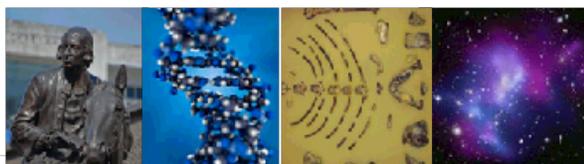


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

July 25, 2017

In Bruce Epperly's book Praying with Process Theology: Personal Practices for Personal and Planetary Healing, he quotes Patricia Adams Farmer who asserts that

a beautiful soul is a large soul, one that can overcome the smallness and pettiness of our human condition. A really fat soul can welcome diverse people, ideas, and ways of being in the world without feeling threatened. A fat soul experiences the intensity of life in its fullness, even the painful side of life and knows there is something still bigger. (Epperly, p.80)

Epperly goes on to describe a fat soul as one whose spiritual practices seek truth in "unexpected places" such as a child at play, a saffron robed monk, religious critics and elderly adults. A fat soul recognizes that the earth is full of God's glory.



We at WesleyNexus hope that we can contribute to the development of fat souls. By bringing together ideas many view as conflicting and setting them side-by-side for reflection, critique and interpretation, new insights can be developed. We hope that something in this newsletter will give you pause and invite you to read and reflect. In our world of extreme specialization it is rare that one is invited to be an amateur explorer. Science and religion is kind of like that, an invitation to do some informed exploring and make some insightful connections across conceptual boundaries, for that is what is necessary to make a fat soul.

In her gracious book on the American political right, sociologist Arlie Hochschild supplements this understanding of a fat soul (our term, not her's) by saying "the English language doesn't give us many words to describe the feeling of reaching out to someone from another world, and of **having that interest welcomed**. Something of its own kind, mutual is created. What a gift. Gratitude, awe, appreciation: for me, all those words apply and I don't know which to use. But I think we need a special word, and should hold a place of honor for it, so as to restore what might be a missing key on the English-speaking world's cultural piano. Our polarization, and the increasing reality that we simply don't know each other, makes it too easy to settle for dislike and contempt" (Strangers in Their Own Land, p XI). Fat souls are able to reach out to someone who's world differs from their world and see a sacred presence. This is the goal of science and religion as well, to bridge the gaps and encounter new ideas that generate spiritual heft.

Interestingly enough, it seems that our brains synchronize with each other during a conversation. In a recent report in Science Daily, this conclusion emerges from a recent study: "*The rhythms of brainwaves between two people taking part in a conversation begin to match each other, concludes a new study. According to scientists, this "interbrain synchrony" may be a key factor in understanding language and interpersonal communication.*" The team, led by Alejandro Pérez, Manuel Carreiras and Jon Andoni Duñabeitia, has confirmed this by recording cerebral electrical activity - that the neuronal activity of two people involved in an act of communication "synchronize" in order to allow for a "connection" between both subjects. "It involves interbrain communion that goes beyond language itself and may constitute a key factor in interpersonal relations and the understanding of language," Jon Andoni Duñabeitia explains.

Thus, the rhythms of the brainwaves corresponding to the speaker and the listener adjust according to the physical properties of the sound of the verbal messages expressed in a conversation. This creates a connection between the two brains, which begin to work together towards a common goal: communication. "The brains of the two people are brought together thanks to language, and communication creates links between people that go far beyond what we can perceive from the outside," added the researcher from the Basque research centre. "We can find out if two people are having a conversation solely by analyzing their brain waves." The full report can be found [here](#):

We continue to appreciate the collaborating groups and sponsors that helped us underwrite expenses for our February live-streamed event, especially The Clergy Letter Project and the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science, but also the several churches and individuals who have sent donations since January 1. Over the summer, we will continue to receive funds for our programs this coming fall and spring, so if you can manage a contribution, large or small, it will help us tremendously. WesleyNexus is a 501(c)(3) charitable, educational organization, and we will acknowledge all gifts from individuals for tax reporting purposes.

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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The 63rd Annual international Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS)

About 150 persons of all ages and nationalities gathered at the boat dock in Portsmouth, NH on Saturday afternoon June 24th for the 50 minute crossing to Star Island for the 63rd Annual IRAS conference, the theme for 2017 being "The Wicked Problem of Climate Change: What is it Doing to Us and for Us?" IRAS was born in 1954 in part out of a concern for the survival of humanity in a nuclear proliferation era. Now the threat – still global and still acute – is much more of a long-term threat, but no less serious. The problem is a "wicked" one because of the overlapping causes and consequences, full of ambiguity and uncertainty, so there will not be any single solution. The issues being discussed at this conference are transnational and multi-generational – so the question before us was: how can we use this monumental threat as an opportunity for societal and spiritual transformation? Click [here](#) to read the complete article.

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ASA Annual Conference, July 28-31, Golden, Colorado

Although the Conference is almost upon us, a number of our colleagues in the midwest might want to make a last-minute connection and attend the 2017 Annual Meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation, to be held at the Colorado



School of Mines. Contact Sharon Carlson at 978-887-8833 or sharon@asa3.org for registration. ASA is an 85 year old organization that brings scientists and Christian believers together in a constructive dialogue. Featured speakers this year include Katharine Hayhoe, Associate Professor, Texas Tech and Director of the Climate Change Science Center; Ian Hutchinson, Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at MIT Plasma Science and Fusion Center; James Peterson, Schumann Professor of Ethics and Director, Benne Center of Religion and Society, Roanoke College, VA; Annabelle Pratt, Principal Engineer (Electrical), National Renewable Energy Laboratory; and the final banquet speaker is Philip Yancey, Internationally known evangelical author and editor-at-large of *Christianity Today*. In our next newsletter, we will have a report from this Conference.

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24 Hours of Uncontrolling Love Facebook Live Event August 24 and 25

Last year, dozens of persons from various backgrounds were invited to write a response to Tom Oord's most recent book **The Uncontrolling Love of God**. These responses were posted online (<https://uncontrollinglove.com/>) with opportunities for comments from people across the world. This fall, the responses will be published in book form. To promote the book, the publisher has scheduled an exciting and novel idea. They will be conducting an around-the-clock Facebook Live Event for a full 24 hour period. The 30-minute segments will consist of essay contributors discussing and answering questions about their essay and Oord's book. Rick Barr, one of the founders of WesleyNexus and our current secretary will be one of the participants.



There are 37 different contributors for this first ever "**24 Hours of Uncontrolling Love**" Facebook Live Event. It will begin at 7PM (EST) on August 24th and run through 7PM (EST) August 25th. You can view the event by going to <https://www.facebook.com/uncontrollinglove/> during the scheduled times.

In addition, there are 6 in-person events to celebrate the release of Uncontrolling Love: Essays Exploring the Love of God.

- Sept. 29-30 Redondo Beach, California
- Oct. 7-8 - Junction City, Kansas
- Oct. 14-15 - Nashville, Tennessee
- Nov. 4-5 - Portland, Oregon
- Nov. 11-12 Boston, Massachusetts
- Dec. 2-3 - Cleveland, Ohio

The essays can be found online [here](#).

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God and Human Suffering: Conversations on 21st Century Genetics and Our Shared Future October 6, 2017 (from Covalance, The Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, and Technology) Episcopal Conference Center of Utah, 75 South 200 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84111 (more details to come)

This faith and science workshop on human germ-line editing is sponsored by the University of Utah: Department of Pediatrics, Division of Medical Genetics and UCEER Center for Excellence in Ethical, Legal and Social Implications); the Rocky

Mountain Synod and its Utah Conference of the ELCA, Mount Tabor Lutheran Church of Salt Lake; and the Episcopal Diocese of Utah. Questions event leaders will be pondering include: What is our shared mission as people of science, ethics, and faith? What is the role of recent dialogue regarding germ-line editing of human em development of regulations that both promote the alleviation of suffering, and protect t of our planet?



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<http://luthscitech.org/event/god-human-suffering-conversations-21st-century-genetics-shared-future/>

You can also read the Covalence journal [here](#).

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How a Guy From a Montana Trailer Park Overturned 150 Years of Biology by Ed Young

This July, the **Atlantic Monthly** posted a fascinating article about scientific discovery. Though it focuses on the lowly lichen, that ubiquitous being entity that is a composite of two organism, fungi and algae, it is a testament to the creativity found in nature and the difficulty science has in understanding that creativity. It is also a personal story of **Toby Spribille**, a biologist who is based in the University of Montana who’s ground-breaking research has taken him across America and Europe. He describes his research as focusing “on the evolution of the lichen symbiosis. Lichens were one of the earliest described symbioses and remain one of the most poorly understood. In essence, they are self-assembling and self-replicating microbe communities: none of the components of the lichen symbiosis, on their own, form anything that resembles the lichen. Lichens arose multiple times in evolution from various lineages of ascomycete and basidiomycete fungi, green algae and cyanobacteria. Some look deceptively similar but assemble themselves from completely different symbionts. I integrate a deep familiarity with the natural history of my system, informed by field work across North America and Eurasia, with application of genomics and phylogenetic comparative methods for identifying the mechanisms that drive the evolution of this fascinating symbiosis.” It is a fascinating read which can be found [here](#).



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THE EVANGELICAL LIBERALISM OF GEORGIA HARKNESS by Lee M.

For quite some time, the notion that one can be a faithful Christian and a liberal has been viewed by many, both within the church and outside the church, as an oxymoron. Many in The United Methodist Church and other Wesleyan offspring view themselves as evangelical and not liberal. Liberal seems to be term of derision and no compliment. However, it was not long ago that Methodism strongly affirmed liberalism but with an evangelical twist. Georgia Harkness, a prominent theologian and philosopher proposed a synoptic approach to theological truth which she termed evangelical liberalism. For Harness “All sources of knowledge—authority, experience, science, logic, and pragmatism should inform our thinking about God. She rejected any exclusive reliance on churchly authority, biblical proof-texting, spiritual experience, or natural reason as the basis for theological truth. Instead, she argued that all of these sources have value, but only as sifted through what she called “the mind of Christ.”(See THE EVANGELICAL LIBERALISM OF GEORGIA HARKNESS [here](#))



“I am still a liberal, unrepentant and unashamed.”

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Harvard’s Conference on “Finding Our Way Forward”

Though this conference is now nearly ten years in the past, the themes of the conference are certainly timely. Finding a Way Forward seems eerily similar to The Commission on a Way Forward as set forth by the 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church to search for a way to bridge the gulf between various factions within the church. During this conference, Marcus Borg, Diana Butler Bass and Brian McLaren address the challenges of being the church in this time of great friction. Though their discussion is a decade old, many of their insights remain relevant.



Rev. Bug Tillinghast has posted a wonderful summary of the program as well as the actual videos which are shown below. While not directly related to science and religion dialogue, the insights from all three of these scholars are worthy of consideration.

<https://dinnerchurchblog.wordpress.com/>

Finding Our Way Forward”

Panel members: Marcus Borg, Brian McLaren, Diana Butler Bass

Part 1 Opening Panel with all three 1:29:52

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nuXd11-Wa8

Part 2 Brian McLaren and Diana Butler Bass 2:00:42

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSKO4DhTRc0>

Part 3 Marcus Borg 56:07

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UsXavOeLbQ>

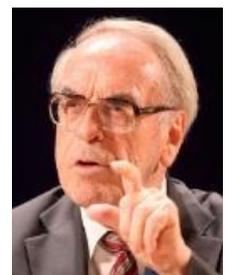
Part 4 with all three 1:40:03

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIQsbnJeLFQ>

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Jurgen Moltmann on Evolution as God's Continuous Creation by Wyatt Houtz

Jurgen Moltmann is one of the most influential theologians of the last 50 years. His impact is present across the theological spectrum. Wyatt Houtz’s engages Moltmann from an evangelical perspective, acknowledging that Moltmann’s theology is not conventional from that perspective but inviting his readers to give him a chance. Houtz writes that “Moltmann’s work can help us work through a common Christian objection to evolution: If evolution is a continuous process, past and present, how can we reconcile it with the biblical message that God seemingly ceased creating at the end of Genesis 1?” In the article, he presents an important insight from Moltmann.



Traditionally Christianity has focused on “original creation” by looking backwards in time to the beginning of it all. “This tradition has neglected God's creative activity throughout history—Continuous Creation—and hasn't recognized the newness of the New Creation. Overemphasizing the Original Creation has perpetuated a retrograde theology of creation that teaches that God's historical creative activity ceased on the seventh day, and we must preserve what remains of that golden age of the Original Creation. Instead, Moltmann proposes that the "historical activity of God stands between initial creation and new creation," because "at heart every preserving activity is innovatory, and every innovating activity is preserving."

<http://biologos.org/blogs/guest/jurgen-moltmann-on-evolution-as-gods-continuous-creation>

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Discovery & Faith Update

Discovery & Faith was launched by WesleyNexus less than a year ago to provide resources that help Christian parents, educators, and churches solve the “conflict problem”:

The perception of conflict between science and biblical faith 1) is a stumbling block in the faith formation of our children and 2) contributes to the dropout problem seen in young Christians ages 18-29.

We are developing resources that will help children experience the harmony between science and biblical faith beginning in early child—emphasis on early—before the perception of conflict sets in.

We’d love to hear from you! Have a story to share? Feedback on our website or sample lesson? An idea or suggestion? Let us know at **connect@discoveryandfaith.org**.

* * * * *

Just in!

Here is a last minute contribution from Rev. Dana Hendershot. She gave this sermon as part of the ecumenical service at the Ecumenical Roundtable on Science, Technology and the Church last April. It was a wonderful way to end a science and faith fellowship weekend. It can be found [here](#).

