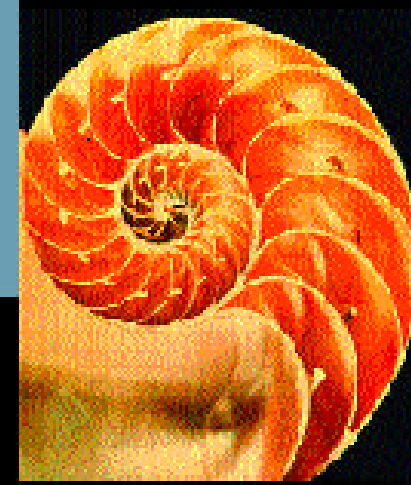


conference **OVERVIEW**

From September 20 to 23, 2001 scholars from the United States and Europe will join University of Florida faculty in Gainesville to explore the drive for unity that lies behind past and present investigations of nature. At the same time, participants will identify and assess why this drive has sometimes been abandoned and what consequences, positive and negative, have resulted.

The format of the conference includes five plenary sessions that focus on specific contexts in which questions about the function of unity in nature can be raised. Three scholars will consider each context, one from a primarily historical viewpoint, another with an eye to developments in the more recent past, and a commentator who will provide an overview. Where possible, participants are encouraged to look beneath the surface of any social consensus about the role of science in the past or in the present, and to examine any deep-seated and lasting visions of nature and humankind that have endured over time in spite of changing articulations of the contents of science.

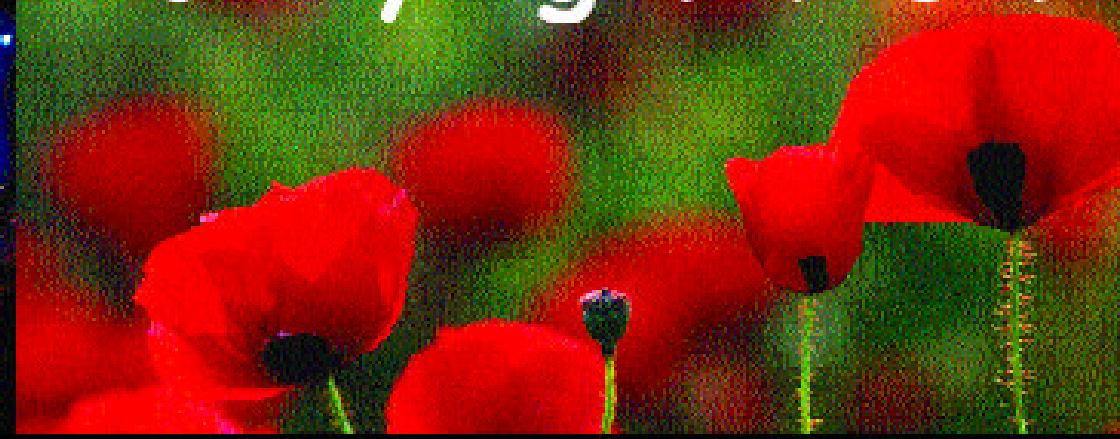
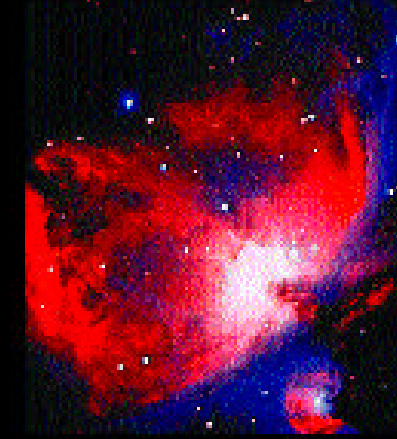
For more information, please contact:
Fredrick Gregory, (352) 392-0271 x263, fgregory@ufl.edu
or visit the conference webpage at:
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/fgregory/conference.htm>



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Past & Present

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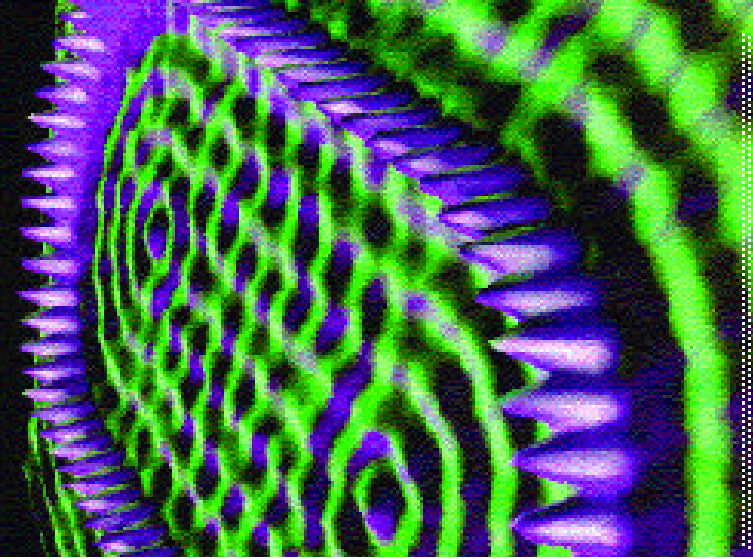
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Past & Present

September 20-23, 2001
University of Florida
History Conference Room
105 Evans-Blinn Hall

Conference Schedule

Friday, September 21

Session 1: 8:00 am—12:00 pm

Nature Writ Small: the Atom

If cosmology represents humankind's attempt to render intelligible the world of the very large, quantum theory goes to the other extreme. Natural scientists have not yet been able to make considerations of the world of the very small compatible with those of the very large. What need is met in the assumption that such a unification can be accomplished? What assumptions lie at the basis of the age-old conviction that in the breaking up of reality into corpuscles or atoms lies a pathway to understanding? What kind of understanding is it that is sought in this way? A historical consideration of the development of atomism in science helps make clear its successes and limitations. Contemporary quantum theory has added new dimensions to this historic quest that expose the deep-seated challenges embedded in the particle liberation of reality. What opportunities exist here for new insights into the enduring, but oppressed human convictions that in taking reality apart we approach closer to an objective representation of nature, but that we simultaneously truncate aspects of a unified view of humankind's relation to nature?

Speakers

"Atoms in Chemistry: Divisible or Indivisible?"

John Hedley Brooke

*Andrews University, Professor of Science & Religion
Oxford University*

"Unification, Final Theory, and History"

Silvan Schweber

*Professor of Physics and Richard Kohn Professor
of the History of Ideas
Brandeis University*

Commentator

Ernst Peter Fischer

*Professor for Wissenschaftsgeschichte
Universität Konstanz*

Session 2: 1:30—5:00 pm

Nature Writ Large: the Cosmos

In the context of past and present pursuits of our understanding of cosmic origins, a great deal of new knowledge has been acquired in the twentieth century. Much of this research has been pursued with an eye to contributing to a unified account of the entire span of cosmic history. How has our conception of the questions contained in the discipline of cosmology changed over time? Were the fundamental queries motivating astronomers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries similar to those driving contemporary cosmologists? Questions of cosmic origin have always lent themselves to mythological articulation in the past. What contemporary myths accompany recent knowledge about the expansion of the universe, its origin in a Big Bang, and its ultimate state in the future? How have the prospects of a secular, rational life affected past and present attempts to articulate a unified account of humankind's place in the cosmos? What relative value have past and present societies assigned to the significance of our understanding of the physical origins and destiny of the universe?

Speakers

"One World or Many? An Historical Perspective on the Question of Extraterrestrial Life"

Michael Crowe

*Benjamin J. Cummings Professor
in Humanities
New York University*

"Our Universe—A Cosmos?"

William B. Drees

*Midwest Center for Philosophy of
Science and Technology
Tübingen University, Eschwege, The Netherlands*

Commentator

Hilgeo Krüger

*Professor of History of Science
University of Jena*

Saturday, September 22

Session 3: 8:30 am—12:30 pm

Nature in Development: Evolution

Questions such as where we come from are not limited to cosmology. They have surfaced time and again with respect to the origin of life, particularly human life. Once humankind began seeing its own past tied together with that of all life on the planet new mythologies of our beginnings had to be formulated. What constraints, if any, did a predisposition to unified accounts impose on explanations of life's past? What function did this predisposition fill? Has this function changed over time, or has it been an intellectual need that has endured in recognizably similar manifestations? Have there been attempts to suggest that evolutionary development might not be susceptible to unified accounts?

Speakers

"Evolution in Nature and Culture: Man's Responsibility for Nature"

Dietrich von Engelhardt

*Director, Institut für Medizin und
Wissenschaftsgeschichte
Medizinische Universität zu Lübeck*

"From Huxley to Wilson: Functions of Unification in Modern Biology"

V. Betty Smocovitis

*Associate Professor of History of Science
University of Florida*

Commentator

Thomas Söding

*Professor and Chair, Department of History of
Medicine
University of Copenhagen*

Speakers

"Before Medicine Killed (Holistic) Health"

Frederick Gregory

*Professor of History of Science
University of Florida*

"The Revival of Holistic Health: Risks and Benefits"

Allen H. Nelms

*Professor of Pharmacology and Therapeutics
University of Florida*

Commentator

Anne Harrington

*Professor of History of Science
Harvard University*

Sunday, September 23

Closing Panel: 8:30 am—12:00 pm

Summary and Overview

Klaus Vondung

*Professor of Germanistik
Universität Siegen*

Stephen McKnight

*Professor of History
University of Florida*

K. Ludwig Pfeiffer

*Professor of Anglistik
Universität Siegen*