

Metanexus: The Very Idea

THE LOCAL SOCIETIES OF THE METANEXUS GLOBAL NETWORK EXEMPLIFY METANEXUS

Erica Vinskie

Metanexus (with a capital 'M') is an institution; *metanexus* (with a small 'm') is an idea. It gives us a dream to be realized and it's catching on.

—Davis George,
The Aloysian Explore and Worship Forum, Jabalpur, India

"I heard somewhere recently that dialogue is not each side with the other, but both sides with the middle," relates Cassandra Vieten of the Bay Area Science and Spirit Dialogues in Petaluma, CA.

The "middle" in the science and religion dialogue is where lie the foundational questions that shape the present and future of our culture and planet and so concern us all.

"The future hinges on the answers that we give to the questions in science and religion," asserts Tom Oord of the Treasure Valley Science-Religion Institute, Nampa, ID, echoing the sentiment of one of his most admired philosophers, Alfred North Whitehead.

"Science can bring diverse elements together. It gives us cohesion. But," warns Mathew Chandrankunnel of the Bangalore Forum on Science and Religion, Bangalore, India, "science has its limits."

Says Ven. Soorakkulame Pamaratana of the Society for the Integration of Science and Human Values in Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, "The benefits of science can only be had when combined with human values."

These values are those that are most often proffered, promoted, protected, and preserved by our religious traditions. But it's not the individual religions that are necessarily the focus, nor their differences. Rather, "we're more interested in the whole concept of being religious, allowing for religiosity at all, and how does being religious influence the way in which we take responsibility for shaping the culture of tomorrow. That's one of our questions," explains Eamonn Conway, coordinator of the Sophia Europa working group on Culture, Technology & Religion in Society, Limerick, Ireland.

He adds, "I'm a theologian, but I've come to realize the impoverishment of doing theology apart from a genuine, what I would call, 'listening mode' to these other disciplines. We need to encourage more critical humility before science, economics, and law... All good dialogue begins with listening."

But why, above all, does this dialogue matter? "It matters because human beings matter," says Roger Kasprick of the LSI group Science and Religion: Faculty, Students and Benedictines in Conversation at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN. "We've come up with the notion that science and religion are in conflict and that's been detrimental, I think, to both science and religion. But even if it weren't, it's been detrimental to human beings."

At the fulcrum of Metanexus the institute is metanexus the idea. Metanexus is about discovering and fostering a connection that transcends divisions. At the same time, metanexus respects and preserves the integrity of distinct disciplines, traditions, cultures, and lives.

At Metanexus Institute's seventh annual conference, *Continuity + Change: Perspectives on Science and Religion*, June 3-7, metanexus the very idea was made manifest. Nearly 500 participants from 35+ countries converged on Philadelphia for a robust interdisciplinary, inter-religious, international, and interpersonal exchange. Among these were over 200 representatives from the Local Societies Initiative, a growing network of dynamic interdisciplinary dialogue groups working in universities and communities throughout the world.

Top to bottom: David Peat; Sister Alice Thomas; Davis George (left); Eamonn Conway (right); Javier Leach.

The 2007 conference theme is *Transdisciplinarity and the Unity of Knowledge: Beyond the "Science and Religion Dialogue"*

June 2-6, 2007, Philadelphia

Call for papers abstract deadline: December 15, 2006

www.metanexus.net/conference2007

All conference photos were taken by Aurora Imaging Company.

Ven. Kunga Sangbo Rinpoche



Left to right: James Salmon, Margaret Poloma and Peter Dodson; Sriya Iyer; Farzad Mahootiam (top); Inmaculada Ramos-Lerate (bottom); Mathew Chandrankunnel; Ursula Goodenough and William Grassie; Ian Barbour.

Conway remarks, "One of the greatest threats [that humans face] is the normalization of shallowness... We hope to find ways of facilitating people in living at a level beyond the superficial and thereby, in that space, choose from the great gifts that modern society and globalization have put at our disposal. Not just for our own personal benefit, but for the benefit of all because we'll be present to all."

How do we accomplish this? "It's a process," explains Deuseddit Nkurunziza of the African Centre of Religion and Science in Kampala, Uganda. "The first [step] is learning from each other."

And it's a process well worth undertaking. As David Peat of the Pari Dialogues on Religion and Science, Pari, Italy, explains, "You look as a little kid through a kaleidoscope, and you just move it ever so slightly and suddenly the whole picture shifts. It isn't disorder you see, but a new sort of order. It requires only a tiny butterfly effect to change the order and see the world in a different way."

"If we just shifted that kaleidoscope a little bit now," adds Margaret Yee of Sophia Europa Oxford, UK, "it would open up the whole world for critical thought...and it would be a quantum leap because the smallest move will come to great change."

That great change is the metanexus that Metanexus Institute, in cooperation with its partners in the global network, can bring about. It's catching on.

For links to more information about and papers from both this year's conference and those of past years, please go to

www.metanexus.net.



Left to right: Anne Foerst; Fernando Di Mieri and Lodovico Galleni; Margaret Yee, Roger Kasprick

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*Eamonn Conway,
coordinator of the Sophia Europa
working group on Culture,
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Limerick, Ireland*

16 Local Societies Win \$160,000 in Supplemental Grants

On June 6, 2006, at the closing banquet of the conference, grant prizes of \$10,000 each were awarded to 16 outstanding Local Societies. The 2006 LSI Grant Prizes, supplemental to the basic program grants every society is awarded, were presented by Eric Weislogel, Ph.D., Director of the Local Societies Initiative, accompanied by John M. Templeton, Jr., M.D., President of the John Templeton Foundation. The winning societies were selected in recognition of organizational excellence, creative programming for their communities, and significant contributions to the larger science and religion movement. The \$10,000 LSI Supplemental Grants were awarded to:

Departimento di Filosofia, Università degli Studi di Trieste	Trieste, Italy
Evangelische Akademie Arnoldshain	Schmitten, Germany
Fundación Xavier Zubiri	Madrid, Spain
GeoChris Foundation	Marikina City, Philippines
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	Wuhan, China
Ian Ramsey Centre, Theology Faculty	University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
Institut de Teologia Fonamental	Barcelona, Spain
Pari Center for New Learning	Pari, Italy
St. Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy	St. Petersburg, Russia
Studio Filosofico Interprovinciale "San Tommaso d'Aquino"	Napoli, Italy
The Thousand Stars Foundation	Nonthaburi, Thailand
Universidad Pontificia Comillas Madrid	Madrid, Spain
Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla	Puebla, Mexico
Università Degli Studi di Perugia	Università di Pisa, Perugia, Italy
University of Uludag	Bursa, Turkey
Yasa Luhur Foundation	Salatiga, Indonesia

For more information about the LSI program, please go to
www.metanexus.net/lsi.



Left to right: Radu Constantinescu and Bishop Irineu Popa; Deuseddit Nkurunziza (top), Ven. Soorakkulame Pamaratana (bottom), Eric Weislogel.