Announcements

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IRAS

The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science

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Purpose—IRAS (*www.iras.org*) is an independent society of scientists, philosophers, religion scholars, theologians, and others who want to understand the role of religion in our dynamic scientific world.

Activities—Each year IRAS organizes a week-long conference. Topics are selected to be relevant to current scientific thinking and to fundamental religious questions. (IRAS members pay a reduced rate for conference registration.)

IRAS organizes events at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and IRAS members help organize sessions at the American Academy of Religion (AAR). IRAS has sponsored more than two hundred fifty meetings at universities, colleges, and theological schools.

IRAS members may also join the lively online discussion group, and thus learn about new developments and publications, express their views, and become familiar with those of others.

Publications—*Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* and *IRAS Newsletter*. IRAS members receive subscriptions to these publications free of additional charge.

Special Relationship—Affiliated Society, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Membership Dues

Membership is very attractive for those interested in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. The membership fee for IRAS for individual members, including *Zygon*, online and print, is lower than the U.S. rate for an individual subscription to *Zygon*! An even lower rate is available for those who prefer to have *Zygon* online only! And new members receive an additional discount in their first year of membership! There is also a discount for student members! For full details, see www.iras.org/membership.html.

Invitation to Join—You are most welcome to join IRAS, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science. For further information and an application write to:

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Artificial Intelligence Turns Deep:
Who's in Control?

An IRAS Summer Conference
June 23–30, 2018

Organized by Abby Fuller and Ted Laurenson (Conference Co-chairs), and Terry Deacon and Sol Katz (Program Co-chairs).

"I'm sorry Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that . . . ." said HAL in the most famous line in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. So Dave had to disable HAL to regain control of the spaceship and dodge annihilation. From early myths of artificially created beings to today, the question "who's in control" has troubled us. Now it looks like we are really going to have to deal with it in our lifetimes. On the 50th anniversary of *2001*, IRAS returns to considering the prospects, opportunities, and dangers of artificial intelligence (AI), first discussed at an IRAS conference in 1968 by Marvin Minsky, a founder of AI research and a consultant to Stanley Kubrick and Arthur Clarke as they directed and created *2001*.

This conference will address how AI may shape our future and our ability to foresee and control that shaping.

Deep learning neural networks and advances in big data manipulation have led to rapid progress in machine learning and associated capabilities. Investment in AI will grow manyfold by 2020, to at least a $50 billion industry. New AI products will enhance sales, data analysis, and diagnostic and predictive services for medicine, government, science, and industry. We are on the cusp of creating machines that can operate in fields that require significant autonomy, such as self-driving vehicles and, ominously, weapon systems. AI algorithms will determine who makes parole, is approved for a loan, or gets hired for a job by analyzing existing patterns that reflect societal bias and historical prejudice. This growing international commercial and governmental juggernaut, itself subject to concentrated and frequently unaccountable control, presents just one of AI's many challenges. How will humans identify and find meaning in life as the breadth of skills unique to living, sentient beings shrinks? The consequences of the interplay of AI and the human mind, and our very self-concepts, are likely to be equally profound. If we succeed in creating science fiction's "conscious" machine, what would be our duties to it (as well as its duties to us)? The values and orientations fostered by a religion and science perspective will be crucial to the responsible development and utilization of AI technology as it unfolds.

We will review the current state and potential future developments of AI technologies and consider the following questions as seen by AI experts and those in related fields:

- What are the true benefits of AI for the future of society?
- How do we assure ourselves that all of society will truly benefit from AI?
- How can we avoid the various pitfalls that are now being debated concerning the control of AI in the future?
- What are the ethical, social, legal, and religious factors that ought to be considered to assure the benefits of AI for society?
- What is the appropriate role of religious wisdom and traditions in helping to maintain this control when considered in the more secular ethical, social, and legal circumstances?
- How can religious wisdom and traditions, in particular, inform more secular deliberations about controlling the future of AI?
- What are the roles of religion and science in contributing to the dialogue to optimize the benefits of AI to society?
- How can we create an ongoing process to maintain human control of the future of AI?

IRAS 2018 Conference Speakers

Terrence W. Deacon, University of California-Berkeley

Ilia Deilio, Villanova University

Willem B. Drees, Tilburg School of Humanities

Oliver R. Goodenough, Vermont Law School

Tristan Harris, Time Well Spent

Solomon H. Katz, University of Pennsylvania

Bruce Naylor, Streaming Curiosity

Jay Ogilvy, Independent Consultant

More information about this year's conference can be found at www.iras.org.

To register and to learn more about Star Island, visit www.starisland.org/iras.