

# Announcements

IRAS

The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science

**Purpose**—IRAS ([www.iras.org](http://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](http://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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## Naturalism—as Religion, *within* Religions, or *without* Religion?

Co-chairs Wim Drees and Barbara Whittaker-Johns

### An IRAS Summer Conference

June 27 – July 4, 2020

*What are the consequences of science-inspired naturalism for religion?* In this conference, we will explore and evaluate options available to those who take science seriously. Briefly, these could be characterized as replacement, reform, and rejection.

- *Replacement:* Might one opt for “religious naturalism,” seeking to articulate a global religious orientation grounded in the sciences that stands in awe of and sacralizes nature, without invoking a supreme being? Would this appeal to those who understand themselves as spiritual but not religious?
- *Reform:* What are the prospects for naturalistic strands within religious traditions—for example, a “naturalistic Christianity” that envisages reality as scientifically understood as God’s creation, or a naturalistic Buddhism?
- *Rejection:* If a naturalist opts for a non-religious orientation such as secular humanism, what would be gained and what might be lost?

Challenging these categories and their boundaries, and disputing whether they need to be mutually exclusive, may help us develop a better understanding of religious traditions and of other communities of meaning making. Questions include:

#### (1) **How well do they address reality?**

- Modern cosmology considers the universe as a whole. What might religious or secular varieties of naturalism contribute to fundamental cosmological questions? Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is reality the way it is?
- What about features of reality dear to humans, such as language-based consciousness, values, aesthetic experiences, and rationality/mathematics? Are these conceptual realities of a categorically different kind, or can they be understood naturalistically?

#### (2) **How well do they serve humans?**

- What *resources* might each orientation provide to motivate and guide our morality and enrich us as humans? How do they bring in personal and communal experience, stories, and art? What is lost when traditional worldviews give way to scientific understandings?
- What about *cultural diversity* and *ecological concerns*? Do we need a scientific creation narrative, an evolutionary epic, to address climate change and the

loss of biodiversity? Or can we rely on a plurality of languages and religious imaginaries?

- *For whom* are such positions attractive? For those raised within a particular religious tradition? For scientists and the science-educated? Might any of these be resonant for “nones” who may not be familiar with religious or philosophical vocabularies?

Plenary speakers will include Marcelo Gleiser, Ursula Goodenough, Sarah Lane Ritchie, Carol Wayne White, and Willem B. Drees.

More information will be made available at [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org).

### Call for Papers and Panels

#### “Naturalism—*as Religion, within Religions, or without Religion?*”

We invite proposals for *short papers* on the theme of the conference. The topic can be approached from various perspectives, such as science, philosophy, religious studies or theology, history, psychology, or sociology. They may consider traditions such as Christianity or Buddhism; contemporary developments such as religious naturalism, spirituality, or the rise of nones; naturalism in relation to moral motivation and values, consciousness, mathematics, scientific methodology, and other philosophical topics; the history of any such developments; their usefulness in addressing individual needs or global and planetary concerns; and so on.

We look forward as well to proposals for *panels* with up to four participants, addressing a particular issue from multiple angles.

Proposals for papers on *other topics* regarding science and religion are welcome too.

Proposals will be peer reviewed. A few Shapley-Booth fellowships for room and board will be awarded to paper proposals deemed strongest. Some other reductions and scholarships may become available, including reduction for first time attendees. Information will be made available at [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org).

**The deadline for proposals is November 30, 2019.** We intend to inform on acceptance and on fellowships before the end of 2019. Proposals should include an abstract of not more than 400 words, prepared for anonymous review, with 5 to 10 keywords. If the proposal is for a panel, please indicate the topic and list the intended panelists in the abstract. Proposals can be submitted using the form at [www.iras.org/2020-call-for-papers.html](http://www.iras.org/2020-call-for-papers.html).

With questions on short papers and panels, please approach Willem B. Drees, [w.b.drees@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:w.b.drees@tilburguniversity.edu).