

**2012 Conference of the International Society for Science and Religion (ISSR)
in association with the Akademie Loccum, Germany
20th – 23rd September 2012**

Embodiment and Embodied Cognition: Scientific and Theological Perspectives

The conference will be held in Loccum, near Hanover, Germany. Loccum is an attractive old town, and there will be an opportunity during the conference to visit the abbey, which dates from 1163 and is known for its well-preserved monastic buildings.

The conference will begin with registration from mid-afternoon on Thursday 20th September, leading into dinner and opening talk in the evening. It will end with lunch on Sunday 23rd September. (Costs for 3 full days including accommodation, meals and busshuttle: 186,40 Euro; Costs for the Sunday-morning architectural tour will be payed separately).

The conference will focus on the concept of embodiment, and especially on theories of embodied cognition, the focus of a current ISSR research project, funded by the John Templeton Foundation and directed by ISSR President, Dr Fraser Watts.

It has been important in work on science and religion to find ways to harmonise the physicalism about human nature assumed by contemporary science with the desire in many faith traditions to emphasise that, for all the importance of Embodiment, humans are more than their bodies. Theories of 'embodied cognition' have many attractions in this context. They arise from a rapidly expanding body of scientific theory and research, and represent a novel approach to the relationship between body and mind, which has the potential to transform dialogue between science and religion in this area. We will interpret 'embodied' cognition broadly to include 'situated' and 'enacted' cognition.

Concepts of embodied cognition have rather different relationships with different faith traditions. For example, there has been a fruitful dialogue with Buddhism going back at least 20 years. There has been no explicit dialogue with Judaism to date, but notions of embodied mind seem very congenial to Jewish thinking about personhood. Christianity seems to have most to gain from an explicit dialogue with embodied cognition, given its close ties to western philosophy, where the problem of the relationship of the body to the mind has been a problem for centuries.

The opening talk on the evening of 20th September will be given by Fraser Watts. The keynote talk on the first full day will be from Alva Noë, Professor of Philosophy at the City University of New York, who has written a series of high-profile books on philosophical issues at the heart of embodied cognition research. John Pickering, from the University of Warwick, will explore the dialogue between embodied cognition and religious thought from a Buddhist perspective. Daniel Weiss from the University of Cambridge, will approach the subject from the perspective of Judaism. Among speakers from a Christian tradition, John Teske from Elizabethtown College, and a recent President of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, will emphasise the scientific research behind theories of embodied cognition; Leon Turner, from the University of Cambridge, and the key-worker on the ISSR research project, will discuss the interface

between embodied cognition and theological anthropology; and Warren Brown, from Fuller Theological Seminary, whose book on embodied cognition will be published shortly, will explore the implications of embodied cognition for character formation and virtue. Two other ISSR members will contribute papers on embodiment and theology, Nancey Murphy from Fuller, and Wentzel van Huyssteen from Princeton.

The conference committee would welcome other offers of papers. We would particularly welcome papers that approach the issues of embodiment and embodied cognition from the perspectives of other faith traditions.

Offers of papers to be presented at the conference should be sent as an email attachment to the ISSR administrator, Tracey McCluskey – tmm34@cam.ac.uk before 26th March 2012. Please ensure the attachment includes your name, your contact details, the title of the paper, and an abstract of no more than 300 words.)