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Matter And Mind: The Vaisheshika Sutra Of Kanada



Synopsis

Matter and Mind is a new translation of the nearly 2,500-year old Vaisheshika Sutra of Kanada together with an introductory essay and a commentary. The Vaisheshika Sutra is one of the most important texts in the history of science that has not received the attention it deserves. It presents an ontology of reality that includes four kinds of fundamental atoms, two of which have mass and two that do not, as well as minds and consciousness. It also presents symmetry principles that it uses to infer properties of the basic atoms. Kanada's laws of motion are nearly identical to those of Newton.

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Customer Reviews

Subhash Kak is Regents Professor at Oklahoma State University at Stillwater. His areas of interest include quantum computing, information theory, neural networks, and history of science. He is the author of twenty books that include The Nature of Physical Reality and Mind and Self.

The Vaisesika Sutras are one of the six major dharsanas, or schools, of Indian thought. Surprisingly few books, however, have commented or explained these sutras in an exhaustive manner. Until now. This new book by Subhash Kak is a welcomed addition to Indian scholarship and explains the Vaisesika dharsana in a careful, systematic and enlightening manner. Kak's commentary is especially important given that the Vaisesika is frequently overlooked in favor of other dharsanas such as Vedanta or Samkhya. Kak's presentation of the

Vaisesika is both exhaustive and enlightening. KakĀfĀcĀ’s exposition contains an introduction of the Vaisesika dharsana. This summary precedes a translation of the Vaisesika Sutras, with KakĀfĀcĀ’s commentary on selected sutras. Two essays conclude the commentary. As the title indicates, this book deals with the nature of dharma, physical reality. Most explanations describe the Vaisesika as consisting in the atomistic theory of reality, and stops there. According to Kak, the main components of reality in the Vaisesika dharsana is matter and mind. In the Vaisesika dharsana the prominence of mind is made explicit. While this is a general feature of most dharsanas, in the Vaisesika dharsana goes further to refine this distinction. Indeed, in the nature of things, mind, the Atman, takes precedence to and is the progenitor of the inner substance underlying physical matter. The sutras as explaining that physical reality is the result of a conjunction of mind (purusa) and matter (prakrti). Not content with this statement the Vaisesika goes into some length at how matter evolves afterwards from that conjunction, KakĀfĀcĀ’s commentary on the sutras adds to the substance of Vaisesika by giving a perspective through modern physics. For example, the Vaisesika predates modern quantum theory and relativistic theory by postulating that reality is to be viewed from the perspective of the observer. This book is both highly recommended because it explores areas not usually followed and presents ancient concepts in a modern light.

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