

May 7th - 10th, 2026	Detailed Program
	American Academy of Religion, Eastern International Region (AAR-EIR) Annual Conference & McGill's Religious Studies Graduate Society (RSGS) Annual Conference

May 7th, 9:00 AM	Opening Remarks (Birks 111)
	Adam Smith Doctoral Candidate, School of Religious Studies President, RSGS Conference Committee McGill University <u>Opening Remarks</u>

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 7th, 9:15 AM	Science and Religion as a Cooperative Dialogue	Cosmology and the Sciences	EIR Business Meeting
	Alex Duceppe-Lenoir McGill School of Religious Studies Discussant	Francesco Bossoletti McGill School of Religious Studies Discussant	Aaron Ricker McGill University Chair
	Hillary Kaeil McGill School of Religious Studies <u>On science and spirit: lessons from the Redpath museum</u> Raised a Scottish Presbyterian, John William Dawson was a life-long defender of Protestant Christianity. He was also a prominent geologist, former principal of McGill University, and founder of the Redpath Natural History Museum. Dawson's career merged science and religion in ways that show the fluidity of intellectual categories that often seem fixed or incongruous today. He insisted that cataloguing the natural world scientifically should bolster Christian faith: it was proof of God's wondrous design. Among the Christian ideas that animated Dawson's thought was the Great Chain of Being, where all life was understood in a sequence from the lowest form to God the Creator at its peak. The Redpath Museum is unique in Canada because it materially represents this chain, even today: a visitor enters the bottom floor that houses the "lowest" life such as invertebrate fossils, moves to the second floor with its higher orders of mammals, and finally reaches the third floor with human artifacts. The racist, colonial knowledge that originally structured it viewed non-European people as animal enough to be included in a natural history museum, yet human enough to be displayed on the highest floor closest to God. This talk discusses these religious dimensions of the Redpath Museum on McGill campus, focusing on an art exhibit staged by a team of McGill graduate students in January 2026. Through an interactive presentation, it discusses the exhibit and its goals, as well as the pedagogical materials that resulted.	Asya Ciftci McGill University <u>From Cosmogony to Cosmology — and Back Again</u> Modern cosmology is often presented as the scientific replacement for mythic and religious accounts of the world's origin. The usual story describes a transition from cosmogony—symbolic or theological creation narratives—to cosmology—a mathematical and empirically constrained physical theory. This paper challenges that picture. I argue that early-universe cosmology does not remove cosmogonic structure. Ancient cosmogonies did more than describe a temporal beginning. They offered conceptual tools for thinking about totality, order, emergence, and intelligibility. Traditions in Greek, Near Eastern, and medieval thought asked why a world exists at all, how structure emerges from undifferentiated states, and what determines the laws governing reality. Modern cosmology, despite its mathematical form, still faces these same questions. Drawing on Big Bang cosmology, inflationary theory, and debates about initial conditions, I show that physics cannot avoid questions that are neither straightforwardly empirical nor purely theological: the beginning of time, the origin of physical laws, and the justification of cosmological boundary conditions. In practice, cosmologists rely on structural assumptions—simplicity, typicality, and naturalness—that function similarly to earlier metaphysical or cosmogonic principles. The claim is not that cosmology depends on religion. Rather, cosmology has taken over a conceptual role once played by cosmogony: it seeks to make the universe as a whole intelligible. Recognizing this continuity helps move beyond the simple conflict model between science and religion and instead frames both as historically distinct responses to a shared problem—the intelligibility of cosmic origins.	<u>EIR Business Meeting</u> The AAR-EIR Business meeting, organized by the EIR Executive Committee. General Business regarding the EIR is to be discussed. AAR members may assist at the meeting.
	Katie Khatereh Taher McGill University <u>Dawson's Desk, or the Soul of Science</u> John William Dawson (1820–1899), former principal of McGill University, was a prominent geologist, president of Montreal's Natural History Society, and founder of the Redpath Museum. He was also a lifelong advocate of Protestant Christianity. As evolutionary theories gained prominence, Dawson defended the Biblical account of creation. These convictions shaped his vision for the Redpath Museum. By placing human artifacts alongside animal fossils from different eras, he challenged evolutionary narratives of successive stages. The display of objects exclusively from non-monotheistic cultures marked them as distinct from Christianity. Above all, Dawson understood carefully ordered natural collections as evidence of God's intentional and immutable creative power. Inspired by this entanglement of religion and science, a McGill team—including the two presenters—created Dawson's Desk, an art installation at the Redpath Museum (January–February 2026). Grounded in archival research, the piece invites visitors into Dawson's mind. As a scientist, he made innovative discoveries while insisting on the Bible's unchanging truth. Dawson's Desk reinterprets sculptor Alexander Calder's distinction between "mobiles" and "stables." The wooden desk, inscribed with Biblical verses, represents scriptural stability, while suspended globes evoke ideas in motion: catalogued species, emerging interpretations of scripture, and Darwinian science. The installation also features three paintings that replicate Dawson's drawing of Pictou Bay, bringing new life to the scenes he observed. This interactive presentation discusses the religious dimensions of the Redpath Museum, the installation, and its goals. Audience members can later visit the Redpath and view aspects of the Dawson's Desk piece in the Birks Building.	Maura Behrenfeld University of Portland <u>A Cosmological Vision of Creation</u> The study of our universe and the role of human beings within this universe is scientifically known as cosmology. When considering the relationship between science and religion, cosmology can be an important means for convergence since cosmology has meaning both in the world of science and in the world of religion. One of the only real ways people can move forward into greater wholeness is to realize they need a deeper, more expansive vision — in other words, a comprehensive cosmology. Through the unrelenting research and writing efforts of paleontologist and theologian Teilhard de Chardin, he reveals that it is through matter that a more inclusive, more comprehensive connection takes place. Such connection opens to critical insight concerning the relationship between humanity and the universe. Physicist Brian Swimme adds further clarification to Chardin's claims stating: "The insight of our religion that we're here for love would be deepened by our understanding of science. The way in which our solar system is rooted in generosity is an image of what it means to be human." If we are really going to grasp who we are, we need to establish connection with our cosmological dimension. What is most important at this stage in human development is to come to know and actuate the "how" of such comprehensive, cosmological connection rather than focus on the "what."	
	Olivier Quinta Université de Montréal	Willis Monroe University of New Brunswick	

	<u>When History Meets Providence: Giambattista Vico's Scienza nuova</u> After more than three centuries, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) remains the best known and yet the most enigmatic philosopher of eighteenth-century Naples. In the first half of the century, at a time when Neapolitan intellectual circles were increasingly embracing Newtonian experimentalism—which posited experimentation and observation as essential means of producing knowledge—the thinker distanced himself from the natural sciences, turning instead toward what we now call the “human sciences”. In his Scienza nuova (1744), a work that truly represents the culmination of his thought, the Neapolitan examines the history of the civil world, seeking to propose a “new science” that would explain the common development of all non-Jewish nations across the ages. At first glance, the choice of pagan history may appear curious for a deeply Christian scholar; yet Christianity is by no means excluded from this philosophical endeavor. Whereas many learned figures of his time presented science and religion as two irreconcilable poles, Vico places God—through divine Providence—at the very foundation of his reflection, leading us to a series of questions that will be the focus of this presentation: (1) How does the Christian religion integrate into the Neapolitan's science? (2) What does Vico truly mean by divine Providence? (3) What role does it play in his science (4) How does the philosopher characterize pagan beliefs in relation to Christianity?	<u>Blending Metaphors in Mesopotamian Scholarship: Identifying Patterns of Thought Across Genres of Knowledge</u> Emic genres of knowledge in Mesopotamia cannot be mapped easily onto modern genres of knowledge and resist attempts at categorization both in their content and the identities of their authors. It is clear that Mesopotamian scribes writing in cuneiform had a vastly different idea of how knowledge was produced and organized than what we imagine today. A single cuneiform scribe might write a highly technical procedure for planetary calculation one day and the next copy down a handbook of hymns to Nabû the god of writing. Scholars have long tried to find lines of division that might disambiguate systems of thought to aid in comparative approaches, especially those within the history of the exact sciences. But the textual record resists such attempts and continually presents evidence of cross-pollination, shared authorship, and deep intertextuality. This paper will look at the language of metaphor in texts commonly thought to be “scientific” and those categorized as “religious”. How do scribes use metaphor to explain the underlying systems of thought, what similarities can we find in the mental models of cuneiform scribes when they describe their world? In particular, the use of conceptual blending theory will allow this analysis to move beyond the binary pairs of conceptual metaphor theory to more thoroughly examine the nature of cuneiform scholarly imagination.	
--	---	--	--

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 7th, 11 AM	Gender and Feminist Studies	Spiritualité et Religion	Special Session with Dr. Adam Hincks and Dr. Gerard Ryan Science, Faith, and Inscaping
	Megan Peck Concordia University Discussant	Genevieve Lutsch McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Ana de Souza McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant
	Marzia Altano Université de Montréal <u>An anthropological reading of the body in religious contexts: the shamanic female leaders of Japan</u> This paper examines the symbolic values we attribute to the human body and how the traditional gender binaries have been deconstructed in the work and words of Deguchi Nao, founder of Ōmotokiyō, a Japanese new religious movement established at the end of the nineteenth century. Drawing upon theories of sociologists, anthropologists, and gender theorists, I apply several approaches to a close reading of how the body was used, defined, and reinterpreted in the Japanese religious context. This study reimagines the physical human body not as an immutable form but as a floating signifier, the recipient of dynamic, religiously powerful symbolic content, both positive and negative. With particular emphasis on the female body, I show how the human body functions as a neutral, pliable element constructed by social norms and symbols, and I argue for the impossibility of providing a clear ontological definition of this object/subject. This paper offers a historical excursus on how the human body has been treated and interpreted, using Buddhist ascetics, shamanic figures, and charismatic founders as examples.	Lucas F. M. Coque Université de Montréal <u>Revisiting William James' epistemology as cultural history for the study of Religion and Spirituality</u> The Gifford Lectures of 1901 and 1902 by the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910), <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i>, is considered a founding text of the modern study of religion. It had a direct influence in the development of the Phenomenology of Religion known by many through the works of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and Mircea Eliade (1901-1986). In the last three decades, many in Religious Studies have distanced themselves from the assumptions of Phenomenology of Religion, particularly the sui generis account of religion, thanks to a sharper awareness of human diversity and the advances of Critical Religion. This distancing reverberates the tense relationship between a social scientific approach in Religious Studies and the inheritance of Theology in Western Universities. Simultaneously, the sui generis position has been recognized as a major influence in the genealogy of the contemporary notion of spirituality used in clinical care, which continues to expand in influence while also encountering a backlash for its lack of empirically based theories. I propose to revisit William James' Varieties and demonstrate how he already faced, quite consciously, similar concerns to our own: How to treat “religion” (or spirituality) both scientifically and respectfully? The answer anticipated his later work on Pragmatism (1907) and on a Pluralistic Universe (1909). Through a hermeneutic approach inspired by the work of psychologist and cultural historian Philip Cushman (1945-2022), I demonstrate how Varieties allows us to better understand the baggage behind current debates over the definitions of religion and spirituality.	Adam D. Hincks University of Toronto <u>Words of Nature, Word of God: Scientific Method and the Theology of Creation</u> The practice of the natural sciences rests on a commitment to the idea that the world is intelligible, a feature of creation that is considered a trace of the Divine in Abrahamic theologies: the ‘words’ of nature are seen as reflexions of the Word of God. I will investigate this connexion between science and faith in light of the thought of Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), who famously used mathematical and scientific examples for illustrating the operations of human understanding, including identifying certain ‘canons of empirical method’, as part of his larger goal of proposing methods proper to theology. Lonergan thought that the generation of an ‘inner word’ of understanding by human cognition was the unifying factor of different ways of knowing—the scientific, the sociological, the ethical, the theological, and so on. I will explore how this key concept of the ‘word’ can both safeguard scientific method from inappropriate intrusion by other disciplines, including theology, while also ultimately linking it to an Abrahamic theology of creation.
	Shuai Zhang UQAM <u>Contesting Motherhood: Body, Ethics, and Sacred Order in Maria's Teknophagia</u> From the perspective of “motherhood,” this paper examines how Josephus and Pseudo-Josephus portray Mary's Teknophagia and interpretations of national catastrophe. In <i>The Jewish War</i>, Josephus presents the collapse of Mary's motherhood as the result of an external predicament described as <i>έτροπον</i>. The reversal of her bodily function both denounces the tyrant and preserves space for readers' sympathy. In <i>De excidio Hierosolymitano</i>, Pseudo-Josephus rewrites the narrative by replacing <i>έτροπον</i> with non emolliēbat, shifting the cause of Mary's action from external desperation to internal weakness. In the fourth century, within the context of Marian and supersessionist thought, Pseudo-Josephus's rewriting established a potential contrast between the Jewish mother, who symbolizes divine punishment and national sinfulness, and the Virgin Mary, who embodies the grace of the New Covenant. This contrast provides a framework for later Christian interpretation and shapes the medieval reception of the two Marys.	Gabrielle Marcelle Felteault Université de Sherbrooke <u>Médecine de l'Âme et Roue de Médecine Chamanique: L'âme conscientisée en quête de guérison</u> L'influence positive de la religion et de la spiritualité sur la guérison n'est plus à démontrer (Azria, Hervieu-Léger et Logan-Prat (2019) :1217-1221), Tillich (1946), Vanderweele (2017) et Koenig (2012). Notre thème est la médecine de l'âme, un soin thérapeutique spirituel offert en soutien à la guérison. Notre assise scientifique est le phénomène de l'âme selon ses incidences et influences révélées par l'impact du langage de l'âme qui s'avère démystifier tous ses pouvoirs infinis et principes éternels. L'hypothèse est: « L'âme conscientisée est la clé de guérison ». Le défi d'une métaphysique de l'âme souvent confinée à une interprétation métaphorique selon une compréhension matérialiste (Goetz & Taliaferro, 2011:1) fut relevé scientifiquement grâce au paradigme chamanique (Lenoir, 2008 :293) d'une Roue de médecine Inca, une thérapie contemporaine à la croisée du profane/sacré/scientifique selon cette technologie 'sacrée' (Villoldo & Krippner, 1987). En 1979, l'OMS reconnaissait le chamanisme en tant que « traitement médical et thérapeutique traditionnel d'origine » (Bulang, 2019 :58). Cette pratique en energy medicine (Villoldo, 2000) associé aux Médecines alternatives complémentaires (MAC) (Berghmans, 2022) est une médecine holistique (Kiefer, 2021). Notre travail permet de révéler les liens phénoménologiques entre l'âme, la conscience et la guérison ainsi que certains principes-clés qui retracent l'ascendance de l'âme conscientisée pour une résolution optimale de guérison. Son efficience n'est pas une garantie de santé physique mais ne l'exclue pas : le soin de l'âme est porteur de Sens, d'Empowerment et de reconnexion à l'Infini. Ainsi, la médecine chamanique pourrait s'adjoindre avec réserves, en Soins spirituels des Institutions sanitaires québécoises.	Gerard Ryan University of Toronto <u>Beyond the Science–Religion Binary: Inscaping, Resonance, and Metzian Praxis on Loneliness</u> Loneliness is too often reduced to an individual pathology or a moral lapse. I take it instead as a theological–social signal that discloses where persons and communities have fallen out of right relation. Beginning from Johann Baptist Metz's starting point of theological praxis—interruptive, memory-laden, and ordered to transformation—I read our present disquiet through Hartmut Rosa's account of resonance. Rosa's grammar helps name the textures of responsive relation across social, ecological, and transcendent axes; Metz supplies the eschatological urgency and praxical discernment to move from diagnosis to conversion of life. To mediate description and disposition, I retrieve Gerard Manley Hopkins's inscape as a school of attention. Practices of inscaping—poetic, liturgical, and ecological—train perception to receive the world as address, intensifying the receptive–responsive arc at the heart of resonance and re-opening subjects to God, neighbour, and creation. Empirical studies of social isolation and eco-anxiety function here as diagnostic interlocutors; they neither exhaust the meaning of loneliness nor stand outside it. Within a renewed theological anthropology of grounded freedom, grace appears as the enabling condition for resonant belonging and for the conversion of dislocated spaces into landscapes of care. The paper concludes with pastoral and public proposals: liturgies of attention; common goods that protect time, place, and presence; and ministries that braid dangerous memory with practices of mutual address. Rather than rehearse compatibility debates between “science” and “religion,” I offer a praxis-forward account in which their disciplined conversation helps communities learn how to belong—before God and with one another—in a fragile common home.
	Christian Robillard Concordia University		

	<u>Gendered Justice: Necromancy, Witchcraft, and Unequal Punishment in Fifteenth-Century Europe</u> This paper examines gender disparities in the prosecution and punishment of magical practices in fifteenth-century Europe, arguing that judicial outcomes were influenced more by the gender of the accused than by the nature of the alleged acts. While both necromancy and witchcraft were condemned as illicit forms of magic and often associated with heresy, men accused of necromancy were significantly less likely to receive capital punishment than women accused of witchcraft. Necromancy was mainly linked to clerical learning, literacy, and ritual knowledge derived from texts. As such, necromancers were educated men, usually clerics or university-trained scholars, who operated within elite intellectual networks. In most cases, male practitioners were perceived as misguided scholars or morally errant clerics whose actions, though sinful, could be corrected through penance or ecclesiastical discipline. In the infrequent cases concerning the most serious allegations, necromancers often benefited from influential patrons who exerted pressure on judicial proceedings. As a result, accusations were often mitigated, charges reduced, or lighter ecclesiastical punishments imposed. Unlike accused men, women charged with witchcraft came to be more closely associated with maleficium, pacts with the Devil, and organized plots against Christian society. Women accused of witchcraft were typically socially marginal and lacked institutional protection or powerful advocates. They were portrayed not as learned offenders but as morally weak, carnal, and spiritually susceptible to demonic influence, and faced courts that interpreted accusations through deeply gendered assumptions. Without access to patronage networks or elite backing, they were far more vulnerable to torture, conviction, and execution.	
--	--	--

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 7th, 1:15 PM	Reconfigurer les frontières entre religion, science et santé : Pratiques contemplatives, spiritualités féminines et fraternité universelle	Healing, Spirituality, and Disability	Book Roundtable: Theorizing the Anthropology of Belief: Magic, Conspiracies, and Misinformation
	Diana Dimitrova Université de Montréal Présidence	Sam Nelson McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Alex Duceppe-Lenoir McGill School of Religious Studies Discussant
	Audrey Girard Université de Montréal <u>Les pratiques contemplatives en entreprises</u> Comment expliquer l'entrée de pratiques telles que la méditation, la pleine conscience et le yoga dans le monde de l'entreprise ? Quel sens et quelles formes prennent-elles dans ce contexte organisationnel et séculier ? Issues de traditions religieuses et philosophiques hindoues et bouddhistes, ces pratiques sont historiquement enracinées dans des cadres éthiques, spirituels et sotériologiques spécifiques. Dans les dernières décennies, ces pratiques sont devenues l'objet de plusieurs recherches en médecine et en psychologie. On peut même parler d'un véritable boom des études sur la pleine conscience issue de la psychologie. Leur effets bénéfiques sur la santé mentale et physique sont de plus en plus documentés par la science, participant à un processus que je nomme "thérapeutisation", par lequel les finalités des pratiques contemplatives sont reconfigurées autour d'objectifs liés à la santé, au bien-être et à la gestion du stress. Ce discours scientifique agit comme une porte d'entrée, c'est-à-dire de légitimation, des pratiques contemplatives en entreprise. Un processus appelé "scientification". Dans l'imaginaire collectif, ce discours scientifique contribue à évacuer toute connotation ésotérique, spirituelle ou religieuse des pratiques contemplatives, conditions de leur acceptation dans les organisations québécoises. Elles y sont principalement mobilisées comme des techniques individuelles de gestion du stress et d'amélioration de la performance. À partir d'une étude qualitative menée dans quatre entreprises, cette communication analyse les modalités concrètes de mise en œuvre de ces pratiques et interroge l'expérience vécue des personnes participantes. Elle pose en particulier la question de la place — persistante, transformée ou marginalisée — du spirituel dans ces formes contemporaines de pratiques contemplatives, et des tensions qui émergent entre santé, performance et quête de sens au travail.	Orresta James Paddock United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities <u>"The Circle: A Poetic Exploration of Spiritual Healing"</u> Spiritual belonging is an intensely intimate experience which is often difficult to put into words. By better understanding our spiritual belonging, we are able to work towards healing our spiritual traumas, which can lead to also processing those traumas and spiritual events which affect our mental health as well. This poetic anthology, accompanied by academic outline, explores a year of spiritual reflection in a number of areas: belief, immanence without gods, devotion and worship, cosmology, and others. This collection aims to understand the evolution of spiritual understanding through grief and other traumas, the ways in which belonging allows us to explore embodied divinity, and how pilgrimage also allows us to connect to different assets of our spirituality. The poems are further designed in various formats to clarify the artistic vision of the spirit of word, with coordinating visuals to explore deeper the reflection of spirit into word.	Luke Matthews RAND School of Public Policy <u>Ontology finds a way: a roundtable discussion of Theorizing the Anthropology of Belief with coauthors Matthews and Robertson</u> In this roundtable Matthews will discuss his 2024 co-authored book, Theorizing the Anthropology of Belief: Magic, Conspiracies, and Misinformation. A central thesis of the book is that belief can be generated via an epistemology→ontology pathway as in modern science, or via an ontology→epistemology pathway as characterized much pre-scientific scholarship. The book traces the intellectual history of these distinct but related thought-forms, and makes a case that reengagement with ontology-first reasoning is central to addressing the pressing problem of "misinformation" and to dialogue between scientific and indigenous epistemologies. Reengaging ontology-first reasoning in the West, however, may logically broaden the scope of scientific and science-adjacent investigations to include magico-religious phenomena. This broadening of investigative scope productively deconstructs disciplinary boundaries erected since the intellectual dominance of Cartesian skepticism as an epistemology-first imperative for reasoning. During the roundtable, Matthews will present his summative thoughts from the joint book project. They will then respond to questions posed by the designated discussant, Alex Duceppe-Lenoir, before fielding questions from the assembled in person audience. The roundtable will be held with English as the primary language.
	William Aylward Concordia University <u>La perception du Yoga dans les écoles publiques en Amérique du Nord</u> Le yoga est lié aux religions de l'Asie du Sud telles que l'hindouisme, le bouddhisme et le jainisme, mais est aussi, de nos jours, souvent perçu comme une simple forme d'exercice physique. Les bienfaits associés au yoga et à la méditation font également l'objet de recherches scientifiques (De Michelis, 2007). Le yoga dans le monde occidental est souvent enseigné de manière laïque et s'adresse à un public laïc. Dans plusieurs cas, ces espaces se trouvent être des écoles publiques. L'âge mineur ainsi que la diversité religieuse des participants soulèvent des enjeux importants sur la transparence et le consentement éclairé chez les jeunes qui participent à des activités comme le yoga ou la méditation dans les écoles publiques (Gunther Brown 2019). En premier lieu, la question « Qu'est-ce que le yoga ? » sera abordée. En utilisant différentes approches académiques (Foxen et Kuberry 2021, White 2012, Singleton 2010), il est possible de voir le yoga davantage comme un réseau de concepts et de pratiques plutôt qu'une seule tradition unifiée. Cette perspective implique également que le yoga ne se limite pas à un seul domaine comme la religion, la philosophie ou la médecine. Avec cette conception du yoga en tête, certains débats seront analysés concernant les programmes de yoga dans les écoles publiques, en utilisant les définitions de « sécularisme » et d'« espaces publics » soulignées par Maclure et Taylor (2011), ainsi que celle de « neutralité » par Bentley (2021). L'analyse des discours permettra d'identifier les différents points d'argumentation sur le sujet du yoga dans les écoles publiques.	Jacqueline Giesbrecht Queen's University <u>Disabled By Religion: The Impact of C-PTSD and Religious Trauma on Disabled Persons in Canada</u> This paper will examine the relationship between experiences of disability, C-PTSD, and religious trauma. Bringing original qualitative and quantitative data (survey of 194 disabled participants from across Canada) into conversation with trauma research, this paper will explore the impact of trauma (religious or otherwise) on the spiritual and religious experiences of the survey participants. Trauma will be discussed as disability and neurodivergence, with a focus on the devastating impact religious, cumulative, and interpersonal traumas can have on health, well-being, spirituality, and spiritual/religious experience. Drawing from participant quotes, this paper will demonstrate how in the presence of religious abuse, ableist theologies, and other forms of discrimination, religion can be a traumatizing, disabling, debilitating, and disempowering force, especially for disabled individuals with multiple marginalizations. As well, it will be shown how for many Discussants, deinstitutionalized traditions and individual spiritual practices have been tools for self-empowerment and healing. The paper will then conclude with proposed areas for future inquiry, advocacy, and support.	

Manon Exbalin Université de Montréal <u>Thérapies alternatives et féminin sacré : repenser la frontière entre science et religion dans les guérisons de l'utérus</u> Dans un contexte mondial d'exposition croissante aux perturbateurs endocriniens, de nombreuses femmes développent des maladies gynécologiques provoquant des douleurs menstruelles intenses ou des difficultés de conception (Hamamah et Berlioux 2022). Ces mêmes maladies ont longtemps été délaissées par la médecine occidentale androcentrée, assimilées à de l'hystérie (Maines 2012). Cette négligence a contribué au retard de la recherche biomédicale dans la prise en charge de ces maladies, alors que le nombre de femmes diagnostiquées augmente d'années en années (Hudson 2021). Face à ce sentiment d'errance médicale, un nombre croissant de femmes francophones se tournent vers des médecines alternatives, notamment au sein de cercles de femmes rattachés au courant du « féminin sacré », où des guérisseuses se présentent comme des figures de relais ou de complément aux institutions médicales jugées inadéquates. Ces espaces mobilisent des pratiques corporelles et spirituelles variées, telles que le yoni yoga (Plancke 2021), l'usage des œufs de yoni (Pasche Guignard 2024) ou encore des bains de vapeur vaginaux, (bains dérivatifs) présentées comme des dispositifs de guérison de l'utérus. Ces pratiques se situent à la marge de la biomédecine comme des religions instituées, et sont fréquemment disqualifiées soit comme non scientifiques, soit comme relevant exclusivement de la croyance spirituelle. À partir d'une analyse critique des discours en ligne, cette communication propose d'aborder ces pratiques comme un terrain privilégié pour repenser la relation entre science et religion dans les pratiques de guérison.	Kacey Dool Queen's University <u>An Archive of Accountability: Exploring Religio-Racial Eugenics</u> In 1907, Sir Francis Galton declared, "I see no impossibility in Eugenics becoming a religious dogma among mankind" and that the hereditarian ideology should be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion...to become an orthodox religious tenet of the future" (Galton, quoted in Trembley 1988). While the pseudo-scientific movement has been explored from historical, sociological, and legal perspectives, attention to the relationship between Eugenics and religion has been under-researched, resulting in a call to explore the ways in which the 'State' and 'Church' worked in concert to popularize the ideology transnationally. Taking archival documentation covering the British Eugenics Movement and the Canadian Eugenics Movement, I explore the ways in which Christianity and a desire to 'civilize' through the creation of a 'paradise on Earth' furnished the fervor with which Eugenics was adopted in the Canadian context, with a particular emphasis on the affective, linguistic expression of desirable bodies and the resulting villainization of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. As a radically local extension of this archival research, I address the legacy of the Eugenics Movement housed in the Queen's University Archives and reflect on creating institutional accountability and public access to histories of such scientific violence.
Pascale Frémond Université de Montréal <u>Le lien nécessaire entre religion et science pour la réalisation d'une fraternité universelle selon trois grands penseurs religieux des XIXe et XXe siècles</u> Dans le cadre de sa thèse de doctorat intitulée « L'importance de l'idéal de fraternité universelle au XXe siècle - L'exemple de cinq communautés de foi au Québec et en Ontario », madame Frémond a étudié les enseignements de trois penseurs pour lesquels religion et science ne sont pas antagonistes et devraient même être considérées comme essentielles pour l'amélioration de l'humanité dans leur relation constructive. Fondateur de la foi baha'ie, Baha'ullah (1817-1892), qui prêchait le pacifisme, la fraternité universelle et la coopération avec l'État, a exhorté à reconnaître l'accord nécessaire entre la religion et la science considérées comme les deux voies dans l'investigation de la vérité. Les maîtres bulgares Beinsa Douno (nom de naissance Peter Deunov, 1864-1944) et Omraam Mikhaël Alvanhov (1900-1986), maîtres de la Fraternité Blanche Universelle en Bulgarie et en France, insistent sur l'importance d'une réconciliation entre religion, science et art. Dans son enseignement, Omraam Mikhaël Alvanhov a donné de très nombreux exemples du lien entre religion et science, montrant que l'étude des phénomènes tangibles pouvait déboucher sur une connaissance approfondie des lois du monde intérieur et spirituel, en appliquant la loi des correspondances énoncée dans la Table d'Emeraude par Hermès Trismégiste « Tout ce qui est en bas est comme ce qui est en haut ». Madame Frémond donnera des exemples de ces correspondances et montrera l'importance accordée par ces trois grands penseurs au lien nécessaire entre religion et science pour la transformation positive de l'humanité.	

	Birks 111	Birks 203	
May 7th, 3 PM	Medicine and Religion	Politics and Religion in a Secularized World	
	Sam Nelson McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Dan Dere McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	
	Bailey Pickard Toronto Metropolitan University <u>Between Scripture and Science: Religious Distrust and Public Health in Contemporary America</u> Centuries of hostility between science and Christianity has created a deeply concerning attitude towards public health in the United States. Decades of arguments about whether evolutionary theories can be trusted and a deep misunderstanding of the aims of science as a whole have set the stage for a generation of Christians who believe that the Bible and Biology are always at odds, and therefore Biology cannot be trusted. With this foundation of deep distrust, politicians have been able to cherry-pick and weaponize scripture, using it to manipulate public health policy. The depth of this danger became clear in the COVID-19 pandemic with the distrust of masks and mRNA vaccines, and it set the stage for the current public health crisis in the US. The only way to move forward with public health policy is to begin to heal the distrust of Biology from Christians and reframe the way Christians view public health. In order to do this, Christians across the US must begin to unravel the layers of propaganda that has encouraged them to reject Biology, and begin to reimagine their relationship with science as a whole. Instead of being skeptical and combative towards public health guidelines, Christians can begin paving the way in caring about others through their support of public health initiatives-- and this all begins with healing the relationship between the Bible and Biology.	Bhromor Rahman Université de Sherbrooke <u>Dieu et mon droit: la fin du néo-athéisme et pourquoi la religion n'est jamais loin</u> Dans les années 2010, le mouvement dit du "New Atheism" (néo-athéisme) prenait de l'ampleur. Cette mouvance opposait religion et science disant rejeter toute croyance basée sur la superstition en faveur d'une raison pure. Menée par des intellectuels comme Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Ayaan Hirsi Ali et Daniel Dennett, cette mouvance se voulait en quelque sorte le comble de la modernité où l'humanité aurait atteint un niveau de développement scientifique et culturel suffisant pour se défaire d'une croyance en quelque chose de plus grand. L'objectif primaire de ces critiques de la religion était d'expulser la religion de la sphère publique. En 2026, le bilan de ce mouvement pourrait surprendre: Hirs Ali s'est convertie au christianisme, Dawkins se dit "culturellement chrétien", Harris s'est trouvé une vocation spirituelle bouddhiste après un voyage en Asie, Hitchens et Dennett sont malheureusement décédés en 2011 et 2024 respectivement. À la lumière des débats sur la laïcité au Québec entre autres, le bilan du mouvement néo-athée mérite d'être exploré à travers ses figures emblématiques et expliquer pourquoi malgré les tentatives considérables de s'en distancer, la religion n'est jamais très loin.	
	Natalia Schvien Scott Harvard University	David O'Reilly University of Ottawa	

<u>If You Give a Mouse A Human Brain: How Neural Chimeroids Reshape Brain Exceptionalism at the Intersection of Religion and Science</u> Our genetics, endocrine system, reproductive system, and social behaviors bear enough similarity to those of other animals that evolutionary relatives such as mice, rats, monkeys, and dogs have long served as effective proxies for human bodies in laboratory and behavioral research. These compatibilities go beyond testing or observation: with advancements in gene editing and surgical techniques, scientists can produce biological chimerism through xenotransplantation, replacing malfunctioning human organs with nonhuman counterparts. Yet unlike other organs, the human brain has remained ontologically isolated—sacred—within the value system of industrialized science. While manipulation of brain chemistry has long been tested on model species, until recently we have not crossed the biological boundary of merging human and nonhuman synapses. With the creation of neural chimeroids, the human brain—the biological emblem of human exceptionalism—can now be hybridized with the brains of rodents and other model species. Rebuttals to the possibility of “humanizing” these chimeras rely on the percentage of human neurons present, yet the equation of brain size or neural density with intelligence or consciousness has been thoroughly critiqued. To date, neuroscience has adhered to a functional physicalist hierarchy that positions human brains at the teleological peak of evolution, a framework no longer biologically justifiable, revealing human supremacy to be philosophical rather than scientific—a continuation of Wallace’s Problem. By its very existence, this new lifeform reshapes notions of kinship while recalling ethical frameworks in folk metaphysics and comparative mythology, where chimeric creatures have long troubled attempts to demarcate human intelligence as uniquely special.	<u>Scientific Satanism: Science as Religious through The Satanic Temple’s Fundamental Tenets</u> The Satanic Temple (TST) is the only Satanic religious organization recognized as a church by both the IRS and Federal Court System in the United States, with official congregations internationally. TST’s position as “religious” is challenged by other religious movements due to their non-theism, rejection of the supernatural, and label as Satanists. TST’s primary spokesperson, Lucien Greaves, maintains that TST is indeed a religious organization, with Satanism as his deeply held personal belief. As part of their doctrine, members of the Satanic Temple seek to follow the “Seven Fundamental Tenets”. The Tenets are reminiscent of both the Judeo-Christian Decalogue and Secular Humanist principles, but leave an opening for individual interpretation. Tenet V appeals to science directly. It states, “beliefs should conform to one’s best scientific understanding of the world. One should take care never to distort scientific facts to fit one’s beliefs.” Membership levels in organized religion are increasingly declining in the Global North. TST represents a unique rejection of both traditional religion and nonreligion as a distinctly religious movement and further challenging the conventional understanding of what it means to be “religious”. By framing practices with a scientific basis under the category of religion, TST is able to provide legal protection for its members that they may not otherwise achieve. This presentation will discuss the novel way TST blends science with religion as a fundamental aspect of their belief and ritual system.
Alexandra Yeryomin McGill School of Religious Studies <u>Last Rites Are for the Living: Brain Death and Sacramental Practice</u> The administration of the Last Rites requires a clear moral certainty that the recipient is still alive, as the sacraments cannot be validly given to someone who has died. However, modern medicine defines brain death in various ways. The American standard, which necessitates the irreversible cessation of all brain functions, offers greater moral clarity for making sacramental decisions. In contrast, the newer Canadian definition, which recognizes death after the permanent loss of consciousness and brain-stem function, introduces a level of pastoral uncertainty. This paper explores how these medical standards impact the Church’s ability to confidently determine the presence of life and their implications for sacramental theology and pastoral care at the end of life.	Aaron Ricker McGill School of Religious Studies <u>Tending the Dream of a Commonwealth of the Demonstrable</u> The last time I checked in on the cultural drama of “science and religion” at a McGill event of this type (2015’s “Religious Ideas & Scientific Thought” conference), I reported on trends in the use of “scientism” as an accusation. Among the defenders of “traditional religion,” references to “scientism” were trending as a way to charge proponents of mainstream science with giving science too much credit and thereby short-changing “religious” knowledge. In more recent years, though, such accusations have increasingly given way to the charge that mainstream science is not scientific enough: the real “irreligious” error from this point of view is putting faith in the global majority of scientists, imagined to be cherry-picking and suppressing truth in the service of “woke” global conspiracies. This upsurge in conspiratorial arguments about who is being “truly scientific” can have disastrous implications for the public image and impact of modern “scientific” ideals and culture. Instead of evoking a commonwealth of the demonstrable, “truly scientific” knowledge becomes here the expropriated monopoly of more-mistrusting-than-thou zetetics, thumbing their gnosiss at the “so-called experts” they’ve so long resented for looking down their gnosiss at the rest of us. In this context, the challenge for intellectual workers is finding ways to promote “science” (in a latitudinarian sense like “a cooperative discipline of the demonstrably likely”) as a conversational olive branch, instead a disputed fig leaf for adversarial agendas – at a moment when global influencers and even world leaders are working hard to promote divisive and triumphalist dreams instead.
Aashi Jain University of Ottawa <u>Reconsidering the Good Death: Sacred Rationales in MAID and Sallekhana</u> Contemporary debates on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) are often framed through a polarized lens that positions biomedical rationality and individual autonomy against religious belief and moral constraint. This binary obscures how secular end-of-life decisions like MAID can be deeply meaningful, reflecting sacred commitments distinct from traditional religious contexts. This paper examines sallekhana (voluntary death through fasting in the Jain tradition) alongside MAID to challenge the deficiency thesis: rather than lacking sacredness, both practices manifest ultimate concerns, albeit differently expressed. Drawing on Charles Taylor’s account of the “immanent frame,” I situate MAID within a medico-legal ontology of autonomy, dignity, and rights, and sallekhana within a transpersonal karmic and ascetic ontology ordered toward liberation. Participants and advocates in both contexts articulate their decisions through deeply held values, even without explicit religious language. By approaching end-of-life decisions as expressions of the sacred- whether rooted in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, self- authored autonomy, or karmic purification- this paper demonstrates how both engage the self’s nature, a good death’s meaning, and valid knowledge of suffering. It proposes that religious studies advances by tracing ontological divergences between biomedical legal discourses of autonomy and dignity, on one hand, and Jain karmic-ascetic discourses of liberation, on the other.	

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 7th, 4:45 PM	Alternative Articulations of Science and Religion Through Medical Knowledge	Religious Reactions and Adaptations to the Sciences	Special Session with Dr. Douglas Farrow (Held at the Newman Center) The Theological Basis of the Natural Sciences
	Megan Peck Concordia University Discussant	Qi Liu McGill University Discussant	
	Florence Pasche Guignard Université Laval	Levana Taussky McGill University	Douglas Farrow McGill School of Religious Studies

	<u>Beyond (Medical) Science and Religion in Contemporary Fertility Awareness: A Case Study of Medical, Feminist, Religious, and Spiritual Discourses</u> The management of human fertility involves negotiating knowledge and power across medical, feminist, religious, and spiritual discourses. This paper shares selected results from a comparative study with practitioners of fertility awareness-based methods (2022-2026; Quebec and French-speaking Switzerland). This research reveals that acquiring knowledge outside biomedical frameworks empowers women, leading to an emerging feminist fertility awareness that reclaims scientific/medical knowledge and sometimes markets itself as "secular." However, religious influences persist in reproductive health, now coexisting with spiritualities articulated around the blurry notion of the "sacred feminine," which can reinforce gender essentialism. Based on interviews, content analysis, and field observations, this paper discusses how multiple authorities (medical, religious, and secular) contest and compete in teaching about fertility and cycle tracking, and the empowerment associated with this. Rather than a gradual replacement of religious views and discourses by scientific ones, the analysis reveals unexpected juxtapositions while women navigate different epistemologies to exercise agency over their bodies and sexuality.	<u>"Gravediggers, Embalmers, and Even Eulogizers": Orthodox Responses to Concepts of Wissenschaft and Its Religious Uses</u> As a case study within the conference's theme of 'Beyond Science and Religion,' I propose examining Orthodox responses to the emergence of Wissenschaft des Judentums to deepen our understanding of their relationship. This nineteenth-century movement aimed to study Judaism through critical, historical, and Enlightenment methods of scholarship, making it a target for Orthodox backlash. While significant research has been conducted on the Orthodox response, these works tend to focus on philosophical, historical, and ethical objections. This paper highlights criticisms of Wissenschaft – objections to applying scientific perspectives to Judaism. By analysing this specific critique, we identify nuances in Orthodox attitudes towards the scientific study of religion and its role in Jewish learning. While some advocate a complete separation between the scientific method and traditional Torah study, others seek to accommodate and reconcile Wissenschaftliche approaches with Torah. Drawing on responsa, polemical pamphlets, and correspondence among German rabbis, this paper investigates how Orthodox critiques of Wissenschaft reflect differing opinions on the relevance of scientific study to the Torah.	<u>Why Aristotle Wasn't Enough: Christianity and the Rise of Modern Science</u> Aristotle, like Plato, wanted a rational theology. He also sought a rational, well ordered account of the world available to the senses. Today it is sometimes said that the latter is not possible where the former remains in play. It is even claimed that modern science, which has taken the work of empirical observation and of reason to new heights, came into existence only after theological convictions were laid aside. I will argue that the opposite is the case.
	Daphnée Dion-Carrier Université Laval <u>Learning from Alternative Menstrual Healths: Experiences of Indian Hindu Women</u> In an article published in 2025, social and policy science scholars, Mcallister, Amery, Channon, and Thomson ask where menstruation fits into global health policy. The authors examine the construction and unspoken assumptions of normative definitions of menstruation, concluding that there is a persistent emphasis on issues related to sanitation and hygiene, as well as girls' education, as the target audience for improving menstrual health. The silence surrounding menstrual disorders and menopausal women, gender non-conforming people, and the lack of discussion on environmental concerns are deplored, but religion as a structuring value system for some people is nowhere to be found in such international relations' approach. However, the paper's objective is to promote a global health perspective in which menstruation is considered an intersectional and multisectoral issue (p. 12), including health, rights, hygiene, and education, with the aim of advocating for "a clear solution" (p. 12). Taking this normative attempt around menstruation as a starting point, this paper questions this type of global approach, which does not allow for the inclusion of locally produced knowledge on menstrual health. By drawing on ethnographic material collected as part of a doctoral project involving Indian Hindu women (n= 75), mainly from Varanasi (2024-2025), I will discuss how the participants' experience of menstruation intertwines medical knowledge, Ayurvedic principles and religion, and that such intertwining does not compete but is an integral part of their menstrual health. More so, focusing on menstrual practices and health highlight various levels of articulation between medicines (as different versions of scientific knowledges) and religion.	John Samuel Luke Martens McMaster University <u>Survival Instincts: Canadian Buddhism and the Fight for the Future</u> Debates surrounding religion and science often rely on opposition between "rational" and "irrational" knowledge. This framing obscures the ways in which religious institutions must operate within contemporary, secular categories of governance and marketization. Rather than standing outside of modern categories and rationality, however, religious organizations are always situated within the epoch they belong to, meaning today's religious institutions must adapt their institutional practices into forms that are defensible and legible to the bureaucratic, marketized, scientific state. These dynamics are evident in the decision to construct Wisteria Place Senior Care Facility at Steveston Buddhist Temple (SBT) in British Columbia. Faced with unsustainable property taxes, shrinking and aging membership, and declining donations, SBT had to act to secure its survival. To do so, SBT moved away from relying completely on its membership and approached the province of British Columbia to build Wisteria Place. For the sake of their continued survival, SBT had to conform to regulatory frameworks and economic models that made them attractive to the governing bodies of British Columbia. Drawing on archival materials, temple documents, and ethnographic work, this paper examines how religious organizations re-form and organize themselves under late-capitalism. What forms of religious institution and religiosity become viable when survival depends on conforming to the secular market? How do religious organizations negotiate authority and meaning as they are increasingly governed by external bureaucracies rather than traditional forms of religious legitimacy? This case demonstrates how contemporary religion is shaped through its interactions with secular modes of governance and rationality.	
	Thomas Seibel Concordia University <u>Beyond Science and Religion: Evidence and the Moral Legibility of Bodies in Modern India</u> Discussions of the relationship between science and religion often frame modern medicine as a site of epistemological conflict, pitting belief against evidence and tradition against rationality. Drawing on histories of medicine in South Asia, this paper argues that such framing overlooks a central problem. Across colonial epidemiology, twentieth-century Ayurvedic reform, and contemporary pharmaceutical regulation, and other places where the science-religion distinction has been invoked to interpret transformations, a more decisive contrast emerges when we instead ask what can and cannot be rendered legible within modern therapeutic regimes. Colonial plague administration did not simply displace ritual etiologies; it reformatting populations into statistical objects of governance, redefining those whose suffering counted and how it could be acted upon. Rather than abandoning "tradition" in favour of science, reform movements in Ayurveda standardized, pharmaceuticalized, and curricularized heterogeneous practices, transforming them into administratively and commercially recognizable forms. Contemporary evidence-based medicine similarly reorganizes suffering into measurable endpoints that sustain regulatory authority, therapeutic compliance, and global markets, redefining what counts as legitimate illness and responsible subjecthood. Even recent controversies surrounding the institutionalization of bhūtavidyā (often glossed over as the science of ghosts or spirits) reveal less a clash between superstition and science than a struggle over which idioms of affliction can be translated into clinically actionable and institutionally acceptable categories. Attending to legibility shifts analysis beyond the science-religion binary toward the moral and economic conditions under which evidence acquires authority. South Asian medical history thus offers a corrective to theoretical frameworks that interpret encounters between science and religion as primarily epistemological disputes, demonstrating instead that ontology and belief are often subordinated to institutional classificatory, disciplinary, and commodifying demands.	Laleh Saramiforoshani York University <u>From Ancient Rain Rituals to Contemporary Performance</u> Iranian rain-summoning rituals, rooted in pre-Zoroastrian and Zoroastrian myths such as the struggle of Tishhtar (rain deity) against Apaosha (drought demon), have persisted for centuries through adaptation across religious changes. Originally Zoroastrian practices, during Islamic era, they evolved into embedded cultural traditions by incorporating Islamic elements in recited prayers and poems while preserving core symbolic acts. This continuity highlights their enduring social function: gathering communities during periods of hardship to share resources, food, and solidarity, fostering resilience beyond any specific doctrinal framework. In contemporary Iran, these rituals continue as adaptive responses to environmental challenges, including drought and the desiccation of waterways like the Zayandeh Rud (life giving river, located in Isfahan, Iran), functioning as intangible cultural heritage that supports communal cohesion amid scarcity. As a descendant of water guardians, my MFA research-creation project, Vows to Water, extends this lineage through embodied performance. By re-enacting ritual elements, the work expresses communal longing for renewal in response to Iran's water crisis. Within the "Beyond Science and Religion" theme, this approach bridges ontology (water as a mythic, living entity in cultural narratives) and epistemology (knowing through embodied, participatory experience). It challenges the separation between "believing" in cultural traditions and "thinking" via scientific environmental insights, proposing performance as a tool to move beyond conflict toward compatibility and deeper dialogue in religious studies. What is "beyond the now"? Performative continuity where religious ideologies evolve into resilient cultural tools for communal healing and adaptation in a globalized, modern context.	

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 8th, 9 AM	Philosophy and Epistemology	MUREL : Dynamiques socioreligieuses, laïcité et espaces municipaux québécois 1	AGIC Special Panel: Anthropology of Religion
	Francesco Bossoletti McGill School of Religious Studies Discussant	Daniela Moisa UQAR Présidence	Megan Peck Concordia University Chair
	Patience Ottoju University of Ottawa	Benjamin Gagné Université de Montréal	Arielle Oviato Concordia University

<u>From Religious Disenchantment to Epistemic Disenchantment: Science, Religion, and Cultural Epistemologies</u> This paper challenges linear accounts of secularization, understood as the decline of religion or religious belief, by reframing the science–religion divide as a transformation in cultural epistemologies rather than as religious decline. Drawing on Clifford Geertz’s conception of religion as a cultural system, I argue that both religion and science function as socially embedded epistemic frameworks through which societies organize meaning, authority, and knowledge. Drawing from this perspective, this paper argues that the process commonly described as religious disenchantment is better understood as epistemic disenchantment: a historical reconfiguration of the institutions and practices that authorize explanations of the world in response to shifting socio-historical tensions. The paper introduces the concepts of epistemic rupture and epistemic reorientation to describe how socio-cultural, political, and economic pressures destabilize existing epistemic systems and create conditions under which alternative frameworks emerge and gain authority. In this account, science does not replace religion because it is inherently more rational, but because it offers different lenses through which the world and its mechanisms can be understood. Consequently, science and religion are interchangeably adopted as epistemic lenses through which societies can address emergent forms of uncertainty at particular historical moments. By conceptualizing secularization and the associated notion of religious disenchantment as a cyclical process of epistemic reorganization rather than a linear narrative of religious decline, this paper accounts for the persistence of religion, periods of religious resurgence, and the coexistence of multiple epistemic authorities in modern societies.	<u>“Empowered to help: what educational science, organisational studies and anthropology are telling us on formalized relationships between religion and municipality”</u> Le militantisme évangélique est formé de deux dimensions clés : l’évangélisation, qui cherche à convertir, et l’engagement social, qui vise un bien commun. Ces deux aspects ont souvent fait l’objet d’un conflit au sein même du mouvement. En parallèle, au Québec, toute action sociale organisée par des groupes religieux et appuyée par l’État et ses instances, soit financièrement, soit sur le plan de la visibilité, doit être exempte de prosélytisme. Cette présentation porte sur une initiative d’aide au déménagement, mise sur pied par une église évangélique québécoise, en collaboration avec une instance publique. Elle vise à soutenir une population en situation de précarité en lui offrant des déménagements gratuits les 30 juin et 1er juillet. Soutenue par près de 200 bénévoles annuellement, elle compte depuis quelques années sur un appui municipal substantiel en ressources humaines et matérielles. Trois questions guident la présentation. D’abord, quels sont les mécanismes de contrôle, étant donné que l’Église interdit le prosélytisme pendant cet événement ? Sont-ils réellement efficaces ? Ensuite, que révèle l’utilisation de formulaires en tant qu’objets-frontières dans les interactions entre les partenaires, les bénévoles de l’organisme et les clients ? Enfin, quels accords (ou négociations) sous-tendent le prêt de matériel et de ressources humaines par la Ville pour une initiative d’un groupe religieux connu et malgré la politique laïque d’aide aux organismes ? À partir d’une recherche qualitative (entretiens, observations, analyse de littérature grise), on tire une hypothèse. Le concept d’objets-frontière (Star et Griesemer 1989) permet d’analyser l’impact de l’organisme d’aide au déménagement sur les institutions municipales. La double dynamique de la présence du religieux et de son autocontrôle, ainsi que la formalisation des liens entre la religion et la municipalité qui leur confèrent les moyens d’aider de même qu’une visibilité publique, favorisent chez les membres du groupe religieux l’émergence d’une « compétence citoyenne ».	<u>“The Waters as Heritage Sites: Learning from le Fleuve, Kanaiatarowennenh”</u> We that belongs to the landscapes they observe? Who participates in the creation of a world dreamt by the Waters? Who chooses what is of us, or of a Heritage? The purpose of this paper is threefold: to explore the historical heritage of the Fleuve through two frameworks — settler Québécois communities and Indigenous perspectives, in particular Kanien’kehá:ka — to question the framework of heritage itself in the analysis of the Fleuve as an entity, and to offer a creative alternative to become part of the Heritage of its Waters. This research took a literary turn, prioritising the contextualization of the Fleuve’s importance in the construction of identities. Through textual and oral analysis, selected Québécois and Kanien’kehá:ka articles are reviewed, addressing their emic definitions of the Fleuve and auto-narrated histories — the relationship authors from these communities recount with the waters, the way they explain their connection to the Fleuve, and sometimes, to each other. By observing Kanien’kehá:ka and Québécois literature, this paper highlights the absence of the in-between voices. Rarely involved within localized Heritage discourses, immigrants and their children are faced with dissonance when seeking their position, or potential contributions, to place-based Heritage. My thesis is that if we can define ‘heritage’ itself as something fluid, adaptable, none-monolithic nor generalizing, then Heritage can be a framework to address the Fleuve. If both are fluctuating, moving, living, then they can be connected, just like all the waters are. Can we create new heritages in relation to the Fleuve? Futurisms, radical imagination, and collective creativity are ways to mold spaces of inclusion and intersection. To honour a space is to honour also those who I inherit it from — to acknowledge those who engaged with it before I. And then to co-design new avenues to include diasporic voices.
Ben Stone Western University <u>Beyond Science and Religion: Pure Consciousness as Shared Epistemic Primitive</u> Conventional framings of science and religion often cast them as competing modes of knowledge – one explanatory and empirical, the other interpretive and belief-based – thereby reinforcing a binary between thinking and believing. This paper moves beyond that opposition by arguing that both domains presuppose a more fundamental, pre-cognitive form of awareness – pure consciousness understood as a non-intentional, non-representational epistemic primitive. Through disciplined phenomenological inquiry (introception), this primitive discloses itself as the immediate, self-knowing givenness of experience – described here as a witnessing-capacity-prior-to- witnessing – that grounds all appearing, prior to representation, belief, or explanation. Scientific modeling presupposes this givenness to register phenomena; religious traditions presuppose it as the immediacy that doctrinal articulation seeks to express. Rather than functioning as an object to be explained by science or as a privileged domain of religious authority, pure consciousness is approached here as a shared structural condition enabling both explanatory and interpretive practices. By relocating the science-religion relation from competing truth-claims to a common epistemic origin, the paper opens tools for deeper dialogue: it reframes religious studies not as a “science” in the narrow sense, but as a discipline uniquely positioned to investigate the pre-theoretical ground from which both Wissenschaft and spiritual meaning emerge. This shift – from conflict or forced synthesis to shared foundational conditions – advances the field’s self-understanding and invites renewed reflection on ontology, epistemology, and the unity underlying apparent duality.	Zackari Bourgeois Université Concordia André Gagné Université Concordia <u>Le prix de la dissidence : Analyse du litige entre l’Église Ministerios Restauración et les autorités municipales.</u> Cette présentation examine la relation entre Ministerios Restauración, une Église apostolique et prophétique, et la Ville de Montréal à la suite de la visite controversée de l’artiste chrétien américain Sean Feucht, lors de sa tournée canadienne l’été 2025. Le discours nationaliste chrétien de Feucht, ainsi que ses positions sur les personnes LGBTQ+ et l’avortement, ont entraîné la révocation de nombreux permis et l’annulation de plusieurs de ses événements. À Montréal, Feucht a relocalisé son événement à l’Église Ministerios Restauración, le 25 juillet 2025. Des représentants de la mairie, ont déclaré que l’événement contrevient aux valeurs de la ville et ont averti l’église de l’absence d’un permis valide. Malgré tout, Feucht et l’Église ont maintenu la tenue de l’événement. Des manifestations ont eu lieu à l’extérieur, et la Ville a imposé une amende de 2 500 \$ à l’Église pour avoir organisé l’événement sans permis. En novembre 2025, l’Église a intenté une poursuite contre la Ville, affirmant que l’amende constituait une forme d’intimidation et de censure de ses convictions religieuses. Cette présentation s’appuie sur des entretiens avec un des pasteurs de l’Église et sur une analyse médiatique, pour comprendre le conflit opposant Ministerios Restauración à la Ville de Montréal. Nous examinons également la manière dont la foi des dirigeants et des membres de l’Église influence leur rôle de citoyens au Québec, ainsi que la façon dont les Églises et les autorités municipales s’inscrivent dans des débats plus larges sur la laïcité et la place de la religion dans la vie publique.	Elizabeth Dugu Concordia University <u>Re-envisioning a Culture in the Bronze Age Civilization by Exploring Sanxingdui</u> The Sanxingdui archaeological site in China’s Ba-Shu region preserves the material legacy of a major Bronze Age civilization. Located in Guanghan, Sichuan, it was discovered in 1927 and gained global attention in 1986 with numerous artifacts made of gold, bronze, jade, and elephant tusks. Flourishing between approximately 1800 and 1200 BCE, this age of civilization left no written records, so its culture remains only partially understood. Initially interpreted as evidence of ancient regal power, recent technologies have revealed finer details, prompting a new hypothesis: this is a sacrificial pit with artifacts used for connecting with deities and the cosmos. This paper proposes to rediscover this civilization and re-envision the cultural world expressed through its ritual objects. Key artifacts include bronze masks with protruding eyes, golden sun imagery, sacred birds, and the bronze sacred tree—the very first item to be excavated. These objects suggest a sophisticated ritual system linking cosmic forces, the natural environment, and communal identity. Examining these works reinterprets Ba-Shu visual culture as a symbolic language expressing cosmological knowledge, spiritual communication, and intercultural exchange. Building on this research, the project proposes an interdisciplinary reimagining of Sanxingdui’s ritual culture. Through music, movement, and digital visualization, it seeks to recreate ritual atmospheres that allow contemporary audiences to experience the sensory and symbolic dimensions of Bronze Age spirituality. This work aims to translate sacred symbols into a living language, illuminating how ancient divination and sacrifice expressed the human desire for cosmic balance, blessings, and prosperity. Born into the Tujia ethnic minority, whose ancestry traces to the ancient Ba people, Elizabeth approaches these materials through Indigenous cultural memory and comparative art history. By rediscovering and re-envisioning these ancestral knowledge forms, this project seeks to renew and reinterpret religious, ritual, and cultural dialogues between past and present.
Paolo Livieri University of Messina	Patrice Brodeur Université de Montréal Saeid Yarnohammadi Université de Montréal	Lauren Mayes Concordia University

	<u>Believing to Be, Knowing to Be. Notes from F.H. Jacobi's notion of Glaube</u> When F. H. Jacobi published David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism in 1787, he made a deliberately provocative move: he installed "faith" (Glaube) at the foundation of epistemology. Faith, Jacobi argued, is not a supplement to knowledge but its sole point of entry into truth; more strongly, it is only through faith that reality itself becomes intelligible. The implication was unmistakable. If faith is epistemically primary, then the entire system of the sciences must ultimately be grounded in it. The controversy this claim ignited has largely obscured a subtler and more durable insight. Jacobi's appeal to faith was not an evasion of rigor but an attempt to articulate a form of realism that later philosophy would neglect. His target was not the contents of scientific knowledge but its most basic presupposition: that there is a reality in the first place. For Jacobi, the existence of reality is not something that can be inferred, demonstrated, or conceptually secured. It is something we must already be committed to. Faith, on this view, is what underwrites that commitment. It alone connects us to the bedrock assumption shared by all the sciences—that there is something there to be known, and that knowledge is intelligible because it is knowledge of an existing world.	<u>Émergence, impacts, et avenir de la Table interreligieuse de concertation du Québec :</u> <u>Une analyse sociologique d'une nouvelle structure d'activisme interreligieux au Québec (2020-2025)</u> À partir du 13 mars 2020, de nouvelles politiques provinciales drastiques affectent toutes les personnes vivant au Québec en réaction à la crise sanitaire pandémique. Les communautés religieuses furent durement touchées dans leurs pratiques rituelles collectives. Des leaders religieux chrétiens, juifs et musulmans, (et autres par la suite) ont créé la Table interreligieuse de concertation du Québec afin de bâtir des ponts de communication avec le gouvernement du Québec, en particulier avec le Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux. Sur la base d'entrevues ethnographiques avec plusieurs des fondateurs et participants à cette Table ainsi que d'une étude documentaire, cette communication présentera d'abord un historique des activités de ce regroupement multireligieux récent dans le paysage social du Québec, puis une analyse de ces communiqués publics afin de faire ressortir deux points : 1) les défis des communautés religieuses à faire comprendre leurs besoins en milieu laïc québécois en temps de crise pandémique et 2) leurs contributions à un meilleur vivre-ensemble à partir de diverses interventions sociales pour freiner l'isolement et alléger les souffrances de nombreux membres de leurs communautés respectives en particulier, et de la société en générale. Un second niveau d'analyse relatera les données ethnographiques recueillies afin de confirmer ou d'infirmer l'hypothèse que cette Table reflète une nouvelle approche dialogique religio-politique faisant ressortir des réalités religieuses souvent passées sous silence dans une société perçue comme fortement sécularisée ainsi que de nouvelles obligations mutuelles entre communautés religieuses et différentes structures gouvernementales, requérant une nuancisation de la laïcité au Québec.	<u>Gender Play at the End of the World: Ancient Mediterranean Trans* Identity</u> A small gold tablet found in a wealthy woman's grave reads: "Now you have died and now you have died and now Bull, you jumped into the milk. Ram, you fell into the milk" (Graf and Johnstone, 2013, 37). Part of a series of objects called the Orphic Lamellae, small inscribed golden tablets connected with Dionysian mystery cults found across Ancient Greece, these tablets are firsthand witnesses of afterlife expectations in an esoteric cult. Which leads me to ask, why might a wealthy woman commission for herself a tablet meant to guide her through the landscape of Hades that refers to her as two masculine animals? What does this tell us about expectations of agency and gender in an esoteric context? I explore these questions with an eye to investigating gender queer identities in antiquity and the capacious expressions of gender that can arise in an esoteric cult setting. Following the work of other scholars engaged in trans* accounts of history such as Colby Gordon, I investigate multiple instances where minoritarian religious expressions allow for the development of gender play. From the gaili in Apuleius' The Golden Ass, trans priestesses of Cybele, to the Gospel of Thomas' assertion that Jesus will make Mary male so that she might enter the kingdom of Heaven, I demonstrate that esoteric religious movements in the Ancient Mediterranean context offered a greater freedom and play in gender performance than is typically recognized in the scholarly treatments. Often, there is a connection between aspects of social marginalization and an androgynous or male-gendered afterlife expectation, especially as a means of gendered agency reclamation. Throughout my investigation, I emphasize the historicity of modern cisgender identity, opening up new spaces for trans* history and remembrance of all the genderqueer folks who came before us.
	Anthony Palma University of Toronto <u>The Preconceptions of a 'Science of Religion'</u> The case for a 'science of religion' has considerable strengths: it distinguishes the academic study of religion from theology proper; it relies upon the authority of empirical science in affirming a more descriptive, objective, materialist reading of religion; it strives for methodological clarity: it views religion as a human phenomenon (by approaching it historically, comparatively, philologically, biologically, anthropologically, sociologically, psychologically, via the cognitive sciences, etc.); and its naturalized epistemology can appeal to both skeptics and devotees, insiders and outsiders. To quote from Max Weber's Science as a Vocation, a science of religion, not unlike science itself, is "in the service of self-clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts. It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets disseminating sacred values and revelations, nor does it partake of the contemplation of sages and philosophers about the meaning of the universe." Yet these claims are not exempt from critique. As with any case brought forward in the court of scholarly opinion, the arguments on offer are as sound as their capacity to withstand the slings and arrows of relevant counter-arguments. With a view to testing the intellectual resilience of said claims, I will identify what I take to be five potential shortcomings of a 'science of religion'.	Katie Khatereh Taher McGill University <u>Yoga Utopias in Climate Dystopia: Rural and Urban Dynamics in Intentional Yoga Communities</u> Yoga intentional communities (YICs) are grounded in a spiritual lineage and embody distinct practices rooted in Hindu traditions, fostering utopian aspirations. In 2024, the Shetland Creek wildfire at Sarangati Village, a YIC in British Columbia, forced evacuation and destroyed community infrastructure, raising critical questions about how Yoga intentional communities engage with environmental crises. This presentation introduces developing research on YICs and climate change, focusing on Nandagram Farms in Mascouche, Quebec, and Sarangati Village. At Nandagram Farms, Montreal-based devotees travel regularly to the rural site for retreats, festivals, and farm work, using the space as both refuge from urban life and a site of emerging ecological practice. These urban-rural movements shape how sustainability and an ethics of care for the environment are imagined and practiced. The two communities further inform broader provincial relations in Canada, as devotional teachings and ecological imaginaries travel nationally between the two provinces, circulating through networks of pilgrimage, pedagogy, and shared spiritual lineages. In doing so, they contribute to evolving conversations around faith-based environmentalism, alternative sustainability practices, and the role of spirituality in shaping responses to ecological precarity across regional contexts in Canada. This project presents YICs as valuable sites for understanding evolving relations between religious practice, environmental ethics, and climate change, highlighting how such communities strive to sustain utopian visions amid the dystopian ecological realities of our time.	Meredith Krueger McGill School of Religious Studies <u>Reimagining religion in social history: reciprocity and the "return of the repressed"</u> In The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange, Kojin Karatani presents a theory of shifts in global social formations in which religion plays a leading role. I This framework, based on modes of exchange, centers the role of capital, nation, and state in shaping history and the present. Karatani interprets Marx's analysis of capital as centered on commodity exchange and proposes a typology of four modes of exchange which have shaped social formations throughout history: gift-counter gift reciprocity, plunder-redistribution, commodity exchange, and "X" or the pure gift. Like Stanley Stowers's social-kinds model for theorizing religion, Karatani's model tracks qualitatively different instances of religion that are continuous with other social relations.2 However, coinciding with recent methodological innovations in religious studies that synthesize the "turn to religion" in philosophy, Karatani's model involves a transcritical materialism that can be read theologically, as non-secularist secular thought.3 His account of social history hinges upon a reinterpretation of Freud's "return of the repressed" to posit reciprocity as a recurring socio-theological force at the center of some religious phenomena. In this presentation, I describe Karatani's method for socio-political and religious history, trace the theological metaphysics of his narrative, and demonstrate how applications of this framework can animate research on religion that centers understandings of relations of power and their transformation.

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 8th, 10:45 AM	Ecology and Climate Science	MUREL : Dynamiques socioreligieuses, laïcité et espaces municipaux québécois 2	AGIC Special Panel: Literature and Film Analysis
	Ayodeji Ogunkaibe McGill University School of Religious studies Discussant	Dr. Charmain Levy UQO Chair	Megan Peck Concordia University Chair
	Zinzile Mdlulwa University of South Africa <u>Knowing the Earth Otherwise: Eco-Theology, Environmental Ethics, and the Limits of the Science-Religion Binary</u> This paper argues that the contemporary ecological crisis exposes the limits of the inherited science-religion binary and calls for a reconfiguration of how knowledge, value, and responsibility are conceptualised. Rather than approaching science and religion as competing explanatory systems, the study treats them as historically contingent modes of knowing that have been artificially separated within modern epistemology. It contends that this separation has contributed to an instrumental view of the Earth, in which ecological systems are reduced to objects of technical management rather than participants in a shared moral world. The paper develops an interdisciplinary framework grounded in eco-theology and environmental ethics to propose an alternative way of knowing the Earth, one that is relational, ethically responsive, and ontologically expansive. It first examines how modern distinctions between fact and value, belief and knowledge, have shaped dominant ecological discourses. It then advances an eco-theological ontology in which the Earth is understood as a community of life bearing moral significance, rather than a neutral substrate of scientific observation. Within this framework, environmental ethics is not an external moral corrective to science, but an integral dimension of ecological understanding itself. The study further introduces ecological conversion as a conceptual bridge linking epistemology, axiology, and praxis. This notion reframes conversion as a transformation of perception and responsibility, enabling forms of knowing that are simultaneously empirical, ethical, and theological. By situating eco-theology as a critical mediator rather than a confessional alternative, the paper demonstrates how religious studies can move beyond the logic of conflict and contribute rigorously to ecological thought. In doing so, it responds directly to the challenge of thinking beyond science and religion in an age of planetary vulnerability.	<u>La laïcité en train de se faire ? Une étude en contexte municipal.</u> Depuis l'adoption de la Loi 21 (Loi sur la laïcité de l'État) en 2019, le gouvernement du Québec a entrepris différentes mesures afin d'appuyer la laïcité dans ses institutions. Si les discussions se sont d'abord cristallisées autour de la question du port des signes religieux et de considérations qui concernaient la neutralité de l'État et ses institutions, les débats récents ont pris une tournure qui interrogent les contours de la notion à une échelle locale. Des prières ayant eu lieu dans les rues de Montréal ces dernières années ont défrayé la chronique, menant notamment le gouvernement à proposer le projet de loi 9, Loi sur le renforcement de la laïcité du Québec. Entre autres mesures, ce projet de loi propose l'interdiction d'utiliser un espace public à des fins de pratique religieuse collective. Si ce projet de loi témoigne d'un affrontement entre différentes conceptions de la laïcité et de sa portée dans la société, nous formulons l'hypothèse qu'il donne également à voir une laïcité en train de se faire. Ancrée dans une recherche doctorale en cours, cette communication propose de réfléchir aux différentes conceptions de la laïcité soulevées par les discussions entourant l'interdiction des manifestations religieuses dans l'espace public au Québec, dans l'objectif de dégager les contours de la laïcité dans les municipalités québécoises.	<u>The Bath that Changed Her Life: Bathsheba as a Powerful Mother</u> Bathsheba is often thought of as either a seductress or a victim of rape which relegates all her power to David or her sexualized body. It also does not allow for her to be seen as a woman of strength and accomplishment as she clearly is throughout 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Lilian Klein argues for an exegetical presentation of Bathsheba as a consenting actor in her engagement with David in 2 Samuel 11. She extends her argument by claiming Bathsheba's pregnancy lends her further agency which she uses to establish a role in David's palace politics. Similarly, Caryn Tambre-Rosenau argues that Bathsheba is not a seductress because she does not follow the trope of other bathing women such as Judith who did intend to seduce men through her actions. I perform exegesis on 2 Samuel and 1 Kings considering Klein and Tambre-Rosenau's arguments presents a Bathsheba who is empowered, morally upright, and disentangles Bathsheba from the virgin-whore dichotomy she is often forced into. This in turn allows for a feminist reading of these male centric texts and displays Bathsheba's influence on the Davidic line which ultimately connects her to major women of the Davidic line such as Ruth. Not only does Bathsheba need to be viewed as an empowered individual and not a victim of rape or a morally fallible seductress but she needs to be viewed within the Ancient Near Eastern socio-political context in which she lived. Beverly Cushman presents her relatability to the Ancient Near Eastern Great Lady who wielded political power, acquired through their sons, and had special political privileges elsewhere only granted to the king. Connecting my exegesis of Bathsheba as a woman who took advantage of her pregnancy to gain power, I fit her into Cushman's argument to express the power Bathsheba was granted by Solomon but ultimately used to uplift herself in Israelite society.

Ferreira Solène Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris, et UQAM <u>Au-delà de la technique et de la croyance : les rituels agraires comme systèmes adaptatifs entre savoirs locaux et rationalités modernes</u> à Cette communication propose d'interroger le dialogue entre science et religion à partir de l'étude des rituels agraires. Souvent interprétés comme des expressions liées aux croyances symboliques et comme des survivances antérieures à l'arrivée des techniques agricoles modernes, ces rituels apparaissent, dans les pratiques locales, comme des modes d'actions intégrés aux cycles saisonniers. A partir d'une revue systématique de la littérature interdisciplinaire et d'exemples ethnographiques comparés, nous proposons d'examiner les rituels liés aux cycles agricoles comme des mécanismes opérationnels ayant une place essentielle dans la subsistance des sociétés paysannes. L'analyse s'appuie sur des terrains d'Amérique centrale, d'Afrique et d'Asie, avec un accent particulier sur l'Inde. Elle démontre d'abord que le rituel remplit une fonction de synchronisation des activités agricoles. En coordonnant les étapes critiques, telles que la préparation du sol, les semailles ou encore les récoltes, le calendrier rituel agit comme un dispositif de régulation collective. Cette coordination est essentielle pour gérer les ressources naturelles et lutter contre les ravageurs. Parallèlement, nous explorons comment ces rites permettent de gérer l'incertitude environnementale. Face aux aléas climatiques, le rituel offre un cadre de médiation qui assure une protection technique perçue. La littérature montre toutefois que l'introduction des technologies modernes (mécanisation, protection chimique des cultures) apporte une nouvelle « certitude matérielle » qui tend à éroder la dépendance aux médiateurs rituels traditionnels. Ainsi, aborder les rituels agraires comme des systèmes adaptatifs complexes, nous permettra de repenser les catégories même de science, de religion, de technique, pour explorer des modes d'action situés au-delà de leur opposition.	Solène Bonardel-Derussy Université de Montréal <u>Espaces et rites laïques au Québec: L'émergence des célébrants laïques et les dynamiques municipales dans les pratiques rituelles contemporaines</u> Dans un Québec marqué par la sécularisation, les pratiques rituelles de fin de vie se transforment. Cette communication présente les résultats d'une étude de cas menée dans le cadre du projet MuReL, portant sur l'émergence des célébrants laïques à Montréal. À travers neuf entretiens et trois observations participantes, la recherche explore comment ces figures hybrides - souvent issues du milieu funéraire ou animées par une volonté de sens - répondent à une demande croissante de rituels personnalisés et non confessionnels. Ces cérémonies, bien qu'ancrées dans une démarche laïque, mobilisent une forte symbolique et cherchent à recréer du lien, du sens et un espace de transition pour les endeuillés. Le rôle des municipalités apparaît en creux : bien que ces pratiques se déroulent parfois dans des espaces publics ou patrimoniaux, elles restent peu reconnues institutionnellement, révélant une tension entre les besoins citoyens et le cadre légal ou logistique existant. La question du traitement des cendres, du rôle des directeurs de funérailles et des obligations réglementaires soulève aussi des enjeux importants.	Amelia Reardon Concordia University <u>Everything is Writing, Everything is Reading: The Political and Scientific Implications of Reconceptualizing the Self as Indeterminate Narrative</u> Stories have been an integral part of human connection and culture for millennia. They carry our cultural histories, help us explore the far reaches of the human psyche, and situate our place within time and space. However, if we combine Derrida's famous "il n'y a pas dehors-texte" and the psychological theory of constructivism, or the theory that the 'self' or consciousness is constantly shifting and rebuilding itself through its interactions with the external world, the story preexists even the first written text or artistic narrative representation on prehistoric cave walls. This paper will draw on narrative theory, deconstructionist theories of self and narrative, and psychological interpretations of consciousness to propose that the self, both conscious and unconscious, is a story in itself. In rethinking the self as a shifting and altering entity that is more in line with non-Western and precolonial belief than the ego-centric view that has prevailed as a political tool for self determination and nationalistic belief, this refiguring of the self as an ongoing and interpretative process that relies on interrelationality will also directly challenge quantitative and scientific attempts that face the aporia of the "third problem of consciousness" by uncovering an overlooked tool for understanding the self – the story. In viewing the self as a narrative – as an ongoing form of oral storytelling that exists not as a singularity but a liminal, superpositioned state that in informed by even the smallest of interactions and which can exist as a multitude of subjective interpretations – this paper will undertake the political and scientific intervention of reconstructing the self as one which relies on a vast web of other people for formation, alteration, and continuation within the larger story of an interrelational society and history.
Tara Wood Concordia University <u>Communicating Science in Canada: Religion as a Dimension of Audience Identity</u> Effective public science communication supports achievement of climate adaptation strategies. This research explored perspectives of Canadian climate academics and science communicators about communication methods and practices, comparing it to research about climate communication shortcomings, specifically political, religious, and cultural affiliation barriers. Findings revealed consensus on the urgency of addressing climate change and concerns over communication strategies regarding public understanding impeded by political beliefs, mistrust in science, and misinformation. Results showed Discussants attuned to factors impacting public understanding of climate science: political beliefs, trust in science, misinformation/disinformation, and economics. Contrary to literature emphasizing religious or cultural barriers, participants considered these factors less impactful. This research underscored the necessity for a more interdisciplinary approach to climate science communication, one that not only involves scientists but also engages communities in the conversation. This engagement is needed to tailor climate science communication to consider political ideologies, religious beliefs, lived experiences, and various other aspects of individual and community backgrounds that shape the public's acceptance of climate science, and science more generally. The impacts of religious and cultural affiliations on climate perspectives are multifaceted and different communities bring unique worldviews, values, and practices that influence climate science acceptance, and should influence how we communicate climate science. It is important to study these factors now as these diverse communities play a pivotal role in both challenging and enriching the national discourse on climate change.	Anaël Bisson Université de Montréal <u>Portée, enjeux et limites de l'exploration urbaine (urbex) comme pratique de (re)valorisation du patrimoine religieux catholique en transition à Montréal.</u> En 2022, le Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec considérait que 28% des églises québécoises (soit 764 églises sur 2751) étaient « en mutation », c'est-à-dire qu'elles se trouvaient dans une période de transition entre leur vocation initiale et une nouvelle fonction qui leur serait prochainement assignée. Cette période de transition est parfois caractérisée par un état qui s'apparente à l'abandon, dans la mesure où l'égglise ne sert plus et est officiellement fermée jusqu'à ce qu'un projet soit approuvé. Dans le cadre de cette présentation, nous proposerons certaines pistes de réflexion suite à une recherche exploratoire sur la pratique de l'exploration urbaine (urbex) dans les églises catholiques montréalaises en transition, en mettant de l'avant le sens qu'elle peut avoir pour les personnes l'exerçant ainsi que sa portée, ses enjeux et ses limites en ce qui a trait à l'expérience et à la (re)valorisation d'un patrimoine religieux qui semble être suspendu dans un espace d'entre-deux institutionnel. L'exploration urbaine est ici appréhendée comme pouvant permettre, dans certains cas, un ensemble de pratiques mémorielles collectives, notamment à travers la mise sur pied d'une communauté d'archivage mêlant expérience sensible et réflexion historique. Nous aborderons également comment certains groupes, généralement plus jeunes et très actifs sur les réseaux sociaux, s'approprient la pratique de l'exploration urbaine ainsi que la manière dont leur pratique crée des tensions au sein de la communauté d'urbexeurs.	Helen Aposos Concordia University <u>Glorious Bodies: Queer Belonging and Greek Nationalist Contexts in Panos Koutras' Stella: A Woman's Way (2009)</u> As the impact of the Sovereign Debt Crisis was coming to light in Greece in 2009, Greek movies started getting notably Weird: bold formal choices, stilted performances, portrayals of family violence and incest. At least, this is the commonly accepted narrative of the development what has since been called 'The Greek Weird Wave.' One of this movement's earliest entries, Stella: A Woman's Way (2009, dir. Panos H. Koutras) tells the story of the titular young trans woman deliberately building a romantic relationship with her father, who is unaware of her identity after not having seen her for his 15 years in jail for murder. While contextualizing this film in relation to the so-called "Greek Weird Wave," my paper explores the avenues that Stella provides for discussing the dissonance of Greek heritage construction, a dissonance exacerbated in the context of economic crisis. I then put this context in conversation with the queer negotiation of familial bonds and national belonging, and the film's uneasy portrayal of queer futurity. First, I briefly engage with how the Greek Weird Wave moniker is somewhat problematic, and ultimately come to terms with it as a heuristic. Then, I discuss how Stella is just one example of a Greek Weird Wave film where identity formation rendered between family members serves as a stand in for commentary on national identity formation (Papanikolaou 2022). Of particular note here are the parallels the film draws between the trajectory of Stella's relationship with her father and the story of Oedipus Rex, especially the way that these parallels engage with the film's wider engagement with the dissonance between Hellenism and life in contemporary Greece. Hellenism broadly describes the construction of Greek heritage around Classical Greek symbols for the Western gaze as a marker of Greek civilizational advancement. This presentation relates Stella with the Greek state's simultaneous commitment and ambivalence with the Western gaze, especially as this relates to the trajectory of queer and trans belonging in Greece.
Claire Offenberger University of Ottawa <u>In Pursuit of Awe: National Geographic and the Cultivation of Nonreligious Enchantment'</u> Since its first issue in 1888, National Geographic has been one of the most widely circulated magazines devoted to the natural world. Under editorial guidance to leave the technicalities of science to others, the publication was intentionally framed around awe, wonder, adventure, and mystery. By utilizing all-colour photography and a visual layout that prioritized images over text, National Geographic cultivated—and capitalized upon—a shared affective response to our planet's capacity to enchant those who gaze upon it. This paper explores the magazine's enduring success as evidence that awe of nature is not only widely experienced but actively sought after; awe and wonder have always been in demand. Drawing on Lori Beaman's work on the reclamation of enchantment, this paper suggests that feelings of awe, wonder, and connectedness are not the jurisdiction of religion alone, but are fundamental human responses to our natural world that both scientific and religious frameworks invoke. In contemporary contexts, this affective middle ground is sometimes translated into the language of "spirituality," particularly when people seek to articulate experiences of 'something greater' without aligning with religion. Yet the long-lasting influence of National Geographic demonstrates that the desire to be enchanted is not necessarily a religious or even spiritual sentiment, nor does the intention to cultivate awe require transcendent motivations. To move beyond the binary conflict narrative around science and religion, this paper centers a shared experience that exceeds boundaries of religion and nonreligion, and questions whether our existing linguistic tools to express awe-inspiring moments are adequate.	Caroline Mailhot Université de Montréal <u>Commercialisation et espace : ethnographie multisite sur l'utilisation de l'espace et les relations municipales des mouvements néopaisans et ésotériques dans le Grand Montréal.</u> Cette présentation mettra en lumière les différents travaux de terrain effectués lors de l'étude de cas sur les spiritualités alternatives dans le Grand Montréal entrepris entre 2023 et 2025. Nous situons spécifiquement les pratiques ésotériques et les spiritualités alternatives dans le paysage religieux du Québec, avec une attention particulière aux milieux urbains ainsi qu'aux dynamiques d'interactions entre ces groupes et la municipalité. Nous offrons ensuite nos perspectives et expériences tirées de nos travaux terrain, afin d'en faire ressortir les faits saillants, notamment la difficulté d'accès au terrain, les relations à l'espace, et les relations de voisinage des groupes spirituels et ésotériques. Nous concluons en offrant certaines recommandations issues de l'analyse du discours des actrices de terrain et des éléments qualitatifs notables ressortant de nos expériences de terrain au sein des communautés spirituelles alternatives.	Bastien Bussières University of California, Riverside <u>Rationalizing Violence Through Sacred Ritual in The Purge</u> The Purge franchise introduces the possibility of redemption of the American nation through an annual sanctified tradition of violence. According to the myth cultivated by the New Founding Fathers of America (NFFA), purging ostensibly offers a solution to the "exponential growth" of poverty and crime in an America facing "the worst economic disaster" in its history. It also functions as a sacred holiday when everyday Americans can ritually come together in the killing of a scapegoat and experience a nationwide catharsis, in the language of René Girard. I argue that the sacrificial violence portrayed in the franchise is rationalized through the mediation of two types of orchestration of time. Re-imagining temporality, the purge as sacred ritual conjures a temporal distance from the act of killing that renders it committable: the eternal return to what Mircea Eliade calls "mythical time" is effectuated in each experience of the ritual of the purge, sanctified "in illo tempore" by a civic model—the archetype of the First Purge. Primordial gestures of violence are exactly repeated by purge celebrants after they were performed and decreed at the "beginning of time" (the nation's rebirth) by civilizing heroes, the NFFA. The reenactment of the first purge transforms concrete time into mythical time, projecting concrete time into the illo tempore of the foundation of the "nation reborn." I demonstrate how these two temporalities—concrete and mythical time—are interlaced in the present as they are woven together through the repetition of the tradition, forming an integrated foundation for The Purge's Americans, making violence a pervasive condition rather than a passing rupture.
Shariq Abdul Ghani Columbia University		

	Climate Change as a Vehicle for Interfaith Engagement Beyond the Science-Religion Divide The science-religion debate has been framed as a binary between empirical inquiry and doctrinal authority that maps poorly onto the breadth of how religious traditions actually relate to scientific knowledge. This framing has narrowed the conversation in ways that obscure a more productive question: whether shared scientific realities can serve as the ground on which religious communities find common cause in practice. This paper argues that climate change represents a productive site for moving beyond the science-religion binary, not by resolving it theologically, but by rendering it as a secondary issue. Across Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traditions, the theological resources for engaging the environmental crisis, such as stewardship, creation care, intergenerational moral obligation, and the fundamental need for a habitable world, are largely convergent. Where competitive goals and hardened in-group boundaries have made theological comparison a difficult entry point for interfaith engagement, shared responsibility for the natural world creates conditions for positive interdependence that theological exchange rarely achieves on its own. Drawing on programmatic experience at Bridges, a multi-faith organization in Houston, Texas, this paper examines what happens when faith communities are convened around climate as a civic and moral challenge to be addressed together. What emerges from this examination is a model of interfaith engagement in which science and religion are neither in conflict nor in dialogue, but oriented together toward a common problem.	
--	---	--

		Birks 203	Birks 205
May 8th, 1:15 PM		AGIC Concordia Undergrad Art Expo: Film	AGIC Special Panel: Physical, Material, Fine Arts, and Textiles
		Thomas Seibel Concordia University Chair	Megan Peck Concordia University Chair
		Grace Stamler Concordia University Mara Zapata Concordia University <u>Teresa</u> Teresa sanctifies queer love by remembering an erotic history of Catholicism. This single-channel video reimagines the writing of Saint Teresa de Ávila, a 16th-century Spanish Carmelite nun who experiences religious ecstasy through transverberation, a divinity felt as a piercing to the heart. In her writings, such divine union is described as extremely loving and painful; borderline orgasmic. This experimental video follows the mystic nun as she, delirious, is beckoned to God. Ascending Mount Royal in a desperate pilgrimage, she finds God in an angel who offers her release... through a lesbian kiss.	Somayeh Rashvand Concordia University <u>"Reparative Archive in Parastou Forouhar's Documentation and The Eyes"</u> This paper examines the work of Iranian artist Parastou Forouhar as a practice of remembrance and a pursuit of justice. Focusing on her installation works, Documentation (2003–ongoing) and The Eyes (2018–ongoing), I approach these works as forms of memory work that persist despite the opacity of official archives and the slow, often obstructed processes of justice. At the same time, they generate a mode of resistance to the condition of living under ever-present surveillance within a totalitarian regime. Documentation was started after the 1998 political murders in Iran, including the assassination of Forouhar's dissident parents, Parvaneh and Dariush Forouhar. Drawing on Ariella Azoulay's critique of regime-made disasters and archival violence, the paper analyzes Documentation as a site of radical return, where bureaucratic processes and government opacity blocked justice and fair investigations, ignored collective grief. I discuss how Forouhar's gathering of documents in this regard resists the authoritarian narrative of the chain murders in Iran during 90s. Turning to The Eyes, I examine how Forouhar's eye motifs simultaneously refer to witnessing and to systematic surveillance embedded in the intimate, everyday lives of the Iranian people. Engaging with Foucault's notion of the panopticon and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible, I argue that this work presents surveillance as an everyday condition embedded within domestic and interior spaces, where visibility becomes inseparable from vulnerability. This paper positions Forouhar's practice as an aesthetic strategy that disrupts the distribution of the sensible, insists on witnessing and mourning as ongoing political acts, remembers the murder of her parents, and opens up alternative ways of seeking justice through her artistic practice without reinforcing and continuing the cycle of violence.
			Mika Benesh Concordia University <u>Iraqi Jewish Amuletic Cultures</u> Though often seen as relics of a lost homeland, protective amulets are still used today by exiled Iraqi Jews and their descendants. In this auto/ethnographic study, my dialogue with four other people of Iraqi Jewish heritage about these practices leads me to posit that protective amulets enable Iraqi Jews to instantiate their relations with one another, with non-humans, and with land itself—and wear these relations on their bodies. Tracing intertwined histories of Jews in Iraq and amuletic practices in the region, I then explore the presence of Iraqi Jewish protective amulets in archives and Iraqi Jewish cultural outputs, such as the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art and Carol Isaacs' 2020 graphic novel The Wolf of Baghdad. My findings contrast with the ways Iraqi Jewish amulets are often described (particularly in the Bezalel Narkiss Index), raising questions about what makes something an amulet for Iraqi Jews. Is an artefact still an amulet when cut off from relational networks which once generated its protective power? What stories of rupture might be told by objects which sit in private collections, disconnected from their people and place? What happens when such artefacts are robbed of their histories? And how do we continue in their absence? Ella Shohat writes that the resurgence of interest in the cultural contributions of Iraqi Jews cannot be reduced to a fixation about the past, since it also suggests hope for a different future (Shohat 2017). Understanding protective amulets as agents which instantiate Iraqi Jewish modes of kinship may open up possible alternative future relations between people, non-humans and land itself throughout the Iraqi-Jewish diaspora.

			Aster Percolides Concordia University <u>Silks, Magical Representations, and the Other in Lai Le Fresne</u> Despite textiles and clothing being highly emphasized in many of the Lais of Marie de France, it still remains an aspect of her work that is seldom studied. The piece of silk functioning as a baby blanket in Le Fresne is one such example; likewise, silk is prevalent in Lanval whenever the Fairy appears in a scene. This article studies the association of silks with luxury and magic in these Lais in the context of the silk industry in the 11th and 12th century Mediterranean, led by Muslim workers, and representations of 'Saracens' in romances by way of exoticized magical characters. The Fresne silk is recognized solely from its remarkable high quality and yet is only vaguely described; silk is used to connote an almost fantastical representation of nobility. I'm likewise interested in how Marie references queerness in Lanval and Bisclavret in surprisingly direct ways; I plan to further explore Lanval's fairy lover as a gendered and sexual other in my thesis. As medieval studies at Concordia receives diminishing attention and resources, and the study of textiles within literature more broadly is still brushed aside, I believe these perspectives are missing from general academia. Shifting the focus to female medieval writing, and taking an intersectional approach regarding gender and sexuality, interests me greatly as an LGBTQ academic and textile artist. I would appreciate the opportunity to share my work with my peers and represent these unique areas of research.
			Yara Ajeeb Concordia University <u>The Archive Cannot Record Irony: Humour, Memory, and the Disappearance of Political Satire</u> Humour has often served as a way of criticizing authority when direct political speech is difficult or dangerous. At the same time, humour is historically fragile. Irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, and tonal ambiguity rarely survive intact once a text moves across time, languages, or cultural contexts. When these cues disappear, the political force of a joke can disappear with them. This paper asks what happens when the archive preserves the words of a text but not its humour. Satire is particularly vulnerable to misreading because its meaning depends on tone, shared cultural knowledge, and an audience able to recognize the joke. Once these conditions change, passages that once mocked authority may instead appear serious, moralistic, or politically neutral. In this way, forms of dissent embedded in humour can quietly disappear from historical interpretation. Rather than treating this disappearance as accidental, the paper considers how the transmission and preservation of texts can reshape the political meanings they carry. When irony becomes illegible, the critical perspective it once expressed becomes difficult to recognize. Recovering humour in historical narratives, therefore, becomes an important interpretive task. Attending to irony and satire can reveal voices that earlier readings have flattened or overlooked. Engaging with the conference theme of RE: Missing Perspectives, this paper argues that humour offers an unexpected way to approach the politics of memory. If the archive cannot easily record irony, then recovering humour may help us recover political perspectives that have long remained hidden in plain sight.
			Chiara Santalucia Concordia University <u>Signalling Vice and Virtue: Visual Codes of Morality from Medieval Art to Disney Films</u> This paper examines how the transhistorical repetition of visual codes functions as a mechanism through which moral meaning is stabilized and naturalized, limiting the range of perspectives that can be recognized within dominant visual culture. In medieval Europe, where literacy was limited, visual imagery and gesture operated as primary communicative tools through which theological and social values were made publicly legible. Under the authority of the Catholic Church, Romanesque art developed a codified visual language in which idealized, symmetrical bodies aligned with European aesthetic norms signified sanctity, while distorted, hybrid, and non-European forms represented sin and moral disorder. These conventions did not merely communicate morality; they established a system of visual legibility that defined which bodies could appear as morally good. Drawing on semiotic theory, this paper argues that such imagery functions iconically, enabling viewers to immediately interpret moral meaning through visual form. This paper situates these conventions within a transhistorical framework in which repetition plays a central role. In the context of RE: Missing Perspectives, repetition emerges as a mechanism that reinforces these dominant visual norms, narrowing the field of representation and leaving little room for alternative embodiments of virtue to emerge or be recognized. By returning to these medieval conventions, this paper traces their persistence in contemporary Disney films such as The Little Mermaid and Snow White, where moral binaries are once again communicated through the body to young audiences, shaping how they come to understand morality from an early age and informing the development of their long-term beliefs. In these films, protagonists are shown with symmetrical features and European idealization, while villains are demonstrated through excess, distortion, and hybridity. This continuity demonstrates how repeated visual forms naturalize associations between European beauty standards and goodness, and between difference and deviance, across time. Ultimately, this paper argues that "missing perspectives" are not simply absent but are structurally excluded through the ongoing repetition of these visual codes, which continue to shape how morality is seen, understood, and reproduced.

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 8th, 3 PM	Internet and Digital Tools	AGIC Concordia Undergrad Art Expo: Visual Art	AGIC Special Panel: Walking Meditation

	Katrina Kardash Université de Montréal Discussant	Thomas Seibel Concordia University Chair	Megan Peck Concordia University Chair
	Vincent Chinweoku University of Augsburg <u>"With one hand, post, and with the other, hold on to God's garment": An investigation of the digital space as mediative site for religion and science.</u> If conventional wisdom once required that science and religion were given to different verities (a verity for which religion prefers the name of mystery thereto) of investigation – with science investigating natural, and religion the supernatural – their boundaries of activities have almost been obliterated by cause of subversive digital phenomenon. Just as theology – as science of religious faith – in the (post)modern culture seems to intensify efforts towards establishing its plausibility claims in a predominantly secular society wherein religious meanings have atrophied, voided of their peculiar sacral contents, and politically leveraged, so is the domain of science almost entropicized, engaged as cynical exercise of reason, and styled as indictment of the grand project of enlightenment. With the metaphor of "writing with one hand and holding on to God's garment" – adopted from an eighteenth-century French physicist and mathematician, André-Marie Ampère – I shall investigate the dialectical relations of science and religion in the media space, deconstruct their nuances of differences, and reconstruct a theoretical framework for their integrative relations as to evolve a new mediative model of doing theology germane to our (post)modern situation. I argue that an integrative model of doing theology – intersecting the rationality of science and the faith of religion – structures the digital mediative spaces as critical, constructive, and communicative loci of socio-religious identities. Within such digital ecosphere, religion will, thus, be made to confront its immanent aporias when it is scrutinized under the precise and rigorous framework of science, as science is also made to encounter religion precipitating a paradigmatic shift of understanding of science and religion and to re-discover the significance of their mutual integration.	Keza Morin Concordia University <u>Your Plaque Has Gotten Out of Control and It Will Clog Your Taste Buds and Sweat Glands</u> Your Plaque Has Gotten Out of Control and It Will Clog Your Taste Buds and Sweat Glands is an oil painting showing the beginnings of my reflections on the relationship between vision, perception and an inflicted bodily experience. During the start of my research around the medieval infatuation with the side wound of Christ, particularly in the accounts of female mystics, I started thinking of broad ideas of nourishment through pain, bodily love through object imagery, and using the art-object for spiritual devotion. The fear that my own anatomy inflicts on me, yet the weight I place on it to dictate my identity and fabricated value, creates a point of tension in the reality I struggle to define. The dimensions of the piece are meant to mirror the size of a devotional object, always intertwined with narrative, a mnemonic reminder of what I cannot see. Referencing these altar pieces, often commissioned by religious communities as aid in prayer and meditation, this piece is meant to interact with the physical senses in conjunction with pre-existing notions of the disembodied (hence ungendered) vagina as a battleground of meaning.	Devan Morrell Concordia University <u>Privilege Walking Exercise</u> With recent politics, there are many people saying things like "things are not that deep," "stop being overly sensitive," and "this generation cannot cope with hardship and needs to be coddled." These are statements of privilege, and while it can be taken for granted by those who have it, its presence is missing from those who go without it. That said, everyone has some privileges, and some more than others. Devan proposes a Privilege Walk exercise with participants interested in seeing how some are made more visible than others, how some can intersect, and how unconscious biases can lead to microaggressions when we do not take the time to critically think before we see and say things.
	Lee Eldridge Toronto Metropolitan University <u>Restoration as Interpretation: Reproducing Ancient Religious texts with Modern Technologies and Digital Fabrication Methods</u> This paper presents an interdisciplinary practice-based case study in restoring and reprinting religious text artefacts, using reproduction as a method for cultural return, access, and care. Many religious print artefacts have been displaced from their original contexts through colonial collection, war, and the capitalist art market. Even when these works are physically safeguarded, they often remain inaccessible in any practical way to the communities, institutions, and devotional lives from which they emerged. I argue that high-fidelity restoration and replication and open-source sharing can function as a form of material repatriation, returning usable, teachable, and ritually meaningful surrogates to religious stakeholders while reducing handling pressures on fragile originals – and encouraging the repatriation of artefacts to their original regions. With these goals in mind I've worked to develop a restoration workflow that reconstructs damaged and fragile pieces without erasing the marks of age that carry historical and devotional meaning. The restored versions are then translated into digitally fabricated reproductions that support tactile, repeatable impressions. Resulting outputs are evaluated for legibility, fidelity, and the capacity to communicate visual rhetoric in embodied, shared settings such as classrooms, archives and places of worship. Rather than treating replication as mere copy-making, the talk frames it as a negotiated practice that clarifies what is being restored, for whom, and to what end. It proposes a model of "protective access," where carefully documented replicas circulate widely, invite handling, involvement, and interpretation, and help re-situate displaced religious works within living devotional communities.	India Darson Concordia University <u>Life Force</u> For my final project, I wanted to focus on the colour red and its symbolism. As I continued to look into its historical and symbolic meanings, I realized there were many ways that I could execute it since the colour has many different meanings. That's when I realized that I wanted to center my focus on how the color red is a symbol of life force, vitality, and energy itself. We can see vitality through divine presence and hope, which we can find within ourselves, human connection, and religious prayer. By finding hope within our own journeys, we can engage with ourselves, our connections, and our prayers by connecting with our spirituality and putting our energy into vitalizing ourselves.	
	Natasha Rayman, and Charlie Atkinson Queen's University <u>Latter-day Influencers: Harnessing Power of Technology in the Evangelical Process</u> The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (LDS) is a religion based on spreading its beliefs to as many people as possible, with the intention of saving (converting) those who have not been inducted into the folds of the Church from Outer Darkness. The American Religion (Bloom 1992), contrary to the major religions of the world, has embraced the use of technology in achieving their evangelical goals, claiming that when used for the Church's mission, it is "a blessing from God." (President Eyring, second-in-command of the LDS church at the opening of the Broadcasting Building at Brigham Young University [BYU], 2011). The Church has not only opened a Broadcast Building to support their television network (BYUtv) and other broadcasting endeavours in their private university as a part of their harnessing of modern technology, but, according to Beardsley (2019), the LDS church engages in experimental technological development aimed at "more purely convey[ing] celestial messages," (iv). More noticeably to the non-LDS public, in recent years LDS influencers have made their way into viral culture by way of social media, extending their frontier mentality into interactive digital realms. Our intentions for this paper are to map the church's subtle shift in strategy for missionizing against major religions' tendencies to turn away from technology. Using both LDS and non-LDS sources, we seek to reinterpret what it means for the LDS church to be a fundamentally American religion as they uphold the American traditions of efficiency, colonialism, convenience, and capitalism.		

	Senior Common Room
May 8th, 4:45 PM	AGIC Keynote (Virtual)

	Ankita Chandranath Rutgers University <u>Faith as Method: Experimenting with Ethical Life under Statelessness</u> What forms of knowledge become possible when faith is approached not simply as belief but as a method for living in conditions of uncertainty? Statelessness is often analyzed through legal categories like citizenship, documentation, and the absence of political belonging. Yet such frameworks reveal little about how displaced communities cultivate ethical lives when political recognition remains fragile or indefinitely deferred. Drawing on ethnographic research with stateless Rohingya refugees living in India's National Capital Region, this talk examines revivalist Islamic pedagogy - Qur'anic instruction, moral teaching, and collective practices of piety - as a site of experimentation in ethical self-formation. Many of these pedagogical spaces are shaped by the devotional practices of the Tablighi Jamaat, an 80 million transnational movement centered on itinerant preaching and the cultivation of moral discipline. Within refugee neighborhoods marked by precarious legality and the long afterlives of violence, these revivalist pedagogies do more than transmit doctrine. They provide frameworks through which participants cultivate endurance, dignity, and collective responsibility in everyday life. My engagement with these spaces also raises methodological questions about how ethnographers encounter religious worlds they do not inhabit. As a non-Muslim anthropologist entering environments structured by devotional commitments I do not share, my participation in revivalist pedagogical spaces did not rest on theological agreement but on an openness to religious practice as a mode of ethical experimentation. Learning occurred not through belief but through attention to the forms of discipline, instruction, and moral cultivation that shaped everyday life. I argue that in these contexts faith operates as a practical method for navigating statelessness: a set of techniques through which communities rehearse possible futures despite the structural conditions of political abandonment. Approaching faith ethnographically in this way invites anthropology to consider religion not only as an object of belief but as a methodological lens for understanding how communities experiment with life, memory, and futurity under conditions of displacement.
--	--

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 9th, 9:00 AM	Special Panel: Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts (SCRIPT)	Philosophy of Religion	Celestial Bodies and Meaning
	Genevieve Lutsch McGill University School of Religious Studies Chair	Adam Smith McGill University Discussant	Aaron Ricker McGill University Discussant
	Rachel Fell McDermott SCRIPT <u>Pity and the Piteous: Viewing the Iconic Depiction of a Diseased Hero</u> This talk focuses on the figure of Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), a poet and litterateur who was second only to Rabindranath Tagore in talent and acclaim in the two decades preceding World War II in Bengal. Lionized since 1972 as the Rebel Poet of India and the National Poet of Bangladesh, Nazrul nevertheless endured a life of difficulty and tragedy, culminating in his own catastrophic loss of mental acuity in the early 1940s. The pity, the pathos, and the horror of his fate has galvanized Bengali admirers, as one can see through their loving, and continued, preservation of his vacant face.	Wayne Chandira McMaster University <u>Overcoming the Particular: Exploring Tanabe Hajime's Philosophy as Metanoetics</u> Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) in Western scholarship is primarily known for his mature philosophical work, Philosophy as Metanoetics. This entry is regarded as a philosophical response to the sociopolitical and cultural crises of postwar Japan (1945-1960), broadly informed by the Western religious philosophical tradition expressed by G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger in addition to the Buddhist writings of Shinran 親鸞, the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū sect of Japanese Buddhism. My presentation aims to provide an overview of a "philosophy of overcoming" that I argue sits at the heart of Tanabe's mature philosophy, demonstrated by his concern with the limitation of reason in the encounter with antinomies, understood as the irreconcilable property of particularity present in truth claims, be it in the realm of philosophical inquiry or scientific discovery. For Tanabe, the manner of overcoming these antinomies of reason does not emerge from the self-activity of the individual pushing reason towards its limit in hopes it will come to a truer, deeper understanding of truth or unification with said truth. Rather, a fuller overcoming can only be received from and mediated by the activity of surrender and reflection, on account of recognizing one's own particularity as a stumbling block to be negated by what Tanabe calls Absolute Nothingness. The encounter with Absolute Nothingness "turns over" (metanoesis μετάνοσις) the individual to the recognition of these antinomies as not particulars to be reconciled (often violently) unto one another in unity, but as activity that embraces those contradictory characteristics of truth in the world in openness.	Meredith Krueger McGill School of Religious Studies <u>Astrologers as Freelance Religious Experts</u> My paper examines the writings of Hellenistic astrologers, highlighting their use of rhetorical methods and contextualizing them as historical actors. The patterns displayed in these writings are common to other prominent religious and philosophical texts of the period: ethnic identification, creative adaptation, and emphasis on esoteric knowledge. These strategies have been identified by scholars of ancient Mediterranean religion as characterizing self-authorized expert knowledge in a highly competitive social context. Social-structural change during the Hellenistic and early Roman empire periods accompanied a decline in the dominance of state religion and an increase in the prevalence and diversity of freelance religious activity. Authors such as Marcus Manilius, Vettius Valens, Firmicus Maternus, and Claudius Ptolemy, who wrote lengthy treatises on astrology, emerged as part of this proliferation of religious and intellectual activity. I employ Stanley Stowers's framework of religion as a social kind to theorize different instances of astrological thought and practice, and to consider how they might be characterized with respect to ancient Mediterranean religion, science, and other philosophical and intellectual processes. I also consider how the expression of these patterns in the thought of contemporary western astrologers might contribute to understandings of religious knowledge and its relationship to power, authority, and social-structural change in the present.
	David Dault SCRIPT <u>Exploring Scripture as a Structure of Feeling</u> In texts such as The Long Revolution and Marxism and Literature, literary theorist Raymond Williams introduced "structures of feeling" as a way to situate the analysis of ongoing cultural production. This paper will take up the idea of structures of feeling in the context of recent conversations regarding the materiality of the objects we call "scripture." This analysis will be framed in part by Richard Newton's provocative question, "Are there posthumous merits for recognizing the agency of texts?" This paper will suggest that the proper answer to this question is "no." Instead, this paper will suggest that Williams leads us both to a re-location of the objects we call "scripture" within the humanist project, and to a re-invigorated interpretive politics.	Spencer Harris Toronto Metropolitan University <u>Temporal Asymmetry in the Ontic Sciences and Fundamental Ontology: Reading Heidegger's "Phenomenology and Theology"</u> In "Phenomenology and Theology," delivered shortly after the publication of Being and Time, Martin Heidegger characterizes theology and the natural sciences as "ontic," or "positive sciences," in contradistinction to phenomenology which he characterizes as fundamental ontology, establishing them as absolutely and formally distinct. This paper argues that the decisive difference between these sciences is not epistemological but ontological. For Heidegger, temporality is ontological as existence is structured by time, i.e., temporality is the horizon of intelligibility upon which beings become accessible in the first place. Natural science works within a paradigm of homogenous, calculative time, which renders beings present-at-hand and repeatable. Theology, by contrast, is grounded in the positing of faith as an existentiell possibility of Dasein which orients one towards an eschatological horizon structured by participation and promise. Because faith is a particular mode of existence, its determinate temporality falls within the field that ontology claims to describe. Yet if the participatory, eschatological futurity of faith cannot be reduced to one's anticipatory being-towards-death which, for Heidegger, designates Dasein's authentic disclosive possibility, then his existential analytic (from Being and Time) faces an internal tension: either faith's corporeal futurity is an ontic modification of individual finitude, or individual finitude does not exhaust the horizon of authentic disclosure. By foregrounding this tension, this paper suggests that moving "beyond science and religion" requires rethinking their relation as distinct temporal possibilities for existence, and reconsidering whether Heidegger's distinction between ontology and the ontic sciences is as stable as it appears at first glance.	Ian Greer University of Toronto <u>Uranus, Heliocentrism, Infinite Spheres: 'Frankish' Astronomy Meets 19th-Century Qur'anic Exegesis</u> Some 60 years after its discovery by William Herschel in 1781, the existence of the planet Uranus and its implications for the traditional, Islamic-philosophical model of the cosmos were being pondered by Abū al-Thaṇā' al-ʾĀlūsī (d. 1854) in his famed exegesis of the Qur'ān, Rūḥ al-ma'ānī. Uranus, along with other celestial bodies of our solar system discovered into the early 19th century by 'Frankish astronomers' are discussed by al-ʾĀlūsī at length in relation to Qur'ānic verses describing the cosmos, and classical Islamicate astrological thought. In this paper, I trace how these astronomical discoveries from Europe made their way to al-ʾĀlūsī in Ottoman Iraq, and analyze his reception of them. In general, al-ʾĀlūsī comes out in favour of an empiricist approach to cosmology, and considers traditional Islamicate cosmological models discredited. He entertains the possibility of infinitely expanding the traditional model of nine concentric celestial spheres, or discarding it entirely; he is ambiguous towards the idea of heliocentrism, but does not oppose it on scriptural grounds; he portrays the scale of our solar system and powers of observation as infinitesimally small, in cosmic terms, marking a major shift from older cosmological models. Al-ʾĀlūsī also grapples with the epistemological challenge posed by European astronomy, warning that tying Islamic belief to faulty cosmology risks damaging the faith's popular credibility. Instead, he argues for interpretation of scripture in any way that can conform to reason and empirical observation, yet in line with Taymiyyan epistemology, sets revelation itself as the ultimate criterion of sound reasoning.
		Vanja Vojvodic York University	

		<u>From Representation to Concept: Is Religious Studies a Wissenschaft Beyond the Conflict Model?</u> This paper argues that the modern science–religion opposition persists because Wissenschaft is often taken to mean external method and objectifying explanation. Hegel offers a different account: Wissenschaft is self-grounding knowing, where truth is disclosed through thought's immanent, self-correcting movement rather than secured by an observer. On this view, religion is neither a rival explanatory enterprise nor a merely private sphere of feeling; it is a determinate way in which spirit relates to truth in representational form, and it contains an internal pressure toward conceptual articulation. I develop this claim by reading the Phenomenology of Spirit as a discipline of consciousness in which the standards of knowing emerge within experience itself. A brief test case from "Lordship and Bondage" makes the point concrete. Hegel shows that a posture of mastery cannot secure truth: lordship depends on an other it does not genuinely internalize, whereas bondage undergoes formation through fear and labour, learning to endure and transform its relation to the world rather than merely dominate it. The point is not to map science onto lordship and religion onto bondage, but to analyze a shared logic of objectifying mastery that the conflict model repeatedly presupposes. Methodologically, the consequence for religious studies is specific: religious studies becomes Wissenschaft when it analyzes doctrines, rituals, and practices as rational configurations of meaning that shape what a community counts as true, and when it tracks how these representational forms generate demands for clearer conceptual determination rather than being dismissed as non-cognitive belief opposed to thinking.	
--	--	---	--

	Birks 111		Birks 205
May 9th, 10:45 AM	Islamic Ontologies and Epistemologies		Workshop: Tips and Strategies for Applying to Cégep and Junior College Teaching Positions
	Arwa Hussein Concordia University Discussant		Amanda Rosini McGill University Facilitator
	Mohammadmahdi Morvarid Concordia University <u>Graded Religious Experience in Islamic Perspective vs. Contemporary Epistemic Distinctions</u> This presentation examines the diversity of religious experience through the lens of classical Islamic philosophy, particularly Mullā Ṣadrā and Qur'anic exemplars, situating it in dialogue with contemporary epistemological assumptions. In much modern discourse, religious experience is often construed as private, affective, or interpretive, and epistemically subordinate to scientific knowledge, which is taken as empirical, discursive, and universally valid. Ṣadrā's framework, following classical Islamic philosophy, incorporates notions akin to knowledge by presence ('ilm ḥuṣūrī) and acquired knowledge ('ilm ḥuṣūrī). His unique metaphysics provides a systematic framework through which the soul progressively attains both cognitive and existential insight. Each level of the soul corresponds to a gradation of religious experience, ranging from initial awareness and assent to divine guidance (Q 28:53), to reception of revelation via angelic mediation (Q 2:97), to direct encounters with the divine (Q 7:143). These experiences constitute genuine knowledge within a graded ontology rather than mere subjective states. I argue that contemporary distinctions between scientific and religious knowledge are grounded in epistemic assumptions that treat religious claims as fundamentally distinct from, yet to some extent subordinate to, empirical inquiry. A Ṣadrāean-informed perspective destabilizes this separation by emphasizing that knowledge in its fullest sense—including knowledge by presence—integrates both cognition and direct experiential insight, making religious experience intelligible, systematic, and ontologically grounded. By situating Qur'anic exemplars within classical Islamic metaphysics, this study provides a non-reductive framework for understanding religious experience, showing that, within a Ṣadrāean structure, religious experiences can constitute a form of understanding that is, in some respects, even more epistemically profound than empirical science, rather than merely complementary or subordinate. Keywords: religious experience, Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic philosophy, Mullā Ṣadrā, knowledge by presence, graded ontology, contemporary philosophy of religion. Elias Baymout University of Ottawa		<u>Tips and Strategies for Applying to Cégep and Junior College Teaching Positions</u> The workshop aims to present guiding principles for building a cover letter tailored to teaching opportunities at the Cégep and junior college levels. I will also discuss the interview process for these types of employment opportunities and the objective of the mock lecture presentation that is often requested when applicants are invited to an interview.

Situating Musa ibn Uqbah's Maghazi within the Islamic
Epistemology of Hadith Sciences

Islamic epistemology has long understood hadith studies ('ulum al-hadith) as a rigorous science concerned with the evaluation, transmission, and authentication of knowledge. This paper argues that the recently rediscovered Maghazi of Musa ibn Uqbah (d. 758) in 2021 provides a microcosmic case study through which this scientific epistemology can be observed in practice. Far from functioning as a merely devotional or pre-critical narrative, the Maghazi reflects a systematic methodology governing how historical data were collected, verified, circulated, and preserved in early Islamic scholarship for religious purposes. Situating Musa ibn Uqbah within the intellectual milieu of Medinan hadith scholars, this study examines the text's compilation practices, its reliance on collective chains of narration (isnad), its controlled narrative structure, and its transmission through licensed pedagogical networks. These features demonstrate how early Muslim scholars balanced orality and writing, coherence and verification, in order to produce authoritative knowledge. The paper further shows how later shifts in disciplinary standards—particularly the preference for fully disaggregated isnads in hadith collections—contributed to the marginalization and eventual loss of Musa's work, despite its early authority. By reading the Maghazi as a site where epistemological principles are enacted rather than merely theorized, this paper challenges modern assumptions that frame religion and science as inherently oppositional. Instead, it proposes that early Islamic historiography exemplifies an alternative scientific rationality—one in which ethical responsibility, methodological rigor, and communal verification are central to knowledge production.

Amanda Tapp
McGill School of Religious Studies

Ibn 'Arabi's Epistemological Method: from Practical Ethics to
Cosmological Ontology

In the treatise *Mawāqīf al-nujūm* (Twilight of the Stars), Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) grounds his epistemological method first in the Sufi traditional discourse of *jihād al-nafs* (the struggle over the self) to uncover his ontological cosmology. This paper focuses on two of the eight "organ" chapters within the treatise, namely: the chapter of the stomach and hunger, overcome through fasting, and the chapter of the private parts (*farj*) and lust, overcome through abstinence. Ibn 'Arabi elevates the bodily desire of hunger to nourishment from God (*rizq*) and therefore His Decree (*qadar*) in and over all things. The desire of the private parts is elevated into a scheme affirming the duality of ontological origins—ascending from the level of man and woman to Islamic theological concepts of the Tablet and Pen, linking them to Hellenistic concepts of the First Intellect and Universal Soul. Ibn 'Arabi gives symbolic meaning to the organs of the human body by incorporating ontological realities into practical ethics, unveiling an inner reality in which the human body is the microcosm of the universe. Moving beyond the modern perceived binary between "religion" and "science", Ibn 'Arabi's epistemological method embeds ontological structures within the mundane—in the everyday exertion over oneself.

Seddigheh Kardan
McGill University

The Hierographic Universe: Shahrastānī's Synthesis of Revelation
and Science through the Arcana of Letters

This paper investigates the idiosyncratic 12th-century cosmogony of a towering Muslim thinker, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, as presented in his esoteric exegesis of the Quran, *Mafāṭih al-Asrār*. While scholars such as Wilferd Madelung, Toby Mayer, and Diana Steigerwald have significantly advanced our understanding of Shahrastānī's esotericism and sectarian identity, a gap remains regarding his specific integration of linguistic structures with physical reality. I argue that Shahrastānī treats the Arabic alphabet not merely as a symbolic tool, but as the literal, physical blueprint of the universe, bridging the divide between prophetic revelation and natural science.

My intervention demonstrates how Shahrastānī's "intuitive scrutiny" (*al-tawassum bi-hads*) decodes the relationship between divine speech and natural phenomena to reveal a "hierographic" universe. Central to this view is his analysis of the Name "Allah" and the disjointed letters (*al-muqāṭa'āt*) in the Quran. He identifies the Arabic letters *alif*, *lām*, and *hā'*, the constituents of the word "Allah", as the "four foundations" (*al-mabādī al-arba'a*) of created existence. In a remarkable synthesis of linguistics and physics, he traces the tridimensionality of space to these letters: the vertical extension of the *alif* generates height, the horizontal extension of the *lām* generates breadth, and the cavity of the *hā'* generates depth. Furthermore, he argues that the fourteen *muqāṭa'āt* letters signify "Command-realities" (*amriyyāt*) that govern the celestial and terrestrial hierarchies. By employing contextual analysis and anagogic hermeneutics, this study reframes the Quran as an implicate order for the physical world, offering a unique medieval perspective on the laws of existence.

Faezeh Izadi
University of Calgary

	<u>Calculated Compassion and Divine Duty: Deconstructing the Dichotomy of 'Thinking' and 'Believing' in Philanthropy</u> Why do we conceptualize 'thinking' and 'believing' as two different processes? In the realm of philanthropy, this dichotomy appears as a conflict between scientific philanthropy—exemplified by Effective Altruism (EA), the science—or systematic rationality—of doing good via utilitarian calculus, data analysis, and evidence-based efficacy—and religious charity, often dismissed as mere metaphysical belief rather than systematic reasoning. This paper challenges that binary by demonstrating Twelver Shia charitable jurisprudence—not mere belief, but systematic reasoning via 'ilm al-uṣūl (principles of legal reasoning) and fiqh (applied law)—as a structured decision framework. Drawing on episodes from Shia intellectual history—including certain juristic fatwas (legal opinions) responding to Mongol invasions and later-era infrastructure funding—this paper shows how Shia 'ulamā' (scholars) expanded the Qur'anic categories of zakat and khums recipients through disciplined uṣūl-based reasoning. Tools such as tarjīh (weighing evidentiary strength), ta'arūf (reconciling conflicting texts)—mirroring EA's calculus in method, if not axioms—maṣlaḥa (assessing public welfare), and uṣūl 'amaliyyah (managing uncertainty through practical principles) enabled jurists to hierarchize needs amid changing social and political contexts. It argues that both EA and Shia fiqh operate through systematic reasoning procedures; what differentiates them are their foundational axioms and sources of authoritative evidence. EA presupposes utilitarian commitments about commensurable welfare and measurable benefit, while Shia jurisprudence grounds normativity in divine command interpreted through disciplined hermeneutics. In both cases, philanthropic "calculation" is structured by prior moral commitments. Moving beyond the science/religion binary reframes the contest not as "thinking" vs. "believing," but as competing normative architectures. Finally, by recognizing these shared structural logics, this paper explores the possibility of a direct dialogue between the two: a cross discursive engagement grounded in their mutual reliance on systematic reasoning and the management of uncertainty.	
--	--	--

	Birks 111		
May 9th, 1:15 PM	Workshop: Restoration as Interpretation: Reproducing Ancient Religious texts with Modern Technologies and Digital Fabrication Methods		
	Lee Eldridge Toronto Metropolitan University Facilitator		
	<u>Restoration as Interpretation: Reproducing Ancient Religious texts with Modern Technologies and Digital Fabrication Methods</u> This paper presents an interdisciplinary practice-based case study in restoring and reprinting religious text artefacts, using reproduction as a method for cultural return, access, and care. Many religious print artefacts have been displaced from their original contexts through colonial collection, war, and the capitalist art market. Even when these works are physically safeguarded, they often remain inaccessible in any practical way to the communities, institutions, and devotional lives from which they emerged. I argue that high-fidelity restoration and replication and open-source sharing can function as a form of material repatriation, returning usable, teachable, and ritually meaningful surrogates to religious stakeholders while reducing handling pressures on fragile originals – and encouraging the repatriation of artefacts to their original regions. With these goals in mind I've worked to develop a restoration workflow that reconstructs damaged and fragile pieces without erasing the marks of age that carry historical and devotional meaning. The restored versions are then translated into digitally fabricated reproductions that support tactile, repeatable impressions. Resulting outputs are evaluated for legibility, fidelity, and the capacity to communicate visual rhetoric in embodied, shared settings such as classrooms, archives and places of worship. Rather than treating replication as mere copy-making, the talk frames it as a negotiated practice that clarifies what is being restored, for whom, and to what end. It proposes a model of "protective access," where carefully documented replicas circulate widely, invite handling, involvement, and interpretation, and help re-situate displaced religious works within living devotional communities. This work is undertaken in collaboration with Dr. Gregory Scott - Undergraduate Programme Director for Chinese Studies at the University of Manchester; an Associate Fellow, Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture in Asia, University of Groningen; and was Co-chair of Holmes Welch and the Study of Buddhism in Twentieth-Century China Seminar of the AAR from 2014 to 2018. The researcher has developed materials to deploy the research content as an interactive workshop where participants (6 to 8) can engage in a traditional printmaking workshop of a religious artefact, generating their own copy using the methods developed.		

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 9th, 3 PM	AI and Religion	Historical, Bioethical, and Theological Liberation	Workshop: Kierkegaard Computer Workshop Package: Conceptual Mapping through Textual Analysis
	Cory Andrew Labrecque Université Laval Discussant	Dan Cere McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Abraham H. Khan University of Toronto Facilitator
	Camden MacKenzie Queen's University	James C. Williams Boston University	

	<u>The New Motor Movement: An AI Religion in the 19th Century?</u> With the rise of the “AI Boom,” scholars have noted an increase in magico-religious claims surrounding the future of AI models, such as the belief that we are on the way to creating the “technological singularity,” a man-man deity which will rule over the earth with benevolence. A number of new religious movements dedicated to worshipping AI have even sprung up, such as Anthony Levandowski’s Way of the Future and the broader TESCREAL movement. However, the desire to build one’s own savior is not new. The New Motor Movement, active throughout the 1850s, also sought to build a mechanical messiah. The New Motive Movement was founded in 1853 by Spiritualist John Murray Spear, with the goal of building the “New Motive Power,” a self replicating alchemical machine that was described as a living god, destined to bring abundance to all people. In this paper, I will use content analysis of New Motor Movement documents and pro-AI social media posts to illustrate that the New Motor Movement and modern AI hype share several common themes; utopian accelerationism, a desire to infuse the mechanical with human mind, the veneration of public scientific figures, a fixation on self replication, a return to a state of enchantment in a disenchanted world, and repeated doubling down on failed prophecies. These similarities illustrate that the magico-religious utopian accelerationism surrounding AI is by no means a recent trend, and prompts us to look further for more historical “AI religions.”	<u>Superstition, Slaveholder Preaching, and Simple Faith: William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass’ Abolitionist Sociologies of Religion</u> American abolitionism has not figured prominently in the history of the sociology of religion, but a close examination of its leading figures’ views can provide a fresh perspective for understanding the nature and relationship of science and faith. This paper puts abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass into conversation with early sociologists of religion (e.g., Comte, Marx, Tylor) in order to explore how their accounts of religion and science might help us better understand these categories. Garrison adopted an enlightenment account of religion as mere superstition and priestcraft, used to justify slavery and control the laity. Ironically, his own embrace of skepticism functioned much like the revivalist religion he rejected. Similarly, Douglass searingly critiqued the racial and class interests behind “slaveholder religion.” However, he was more pessimistic than Garrison that science was unprejudiced and more optimistic that religion could be liberating. The 1850s debate over polygenism – the belief that the human race was comprised of several distinct species that lacked common descent – provides a case-study for how Garrison and Douglass’ views played out. Douglass appealed to Genesis to refute polygenism, urging that some questions were beyond science. Conversely, Garrison denied that polygenism was science, but at the cost of reifying race as a scientific concept. Taken together, Garrison and Douglass’ accounts remind us that appeals to science can be just as religiously motivated and racially fraught as anything conventionally religious – and that what counts as scientific or religious was as contested in the mid-nineteenth century as it is today.	<u>Kierkegaard Computer Workshop Package: Conceptual Mapping through Textual Analysis</u> The presentation demonstrates an application of the computational analysis strategies to map the concept boredom (Danish, Kjedsommelighed) in the Kierkegaard Corpus. It employs the software package Kierkegaard Computer Workshop (1999) by Alastair McKinnon at McGill in Philosophy of Religion. The package, resulting from at least three decades of his pioneering work, is an investigative tool for literary studies that enhance perspective on what is foundational to scholarship, whether it be religion or science: objectivity, order and methodological rigour with respect to what can be said or known about a literary production. In this case what can be said about the concept of boredom through Kierkegaard’s literary artistry.
	Karen Phan Yale Divinity School <u>Panel Painting to JPEG: The Ontological Failure of Artificial Intelligence Generated Icons</u> This thesis examines the theological status of artificial intelligence (AI) generated religious imagery through Byzantine icon theory, asking whether such images can participate in the material, devotional, and communal, definitions traditionally ascribed to icons. Situating AI within an intellectual lineage beginning with iconoclasm debates then turning to Alan Turing’s Computing Machinery and Intelligence, the project places contemporary image-generation models such as DALL·E and Midjourney in dialogue with late antique and Byzantine debates on representation, likeness, and mediation. Drawing on St Theodore the Studite’s defense of icons as relational images grounded in the Incarnation, the thesis argues that AI-generated portraits cannot be understood as icons in a theological or art-historical sense. Icons depend upon an embodied triad between maker, prototype, and worshipping community, sustained through liturgical practice, ascetic discipline, and intentional craft. Adding Aristotle’s account of deliberation further clarifies this distinction: algorithmic production lacks the ethical agency and purposive choice intrinsic to sacred image-making. While engaging the scholarship of Robin Cormack, Charles Barber, Bissera V. Petcheva, and many others, the study reasserts the Christological foundations of icon theory. While situating AI imagery within contemporary political economies of data extraction, militarism, and environmental cost, AI may attempt to reproduce religious images, but it cannot generate objects of real veneration.	Ruth Kause University of Toronto <u>Briarpatch Preaching: Homiletics and Hidden Transcripts in an AI-world</u> Although AI can help prepare sermons, this paper argues against reliance on AI in preaching, in order to preserve preaching’s (flex)ability to address systemic injustice. It draws on a diverse set of thinkers – Black essayist Albert Murray, anthropologist James C. Scott, and Indonesian sci-fi novelist A.W. Prihandita. We find ourselves in a world of adversity and structural oppression – Murray’s “briar patch.” This situation elicits the improvisation of subaltern peoples who subtly resist the powerful by criticizing them in coded language, or Scott’s “hidden transcripts.” Preachers too must become fluent in these transcripts, better to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. This doubleness – saying one thing and meaning another – is well-beyond current generative Artificial Intelligence, as Prihandita’s thought experiments on untranslatability show in her recent novelette. However, even if AI is eventually able to speak in hidden transcripts, it will only serve to make them legible to powerful AI-corporations and so expose their meaning, rendering them useless for resistance. Preaching that relies on AI thus risks uncovering hidden transcripts and placing the vulnerable in even greater peril.	
	Caro Lina Choy Pedroza Concordia University <u>Technology, Value, And The Moral Work of Education: Rethinking Human Responsibility in The Age of AI</u> This presentation examines how artificial intelligence reactivates a foundational philosophical and religious concern: the question of human responsibility in a technologically mediated world. Drawing on Frederick Ferré’s constructive postmodern metaphysics and Parker J. Palmer’s spiritual philosophy of education, I argue that contemporary debates around AI reveal the limits of modern instrumental rationality and the false separation of facts and values. Ferré challenges the modern assumption that values are external to reality, insisting instead that value is intrinsic to being itself. From this perspective, no technological system, including AI can be ethically neutral, every algorithm encodes metaphysical commitments about meaning, intelligence, and worth. Palmer complements this framework by reframing education as a relational and spiritual practice rather than a mere transmission of information. His insistence that “truth is personal as well as propositional” exposes the inadequacy of educational models that equate knowledge with control, an anxiety that resurfaces in contemporary fears that AI will render human knowing obsolete. By placing Ferré and Palmer in dialogue, this paper proposes a postmodern ethic of technology grounded in relational ontology and ecological consciousness. Rather than approaching AI through technophilia or technophobia, I argue for an educational and ethical response that emphasizes participation, care, and value-awareness. AI is not merely a technological innovation but a metaphysical test: it forces societies to confront whether intelligence can be divorced from responsibility and whether education will cultivate technicians or stewards of meaning. Ultimately, this presentation suggests that religious and spiritual dimensions of knowing—understood as depth, relation, and intrinsic value—are indispensable for navigating AI responsibly in a globalized, technologically saturated world.	Alexandre A. Martins Marquette University <u>Assessing Liberation Bioethics as a Framework for AI in Global Health</u> This paper examines whether theology and health care can collaborate to address ethical challenges arising from the development of medical technology. Liberation bioethics is an extension of liberation theology, a way of doing theology from the perspective of poor and historically marginalized communities. Health care is a field marked by contradictions: while modern, highly technological medicine has developed tremendously in the last few decades, helping many people live longer and better lives, this medicine is often not accessible to all, creating a huge health disparity and inequality in accessing its benefits. Liberation bioethics looks at this contraction through the lens of those who are left out of the development of modern medicine as an ethical issue of justice and human dignity. Considering the most recent development of AI and its uses (current and potential) in health care, this paper will examine whether liberation bioethics contributes to addressing the ethical challenges related to AI and health care. It argues that the liberation bioethics framework provides essential ethical tools to critique and address the systemic inequalities of modern AI in healthcare. The presentation will proceed in three moments: (1) it will introduce liberation bioethics; (2) it will present key bioethical challenges and the insights of liberation bioethics to address them, considering its experience in the global south; (3) it will use this framework to examine ethical challenges related to AI and health care, considering AI as part of the newest development of modern medicine that has been growing in an incredible pace.	

May 9th, 4:45 PM	Senior Common Room	
	AAR-EIR and RSGS Keynote	
	Cory Andrew Labrecque Professeur titulaire, Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses Université Laval	

	<u>In saecula saeculorum : Transhumanism and the Catholic Tradition on the Desire for Immortality</u> Transhumanists lament the many shortcomings of being human, including the inevitability of ageing and death. Perhaps even more regrettable for transhumanists, though, has been our apathy in the face of these limitations; we have collectively surrendered our evolution as a species to Nature. As such, we have impeded progress and, ultimately, we are paving the way to our own extinction. It is high time, transhumanists tell us, to take the reins from Nature and assume full control over our (re)design by promoting enhancement on virtually every level, through the responsible use of science and biotechnology. This presentation engages transhumanism and the Christian tradition (writ large) on the matter of radical life extension. No longer within the realm of simple speculation, the idea of increasing human life expectancy by decades (at least) has become a serious scientific pursuit. Over the centuries, the Church has developed sophisticated doctrines on immortality, salvation, and transcendence that address human finitude, but these are described as being attainable only outside of, or beyond, the scope of this mortal, temporal human experience. The expectation of a growing number of scientists (and others) is that, in due time, humans will know indefinite longevity in the here-and-now.
	Sharday Mosurinjohn Associate Professor of Contemporary Religious Context, School of Religion Queen's University <u>Swimming, Treading Water, Drowning: A Synoptic Model of Consciousness Beyond Psychosis and Mysticism</u> This talk unpacks a provocative phrase I have often encountered in psychedelic and mystical studies: "The psychotic is drowning in the same sea the mystic is swimming in." I investigate what it means to swim, tread water, or struggle in this sea, examining the variables that shape how intense states of consciousness are experienced, interpreted, and integrated: ego strength, relational and material resources, narrative frameworks, developmental capacities, and the skill to navigate openness, closure, and informational permeability. My moves are toward synoptic integration. Mechanistic accounts – whether, e.g. neuroscientific, psychological, or sociological - function as handles, tracing how states emerge and relate without collapsing them into explanatory closure. Complementary humanistic and metaphysical frameworks scaffold relational attunement and skillful engagement with other holons of consciousness. Together, these perspectives illuminate a spectrum of consciousness in which choice, skill at moving between states, and developmental awareness are as central as the states themselves. I develop a conceptual model in which the same phenomenology may manifest as what an experiencer or observer may (differently) code as incapacitating psychosis or mystical insight. Central to this model is a spectrum of agency: the degree to which individuals can exercise awareness and choice in entering, modulating, and exiting states, and the improvisational skill with which they navigate them. Health and flourishing depend on the capacity to select a range of meaningful options from among what could otherwise be perceived as either a teeming overload or a rigid dearth, and then to integrate, and act upon them. I visualize this as a matrix of stimulation and permeability, distinguishing between healthy boundary intelligence - discernment, narrative agency, and chosen openness - and defensive closure, in which people lose the capacity to articulate with other perspectives, accommodate new data, or engage in integrative dialogue. Outcomes are further shaped by social and material resources: what narratives, attention, or support are available to the individual, and what are the cost-benefit analyses they make in navigating them. Finally, I offer an analytic wager linking the registers of our subjective interiority and the conceptual modelling we use it to do: to the extent that a framework cannot articulate with other frameworks, cannot integrate data it cannot accommodate, or must ignore what it cannot process, it is defensively closed - structurally psychotic - that is, losing agility in the dance between intelligent organization and evolutionary potential characteristic of consciousness itself.

	Senior Common Room
May 10th, 9 AM	Virtual Plenary Session with Dr. Andrew Davison and Dr. Kenneth Keathley Christianity, AI, and Evolution
	Torrance Kirby McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant
	Andrew Davison University of Oxford <u>The Contemporary Application of Scholastic Metaphysics to the Study of Artificial Intelligence</u> This paper forms part of my ongoing work on artificial intelligence, understood here primarily as machine learning, and approached from the perspective of scholastic metaphysics. Scholastic metaphysics is a philosophical tradition grounded in Aristotle and developed continuously since the early Middle Ages within the Christian tradition, in sustained and significant dialogue with Jewish and Islamic thought. The first part of the paper offers a summary of two existing strands of this work, concerning analogy and instrumental causation. The second presents new material, first on the analogical meanings of goodness in the assessment of capacities and outputs in AI systems, and secondly on further Aristotelian accounts of causation relevant to contemporary computational processes. In the third part, the paper steps back to reflect on the capacity of religious traditions—by virtue of both their historical depth and their wide-ranging intellectual concerns—to preserve and develop philosophical resources that can be brought into fruitful engagement with contemporary scientific questions.
	Kenneth Keathley Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary <u>Evangelicals, Evolution, and Inerrancy</u> This paper re-narrates the modern evangelical "conflict" with evolutionary science by tracing how sociological trauma and boundary-marking practices shaped theological commitments, especially the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. I argue that the perceived impasse arose as much from the loss of evangelical cultural dominance in the United States as theological commitments. The first section situates the debate within a cluster of disorienting developments for conservative Protestants: the Civil War as a theological crisis, the advent of biblical criticism, and the reception of Darwin's theory of evolution, culminating in the 1925 Scopes Trial. In this setting, inerrancy functioned as a watchword, a primary boundary marker for evangelical identity. The second section argues that the post–World War II creationist movement fashioned a link between inerrancy and young-earth readings. Although earlier evangelicals often made room for an ancient earth (gap theory, day-age, and similar interpretations), Henry Morris and John Whitcomb's <i>The Genesis Flood</i>—written against Bernard Ramm's <i>A Christian View of Science and Scripture</i>—helped young-earth creationism become dominant within conservative evangelicalism. I contend that this "Athanasius against the world" posture fostered distrust of scientific institutions and encouraged fideism under the banner of presuppositional certainty. Finally, the paper identifies a relatively recent hermeneutical pivot: theological readings of Genesis 1–3 (framework, cosmic-temple, and similar motifs) that preserve inerrancy without requiring young-earth commitments. Focusing on Greg Beale's response to Peter Enns, I suggest that influential inerrantists are now making interpretive room for renewed, less adversarial evangelical engagement with contemporary science.

	Birks 111	Birks 203	Birks 205
May 10th, 10:45 AM	Workshop: The Pros and Cons of the Interdisciplinarity of Religious Studies	East-Asian Studies	Book Roundtable: Les juifs orthodoxes en France (1980-2023). Une minorité religieuse face à l'Etat laïque
	Marzia Altano Université de Montréal Facilitator	Qi Liu McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Levana Tausky McGill University Discussant
		Jing Wang Concordia University	Frederic Strack Université de Sherbrooke

	<u>The Pros and Cons of the Interdisciplinarity of Religious Studies</u> Problem: Religious studies are often approached from a variety of perspectives, including sociology, history, anthropology, psychology, and gender studies. While the departments and institutions swarm with amazing contributors in several fields, what awaits beyond the long-awaited title of doctor is usually far from a clear path. The interdisciplinarity of religious studies offers a multitude of approaches that gather several different candidates under the same umbrella. Students' agendas are characterized by a simple common denominator: how to find the best way to address issues inherent to humans and to the so-called religions. While recognizing religious studies as a stand-alone discipline has its own advantages, its peculiarity also creates scholars of religions who could potentially fill positions in other fields. However, setting them aside by preferring doctors in sociology, history, anthropology, and so on. Humanities subjects in universities are facing a period of serious tension. This issue is causing distress for professionals who are unable to advance in their careers. Potential discussion points: 1. As students of religious studies, how should candidates (re)act when facing anxiety for the future of the humanities in academia? 2. As a religious studies scholar whose research focuses on subjects that can be addressed using the following approaches – sociological/anthropological/historical/psychological/gender – am I potentially eligible for a position in sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, or gender departments? 3. A first look at universities' websites reveals part of the problems in the field: most departments fall into the category of "Theology and Religious Studies." Whenever the study of religions is classified as theology, it is undoubtedly linked to the study of Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The problem that arises concerns academics whose work does not fall into these categories. Where, then, would scholars of Asian religions, spirituality, modern and contemporary movements, diaspora religions, and others fit in? Other problems/questions/points are welcome.	<u>Making Merits, Making Happiness in Central Tibet: Buddhism, Aging, and Well-Being beyond the Science-Religion Divide</u> Global mental health research increasingly associates Buddhist practices with enhanced well-being, often framing meditation and mindfulness practices as "coping strategies." Yet such work rarely takes seriously the ontological claims—karma, rebirth, and death—that motivate these practices and are often considered incompatible with science. This paper moves beyond such binaries by examining how Buddhist practice among older Tibetans generate well-being on its own ontological and epistemological terms, in ways that resonate with but cannot be reduced to secular scientific models of mental health. Drawing on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a village in Central Tibet, this paper explores how older Tibetans engage in what I term "caring-for-karma" Buddhism: a pragmatic, future-oriented orientation centered on merit-making to secure a good death and favorable rebirth, rather than on doctrinal philosophy or formal meditation. These everyday practices nonetheless shape emotional life in old age by alleviating loneliness and anxiety, while fostering ethical continuity across lifetimes and reinforcing intergenerational relationships. By foregrounding what Buddhists actually do, the paper traces how different ontologies of mind, time, and causality—multi-life karmic causation versus single-lifetime brain-based models—challenge the assumption that religion's relevance to well-being must be evaluated through secular scientific frameworks alone. It thus contributes to broader debates in religious studies and health sciences by questioning how "religion," "science," and "well-being" are conceptualized, and by suggesting alternative ways of thinking about well-being beyond the science-religion divide. Adrian Stathoukos McGill University School of Religious Studies <u>Flowering Teeth by the Riverbank</u> This paper investigates contemporary intersections of material, ideological, and spatial culture within expressions of emotion and imagination at Osorezan Bodaiji, a Sōtō Zen temple in Aomori, Japan. It analyses the temple's figurative stupa, the hachiyō Jizō bosatsu (Eight-Leaf Stone Jizō), in comparison to the Gokuraku Jizō to elucidate how Jizō exists as a non-binary figural repository and protector for the youthful dead, and non-figural manifestation of the Womb World and salvation. By focusing on children's teeth interred within the Stone Jizō-cum reliquary, this study contributes to the field of "Zen materialism" and more nuanced understandings of lived Buddhist realities in Tōhoku. Elizabeth Dugu Concordie University <u>Unveiling Daoism on the Spectrum Beyond Science and Religion</u> This paper speculates on the relationship between religion and science through the lens of Daoism. As a religion as well as a philosophy, Daoism is foundational to Chinese civilization. I argue that Daoism dissolves the binary between religion and science, presenting cosmology, ontology, and epistemology as integrated dimensions of lived practice. Drawing on early Daoist texts such as the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi, I examine how Daoist understandings of qi, yin-yang, and the dynamic interplay of the Five Elements articulate a worldview in which knowledge of nature and bodies are inseparable. This cosmological vision generated concrete and practical scientific-cultural systems: Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). With its meridian theory and holistic physiology, Daoism created the Chinese lunar calendar, which structured agricultural and ritual life across East Asia. With its mathematical-symbolic systems, such as the Yijing hexagrams, the binary structure of Daoism has been studied in parallel to modern computational logic. The resonance between Daoist cosmology and modern science is not merely metaphorical. When Niels Bohr incorporated the Taiji (yin-yang and ba gua) symbol into his coat of arms after receiving the Nobel Prize, he acknowledged the philosophical and scientific foundation of Daoism in his achievement of quantum physics. By situating Daoism not as "religion" opposed to "science," but as an integrative model of world-making, this paper asks whether the very distinction between believing and thinking is historically contingent. Daoism offers conceptual tools for moving beyond the opposite paradigm toward a deeper account of how cosmology, practice, and knowledge co-emerge. Tian Qin Shandong University, and University of British Columbia <u>"Practical Learning" and the Faith in Dao: Wang Fuzhi's Qi-Monism as a Pre-modern Chinese Approach to the Science-Religion Issue</u> Modern discussions on science and religion are often framed by a Western binary that opposes empirical rationality to spiritual faith. This paper explores how Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), a prominent scholar in Late Imperial China, addressed a similar tension through his philosophy of "Qi" (Vital Energy) before the extensive introduction of Western science. The paper first identifies the rise of "Practical Learning" (Shixue 實學) in the Ming-Qing transition as an indigenous parallel to early modern science. Wang championed a verifiable, empirical approach to the material world, rejecting empty speculation in favor of investigating concrete things. However, unlike secular materialism, Wang's thought retained a profound religious dimension: the belief in "Dao" (The Way). For Wang, Dao is not an abstract deity but the sacred, immanent order governing the continuous transformation of Qi. The core argument is that Wang's Qi-monism unifies these two dimensions. Since Dao cannot exist outside of Qi, the "scientific" investigation of material changes (Practical Learning) becomes a religious act of revering the Dao. Thus, Wang Fuzhi presents a unique pre-modern model where empirical inquiry and religious faith are not contradictory but mutually constitutive. This historical case offers a non-Western perspective for rethinking the relationship between natural laws and sacred values.	<u>Les juifs orthodoxes en France (1980-2023). Une minorité religieuse face à l'Etat laïque</u> This book examines the tension between viewing religion as an element of the public sphere and the privatized, pluralistic approach to religion prevalent in secularized societies. Specifically, it explores this dynamic and its consequences for Orthodox Jews in France—a nation that has prided itself on secularism since the 1980s. The thesis addresses a dual phenomenon: First, it analyzes how Orthodox Jews secure the space they need to practice their faith both privately and publicly, considering their needs, claims, and the strategies they employ. Second, it investigates the public governance of religion, focusing on how the French state manages a religious minority that challenges trends in secularization. This work draws on interviews with Orthodox Jews as well as political and administrative figures. It also examines two Orthodox newspapers and employs insights from electoral sociology, collective action, public policy, and the sociology of religion to assess the viability of Orthodox Jewish integralism in French society. It thus illuminates religious governance beyond just Islam, helping distinguish between issues specific to a particular religion and those associated with religious orthodoxy generally. In summary, the findings demonstrate that intransigent integralism is declining, eroded by negative responses from public institutions and the ongoing process of secularization that it cannot reverse.
--	---	--	--

May 10th, 1:15 PM	Birks 111 Science Under Siege: Author Meets Critique	Birks 203 Sociology of Religion	Birks 205 Christian Theology
-------------------	--	---	--

	Abraham Khan University of Toronto Chair	Alex Duceppe-Lenoir McGill University School of Religious Studies Discussant	Adam Smith McGill University Discussant
	Donald Wiebe University of Toronto <u>Science Under Siege: Author Meets Critique</u> Donald Wiebe's forthcoming book (Bloomsbury 2026) continues his career-long project to properly conduct the study of religion from rational and scientific knowledge. As such, his volume is based on the theme that the objective of "the study of religion" in the context of the modern university is to produce and distribute soundly based knowledge about religious thought and practice. It is neither a polemic against religion nor an apology for it. Rather, it is an argument that the "study of religion" in that context must be a value-neutral scientific enterprise. This presentation will consist of three presentations critiquing Prof. Wiebe's work and then a response from Prof. Wiebe himself. The critiques will be offered by: Michael G. Sherbert, Post-doctoral Fellow in Connected Minds Program, School of Religion, Queen's University Jim Kanaris, Associate Professor in Philosophy of Religion, School of Religious Studies, McGill University The session will be chaired by Prof. Abraham Khan.	Frederic Strack Université de Sherbrooke <u>Integrating Religious Studies into Political Science Research: What are the Consequences for the Public Governance of Religion?</u> This presentation explores the relationship between religious studies and other social science disciplines, and argues for closer collaboration between the sociology of religion and political science. More specifically, it attempts to show that it may be relevant for political science research on an orthodox religious minority to give significant explanatory weight to the religious object. Based on a case study of voting patterns among Orthodox Jewish communities in France, the article shows that borrowing concepts from the sociology of religion contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the political behavior and citizenship of believers often labeled as fundamentalists. Beyond this methodological contribution, the article develops a contribution to the public governance of religion. Indeed, it appears that the public governance of religion is not based on a homogeneous and immutable group, but on a pluralistic and changing one. The observation of religious fundamentalism in various shades of intransigence, but all part of a dynamic of secularization, invites us to consider a flexible approach to fundamentalist religion. This presentation is based on field research conducted from 2018 to 2022 in the Ile-de-France region, Strasbourg, and Aix-les-Bains. It consists of 70 participatory and non-participatory observations, the study of nearly 500 issues of Orthodox newspapers in France, four Orthodox websites, and nearly 90 semi-structured interviews, lasting an average of 1.5 hours, with Orthodox Jews and political and administrative leaders.	Laura Moncion University of Tübingen <u>The Theology of Reclusion in the Klausnerinnenpredigt or Recluses' Sermon</u> In the cities of late medieval Europe, religious reclusion was a popular option for women desiring a devout life outside of a monastery. As recluses (also known as anchoresses), these women were voluntarily and permanently enclosed inside special dwellings, called anchorholds or reclusoria, usually attached to parish churches. Having eliminated the distractions of the outside world, recluses were to spend their lives cultivating focus on divine matters, but were also sought out for intercessory prayer and spiritual advice. Local priests and preachers offered recluses spiritual guidance of their own. This paper examines a sermon from fourteenth-century Strasbourg, known as the Klausnerinnenpredigt or Recluses' Sermon, which outlines advice given to five women recluses of the city. In it, the speaker advises an audience of recluses and passersby about the nature of reclusion and its spiritual commitments. Notably, the Klausnerinnenpredigt frames its advice to recluses by way of mystical theology. The speaker hinges his understanding of reclusion on the concept of « abegeschiedenheit », or « detachment », as formulated by Meister Eckhart. By framing recluses' way of life around this concept, the speaker ties reclusion to mystical spirituality, yet also leaves room for women recluses to re-interpret their vocation. This paper opens up the theological framing of this sermon and explores the ways in which the sermon, as a performative text designed for multiple audiences, can be productively used in research on medieval religious women.
	Michael Sherbert Queen's University <u>Science Under Siege: Author Meets Critique</u> Donald Wiebe's forthcoming book (Bloomsbury 2026) continues his career-long project to properly conduct the study of religion from rational and scientific knowledge. As such, his volume is based on the theme that the objective of "the study of religion" in the context of the modern university is to produce and distribute soundly based knowledge about religious thought and practice. It is neither a polemic against religion nor an apology for it. Rather, it is an argument that the "study of religion" in that context must be a value-neutral scientific enterprise.	Danika Brockman McGill University <u>Reconsidering Christian Modernity: Amish Life and the Boundaries of Social Theory</u> In theories of modernity, it is often taken for granted that Christianity has played a foundational role in shaping modernity. Scholars have argued that Christian theology and practice foster the emergence of distinctively modern social formations: namely, moral individualism, rational economic behavior, and disembedded forms of personhood that facilitate capitalist expansion, liberal subjectivity, and secularization. However, work within the anthropology of Christianity has engaged with this theory more critically, variously supporting and refuting its claims with ethnographic work. In this same tradition, I aim to critically engage this theoretical lineage not to refute it wholesale, but to probe its boundaries and blind spots. I ask how a specific Christian formation - the Amish - complicates or qualifies these claims. The Amish, whose world is marked by discipline, humility, restraint, and communal authority, both conform to and diverge from various modern tendencies. They do not fully reject modernity, nor do they uncritically adopt it. This paper argues that the Amish show how Christianity can also operate as a moral constraint on modernity, not merely as its incubator or a neutral comorbidity. The Amish's Reformational roots categorize them as Protestant, and, indeed, they do commit to certain Protestant beliefs (biblical authority, plain speech, adult baptism, etc.). But the Amish also rework these commitments within a communal system that resists moral autonomy, technological acceleration, and capitalist rationality. In doing so, the Amish can illuminate the contingency of modernization narratives and ask us to reconsider the assumed social effects of Christianity.	Viviane Etoa Université de Sherbrooke <u>La lumière de la vérité dans la quête de sens de l'Être.</u> Dans un monde en ébullition où les frontières du réel sont floutées par la virtuosité lumineuse d'images intelligibles, virtuelles ou irréelles; Et où l'instantanéité du passage d'un monde physique à un autre artificiel tend à falsifier l'historicité des êtres et des choses au travers d'un narratif et herméneutique des faits; Certains auteurs s'insurgent contre une forme de désinformation (Jaron Lanier, 2020), D'autres prônent une tempérance des usages communicationnels du virtuel, tout en respectant la liberté d'expression : (Gaspard Koenig, 2025). L'être humain en quête de sens de son existence s'interroge. Que reste-t-il donc des repères et des formes d'une réalité objective nécessaire à la mesure de son connaître ? Comment trier l'ivraie du bon grain ? Alors même qu'il est atomisé par un tsunami d'images et d'informations contradictoires dont la véracité semble de plus en plus contestable? Quelle est donc la vérité des choses ? Quels pourraient être les critères de discernement de cette vérité ? Vertu ou vice ? Normal ou pathologique ? Compromis ou compromission ? Vérité de foi ou vérité scientifique ? Un labyrinthe de questionnement qui le plonge dans une solitude existentielle dans laquelle il peine à trouver la sortie ... Bien que Heidegger (1927) ait tenté de répondre à certaines angoisses existentielles de l'être, celui-ci demeure néanmoins confronté à des questionnements liés à sa perception du réel et de la vérité des choses. Si l'on en croit de nombreux critiques des réseaux sociaux; (Jaron Lanier, 2020). Un doute permanent effleure les consciences individuelles et collectives sur cette hégémonie tutélaire du monde du virtuel et de l'irréel, de la totémisation des intellects. Ce qui n'empêche nullement que la confusion et le brouillage des lignes de discernement poursuivent inexorablement leurs ravages dans les esprits. Notre modeste contribution à ce colloque vise en son dessein général à questionner les trajectoires de liberté et de responsabilité; ainsi que les possibilités de réalisation de l'être en quête de sens et de vérité pris dans l'état de la construction de la vérité sociale. Surtout en l'absence des fondements de la foi en un Dieu connu ou inconnu. Nous nous appuyons sur les travaux de Josep Pieper (1979) pour tenter de mettre en lumière le vouloir dans le connaître de la vérité des choses et un agir moral qui relèvent du désir métaphysique ontologique de l'être autant que de sa raison pratique.
	Jim Kanaris McGill School of Religious Studies <u>Science Under Siege: Author Meets Critique</u> Donald Wiebe's forthcoming book (Bloomsbury 2026) continues his career-long project to properly conduct the study of religion from rational and scientific knowledge. As such, his volume is based on the theme that the objective of "the study of religion" in the context of the modern university is to produce and distribute soundly based knowledge about religious thought and practice. It is neither a polemic against religion nor an apology for it. Rather, it is an argument that the "study of religion" in that context must be a value-neutral scientific enterprise.	Kosalan Kathiramanathan Queen's University <u>Esotericism and Nihilistic Violent Extremism</u> For this presentation, I hope to explore the nexus between the emerging trend of Nihilistic Violent Extremism (NVE) and various esoteric and occult frameworks. Primarily, this project seeks to examine the role these frameworks play in facilitating NVE activities. On a deeper level, I am specifically seeking to explore why NVE actors have repeatedly drawn on these frameworks and what this might reveal about how meaning, identity and violence are constructed in the absence of coherent ideology. The methodology employed for this project will involve examining the current academic explorations of an esoteric order that has both espoused violence and shared some links or appeared in connection to some NVE cases, the Order of Nine Angles (ONA). By drawing on these academic insights, I hope to draw connections/comparisons/and parallels to several NVE Cases and the online materials produced by NVE actors. Currently, I have access to roughly 90 case studies of NVE actors (primarily secondary sources) and 50 manifestos and other documents produced by NVE actors (primary sources) By using the academic exploration of ONA's use of esoteric and occult frameworks in promoting violent extremism, the goal is to establish a baseline to then answer how (if at all), does esotericism function as a meaning-making framework in ostensibly nihilistic movements/environments?	Charlie Zacks Harvard University <u>Schelling's Natural Theory of Science: Expansion and Contraction</u> This paper argues that Schelling's philosophy of nature articulates a form of natural theology internal to scientific reason itself, rather than a theological supplement imposed from without. Against both Enlightenment mechanism and later positivist reductions of nature to inert extension, Schelling reconfigures nature as a dynamic process structured by the alternating movements of expansion (Ausdehnung) and contraction (Zusammenziehung). Rather than merely describing physical tendencies, these forces function as metaphysical principles through which nature becomes intelligible as self-organizing, internally purposive, and ultimately expressive of the Absolute. In contrast to postmodern theological attempts (e.g., Caputo, Kearney) to weaken or defer metaphysical claims, Schelling's natural theology intensifies them by locating the divine not beyond nature but as the dynamic ground of its intelligibility. This yields a model of "scientific theology" in which the study of nature becomes, in a precise sense, the study of the self-unfolding of the Absolute.
	Aaron Ricker McGill University School of Religious Studies	Guillaume Gagnon Dugas Université de Sherbrooke	

	<u>Science Under Siege: Author Meets Critique</u> Donald Wiebe's forthcoming book (Bloomsbury 2026) continues his career-long project to properly conduct the study of religion from rational and scientific knowledge. As such, his volume is based on the theme that the objective of "the study of religion" in the context of the modern university is to produce and distribute soundly based knowledge about religious thought and practice. It is neither a polemic against religion nor an apology for it. Rather, it is an argument that the "study of religion" in that context must be a value-neutral scientific enterprise.	<u>"Because the Gods inspired me, and I am true to myself": studying neo-paganism according to joint theological and social-scientific frameworks.</u> Heathenry or Norse-oriented neopaganism (NNP) was the subject of my master's thesis (Gagnon Dugas, 2025). This contemporary religious movement is gaining momentum (Calico, 2018) in the context of a "meaning crisis" understood from psychological, anthropological, and semiotic perspectives (Vervaeke et al., 2017) and which characterizes the post-Christian cultural field (Murray, 2009). Because I am tracking down elements of belief that could make NNP a response to this meaning crisis, I have not limited myself to the etic approaches of social sciences. I have also drawn on an interpretive framework inspired by Paul Tillich's theology of culture (1951) and used the theological methods of Pagé (1982) and Tavad (1975). The inherent tension between a social-scientific approach that seeks to "de-subjectify" (Rival, 2014, p. 92) belief, and theological methods that require the "acceptance of revelation at the very level of praxis" by the researcher (Pagé, 1982, p. 139) raises the following question for research: how can we make belief fully intelligible without losing sight of the skeptical, or unbelieving attitudes of some of its audiences? In this presentation of research findings, we will follow Goodman's (2013) epistemology of "many different world-versions" (p. 4). The latter allows for the integration of a non-objectified scientific world-version and diverse religious world-versions within a pluralism of thought where the typical adversary of the believer "is the materialist or monopolistic physicalist" (ibid.) rather than the scientist.	
--	--	---	--

	Birks 111
May 10th, 4:30 PM	Closing Remarks
	Aaron Ricker McGill University AAR-EIR Regional Chief Officer <u>Closing Remarks</u>