower Austria, in order to exam in depth the question of meaning in a world of growing hostility.

**A coming together of the best.** The Austrian current affairs magazine "News" will be media partner at the first conference of the newly founded "Waldzell Institute" (named after Hermann Hesse's renowned "Glass Bead Game"). There has not been such a high-calibre conference for a long time, if ever. The speakers are

- Paulo Coelho, Brazilian author and philosopher (60 million copies sold).
- Shirin Ebadi, Iran, Nobel Prize winner 2003.
- Carl Djerassi, US-based Austrian and inventor of the "pill".
- Thomas Hampson, USA/Austria, world-famous baritone, mastermind of the opera.
- Gunter Blobel, Germany/USA, Nobel Prize for Medicine.
- David J. Goldberg, England, Senior Rabbi, leading Jewish academic, commentator.
- Anton Zeilinger, Austria, world-famous quantum theorist.
- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Hungary/USA, psychologist, researcher on happiness, creativity and fulfilment, "Thinker of the Year 2000".
- Stephan Rechtschaffen, USA, pioneer of the Wellness movement.

The meeting fee of EUR 2,000 will also provide the budget for scholarships offered to a number of candidates to be selected. The number of attendants has been limited deliberately to 200 to ensure exclusivity. Conference results will be made accessible on the web after the Meeting. Hopefully this will inspire a worldwide dialog.

Austrians Gundula Schatz, biotechnologist and founder of the technology transfer firm "Tectrans", and Andreas Salcher, management consultant (Andreas Salcher Company) are accredited with organizing the event. The required total budget of EUR 918,000. will be provided by the most part by the province of Lower Austria and the Raiffeisen Bank. Following the creation of the European Forum at Göttweig and the Danube University, Krems, provincial governor, Erwin Pröll, hopes to establish a centre for the spiritual search for meaning at Melk Abbey.

**Strategies for life.** What will happen in these three days? What is the theme? The search for meaning, a topic that was of pivotal importance to the Austrian psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor, Viktor Frankl, has become a vital issue now especially in times of uncertainty and fear. Already in the USA the subject is omni-present. The question for meaning in one's private and professional life is a European issue too. Great individuals such as Paulo Coelho or Gunter Blobel, who generously donated his Nobel Prize money to the reconstruction of the synagogue and the Frauenkirche in Dresden, are shining examples of this.

- Day one, Friday, 10 September: a select dinner will be held in honour of for the speakers.
- Saturday, 11 September, (the date was not chosen by coincidence): Following a speech by Paulo Coelho, participants will begin to work together with the speakers in small groups. In the evening, all attendees will gather in the Abbey Church for a "meeting of religions".
- Sunday, 12 September: group work will continue until 5pm. Paulo Coelho, whose fame will guarantee attention spanning the world's media, holds the final speech of the conference.

The next conference will be held with a new team of participants a year later and from then on regularly. By then we hope we will be able to report the constructive and positive changes that Waldzell has made to the world of meaning.