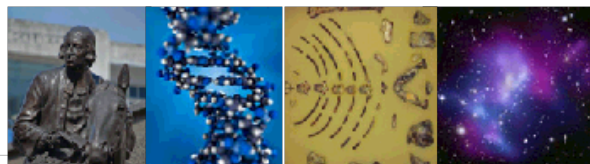


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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April 20, 2015

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

I am taking a few minutes to welcome you all to the April 20, 2015 WesleyNexus Newsletter. My contribution will be fairly short this month. I am in the middle of my last paper for my last class for what I expect to be my last degree. After over a decade of slow but steady progress, I will be graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC with an MA in Systematic Theology with a concentration in, what else, science and religion. The program allows interested students to design their own curriculum once a core set of courses has been completed. With that flexibility I was able to take two science and religion courses, one taught by Dr. Walt Shropshire, WesleyNexus' first President and one taught by Dr. Connie Bertka, a member of our advisory board. In addition, I was able to construct independent studies on Josiah Royce, Evolution and Theology and Creativity, Novelty and Emergence, all topics with connections to the science and religion dialogue. I want to thank all my friends with whom I shared this journey and hope that in the future I will be better able to contribute to WesleyNexus and the broader science and religion discussion. Thanks also to my fellow WesleyNexus contributors while I focus the next few weeks on this final paper.

We continue to ask for your support. WesleyNexus is very much a virtual organization. I write this on my home computer using free email and incurring no organizational expense. All funds that we collect are spent on maintaining our web presence, sponsoring programs, distributing the newsletter and promoting activities of other organizations within the science and religion space. **All contributions are acknowledged for tax reporting purposes.** Please consider supporting us with a contribution either through the PayPal DONATE link below, or, by sending a check to:

WesleyNexus, Inc.
24500 Fossen Road
Damascus, MD 20872



Thanks in advance for your support.

God Bless,

Rick Barr, Secretary,
WesleyNexus, Board of Directors

GreenFaith Day 2015: April 25, 2015, 10 AM - 12 PM.

In recognition of Earth Day, Community UMC in Crofton will hold a

GreenFaith Day event focusing on climate change on Saturday April 25, from 10 a.m. to noon. The keynote speaker will be Asia Lachir, a PhD candidate at the University of Marrakech-Morocco, and currently on a Fulbright scholarship doing research at Goddard Space Flight Center on u also hear from Joelle Novey, director of Interfaith Power & Light (DC.ML...), about how churches and congregations of all faiths across our region are responding to climate change: www.mdip.org This event is enabled by GreenFaith.org and ClimateVoices.org, and sponsored by the BWC chapter of the MFSA and by WesleyNexus. Open to the public and free; registration requested at <https://eventbrite.com/event/16222211070/>.



Jesus Seminar on the Road, May 1-2
The Rhetorical Jesus Goes to Church - Register Now!
Friday, May 1, 7:30pm | Saturday, May 2, 9:30am
Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, 3401 Nebraska Ave, Washington DC 20016

The Jesus Seminar on the Road presents “The Rhetorical Jesus Goes to Church,” with Professors David Galston and Bernard Brandon Scott. Jesus of Nazareth used irony, hyperbole, paradox and other rhetorical devices to speak of God and God’s kingdom. What can we learn about the historical Jesus through the study of his rhetorical “voiceprint”? What does this scholarship mean for the life of the church? Friday, May 1, 7:30pm - 9pm; Saturday, May 2, 9:30am - 4pm. Registration: \$60/before 4/17; \$75/after 4/17. Register [here](#)



Jews, Protestants, and Secularization in Modern America
Sunday, May 3, 7:30pm, Congregation Beth El, 8215 Old Georgetown Rd, Bethesda, MD 20814

On Sunday, May 3rd, the Foundation for Jewish Studies will be hosting Dr. David Hollinger, the Preston Hotchkis Professor Emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley, and a well-known historian of American religion. Dr. Hollinger will be speaking about two groups who have made the public culture of the United States more fully secular during the past 60 or 70 years. These include Americans of Jewish descent, including many scientists, writers, and other professionals who either do not practice Judaism at all, or do so with limited intensity; and Americans from Protestant families whose ‘religious’ lives are largely limited to social action projects. How have these Americans with Jewish and Protestant roots created a formidable alliance for secular, cosmopolitan culture in the United States, and what challenges have they faced? More information at foundjs.org



Institute for Science & Judaism
Sunday, May 3, 2015, 4:00-6:00 p.m.,
Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, 7727 Persimmon Tree Lane, Bethesda, MD.

The Institute for Science and Judaism (“ISJ”) will sponsor a forum with NASA’s Dr. Jennifer Wiseman and Rabbi Fred Dobb on the discoveries of thousands of exo-planets and evidence indicating that oceans may lie beneath the surface of the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. These discoveries suggest the existence of multitudes of worlds with environments that could harbor life. Dr. Wiseman, NASA’s Senior Project Scientist for the Hubble Space Telescope, will present an illustrated lecture describing these new developments and their scientific



The Institute for Science and Judaism
ScienceAndJudaism.org

significance, and Adat Shalom's Rabbi Fred Dobb will discuss implications of the possible discovery of life beyond earth for Jewish theology. A discussion among the panelists and the audience moderated by ISJ President Rabbi George B. Driesen will follow. Directions can be found [here](#).

Reminder of Upcoming Events:

(see [March 2015 newsletter](#) in our Archives for full descriptions)

Transhumanism Conference, Conference Dates: July 26-31, 2015; Location: Juniata College. Chaired by: Don Braxton, J Omar Good Professor of Religious Studies, Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA
We are accepting proposals in many domains. Visit the webpage <https://sites.google.com/site/transjuniata/>.

“New Conversations in Science and Religion: What Difference Might Critical Realist Philosophy Make?”

An Interdisciplinary Conference, July 30-31, 2015, University of Notre Dame, IN
Center for the Study of Religion and Society, Christian Smith, Prof of Sociology, Director
<http://csrs.nd.edu/events/newconversations/>

61st Annual meeting of the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) –

Star Island (off Portsmouth), New Hampshire, August 8-15, 2015

Call for Papers, deadline February 1, 2015; website: www.iras.org

Confirmed keynote speakers include: Carol Wayne White, Karen Barad, Fern Feldman, Billy Grassie, Catherine Keller, Laurel Schneider, Emilie Townes, Claudia Schippert, Whitney Bauman, Lisa Stenmark, and Chapel Speaker, Donna Schaper.

Participant Contribution By Lee Lybarger

WesleyNexus encourages our participants to contribute reflections on science and religion. This month, Lee Lybarger has submitted an article "SCIENCE'S CHALLENGE FOR DOCTINAL CHRISTIANITY". The article can be found [here](#) and a biography of Lee can be found [here](#).

[Review: Dr. Philip Clayton presents Annual Lamb Lecture at Villanova](#)

By Dr. E. Mayard Moore

[Brain Science—What It Can and Cannot Deliver](#)

A review by Roberta M. Gilbert, M.D.

Recommended by Jennifer Secki Shields, WesleyNexus Board Member

Edge.org: A Rich Resources Science and Religion Discussion

Edge.org. unquestionably is an organization with secular leanings; it is none-the-less, a provocative site with well-reasoned and insightful contributors from across a range of disciplines. I have chosen three links that I find particularly intriguing.

Check out Edge.org for yourself at www.edge.org.

The logo for Edge.org, featuring the word "Edge" in a stylized, cursive font.

Edge.org - Formulating Science in Terms of Possible and Impossible Tasks: A Conversation With Chiara Marletto

CHIARA MARLETTO is a Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College and Postdoctoral Research Assistant at the Materials Department, University of Oxford; Currently working with David Deutsch. In this article, we are introduced to a term with which many of us are unfamiliar: constructor theory. As presented in the beginning of the article, for “the constructor theoretic view, humans, as knowledge creating systems, are quite central to fundamental physics in an objective, non-anthropocentric, way. This is a very deep change in perspective.



One of the ideas that will be dropped if constructor theory turns out to be effective is that the only fundamental entities in physics are laws of motion and initial conditions. In order for physics to accommodate more of physical reality, there needs to be a switch to this new mode of explanation, which accepts that scientific explanation is more than just predictions. Predictions will be supplemented with statements about what tasks are possible, what are impossible and why.” Though I cannot claim to have more than a barely superficial understanding of the issues presented in this article, it deals with a variety of topics discussed by those engaged in the science and religion dialog over the past decades: quantum entanglement, emergence, information, and reductionism to name a few. To quote Marletto, “information... can act as a constructor—i.e., an object that can cause transformations and retain the property of causing them again. All these elements that I just mentioned—information, knowledge—are emergent things that, in the prevailing conception of fundamental physics, would not have a natural expression because you would have to talk about many atoms undergoing certain complicated transformation in some phase space; while in constructor theory, they are natural objects. They are the very elements by which the theory expresses itself. These are examples of how constructor theory brings in conceptual 'devices' that are new to physics, so that it can address problems that have been not solved so far. That's very promising.” You can find the article [here](#).

Death Is Optional: Edge.org Discusses the Possibility of Inorganic Life

What if death was optional? What if we could break the bonds of our organic straightjacket and express ourselves resting atop of an inorganic infrastructure that would sustain life? These are the questions that Yuval Noah Harari, author of [Sapiens, A Brief History of Human Kind](#) and Nobel Prize Economist Daniel Kahneman discuss in their conversation on Edge.org earlier this month. These questions have been around for a number of decades since artificial intelligence and robotics have captivated the imagination of scientists and fiction writers. Related to the Edge.org annual question discussed below, this provocative conversation seems to challenge the insights of many faith traditions. I think it is worth talking about. You can find the video and text [here](#).



Edge.org Annual Question: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MACHINES THAT THINK?

Every year, Edge.org asks dozens of experts from a variety of fields to comment on a provocative, open ended question. This year, Edge asked the question “What do you think about machines that think?”. The theme of many science fiction plots in movies and in print, this question brings forth opinions both pro and con. For people of faith, however, a further question can be asked: if machines can think, what is their relationship to God; do they have soul(s), can they be regarded as moral beings and therefore guilty of

moral failing? While these faith oriented questions are outside the scope of this remarkable group of very secular scholars, their responses are fuel for thought. You can find their comments [here](#).

