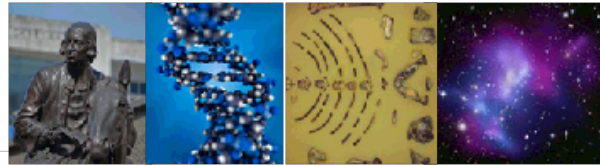


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

November 15, 2015

November will be a busy month for all of us as we look forward to Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays. So we at WesleyNexus are trying to get a jump on things by distributing our newsletter a bit earlier than last month. In this edition, we have a variety of content including links to videos you may not have seen, announcements of upcoming events and some thought provoking articles. We also want to highlight the upcoming WesleyNexus event as we participate in our fourth Evolution Weekend this coming February.

We are an all-volunteer organization and rely on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs, all of which are open to the public – to anyone who wants to engage in the science & religion dialogue. We hope that you will consider supporting us this holiday season with a contribution of any size. It is a cliché but also a truth that our goals are not matched by our funds. So, we continue to ask for your support. **THANK YOU TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ACTUALLY SENT RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS.** We want to stress that 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 either through PayPal receipt or by letter.** 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, Maynard, and the rest of the
WesleyNexus Board of Directors

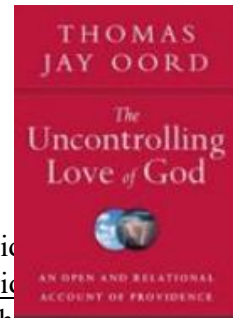
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Videos

The Uncontrolling Love of God by Tom Oord

This month, we would like to highlight a new book by Tom Oord, a member of the WesleyNexus Advisory Board and a longtime supporter of the science and religion dialogue. In this book, Tom tackles what is known theologically as

the problem of theodicy ... or more colloquially, why do bad things happen and what does that imply about our understanding of God. For Oord, this means that we need to be open to the idea that God is not the One who is always in control but, if God is love then God inherently is uncontrolling and that through this understanding we just might be able to begin to understand theodicy and what we as Christians are called to be. As Oord puts it, perhaps we need to “believe in and cooperate with the uncontrolling love of God”. Here is a short video about the book, The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence. Tom refers to himself as an open-relational theologian, a perspective which is behind the notion of the Uncontrolling Love of God. The video can be found [here](#).



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lly,

As many of you may know, Tom was laid off from his teaching position at Northwest Nazarene University. While the issues surrounding his dismissal are complex and varied, one thing is clear. Tom has been a leader in his denomination in promoting a compatibilist view of science and religion which has not been well received by the powers that be in the Church of the Nazarene. The link below provides Tom’s response to these events.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmo8-R67ZRw>

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Science & Religion: Evolution & the Retelling of Our Spiritual Story

In the fall of 2014, Adult Education at Northaven UMC (Dallas) sponsored and filmed a 13-week program during the Sunday school hour to explore the present state and future of religion by looking at: the story of creation from an evolutionary perspective and how it can become our spiritual creation story;



- the science of the brain and the connections between its function and the religious/spiritual life;
- the intertwined evolution of cultures and religions from their beginning until now;
- the paradigm shift in our cosmology as it occurs in religion over the centuries and what that means for our understanding of God.

This program was led by Tom Timmins, Ernie Stokely and Ben Marshall, and each 40-45 minute presentation was followed by a 15-20 minute Q&A discussion (also filmed). Topic titles and descriptions are shown on the webpage; video, just click on the links for each topic. A list of references for all presentations is also shown.

The webpage containing all the materials for the program can be found [here](#).

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"A GOD THAT COULD BE REAL"

On October 28, at the Washington Ethical Society, Nancy Ellen Abrams gave a public lecture on this theme, which is also the title of her newest book. Abrams, an attorney, philosopher of science and lecturer at University of California Santa Cruz, brings a long-term interest in science policy, having worked for an international law firm, a European environmental think tank, the Ford Foundation and the



Office of Technology Assessment at the U.S. Congress. She has consulted with the governments of Sweden, California and Wisconsin, with ExxonNuclear, and others. She and husband, Dr. Joel Primack, team-taught a course for more than a decade at Santa Cruz called "Cosmology and Culture," which won awards from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Templeton Foundation. Abrams and Primack have co-authored two previous books that any of us in the Science & Religion dialogue should purchase and study: *The View from the Center of the Universe* (2006, Riverhead Penguin) and *The New Universe and the Human Future* (2011 Yale U Press). Primack, astrophysicist at University of California Santa Cruz, who just received the 2016 Leo Szilard award, for his ground-breaking work studying dark matter, accompanied Abrams, and the discussion was vigorous among the attendees. Abrams begins with a compelling point, that to be "real," anything referenced must exhibit qualities that reflect a broad consensus among scientists, philosophers, theologians and those who reflect upon daily personal interactions in the world. And with the discoveries of astrophysics in the last 50 years, we first must consider that "reality" (our new cosmic home) is the framework for these reflections to make sense. All previous concepts about deity and cosmic purpose now must be reconceptualized to make sense. This being stipulated, as it were, Abrams goes on to show how we must trash the common claims that we (humans) are insignificant blips in a vast time scale and that the Earth of a tiny spec at the edge of an insignificant galaxy among billions of others in the universe. Abrams shows how scale is critical, not just in physics but in all that we think and do. She illustrates this by reference to the ancient concept of the cosmic Uroboros, showing how the universe itself is a continuity of differing size-scales, down to the tiniest particles (which may be the quarks which we cannot see but only infer). As it happens (not by accident) we (humans) are at the exact midpoint on this scale, the Midgard, the only point where intelligent life can emerge and persist. Moreover, wherever we are in the universe (here and now), the expanding forces (dark energy/dark matter) are driving the universe into new space at an ever-increasing speed. In the centuries to come, just our our ancestors could not possibly have had any comprehension of this universe-at-scale, our descendents (human or otherwise) will have no access to those elements now at the "edge" of reality. Our records and documentation will be all that is. This is our new reality. The cosmic Uroboros is a bridge between the spiritual and the physical. This is the only context in which we can find meaning. The fact that we are the "Midgard" is the only way we can understand "the Ultimate" and our own "centrality" to the universe. The Universe is always becoming, and experiencing the universe from inside (our only option), we are "enfolded" in time (midway between our past and our future), the great NOW being all that we have. But our constraints are also our source for inspiration: our challenge is to develop imagery that bridges the "incomprehensible gap" between the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, all the while upholding the principles of Order, Harmony, and Truth. Ours is a sacred opportunity to see everything afresh through a new cosmic lens. And, as Abrams reminds us, it is an opportunity that we will not get again. Her new book, *A God that Could be Real*, published by Beacon Press, is available from bookstores; a paperback edition is scheduled for March 2016.

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4850 Feet Below – The Hunt for Dark Matter

Fans of the Big Bang Theory will remember the episode where Sheldon and Raj decide to apply to a research project that is searching for dark matter in an abandoned mine thousands of feet below the earth's surface. To simulate the experience and test their ability to withstand the harsh underground setting of a mine, they decide to go "underground" in a university sub-basement that houses heating and cooling ducts, water lines and rats! They don't last very long. In a video posted by Science Friday, you can get a look at what it would really be like. "4850 Feet Below" captures a look a South Dakota mine that is being used to find the most elusive of all physical entities, dark matter.



You can find this fascinating video [here](#).

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Re-conceptualizing the Origin of Life

On Monday November 9, at the Carnegie Institution in Washington DC, 100 of the world's pre-eminent scientists convened for a week-long discussion concerning the origin of life. As implied by the title of the consultation, the idea was to break the old patterns of thinking about this mystery, and to explore some of the implications of research that are being pursued in laboratories and planetaria around the world. It was an opportunity for scientists to speak at depth with each other beyond the normal boundaries of dialogue. As President of the Carnegie Institution Matthew P. Scott said, scientists have begun “to seriously question that chance alone was responsible.... Some go so far as to say that life is a 'cosmic imperative.’” This conference was the outgrowth of a grassroots movement called "Modeling Origins of Life", MOL for short, which sprang up from a number of informal workshops that were organized in the US and in Japan in 2014. The conference goal is to host discussions of broad scope but with targeted impact on key questions and core concepts about the origins of life on Earth, the organization of the biosphere, and the nature of the living state. Speakers included: Christoph Adami, University of Michigan; Laurie Barge, Jet Propulsion Laboratory; John Baross, University of Washington; Henderson Cleaves, Institute for Advanced Study; Lee Cronin, University of Glasgow; Jessica Flack, Santa Fe Institute; Takashi Ikegami, University of Tokyo; Betül Kaçar, Harvard University, and a host of others from around the world.

Physics and chemistry have arrived at a deep understanding of the non-living world. Can we expect to reach similar insights, integrating concepts and quantitative explanation, in chemistry and biology? Life at its origin should be particularly amenable to discovery through scientific laws governing biology, since it marks the point of departure from a predictable physical/chemical world to the novel and history-dependent living world. The origin of life problem is difficult because even the simplest living cell is highly evolved from the first steps toward life, of which little direct evidence remains. This conference aimed to explore ways to build a deeper understanding of the nature of biology, by modeling the origins of life on a sufficiently abstract level, starting from prebiotic conditions on Earth and possibly on other planets.

Dr. Robert Hazen, founder and director of Carnegie's Deep-Carbon Observatory, established in 2008 through a generous ten-year grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, gave a sold-out public lecture on November 12, entitled “Chance, Necessity and the Origins of Life.” The lecture, profusely illustrated with informative slides, was structured in three parts: (1) an overview of the current status of scientific research on the origins of life on Earth, based on the assumption that life is carbon-based and originated from a process of chemical reactions involving water and rocks; (2) an affirmation that the question of “chance or necessity” is a false dichotomy, the alternative being that life, given the requisite deep time frame and the diversity of minerals on Earth (now numbering 6,437 and counting) is, in fact, biologically “inevitable,” and (3) a statistical demonstration that laboratory experiments (such as those carried on for the last 60 years) can only yield a “probability” for life's origins being discovered. Dr. Hazen concludes that the best clues will be the microbes found in deep thermal vents within the Earth and any cosmic discovery of life elsewhere in the solar system. If “life” is discovered on Mars or perhaps on Europa or Titan, the questions is: will life have the same molecular structure as life on Earth? If yes, then it is likely that we are alone in the universe, but if not, then it is likely that there is abundant life throughout the universe. As of now, we can only speculate.

The conferees examined the origin of life as part of a larger concern with the origins of organization, including major transitions in the living state and structure formation in complex systems science. The results of the discussions will likely be published by Carnegie – inquiries may be directed to the conference administrator at the link: <https://carnegiescience.edu/events/lectures/re-conceptualizing-origin-life>.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

“Science of Mindfulness: What we know and don’t know”

Monday, November 16, 2015:

The Institute for Religion and Science, Hosted by Chestnut Hill College, invites everyone to an Evening Discussion with Marc Schulz, PhD, Hale Professor in Science and Mathematics, Bryn Mawr College –



Monday, November 16, 2015:

“Science of Mindfulness: What we know and don’t know”

Location: Commonwealth Chateau on the SugarLoaf Campus of Chestnut Hill College, 9230 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19118

Meditation and other mindfulness practices are hot commodities in contemporary American popular culture. Ever widening circles of people are becoming interested in the benefits that mindfulness can offer in stress-relief, well-being and physical health. This talk will highlight modern conceptualizations and implementation of mindfulness practices that have arisen in the west, and will review scientific research that examines the potential health benefits of these practices. For more information, go to www.irands.org

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ASA Posted Events

The American Scientific Affiliation is maintaining a long list of events that will be taking place within the next few months. The list begins with “Keeping the Conversation Going in Churches,” an online presentation of the concluding program in the “Faith & Science in the 21st Century” presented by Luke Powery, Associate Prof. of Homiletics at Duke University on the 15th of November and ends in June with “Transformations in Care,” a conference in Deerfield, IL for The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity.



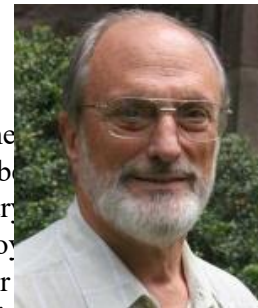
Of particular note is the recurring program presented at St Paul’s United Methodist Church in Socorro, NM. From November 19, 2015 through April 21, 2016, they will be presenting a series of four programs ranging from a personal reflection by Paul Shoemaker, staff scientist at Sandia Lab; "Evolution of a Canon" - a personal journey from being a non-believer to becoming and serving as a Lay Canon in the Episcopal Church in November to “A Finely Tuned Universe: Its Age and Beginnings” by Glenn Magelssen of Los Alamos Lab. The ASA event list can be found [here](#).

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For those in the Washington DC region, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the American Scientific Affiliation meets on Saturday, December 5, at 7:00 pm at the Cosmos Club (2121 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC). Please RSVP to both meeting and pre-meeting dinner.

Dr. Roy Clouser, Professor Emeritus of the College of New Jersey, will

speaking on the early chapters (1-7) of the Book of Genesis, upon which most of the alleged conflict between Scripture and science focuses, with the result being multiple readings of the text ranging from extreme literalism to complete allegory. Dr. Clouser seeks to establish the best reading possible by taking Genesis, understanding the text as "canon," a religious document intended to instruct by and demands of God's covenant. In doing this, Dr. Clouser will not only be warping the creation account but will also bring into question assumptions that have enjoyed acceptance in the Western church since Augustine, but which neither Jewish nor accept. Dr. Clouser will argue that the shared Jewish and Orthodox understanding makes more sense.



that promises into readings

You can learn more about Dr. Clouser here: <https://philos.tcnj.edu/faculty/roy-a-clouser>

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November 20, 2015 in Atlanta, GA
Symposium: The Science for Seminaries Project

AAAS, through its Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion program, will partner with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the International Society for Science and Religion (ISSR) to present "Science and the Next Generation of Religious Leaders: The Science for Seminaries Project" in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature. This event is designed to showcase the grant-winning seminaries currently working with AAAS and the ATS and to invite participation in the next stage of the project. What have these 10 pilot seminaries learned about how to integrate science into core seminary curricula? How can religious and theological education be enhanced by science? How can future religious leaders best be exposed to science?

The keynote event of the Symposium will be a dialogue between Jennifer Wiseman, AAAS/DoSER program director, and Philip Clayton, Ingraham Professor of Theology at Claremont School of Theology. (Note: Philip Clayton is on the WesleyNexus Advisory Board.)

For more information on this event go to <http://www.aaas.org/event/symposium-science-seminaries-project>.

For more information about the Science for Seminaries project, visit www.scienceforseminaries.org

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Science & Religion Roundtable
December 3, 2015 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Hennepin Church, Minneapolis, MN

The Science & Theology Network and Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church co-sponsor a monthly Science & Religion Roundtable that explores a wide variety of topics. If you are interested in how science and religion can be partners in the quest for truth, this book club may be for you. The Thursday evening gatherings are marked with great questions, lively discussions, occasional debates, and frequent laughter. All of the meetings are free, and newcomers are always welcome.



See more at: <http://hennepinchurch.org/event/science-religion-roundtable-5/#sthash.6BFtAiNg.dpuf>

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February 13-14, 2016:

Evolution Weekend, sponsored nationwide by the Clergy Letter Project.

WesleyNexus is pleased to announce that we once again will be hosting the premier event in Maryland, at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center in Fulton, Maryland. For the fourth year we will be live-streaming the event from our webpage. We encourage all in our network who are in the near vicinity to plan on attending and bring a large delegation from your congregation. In 2016 our focus will be on Medical Ethics: How will the New Technologies Change the Way we Think about Ourselves and Social Responsibilities? We are confirming our speakers now for this interfaith event, which will be moderated by Professor Sondra Wheeler, bioethicist and Professor of Christian Ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. More information will be on our webpage shortly, but we hope you will make your plans now to be present, and if out of the area, organize a church viewing that week-end and have your own discussion by participating in our webcast.

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Articles on the Web

Choosing Empathy: A Conversation With Jamil Zaki (Edge.org)



A recent interview posted on Edge.org tackles the phenomenon of empathy as Jamil Zaki, assistant professor of psychology at Stanford University and the director of the Stanford Social Neuroscience Lab convenes a conversation with Paul Bloom, Brooks and Suzanne Ragen Professor of Psychology, Yale University and author of the book *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil* and David DeSteno, Professor of Psychology at Northeastern University. Zaki’s lab at Stanford uses the techniques available to modern brain research such fMRI to identify what is going on neurologically when one feels empathy. As Zaki states, “When I see you experience some state—make a movement, feel pain, or exhibit some emotion—my brain generates a pattern of activity consistent with what you're experiencing, not with what I'm experiencing. It's as though my brain rehearses your experience for me so that I can understand it implicitly. We, and lots of other folks, have demonstrated that this happens, even absent any instruction to empathize and even when you distract people. This suggests that even this neural signature empathy might be occurring outside of our awareness or control”. However, his current research seems to suggest that there is also a volitional aspect to empathy, to seek to experience it and to avoid it. But as Paul Bloom and others have noted, “empathy generates kind and moral behaviors, but in fundamentally skewed ways, for instance, only towards members of your own group and not in ways that maximize well-being across the largest number of people. On this account, empathy is an inflexible emotional engine for driving moral behavior and if you want to do the right thing, you should focus on more objective principles to guide your decision-making.”

This discussion raises significant issues of what it means to be human as beings that experience and act upon the feeling of empathy. Though not discussed within the context of the article (or within Edge.org in general), religion and faith are certainly related to this evolving understanding. The article can be found [here](#).

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Defeating Anxiety by J. L. Cowles (NY Times)

In a personal reflection by J. L. Cowles, the author describes his challenge of coping with chronic anxiety which began when the stock market crashed seven years ago. Since then, he has treated his condition with pharmaceuticals, psychotherapy, and mindfulness techniques. In addition, he has used this time to reconnect to his Catholic heritage. He remains a skeptical American but found that it made him feel good. And then he makes a fascinating statement: "I was aware of the irony that I had taken control of my ability to choose to have religious feelings which, in turn, required me to relinquish control to the notion of a higher power. And a funny thing happened: I found joy in being part of the congregation, a group which I had previously not respected because I thought of them as mindless sheep being led around by a questionable liturgy. Now I was one of the flock. Relinquishing control felt wonderful". Faith becomes a part of an integrated approach including bio-chemistry, modern psychology and meditative techniques as well as belonging to a faith community.



As the theologian Diana Butler Bass has proposed, the new model of faith is to first belong, in this case by just showing up, then behaving differently by participation in faith action and then through belonging and participation, ones beliefs may change. The article can be found [here](#).

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Science and Religion in Latin America by Ignatio Silva.

Abstract

The state of the debate surrounding issues on science and religion in Latin America is mostly unknown, both to regional and extra-regional scholars. This paper presents and reviews in some detail the developments made since 2000, when the first symposium on science and religion was held in Mexico, up to date. I briefly introduce some features of Latin American academia and higher education institutions, as well as some trends on the public reception of these debates and atheist engagement with it in Mexico and Argentina. The primary conclusion of this paper is that, even though the discussion is new to Latin American academic circles, it is gaining traction and will certainly grow in the coming years.



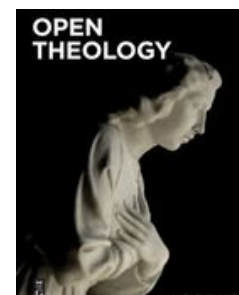
The article was posted on Academia.com [here](#) but can also be found [here on Wesnex.org](#)

Ignatio Silva is Director of "Science, Philosophy and Theology in Latin America", at the Ian Ramsey Centre, Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford.

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Open Theology

Open Theology is a new academic journal based on the open access model (no charge!). Their most recent postings are devoted to differing areas within the overall science and religion space. Below you will find the contents of this issue. (Note: it is found towards the bottom of the webpage.)



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Science and Religion: Issues and Trends, Watts, Fraser / Khalili, Shiva (Editorial)

The Secret Sympathy: New Atheism, Protestant Fundamentalism, and Evolution, Fraser, Liam Jerrold
Ernan McMullin's Thought on Science and Theology: An Appreciation, Barzaghi, Amerigo / Corcó, Josep

The Higgs Boson, The God Particle, and the Correlation Between Scientific and Religious Narratives, Stahlberg, Lorns-Olaf

Transcendent Mind, Emergent Universe in the Thought of Michael Polanyi, Smiles, Vincent M.

Science and Spirit: A Critical Examination of Amos Yong's Pneumatological Theology of Emergence, Leidenhag, Mikael / Leidenhag, Joanna

Downward Causation – The Way How Mind and Matter Interact?, Losch, Andreas

Cultural Influences on the Brain Science and Theology on Human Specificity, Colagè, Ivan / Oviedo, Lluís

God, Genetics, and Event Phenomenology, Love, Carolyn J.

Self-Evident Experience: A Challenge to the Empirical Study of Religion, Renner, Walter
Science and/or Miracle? The System Approach to Miracle Events, Świeżyński, Adam

The journal can be found at:

<http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/opth.2014.1.issue-1/issue-files/opth.2014.1.issue-1.xml>