

LASAR newsletter No. 9 (June 2013)

Dear Reader,

Demand for the event held recently in June, *Robots, God and Genetic Engineering* exceeded capacity, but there are still spaces for the event *Robots, God and Free Will* being held at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, on Wednesday 25th September.

This is a free event and schools need only arrange transportation and bring packed lunches.

Schools interested in attending should contact us via the Faraday Schools website:

<http://www.faradayschools.com/site-map/events/>



At our first event for schools, Professor Kevin Warwick from the University of Reading talked about why he is sometimes called the first Cyborg - a video of his talk is on the website. Use the search box to find the page 'The first cyborg?'

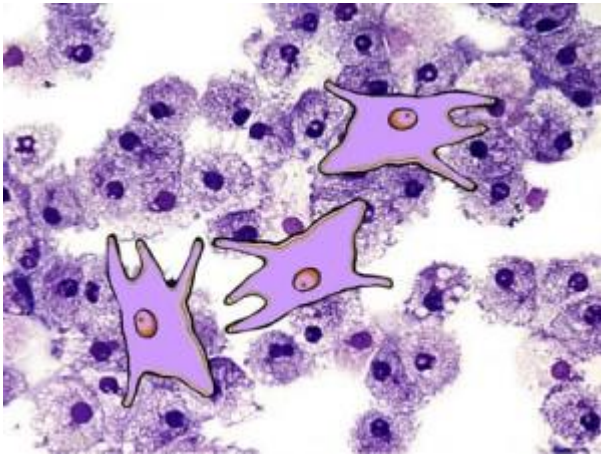
Write for the Faraday Schools website

Our website is designed to appeal to students in secondary schools and we welcome their ideas and thoughts. Short articles (250-500 words) can be uploaded by following the link on the *Articles by Students* page.

Here are some suggested themes:

- Is time really relative?
- Big Bang, Creation or Both?
- Determinism versus Free Will

- How do we know what we know and how do we know if it's right?
- How does science work and what questions are scientists exploring today?



For example Year 10 student Dominic (thinking about the origins of life) writes:

I think that it was inevitable that the right conditions such as volcanoes, interplanetary collisions and meteors would occur in some way to result in collections of cells and life as we know it, however small the probability of it happening was.

Website news

Science and World Faiths

How do world faiths see the relationship between science and religion? We asked an Islamic astrophysicist, a Hindu scientist, and a Hindu priest and scholar to talk us through how they see the relationship between their faith and science.

There are links from the Science and World Faiths page to more in-depth interviews.



Please use our email address lasar@reading.ac.uk for any comments about the website.

Background about the project

The LASAR, Learning about Science and Religion, Project was motivated by a concern that there is a strong public perception (reinforced by some popular media) that science and religion are in some sense opposites, that is that science is an atheistic activity. In particular, we were concerned that school pupils may come to accept this as a normative standard: something that is both incorrect, and which could deter students who hold religious faith from considering science as a suitable basis of future study and

career. Such an effect would not only be unfortunate when there is widespread concern about the limited numbers of young people seriously considering science careers, but in principle could set up a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people of faith are significantly deterred from science, then science could over time become dominated by atheists!

LASAR is looking at this issue from two complementary directions. We are planning research which will help us find out more about exactly what secondary age students do think about science and religion, something of the factors which they feel influence their views, and how their ideas shift over time. We intend to report our findings widely, and when we have results available we will use this newsletter to direct readers to these reports. We are also looking to develop curriculum materials and approaches which can support teachers in engaging secondary age pupils with something of the broad range of opinions and scholarship in the area of science and religion. In this way we hope to make sure that there are sufficient accessible and balanced presentations to help pupils to recognise that this is a nuanced area where there are no simple answers (so scientists hold a wide range of faith positions and views on religious matters), and offer them interesting resources to stimulate their own thinking in this area.

Yours with best wishes

Berry, Keith, Fran and Helen

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