

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

February 4, 2005

Bill Schlotter

Philosopher, Primatologist Compare Notes in UCSB Nature, Science, and Religion Dialogue

Philosopher Evan Thompson and primatologist Frans de Waal will discuss "Primates, Monks, and the Mind," the second in UC Santa Barbara's "Dialogues in Nature, Science and Religion" series, at 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13 in Victoria Hall, 33 West Victoria St., Santa Barbara.

The dialogue is free and open to the public.

Thompson is the Canada Research Chair in Cognitive Science and the Embodied Mind at York University in Toronto.

His research has sought to broaden understanding of human experience through the use of cognitive science, study of human consciousness, and contemplative traditions such as Buddhism.

De Waal is the C.H. Candler Professor of Primate Behavior in the Department of Psychology in Atlanta. He is also director of the Living Links Center at the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center.

His research focuses on food-sharing, social reciprocity, and conflict resolution in primates.

Thompson and de Waal will look for common ground in their research, seeking implications for the nature of the mind and human emotion, specifically empathy.

Thompson plans to consider whether there might be a science of the mind and brain that is informed by human contemplation, such as meditation. And he will consider, too, whether heightened capacities for empathy and compassion reported by members of mystical and contemplative groups is in fact part of our biological heritage.

De Waal will report on his research into the presence of empathy and sympathy in animals.

"Dialogues in Nature, Science, and Religion" is part of a three-year UCSB project to examine and integrate diverse views of nature from myriad scholarly perspectives. It is funded in part by the John Templeton Foundation. Jim Proctor, an associate professor of geography at UCSB, directs the program.

More information is available on the program's Web site, www.newvisions.ucsb.edu

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