



The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science

The 62nd Annual IRAS Conference

## How Can We Know?

Co-creating Knowledge in Perilous Times

June 25 to July 2, 2016 – Star Island, New Hampshire

Co-Chairs: Pat Bennett, Ruben Nelson, & John Teske

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*What does knowing and living reliably, inclusively, sustainably and humanely now require of us – as persons, communities, institutions and whole societies?*

Does knowing evolve from imagining and feeling? How do religious, scientific and secular traditions differ? What are the biological foundations of morality? What might “Know yourself” really mean? What have we been missing in the science/religion dialogue?

These are not abstract questions. Our fate – global, societal and personal – hangs on them, since what we do is largely a function of what we think we know.

Given the destructive culture wars of our time – ecological, economic, societal, political and personal – we simply cannot afford to *agree to disagree* on what is to be taken as reliably known. Rather, in dialogues that foster personal and shared learning, we must explore afresh the nature and demands of reliable knowing.

Tensions between the ways of knowing that underlie the sciences and those of other historical, cultural and religious perspectives often give rise to obstacles to working together for human and planetary well-being. Pointing to the rapid progress and obvious power of the natural sciences, many assume that only the scientific method fosters reliable ways of knowing. Many scientists, as well as others who emphasize the ambiguities of history and the co-creative power of persons and communities, disclaim such a contention and emphasize the need for a thorough-going self-critical awareness.

**How Can We Know? Co-creating Knowledge in Perilous Times** – the 2016 IRAS Summer Conference – has been designed to explore the above focal question in light of the emerging conditions of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The narrative arc of the week and the daily rhythms of the conference are being designed to enable participants to test and expand their own understandings of what it is to know more reliably and live more coherently. We will create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue among persons with diverse backgrounds.

Each plenary session will feature dialogue. It will occur first between two invited speakers and then among all participants. The conference will also include smaller collaborative groups which use a variety of creative formats.

This is an exceptional opportunity to get away from daily routines long enough to engage in deep and transformative learning; to participate in respectful dialogue informed by scientific, religious, spiritual and philosophical insights. All of this is on Star Island: a place that is physically beautiful, child and family friendly, and committed to sustainability. <http://starisland.org/media/slideshow/>. A children’s program will also be available, and babysitting can be arranged.

**The Narrative Arc of the Week:** We will begin by looking at the complexity of the knowledge required to guide us to an ecologically humane and sustainable planetary civilization. In this light, we will explore and seek to move beyond the limitations of our present scientific, religious and secular traditions as we seek to meet the challenges of truly inclusive knowing and living.

**Call for Papers:** Paper proposals of no more than 250 words, or poster proposals of no more than 100 words, should be sent by email to Ruben Nelson by February 15, 2016: [rubennelson@shaw.ca](mailto:rubennelson@shaw.ca) We have full and partial scholarships for the top papers.

**Confirmed Speakers:**

**Warren Brown** is director of the Lee Edward Travis Research Institute and Professor of Psychology at the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. He has published extensively in scientific journals such as *Neuropsychologia*, *Psychophysiology*, *Biological Psychiatry*, *Developmental Neuropsychology*, *Cortex*, *Nature Review Neuroscience* and *Science*. His two newest co-authored books are *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities of Human Nature* (2009), and *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (2012).

**Phillip Cary** is Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University in St. Davids, PA. He has published *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You DON'T Have to Do* (2010), *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (2008), *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (2008), and *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (2000). He has also taught Teaching Company courses on Philosophy of Religion, Augustine, and Luther. He considers himself a "Postmodern MacIntyrean Orthodox Christian."

**Chris Corbally** is a Jesuit astronomer for the Vatican Observatory Research Group, for which he has served as vice-director, and liaison to its headquarters at Castle Gandolfo, Italy. He is Adjunct Associate Astronomer at the Department of Astronomy, University of Arizona, and ministers to a wide variety of Catholics, including Native Americans. He is a past president of IRAS, and co-organizer for their conference on "Life in the Universe." He has published often in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, and is co-founder of the Human Sentience Project.

**Wentzel van Huyssteen** was the James J. McCord Professor of Theology and Science at Princeton Theological Seminary for 20 years. He was the author of a major initiative on *Transdisciplinarity* that was behind the Metanexus conference on "Subject, Self, and Soul: Transdisciplinary Approaches to Personhood" in Madrid in 2008. He also delivered the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh in 2004 on *Exploring Myth and Meaning in Prehistoric Cave Paintings*. He is both the first South African and the first scholar from Princeton Seminary to receive this distinguished honor.

**Margaret Boone Rappaport** is the other co-founder of the Human Sentience Project. She is a cultural anthropologist who works as a futurist, lecturer, and science fiction novelist in Tucson. As president of Policy Research Methods, Inc. of Falls Church, VA, she was a contractor to federal and state agencies for over 20 years. She earned her doctorate at Ohio State in 1977, with a dissertation on the adjustment of Cuban refugee women and families. She is also a prize-winning short-story and poetry writer.

**Louise Sundararajan** has doctorates in the history of religions (Harvard) and in counseling psychology (Boston U.), and chairs the Task Force on Indigenous Psychology for the APA, is a past president of the International society for the Study of Human Ideas recipient of the Abraham Maslow Award (2014). She just published *Understanding Emotion in Chinese Culture* (2015). She sees Eastern and Western cultures as mirror images in terms of rationality, relational thinking, and symmetry or harmony.

**John A. Teske** is professor of psychology at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, PA. where he teaches courses on emotion, personality, and the history of psychology. He has published research in several subfields of psychology, as well a dozen articles in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, and a recent book chapter on "The Emotional Psychology of Religious Diversity." He is a past president and academic Fellow of IRAS, and co-organized their conference on "The Mythic Reality of the Autonomous Individual."

**Pat Bennett** has a doctorate in theology and a bachelor's degree in medicine. She is currently a programme development worker for the Iona Community in Scotland. Pat was unanimously chosen for the Research Prize of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology for her doctoral research on *Relationality and Health: A Transversal Neurotheological Account of the Pathways linking Connection, Immune Function, and Health Outcomes*. She was co-organizer of the IRAS conference on "Scientific, Spiritual, and Moral Challenges of Solving the World Food Crisis." She will also be our Chapel Speaker.

**For more information**, visit the IRAS website [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org).

**To register**, please contact Marion Griswold, Registrar, at [mbgriswold@yahoo.com](mailto:mbgriswold@yahoo.com). For instructions on how to register online, go to <http://www.iras.org> and click on 2016 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION.