



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
GIFFORD LECTURES 2013

Facing Gaia

A new inquiry into Natural Religion

A series of six lectures by

Bruno Latour

Professor at Sciences Po, Paris

18 February to 28 February 2013 at 5.30pm

Location of lectures

All lectures take place in St Cecilia's Hall, Niddry Street, Cowgate, Edinburgh, at 5.30pm.
www.ed.ac.uk/maps/buildings/st-cecilias-hall

Further information

Gifford lectures are free but ticketed. To book tickets visit the University of Edinburgh Gifford Lecture website at www.ed.ac.uk/gifford-lectures.

Please contact lynn.hyams@ed.ac.uk if you have any queries about this lecture series.

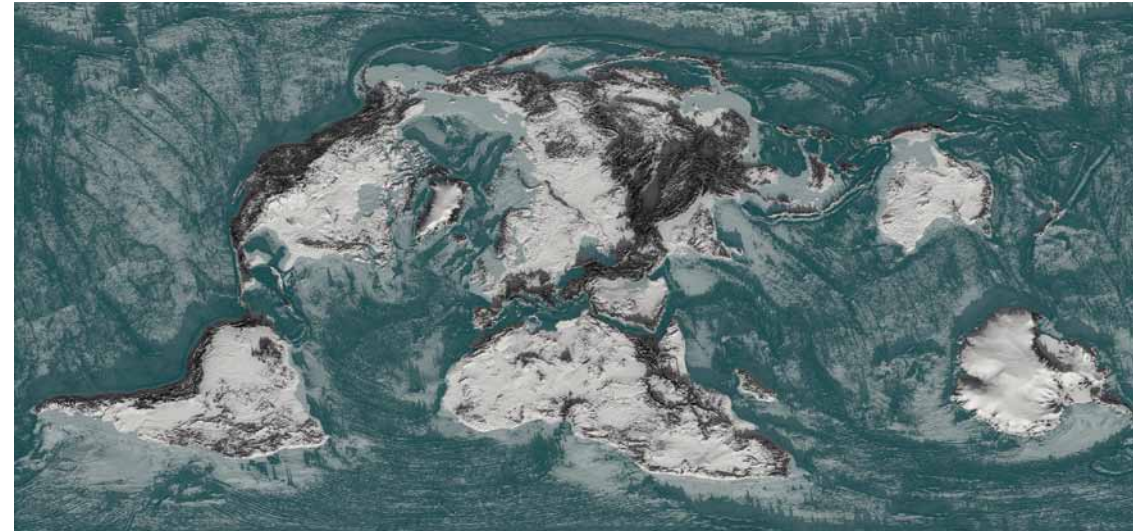
The Gifford Lectures

The Gifford Lectures, which are held at each of the four ancient Scottish universities, were established under the will of Adam Lord Gifford, a Senator of the College of Justice, who died in 1887. For over a hundred years, the Lectures have enabled a most notable field of scholars to contribute to the advancement of philosophical and theological thought. Past Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh include William James, John Dewey, Albert Schweitzer, Niels Bohr, Arnold Toynbee, Sir John Eccles, Iris Murdoch, Charles Taylor, Michael Ignatieff, Wentzel van Huyssteen, Noam Chomsky, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Simon Conway Morris, Alexander Nehamas, Robert Veatch, Jonathan Sacks, Diana Eck, Mike Gazzaniga, Terry Eagleton, Patricia Churchland.

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Biography

Bruno Latour is Professor at Sciences Po Paris and has also been Professor at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines in Paris and visiting Professor at University of California (San Diego), at the London School of Economics and Harvard University.

After field studies in Africa and California he specialised in the analysis of scientists and engineers at work. In addition to work in philosophy, history, sociology and anthropology of science, he has collaborated on many studies in science policy and research management, producing significant works such as *Laboratory Life*, *Science in Action*, *The Pasteurization of France*, and more recently *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory*. He has also published an anthology of essays, *Pandora's Hope: Essays in the Reality of Science Studies*, which explore the consequences of the "science wars" and has made a valuable contribution to the political philosophy of the environment with the book *Politics of Nature*. In a further series of books, he has explored the consequences of science studies on religion in *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* and *Rejoice* (the latter to be published by Polity Press).



Facing Gaia. A new inquiry into Natural Religion

There could be no better theme for a lecture series on natural religion than that of Gaia, this puzzling figure that has emerged recently in public discourse from Earth science as well as from many activist and spiritual movements. The problem is that the expression of "natural religion" is somewhat of a pleonasm, since Western definitions of nature borrow so much from theology. The set of lectures attempts to decipher the face of Gaia in order to redistribute the notions that have been packed too tightly into the composite notion of "natural religion".

18 February 2013 Once out of nature

The set of questions around the two words "natural religion" implies that only the second word is a coded and thus a disputed category, the first one being taken for granted and uncoded. But if it can be shown that the very notion of nature is a theological construct, we might be able to shift the problem somewhat: the question becomes not to save or resurrect "natural religion", but to dispose of it by offering at last a "secular" version of nature and of the natural sciences.

19 February 2013 A question of agency

Once nature and the natural sciences are fully "secularized", it becomes possible to revisit also the category of the supernatural. Then, a different landscape opens which can be navigated through an attention to agencies and their composition. Such a freedom of movement allows the use of the rich anthropological literature to compare the ways different "collectives" manage to assemble and totalize different sets of agencies.

21 February 2013 Gaia's puzzling features

In spite of its reputation, Gaia is not half science and half religion. It offers a much more enigmatic set of features that redistribute agencies in all possible ways (as does this most enigmatic term "anthropocene"). Thus, it is far from clear what it means to "face Gaia". It might require us to envisage it very differently from the various divinities of the past (including those derived from nature).

25 February 2013 How many globes can be held on an angel's fingertip?

The paradox of what is called "globalization" is that there is no "global globe" to hold the multitude of concerns that have to be assembled to replace the "politics of nature" of former periods. What are the instruments —always local and partial— that are sensitive enough to Gaia's components for the limited technical and emotional apparatus of assembled humans?

26 February 2013 War of the worlds: humans against earthlings

In the absence of any Providence to settle matters of concern – and thus of nature, its barely disguised substitute – no peaceful resolution of Gaian conflicts can be expected. The recognition of a state of war and the designation of enmity is indispensable if a state of diplomacy is later to be reached. Under the pressure of so many apocalyptic injunctions, what is a Gaian political theology?

28 February 2013 St Christopher you're not strong enough to carry the world!

Although the resources of "paganism", New Age cults, renewed themes of Christian incarnation, and process theology offer rich mythological insights, it is not clear whether they are at the scale and sensitivity needed to face Gaia. A search for collective rituals should begin with works of art and experiments able to explore in sufficient detail the scientific and political composition of the common world.