

The Jacob Marschak Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Mathematics in the Behavioral Sciences at UCLA

Young Research Library Conference Room 11360 | January 22, 2015 at 3-4:30 pm

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The Origin of Ideas: Blending, Creativity, and the Human Spark

Speaker: Mark Turner, Institute Professor and Professor of Cognitive Science, Case Western Reserve University

Host: David DeLiema, Ph.D. candidate, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA

Other species have abilities we do not—they can fly, spin webs, photosynthesize. But human beings are the heavyweight champions of extremely rapid creativity. We are the origin of ideas. We invent and disseminate new ideas constantly, often ideas that range across vast expanses of time, space, causation, and agency—expanses that go far beyond human scale and that leave other species in the dust. Why are we so innovative? How can our little brains hold onto new ideas once they are formed? Professor Turner explores the ways in which advanced human cognition, often profoundly conservative, is remarkable for its ability to blend old ideas to make new ones, with emergent meaning arising in the blend. Advanced blending, a basic mental operation for human beings, is a constant, everyday mental activity, not costly and not reserved for special effects, even though it is almost entirely unnoticed. It appears to operate according to uniform principles and under uniform constraints, underlying mathematical insight, scientific discovery, advanced social cognition, art, music, religion, fashion, decision-making, grammar, and the rest of the performances that distinguish cognitively modern human beings.

Professor Turner is the author of *The Origin of Ideas* (2014), *The Artful Mind* (2004), *Cognitive Dimensions of Social Science* (2001), and a many other books and articles. He is Founding Director of the Cognitive Science Network; Co-Director of the Distributed Little Red Hen Lab; winner of the Prix du Rayonnement de la langue et de la littérature françaises from the French Academy; Founding President of the Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts; Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, the National Humanities Center, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University, the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for the Science of Origins; Extraordinary Member of the Humanwissenschaftliches Zentrum der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität; and External Research Professor of the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study.