

# Subject, Self, and Soul: Transdisciplinary Approaches to Personhood



## Call for Papers

### ***Metanexus Conference***

July 13-17, 2008

Madrid, Spain

[www.metanexus.net/conference2008](http://www.metanexus.net/conference2008)

Deadline for Abstracts: **December 15, 2007**

### **MIHI QUAESTIO FACTUS SUM**

**(I have become a question to myself.)**

Augustini *Confessiones* (liber X, caput xxxiii)

Who are we? Why are we here? In our age, it is science that purports to answer these ancient questions, while technology promises to make us even “more than human.” But despite our amazing scientific discoveries and technological powers, are we not still “a question to ourselves?” And what new questions about ourselves have been raised in our own times?

If we are truly to understand ourselves, our place in the cosmos, and our relation to each other and to the divine, we must adopt rich transdisciplinary approaches that cut across fields of knowledge, institutional boundaries, cultural borders, and religious traditions. We need to explore such questions as:

There is something inescapably “first person” about consciousness. What accounts for this? Can third-person, objective science give a complete analysis of first-person, subjective experience? And can it tell us how to live our lives, how to seek virtue, or how to live together?

The human brain manifests a massive complexity, comprising about 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion ( $10^{14}$ ) synapses. But are we our brains? Or is there something we are that is irreducible to brain states? Is there a soul?

To what degree are we relational beings? Is there an essential relation between “I” and “Other”? Is the notion of the subject inescapably political? What is the relationship between subjectivity and sovereignty?

Are there such things as a collective consciousness or a collective unconscious? Must we add “community” to the classical triad of “body-mind-soul”?

What are the metaphysical underpinnings of the human person? What sort of clues can the existence of persons hold for metaphysics?

How might we go about a search for meaning, for what is “real and important” to ourselves? Is this a spiritual quest? A philosophical practice? An empirical exercise? How do we best approach this search, or are these questions somehow flawed?

What are the limits of the person and personhood? What happens to persons pushed to the extremes, by poverty, by torture, by war and upheaval?

Join us for the 9th annual Metanexus Conference when philosophers, biologists, physicists, cosmologists, neuroscientists, cognitive scientists, theologians, religious scholars and community leaders, historians and educators will discuss these and other profound questions of what it means to be a person in a rapidly evolving and complex world.

Among the attendees will be more than 200 representatives of the Metanexus Global Network of multidisciplinary Local Societies from over 40 countries.

### **Additional Themes**

Papers are invited that address the broad themes listed above, but *the conference is open to critically rigorous, scientifically-, theologically-, and*

*philosophically-informed papers on any topics that touch on profound questions of a transdisciplinary nature concerning the person and the cosmos.*

**Presentations by interdisciplinary or inter-institutional teams are especially welcome. Proposals for special sessions and panel discussions will be considered.**

- **meta-THEMES:** *Transdisciplinary Theories, Methodologies, and Approaches*
  - (theories of transdisciplinarity, systems theory, integral theory, constructing transdisciplinary research programs, pluralist methodologies, epistemology and transdisciplinarity, integrating scientific and non-scientific knowledge, the logic(s) of transdisciplinarity, developing standards of rigor for transdisciplinary studies, deontology of transdisciplinarity)
  
- **nexus-THEMES:** *Profound Questions, Pressing Issues:*
  - Transdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding the Human Person
  - System, Identity, and Transcendence (Scientific, Philosophical, and Religious Perspectives)
  - The Idea and Possibility of Wisdom
  - Health, Healing, and Spirituality
  - Transdisciplinarity and Institutions (educational and otherwise)
  - Transdisciplinary Approaches to the Problem of Poverty (or other Social Problems)
  - Globalization and Personhood
  - Network Culture, Collective Intelligence, Sociologies of Philosophies, and Diffusion of Innovations
  - The Possibility of *Post*-postmodern Metaphysics
  - Analytic Philosophy of Synthetic Thought
  - Reductionism, Naturalism, Nominalism—Are There Viable Alternatives?
  - Scientific and Religious Perspectives on Human Flourishing
  - Nature, History, and God: Emergence and Complexity
  - Infinity—Logic, Mathematics, Cosmology, Theology
  - Artificial “Multiple Intelligences” (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist)?
  - Continental Philosophy, Theology, and the Concept of Person

## **Guidelines**

A NOTE ABOUT PRESENTATION OF THESE PAPERS: All accepted papers are to be submitted in advance and will be posted and publicly accessible on the Metanexus Conference Web site. Abstracts will also be printed in the conference

reader. Authors of papers and presentations will be required to sign a release allowing Metanexus to record their contributions to the conference for later use via the Metanexus website and podcasts. The goal in this conference is not simply to present papers, but to meet and network with creative persons from around the world. The hope is to learn from each other, to try out new ideas on a welcoming yet critically astute audience, to provide inspiration towards further research and exploration, and to generate a synergy that will have effects long after the conference is over.

To be considered for a paper presentation at the conference, please submit ALL of the following in ENGLISH:

1. A separate COVER SHEET that lists the author(s) full name(s), name of institution(s), complete postal address, telephone number(s), and email address, along with the PAPER TITLE.
2. On a different SEPARATE sheet, a 200 word BIOGRAPHY for each author of the paper, written in third-person form (“She is professor...” rather than “I am professor...”).
3. An ABSTRACT of between 1500 and 2000 words. Each page of the ABSTRACT must be numbered. The ABSTRACT must not contain any self-references, in order to facilitate blind review.

ALL SUBMISSION ELEMENTS MUST BE SENT VIA EMAIL AS ATTACHMENTS (.doc or .rtf only—NO .pdf files will be accepted). WE CANNOT ACCEPT ANY OF THIS INFORMATION IN THE BODY OF THE EMAIL MESSAGE.

DEADLINE for submitting abstract and biography is **DECEMBER 15, 2007**.

DEADLINE for completed versions of SELECTED papers is **APRIL 1, 2008**.

FORMAT for papers: Final Papers must be submitted in ELECTRONIC format (MS Word .doc format). Further instructions will be sent to presenter upon selection.

As this is an international meeting, the official language of the conference is ENGLISH. However, there will be some sessions of the 2008 conference that will be conducted in SPANISH. Therefore, if you would like to be considered for one of these sessions, please submit the COVER SHEET, the BIO(S), and the 1500-2000 word ABSTRACT in **BOTH English AND Spanish**. Final papers, however, may be submitted in **ONLY Spanish**.

LENGTH LIMIT OF FULL PAPERS: 10,000 words (approximately 20 single-spaced 8.5” X 11” typed pages in 12 pt. Arial or Times New Roman font).

READING TIME: approximately 30 minutes, followed by up to 10 minutes of question and answer.

Please submit cover sheets, abstracts, bios, and (if selected) completed papers via email to [papers2008@metanexus.net](mailto:papers2008@metanexus.net) .

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