

Cybernetic Enhancement and the Problem of the Self

A free lecture sponsored by The Central Pennsylvania Forum
for Religion and Science and the Messiah College Honors Program

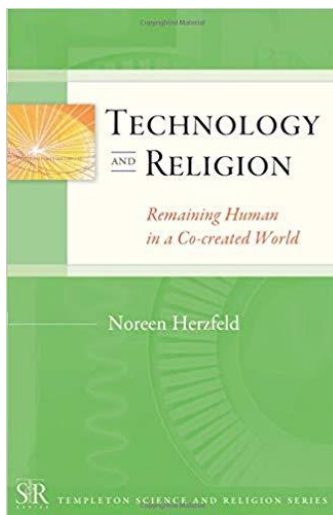
**Featured speaker: Dr. Noreen Herzfeld, Nicholas and Bernice Reuter
Professor of Science and Religion at St. John's University and the College of
St. Benedict**

Do our bodies matter? If information is the building block of the universe, then are we—our thoughts, memories, joys and sorrows—just the information pattern stored in the synapses of our brain? If this is so, then the self could be reproduced digitally, leading to a new immortality. Such thinking introduces a new Cartesian dualism that separates mind from body, locating the self wholly in the mind.

This view contrasts with the traditional Christian understanding that humans are created and best understood as being in the image of God, an image found in our rational intellect, our embodied agency, and our relationships. The dreams of cybernetic immortality fail to capture the full nature of what it means to be human and leads to grandiose delusions--Niebuhr's sin of pride--regarding what we can accomplish in the here and now, delusions that are harmful to both our sense of self and our capacity to love one another.



Monday, 1 April 2019, at 7:00 pm in Hostetter Chapel Sanctuary, Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, PA. [Directions](#) and [campus map](#). Hostetter Chapel is in the center of campus. Guests may park in the circle just outside the main door.



Noreen Herzfeld is the Nicholas and Bernice Reuter Professor of Science and Religion at St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict. She holds degrees in Computer Science and Mathematics from The Pennsylvania State University and a Ph.D. in Theology from The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. Herzfeld is the author of *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit* (Fortress, 2002), *Technology and Religion: Remaining Human in a Co-Created World* (Templeton, 2009), *The Limits of Perfection in Technology, Religion, and Science* (Pandora, 2010) and editor of *Religion and the New Technologies* (MDPI, 2017). She has published numerous articles and book chapters and is a frequent speaker on the prospects for AI, ethical issues in technology, and Islam. She is the founder and a writer for the [Avon Hills Salon](#).

The Central Pennsylvania Forum for Religion and Science is based at Messiah College. For details about all

Forum events, please visit <http://www.messiah.edu/godandscience/> or contact Dr. Ted Davis (tdavis@messiah.edu), 717-766-2511, ext 6840.