

Academy Conferences, in partnership with the Ian Ramsey Centre, University of Oxford; Big Questions seminars.

# I COUNT THEREFORE I AM?

## Science and the Big Questions

Professional Development for teachers of science, philosophy, ethics, and religion.

The focus of these study days will be on 'doing philosophy' and engaging in philosophical activity to apply philosophical knowledge and skills to real-life situations, and to explore how apparently non-philosophical material can be treated in a philosophical way.

### SEMINAR 1

#### CAN TEACHERS BE REPLACED BY ROBOTS?

It is increasingly difficult to recruit teachers to the profession and computers are far quicker, more accurate and cheaper than any human being. So, are digital learning and robo-teachers the future for education? This session will outline the role and nature of knowledge and help teachers explore the concepts, theories, models and techniques that underpin big questions in science as well as the complexity of knowledge and understanding.

For discussion, Einstein's claim that, "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift."

### SEMINAR 2

#### IS THE GREATEST GOOD TO MAKE THE GREATEST NUMBER HAPPY?

Jeremy Bentham claimed that ethics can be calculated and be put on a scientific footing, making moral choices a matter of cost benefit analysis. This session will outline some of the social and ethical implications of this approach including reflection on a range of social issues such as environmental degradation and the development of human-hybrids. What are the ideological assumptions and the implications of this for human civilisation?

Are there any moral limits to scientific progress? What is it to be fully human in a scientific age?

For discussion, Francis Crick's claim that, "You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and freewill are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules"

### SEMINAR 3A

#### THE BIG 'WHY' QUESTIONS IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Why is there something rather than nothing? Why am I here? Why are numbers beautiful? What counts as evidence and how do we judge a good model for understanding the ultimate nature of reality? What counts as an explanation and can science explain everything? Why are some hypotheses more reasonable than others? Does it correspond to the real world?

Is it internally consistent? Does it work? Is it simple? Is it elegant/beautiful? Does it illuminate? Does it make sense of wholes not just parts? Does it have a capacity to make predictions?

For discussion, Paul Erdos's claim, 'God may not play dice with the Universe but something strange is going on with prime numbers.'

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**SEMINAR 3B**

**DOES RELIGION COUNT IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE?**

Religion doesn't usually involve counting but does it count, and if so why? What do we mean by religion and how does it relate to science? What can grace inspiration miracles and providence mean today? Evaluating the claim that we need more than number and rationality to make sense of the world: discussion of the importance of imagination, poetry and music as well as the second person perspective in both science and religion.

The session will conclude with a short, 3-min film summarising the key ideas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-4bPc71qgc>

For discussion, Einstein's claim that 'Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'

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**SESSIONS LED BY:**



**JULIE ARLISS** is Director and Founder of Academy Conferences, which runs events for Gifted & Talented Students, as well as for teachers and headteachers. She has thirty years of experience as a teacher, is a former Cambridge CIE examiner, and is a Fellow at Harris Manchester Oxford University, 2018.



**DR. ANDREW PINSENT** is Research Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, Faculty of Theology and Religion, Oxford University. Formerly a particle physicist at CERN, he is a philosopher, theologian and contributor in the media and schools to engagement with science, faith and the big questions of life.

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Oxford is one of the world's leading centres for the study of the relation of science and religion. The Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion is one of the world's foremost institutions dedicated to fostering research, teaching and public engagement in the field.

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**TO BOOK**

Book and pay online at [www.academyconferences.com](http://www.academyconferences.com)

E: [info@academyconferences.com](mailto:info@academyconferences.com)

T: 02 8091 4279

T: 07 5445 7994

All sessions will be held at the end of the school day and run between 3.30 – 6.00 pm.

Resources will be provided for classroom use.

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**COST**

\$95 per person. Schools may be invoiced.

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**WHEN AND WHERE?**

Melbourne, Siena College.	Wednesday 25th July
Adelaide, Concordia College.	Thursday 26th July
Brisbane, Churchie.	Monday 30th July
Sydney, TBC.	Tuesday 31 July
Auckland, St Cuthbert's.	Friday 3rd August
Christchurch, St Andrew's College.	Tuesday 7th August