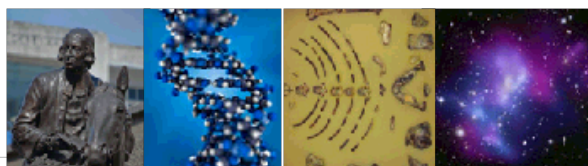


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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February 22, 2015

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

I just finished watching the wonderful movie “The Theory of Everything” which portrays the life of Stephen Hawking, a name known by most in the western world either through his writings or via popular shows like "The Simpsons" or "The Big Bang Theory". I remember reading that his book, [A Brief History of Time](#), was one of those coffee table books which everyone owned and displayed in their living rooms but few actually read. So people know Stephen Hawking and through the movie they may get a sense of his personal struggles and triumphs. Near the end of the movie, there is a scene which shows Hawking meeting the Queen of England where he was awarded knighthood, though he privately declined the honor. This was certainly a high point of his life. However, I was a bit disappointed that the movie failed to mention another high point in his life, the meeting that Hawking had in 1981 with Pope John Paul II during a conference of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. For the English, the Queen of England is rightly revered but from a global perspective few persons have the stature of Pope John Paul II (and I say that being a liberal Methodist!). Given the misunderstanding of both science and religion and the presumed conflict that exists between them, the movie could have presented a scene that helped dispel some of the fictions of the relationship between these core human activities. Dispelling misunderstanding and misperception has been a primary goal of WesleyNexus over the past five years. We appreciate your participation in this effort and hope you continue to find value in what WesleyNexus has to offer.

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

## WesleyNexus Evolution Weekend, February 15, 2015 was a Success !

On February 15th, Fulton, MD was in the midst of the cold snap brought to us by what weather people call the Siberian Express which still continues its tight grasp on the Southern and Eastern half of the United States. That afternoon, over forty people braved sub-freezing weather and marginal road conditions to listen to a panel of four persons discuss what it means to be a person of faith (or no faith) in the modern, scientific world. The panel included Haytham Younis, a student of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Dennis Skocz, Ph.D., career diplomat, Catholic, and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at UDC, Daniel Spiro, a Jewish author and coordinator of the Washington Spinoza Society, and John Shook, Ph. D., Instructor in science education at the University of Buffalo, speaking on behalf of non-theistic humanists. We very much appreciate our co-sponsors, including the two primary: the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) [www.IRAS.org](http://www.IRAS.org), and the Clergy Letter Project at [www.theclergyletter.org](http://www.theclergyletter.org). The two-hour video of the event can be found on our website at [www.wesnexus.org](http://www.wesnexus.org). We encourage you to view it and perhaps convene a small discussion group, utilizing the “questions for discussion” that are still on the website. You can actually view the program in 20-30 minute segments with a Sunday School class or other small group. Afterwards, please let us know what you think by sending an email to [WesleyNexus@aol.com](mailto:WesleyNexus@aol.com).



## Is Christian Belief Conducive to Doing Good Science? A Live Internet Debate on February 24, 2015 at 7:00 PST

Dr. Ted Davis, Fellow of the History of Science for the BioLogos Foundation and Professor of the History of Science at Messiah College, will debate Bernie Dehler, an atheist (former evangelical born-again Christian) and the author of the booklet "Modern Science and Philosophy Destroy Christian Theology." Dr. Davis has been a longtime supporter of science and religion dialogue in the mid-Atlantic region through his regular discussions at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. For more information go to <http://stuorgs.oregonstate.edu/socratic>



## Reminder: DoSER Program of AAAS: Science Perceptions National Conference, March 13, 2015.

<http://www.aaas.org/event/science-perceptions-national-conference>

Registration for the Science Perceptions Conference is now open with the conference rate of \$79. You may register [here](#).

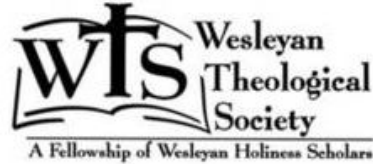
“Perceptions: Science and Religious Communities” is a national conference that will bring together leaders in science and religion—including DoSER director Jennifer Wiseman, National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson, and climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe—to further conversation and to plan a course for future dialogue.”



The list of speakers includes Nobel Prize winner in physics William D. Phillips, climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe, DoSER director Jennifer Wiseman and Leith Anderson, the President of the National Association of Evangelicals. Additional speakers are listed on the website which can be found [here](#).

**Reminder: 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, March 6-7, 2015**

The 2015/50th Anniversary Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society will be held at Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Mount Vernon Ohio, on March 6-7, 2015. The meeting keynote speakers will be Doug Strong, Seattle Pacific University, and Beth Felker Jones, Wheaton College. The Presidential address will be given by Richard



Thompson, Northwest Nazarene University. The two-day session will follow the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Philosophical Society, and persons can register for both. The WTS Conference will feature a wide variety of topics in the Wesleyan tradition, including Biblical Studies, Moral Theology, Theology and Practical Culture, Ecumenical Studies, and Women's Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition. WesleyNexus Advisory Board member Dr. Thomas Oord of Northwestern Nazarene University will play a prominent part in the proceedings. WesleyNexus President Dr. Moore has had a paper approved and scheduled in the section Theology and Science: his topic will be "John Wesley's Engagement with the Science of his Day." Please mark your calendar now and save the date. We hope that you will join us for the conference in Mount Vernon, Ohio March 6-7. More information is on the website: [www.wtsweb.org](http://www.wtsweb.org).

**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**

Technology is leading humanity into some wondrous and peculiar places. Daily reports point to the emergence of quantitatively and qualitatively new modes of existence, knowledge, and behavior. The conference - Our Transhuman Futures - brings together people from all



over the world who are pioneering the edges of these realities. It will be four days of exciting presentations, demos, theater pieces, and art exhibits of our transhuman futures. Consider what projects you might present at this exciting event. Network with others working in these fields. Registration is now open and we are accepting proposals in many domains. Visit the webpage <https://sites.google.com/site/transjuniata/>.

**Early Adversity and Later-Life Illness: March 29, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m., The Institute for Science and Judaism & Temple Beth Ami**

Two researchers, Dr. David Reiss and Dr. Stephen Suomi will discuss their collaboration, which has the ultimate goal of developing both childhood and adult forms of therapies for



The Institute for Science and Judaism  
[ScienceAndJudaism.org](http://ScienceAndJudaism.org)

prevention and reversal of the liability for numerous medical problems that result from early adversity. The event page with flyer for the program can be found [here](#).

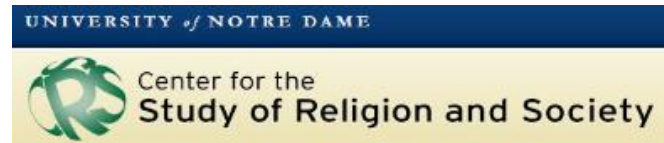
Note: Rabbi George B. Driesen, the Institute's founder and President, has been a long-time supporter of WesleyNexus. We encourage our participants to take advantage of this unique and important program sponsored by ISJ and Temple Beth Ami.

## “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, Professor of Sociology, Director  
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT and CALL FOR SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

<http://csrs.nd.edu/events/newconversations/>

Critical realism is an innovative philosophical framework with the potential to open up space for constructive dialogue between the natural and social sciences, the study of religion, the humanities, and people and communities of faith. Critical realism seems more suited than other competing philosophies of science (positivism, hermeneutics, postmodernism) to take seriously the truth claims and inner worlds of religious believers. A neo-Aristotelian realism of this kind takes seriously ontology and emergence, which allows for considering ideas like “love,” “forgiveness,” “virtue,” “flourishing,” and “divinity” as real and powerful causal forces, important for a more complete explanation of social phenomena. Religious perspectives may also have much to learn about science through critical realism. The goal of this conference is to further advance dialogues between science, religion, philosophy, and theology by drawing diverse thinkers together to consider the possibilities of better mutual understanding across these different fields of knowledge and inquiry.



This one day-long mini-conference immediately follows the annual meeting of the International Association of Critical Realism (IACR), also to be held at the University of Notre Dame campus, from July 27-30, 2015. The joint scheduling of these two conferences is intended to encourage overlap between the two conferences' participants. Consider attending both conferences, from July 27-31. Thanks to several generous grants we are able to provide housing and food at a very low cost to participants. The cost of attendance at the one-day conference is \$125.00, which includes two nights lodging and full board (three meals daily). The cost of attendance at the IACR conference is \$400.00, which includes five nights lodging and full board. The registration deadline is May 30, 2015. After that deadline, an additional \$40.00 charge will be applied. (We are also able to provide a limited number of scholarships to faculty from colleges and universities (1) with a Catholic mission or (2) affiliated with the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

More information is available at: <http://csrs.nd.edu/events/newconversations/>

**Reminder: 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](http://www.iras.org)**

Theme: Unsettling Science and Religion: Contributions & Questions from Queer Studies

The goal of the 2015 IRAS conference is to borrow the techniques and challenges from within queer studies and queer theory, with the goal of unsettling—or “queering”—our own discipline(s). To this end, we call for papers and poster



presentations on topics at the intersection of religion, science and queer theory. This might include ways to challenge the boundaries within and between religion and science, and or between and within the academy,

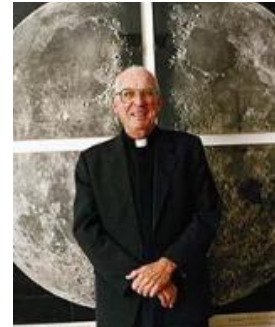


as well as the boundaries of the sacred and secular, of reason and faith. Ultimately, we want to ask how queer religion, science and philosophy, can and/or should be.

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.

### **The Pope's Astrophysicist by Margaret Wertheim**

I didn't remember when Stephen Hawking met the Pope so I went to Google and landed upon an old but interesting article by Margaret Wertheim on George Coyne, at one time a director and research scientist at the Vatican Observatory. Coyne was at the conference and Wertheim had this to say about the meeting: "Father Coyne was also at the conference. Like most fellow scientists he is impressed by Hawking's mental agility and does not quibble with his physics. But genius or not, Hawking's grasp of theology is sorely lacking. It is "just silly," Coyne says, "to suggest that this kind of cosmological theory does away with God." He simply does not understand the theological issues. At the Pontifical Academy meeting, Coyne admonished Hawking, "Stephen, God is not a boundary condition." You can find the Wertheim article [here](#).



### **Quantum Weirdness: On the Mystery in Nature**

Commenting on a recent article in "Nature Physics," Edward Frenkel, professor of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley and author of Love and Math: The Heart of Hidden Reality, reminds us that from what we can determine based on the current state of physics, the world is quite odd, even weird. Or as he puts it, "Is there a fixed reality apart from our various observations of it? Or is reality nothing more than a kaleidoscope of infinite possibilities?" It appears that the latter is closer to the evidence at hand. You can read the article [here](#).



Thanks to Jerald Robertson of IRASNet for bringing this to my attention

### **Transfiguration Sunday or Evolution Weekend by Tony Mitchell, PhD**

This year Evolution Weekend and Transfiguration Sunday happened to take place on the same day. On Facebook the day before, I read a post by Rev. Allan R. Bever, Pastor at The First United Methodist Church of Akron, Ohio, Professional Fellow in Theology at Ashland Theological Seminary, and Ordained Elder at East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church: "Tomorrow is Evolution Sunday, but I won't be worshiping with Charles Darwin. It's not because I don't believe in evolution. Indeed, I do. In fact, I think evolution is much more compatible with a trinitarian view of God than a static 7-day account of creation, which puts too many restrictions on how the first chapters of Genesis must be read. I won't be recognizing Evolution Sunday tomorrow simply because it's Transfiguration Sunday and that trumps everything else. What say you?" I invited him to take advantage of both by celebrating Transfiguration Sunday in the morning and then tuning into WesleyNexus for



Evolution Weekend in the afternoon. I don't know whether he took me up on this offer. I received no reply. However, I did discover a post by Tony Mitchell PhD affirming that instead of being in opposition, these two can be seen as complimentary. Tony's blog can be found [here](#).

### **Sean Carroll: Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics**

This past week I ran across an article that brought to my attention an area of speculation and research that I had not thought about for quite a while. Like many non-scientists who read in the area of physics and cosmology, I have been aware of the "many-worlds hypothesis" (Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics or MWI) and pretty much dismissed it as merely speculative thinking buttressed by mathematics that I would never understand. It seemed to me that it would be impossible to gain empirical evidence for such a claim. Well, in his blog of February 19, physicist Sean Carroll, directs his thoughts to counter these assumptions. He clearly states that "The people who object to MWI because of all those unobservable worlds aren't really objecting to MWI at all; they just don't like and/or understand quantum mechanics." Well he is right, I certainly don't truly understand it at the level of mathematical theory; it certainly is a puzzle. (Find his article [here](#))

Then on Thursday, February 19, I had a conversation with Anne Bouie, Artist in Residence at Wesley Seminary who was fascinated with WesleyNexus once I told her who we were. She then said she had run across an article claiming that it may be possible to provide experimental evidence of MWI. She was kind enough to send me a couple of links that can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Thanks Anne!

### **Transform 2015: April 23-25 in Washington, DC**

A Facebook friend has invited me and members of the WesleyNexus community to join others in Washington, DC to Transform 2015 on April 23-25. Transform Network is partnering with Wesley Theological Seminary and a number of other institutions to "bring together people who are on the verge of starting new communities (i.e., community catalysts) or are already cultivating new communities to give them the encouragement and resources they need to get started." For more information go to <http://transformnetwork.org/2015-national-gathering/>



### **Rabbi Jonathan Sachs (former chief rabbi of the UK) speaks on Science and Religion**

This week's Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly (podcast) continues an interview with Rabbi Jonathan Sachs (former chief rabbi of the UK). He articulately and in clear terms expresses the distinctions and connections between science and religion. It strikes me that, considering both disciplines love to become mired in jargon and intricate 'frames of reference', Sachs cuts through it all to discuss simple but profound truth. The podcast can be found [here](#).







