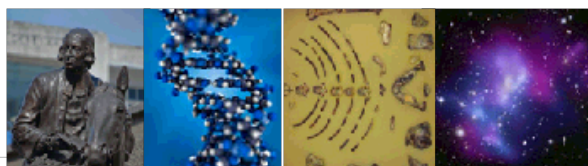


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

September 20, 2016

Both science and religion are communal activities. When done in isolation without feedback or input from others, it is too easy to get stuck on an eccentric idea that has little relevance to a broader understanding for the world. The science and religion dialogue deliberately reaches out to a broad community of participants for input and feedback. When community validation occurs, it feels good! This month we are highlighting right up front and article in [Sacred Matter: Religious Currents in Culture](#) by Scott Muir, a PhD student at Duke University who wrote a recent article called “Bonnaroo: Spirituality and Collective Effervescence.” In this article, Muir reflects on the alternative spirituality he found at the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. What he observed provides validation for what we wrote (here) two years ago in the [WesleyNexus Newsletter](#) about the experience at the 2014 Folks Festival in Colorado. At that time we referred to that feeling of impromptu community as a form of Wesleyan prevenient grace whereby a primordial human thirst for meaning and community was quenched. In “Bonnaroo: Spirituality and Collective Effervescence,” Muir reports his research on the uplifting, spiritual experience that many – perhaps most – experienced in the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival. For those attending, it provided an experiential highpoint that is analogous to what Christians (Methodists?) would call grace. “We all feed off of that positive energy” wrote one respondent. “Every person here genuinely wants those around them, strangers though they may be, to have a good time and a positive experience.” One first time attendee reported being “STUNNED by the sense of community and generosity and taking care of others here.” Many respondents report that they feel an affinity with “like-minded” attendees and that their experiences in the Scene have made them “more accepting, open and empathetic” to others and motivated them “to show everyone they’re good the way they are.” But, Muir points out, experiences like this come and go with no long-term institutional, ongoing presence. The challenge for Methodism and Wesleyans in general is to understand these movements, the criticism they present to institutional faith and develop forms of engagement that affirm the authentic sense of spirituality while providing on-going support for continual development. WesleyNexus, with our on-going mission of affirming the viability of engagement between science and religion, is working in our small way to support this type of engagement.



We remain an all-volunteer organization and need support from our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. We thank everyone who helped contribute to this effort. To continue our programs, we will need support from others. As always, all funds that we collect as donations are spent on maintaining our web presence, sponsoring programs, distributing the newsletter, and promoting activities of other organizations within the science and religion space. Beginning in September, you can now designate your contribution in whole or in part to “Discovery & Faith,” our new initiative announced last month that has a focus on developing study materials for children at the *nexus* of science and religion. **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



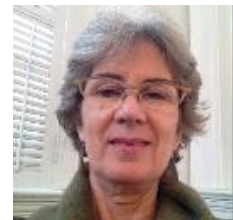
Thanks in advance for your support.

God Bless,

Rick, Maynard, and the rest of the  
WesleyNexus Board of Directors

**As part of our editing process, Angela Maves (WesleyNexus Executive Board) responded with the following reflection:**

We've all been aware at some time or other of the feeling of community engendered by attending a good play or concert, and it's a good point that these experiences are fleeting at best and can use some structure around them to perpetuate/understand/develop them in some way. I sometimes note with patients at the hospital who don't attend church, that the arts, along with science and nature are each "domains" of spirituality - church being another, and we can have good conversations no matter what our entry point. However, I also wrote in a sermon in the mid-nineties, when talking about New Age "grazing" and "spirituality", that the Spirit we learn of in church INSPIRES the arts that we enjoy when we attend a concert or whatever. In other words, these "domains of spirituality" do not have equal valency.



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**Kenneth and Linda Carder find grace amid memory loss by Sam Hodges  
Christian Century, August 30, 2016**

Bishop Kenneth Carder, 75, was bishop of the Mississippi and Tennessee conferences of the United Methodist Church and served on the faculty of Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. He recently joined the WesleyNexus Advisory board and has been a strong supporter for WesleyNexus for a number of years. He is currently interim chaplain at Bethany, a senior community near Columbia, South Carolina, his flock consisting of 40 people. As chaplain, Carder is able to minister to the unique needs of his congregation, many of whom have various levels of dementia. Carder's wife Linda is one of those with advanced dementia and his current vocation is to be with her and the other families going through this challenging time. Please read the article [here](#). Our prayers are with the Carders and all those who face the challenges of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.



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**The Real Take-home Message from "God and the Multiverse" by Jennifer Secki Shields**

I have spent nearly 16 years professionally in local church ministry and can't tell you how many times I've heard the Church talk about reaching young people. It comes up at just about every gathering of church leaders at every level of the United Methodist connection. And for good reason—Christianity in the U.S. has an image problem and young adults—churched and unchurched alike—are rejecting us in

historically unprecedented numbers. But, had you been at the National Press Club on September 12th, you wouldn't have known that from all the seemingly 20- and 30-something professionals in attendance at "God and the Multiverse," an evening conversation by The Trinity Forum, BioLogos, and RenewDC.



The concept of a multiverse is the latest development in cosmology and posits that our universe is just one of an infinite number of universes that make up the multiverse. While this may seem implausible and multiverse theories are a long way from being scientific fact—there is good physics to suggest the concept may be correct. For many Christian believers, the idea of a multiverse challenges their notions about our origins and Creator. "God and the Multiverse" featured a presentation by Deborah Haarsma, astronomer and president of BioLogos, and a theological response from Thomas Hinton, Rector of Church of the Advent, both suggesting that ideas of a multiverse need not be seen as contrary to our belief in a Creator God. The program was well-attended; in fact, "sold out" as noted by Cherie Harder (president, The Trinity Forum) in her introduction for the program. I estimated at least 250 in attendance based on my crude chair count.

After the official program ended, I watched as a long line of young adults formed to speak directly to Dr. Haarsma. I heard one young man ask a question that indicated he was grappling with what the information from Dr. Haarsma's presentation meant for the Christian teachings of his youth. She graciously met this young man and each other young adult in that line "where they were" and patiently discussed each and every question.

Without question, the evening's presentations and discussions were thoroughly engaging (I ask you, how often do you get to hear "Praise the Lord!" and "string theory" in the same message?!). But, for this observer, the real takehome message from "God and the Multiverse" was not how multiverse theories can be reconciled with our faith in a Creator God. Instead, the message was this:

If the Church really wants to reach young people, she might try looking for them at the intersection of Science and Faith. They'll be standing on the corner there, with all their questions about how to make sense of religious faith in a science world, longing to know this Living God we call Jesus.

*Jennifer Secki Shields is founder and director of Discovery & Faith, an initiative sponsored by WesleyNexus to help children and families experience the harmony between science and faith. She serves on the WesleyNexus Board of Directors. This article is also posted on the Director's Notebook blog at <http://www.discoveryandfaith.org>.*

## **Faith and Discovery**

We at Discovery & Faith want to help children see the harmony between science and biblical faith so that they can fully and faithfully follow Jesus in a culture increasingly shaped by science. We are developing resources for children, youth, families, and small groups.

Our resources aim to help children:

- appreciate scientific discovery as a revealing of God's world;
- respect the Bible as the revealing of God's Word;
- know Jesus as the revealing of God's love; and
- embrace the world around them with the love and grace of Jesus Christ.



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### WesleyNexus Participants Contribute to Uncontrolling Love Of God Discussion

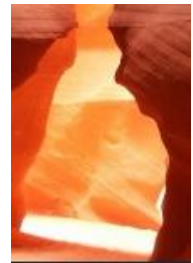
In 2015, Tom Oord published The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence. The book is quite a success and, as a follow-up, readers have been invited to contribute reflections on a published website called <https://uncontrollinglove.com/>. WesleyNexus is please to note that two of our participants, Jerry Josties and Rick Barr have written responses and had them accepted. Jerry’s September 2 posting is titled “A Universe of Moral Choice”. Rick’s article, “Uncontrolling Love: Tailor Made for All Creation” is scheduled for posting on October 14. Jerry’s article can be found [here](#).



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### What does philosophy of religion offer to the modern university?

“Philosophy of religion is home territory for a remarkably diverse variety of scholars and students. This site describes and supports those intellectual adventurers. We survey the books, the ideas, the thinkers, the societies, the conferences, the news, the jobs, and the websites dedicated to this field that we love....Here at [PhilosophyOfReligion.org](http://PhilosophyOfReligion.org), we are asking philosophers of religion to tell us what philosophy of religion can offer to the modern university, considered either as a whole or through the lens of one or more university disciplines. Our blog is full of fascinating contributions of this kind.” Given that the modern university is dominated by secular disciplines and that the sciences ground many of those disciplines, the question of where religion fits is of critical importance. This website provides a space for reflection on this topic.



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### How Morality Changes in a Foreign Language by Julie Sedivy

“Several recent studies have focused on how people think about ethics in a non-native language—as might take place, for example, among a group of delegates at the United Nations using a lingua franca to hash out a resolution. The findings suggest that when people are confronted with moral dilemmas, they do indeed respond differently when considering them in a foreign language than when using their native tongue.” This is a fascinating area of study that has implications for theological reflection. Perhaps foreign languages are critical to moral development in a way we could not have imagined a generation ago. The article can be found [here](#) as well as more in-depth, scholarly article which can be found [here](#).



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### How religious commitment affects people's reactions to medical advancements by Kelsey Dallas

The evolution weekend program sponsored by WesleyNexus in February, 2016 convened a panel of scholars to discuss technology and biomedical ethics. In a recent Pew survey, the importance of this topic to the general public was confirmed. As reported by the Deseret News, religious commitments affect how people view advancements in medical science. “Highly religious Americans were also less comfortable with brain chip implants for improved cognitive abilities and synthetic



blood for improved physical abilities” Gene editing is another area where the general public has concerns. Unaffiliated persons are substantially more comfortable with the idea of gene manipulation than persons who indicate religious affiliation. You can read the article [here](#) and find the more detailed report by the Pew Research Center [here](#).

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### **Religious Diversity May Be Making America Less Religious by Daniel Cox**

“In the United States, diversity has generally been considered an asset. It is frequently cited by public figures as both a source of national pride and a worthy ambition. It is an oft-stated goal of Fortune 500 companies, private colleges and entire sectors of the U.S. economy. And even if Americans don’t claim much diversity in their own social networks, few believe that our differences are not something to be celebrated. At one point it was even argued that America’s religious vitality hinged on its diversity — greater competition between places of worship would contribute to a more vibrant religious culture. However, new evidence suggests that religious pluralism could work in the opposite direction — undermining the vitality of America’s religious communities.” However, correlation is not cause and what may be perceived as a threat may really be an opportunity. Perhaps the challenge is to do religion differently. Science and religion dialogue may be one of those ways of doing faith differently. Read the article [here](#).



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### **ECCE HOMO ("BEHOLD HUMANITY") by by Xavier Le Pichon**

#### **The importance of weaknesses**

“As I knew from my own scientific experience, the weaknesses, the imperfections, the faults facilitate the evolution of a system. A system, which is too perfect, is also too rigid because it does not need to evolve. This is true in politics; it is true within a society, within families, within nature. A perfectly, smoothly running system, without any default is a closed system that can only evolve through a major commotion: the evolution occurs through revolutions... Contrarily to what is often assumed, the weak and imperfect parts are often those that allow the evolution to occur without any revolution. This is true for the evolution of life, which is in great part based on the occurrence of coding errors during the duplication of the genetic information. One can ask whether it is not also true of our societies. We tend to dissociate the individuals who are well adapted to our social life from those that have difficulties to follow the pace that is imposed on them by our life style. Yet a society that separates the producers from the others considered as dead weight, even as marginal or excluded individuals, is a hard society, characterized by conflicts and often by complete rejection of minorities. It is sad and pessimistic. On the contrary a society where all are well integrated has a much more adaptable structure, with a different, easier and more conciliatory mode of life. It is often happier and more optimistic.” Read the whole article [here](#).



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### **A Life of Meaning (Reason Not Required) by Robert A. Burton**

The enlightenment mentality of modernity has associated meaning in life with reason and critical reflection. Going back as far as Socrates and Aristotle, it was claimed that “an unexamined life is not worth living.” There certainly is some truth in this claim, however, as Robert Burton points out, “acquired knowledge is not the same as the felt sense that one’s life is meaningful.” Many of our actions and behaviors are triggered



by pre-conscious perceptions and feelings. The role of reason and contemplations with meaning and purpose has become more tangled with other complementary neurological activity leading to a much more complex picture of human meaning. Reason no longer stands at the top of the hill looking down at other features of being human. I suspect John Wesley would understand this whose heartwarming experience at Aldersgate was transformational. Read Burton's article [here](#).

Robert A. Burton, a former chief of neurology at the University of California, San Francisco, Medical Center at Mount Zion, is the author of "On Being Certain: Believing You Are Right Even When You're Not," and "A Skeptic's Guide to the Mind: What Neuroscience Can and Cannot Tell Us About Ourselves."

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First glimpse of a black hole being born from a star's remains By Anna Nowogrodzki  
[This is just really cool!](#)



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**How Much More Can We Learn About the Universe? By Lawrence M. Krauss**  
"Are there fundamental limits to science?"

The answer, of course, is that we don't know in advance. We won't know if there is a limit to knowledge unless we try to get past it. At the moment, we have no sign of one. We may be facing roadblocks, but those give every indication of being temporary. Some people say to me: "We will never know how the universe began." "We can never know what happened before the Big Bang." These statements demonstrate a remarkable conceit, by suggesting we can know in advance the locus of all those things that we cannot know. This is not only unsubstantiated, but the history of science so far has demonstrated no such limits." So says Lawrence Krauss, theoretical physicist and cosmologist, the director of the Origins Project and the foundation professor in the School of Earth and Space Exploration at Arizona State University. But perhaps there is already a qualitative space which cannot be addressed adequately by science, what Stephen J. Gould was referring to when he used the term non-overlapping magisterium? If so, then the answer has already been given. Krauss may be looking under the wrong lamp-post with the wrong light. Read the article [here](#).



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**Upcoming Events**  
**Central PA Forum**

WHAT: "The Big Bang, Stephen Hawking, and God" by Dr. Henry ("Fritz") Schaefer  
WHEN: Friday, October 7 at 7:00pm  
WHERE: Hostetter Chapel, Messiah College, One College Ave, Mechanicsburg PA 17055

DETAILS: We are hosting one of the greatest chemists in the world, Henry ("Fritz") Schaefer. Dr. Schaefer is Graham Perdue Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Center for Computational Quantum Chemistry at the University of Georgia. He is also a devout Christian who is not shy about his faith. That combination is uncommon, so this is an uncommon opportunity to hear and meet an important Christian scientist.

Dr. Schaefer has given this talk dozens of times on university campuses all over the world. His book, "Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?" (2003) has been a best seller on Amazon. We could have a large crowd, so I advise early arrival to ensure a good seat.

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**The Forum reading group** will meet twice this fall on the following schedule and read portions of Dr. Schaefer's book in anticipation of his talk. The two meetings are in different locations and at different times, so please note the information carefully.

WHAT: "Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?" (Introduction, Chapters 2-3, Chapter 10)

WHEN: Thursday, September 8 from 7:00 to 8:30pm

WHERE: Kline Hall 108, Messiah College, One College Ave, Mechanicsburg PA 17055

DETAILS: Introduction, Chapter 2 ("Scientists and Their Gods"), Chapter 3 ("The Nondebate with Steven Weinberg"), Chapter 9 ("From Berkeley Professor to Christian"), and Chapter 10 ("The Way of Discovery"). This material is more personal in nature and will provide background for his visit on October 7.

WHAT: "Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?" (Chapters 4-5, Chapter 7)

WHEN: Thursday, October 6 from 6:00 to 8:00pm

WHERE: Larson Union 237, Messiah College, One College Ave, Mechanicsburg PA 17055

DETAILS: Chapter 4 ("The Big Bang, Stephen Hawking, and God"), Chapter 5 ("Climbing Mount Improbable: Evolutionary Science or Wishful Thinking?"), and Chapter 7 ("C. S. Lewis on Science and Scientism"). This material is more academic and closely related to the talk he will give the next evening.

Good news: Dr. Schaefer will join us for dinner and conversation! The location is a lovely conference room one floor above the Union Café, where you can buy your own meal and bring it upstairs. If you plan to attend this dinner meeting, please notify Ted Davis (tdavis@messiah.edu) at least 48 hours in advance. Seating is limited and available on a first-come basis.

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**Institute for Religion and Science @ Chestnut Hill College**

During 2016-2017, the Institute will concentrate its activities on topics relating to the brain such as neuroscience, neurotheology, neuropsychology, artificial intelligence, and transhumanism.

Fall Lectures include:

Thursday, September 22, 2016 "Do Humans Have Minds? Neuroscientific and Biblical Issues"

Nancey Murphy, PhD

Senior Professor of Christian Philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena CA

Wednesday, September 21, 2016 at 4:30 pm, Dr. Nancey Murphy will also speak at Villanova University "Does Neuroscience Teach that we Have No Souls?"

Monday, October 24, 2016 "Outsourcing Memory: Are our Minds Compatible with Computers? Can we upload our memory to a computer?"

Noreen Herzfeld, PhD

Professor of Computer Science, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN

All lectures will be held at the Commonwealth Chateau on the SugarLoaf Campus of Chestnut Hill College.



<http://irands.org/>



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Wesleyan Theological Society: Call for Papers  
Due October 1, 2016

To submit go to <http://www.wtsweb.org/>

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**Mountains and Sacred Landscapes**

An International Conference Sponsored by: International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture India China Institute, The New School Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, American University International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development  
April 20 – 23, 2017  
The New School, New York City  
Extended Proposal Submission Deadline: October 10, 2016 5pm EST  
For more information: <https://form.jotform.com/mssl2017/sacred-mountains2017>

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**Wilfred Sellers on Science and Subjective Experience**

Philip Clayton, in *Adventures of the Spirit* (p.84), quoted from the philosopher Wilfred Sellers 1971 book *Science, Perception and Reality* the following insightful passage:

“The conceptual framework of persons is not something that needs to be reconciled with the scientific image, but rather something to be joined to it. Thus to complete the scientific image we need to enrich it not with more ways of saying what is the case, but with the language of community and individual intentions, so that by construing the actions we intend to do and the circumstances in which we intend them in scientific terms, we directly relate the world as conceived by scientific theory to our purposes, and make it our world.”





