



Psychic Trauma: Brain, Mind, Community

Traumatic events, in the form of natural and technological disasters, domestic violence, crime, and terrorist acts, are all too common in the lives of people living in New York City and around the world. The impact of these traumatic events, occurring from early childhood to old age, can be viewed from various perspectives, notably biological, psychological, and social. The roundtable *Psychic Trauma: Brain, Mind, Community*, held on Saturday, March 10, brought together experts from the fields of psychoanalysis, psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience, in an effort to integrate disparate models of understanding traumatic phenomena. The goal of the discussion was to develop a clearer understanding of how various traumatic events alter life trajectory through persisting effects on the brain, mind and community, and how distinctly different interventions can each be therapeutic.

Spencer Eth, Professor and Vice-Chairman in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at New York Medical College and Director of Behavioral Health Services at Saint Vincent Medical Centers, moderated the discussion. He began by recounting the evolution of attitudes about trauma in the psychoanalytic community, beginning with early studies by Freud and Breuer that traced hysteria in patients to traumatic events in their youth. Freud later retracted this theory when it was met with scorn and incredulity. Dr. Eth postulated that the rejection of this relationship between hysteria and trauma was an injustice to victims of childhood incest and abuse. Later, when the effects of shell shock following World War I brought greater attention to the study of trauma, Freud began to categorize its symptoms.

The return of veterans from Vietnam and widespread public attention to rape victims in the 1970's led to greater awareness of trauma studies.

He placed behavioral responses to trauma into two groups, with compulsiveness and repetitive behavior labeled as "positive" and avoidance, inhibition, and phobia labeled as "negative." The return of veterans from Vietnam and widespread public attention to rape victims in the 1970's led to greater awareness of trauma studies. Despite this heightened awareness, early attempts to describe post-traumatic stress disorder in children were widely mocked as over-prescribing.

Leonard Shengold, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine and the author of *Soul Murder: The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation*, clarified that Freud never really dismissed the actuality of seduction in childhood by a parent or that neurosis in adulthood was connected with this seduction. He went on to explain that the concept of soul murder was not a diagno-

Continued on p. 3

A Note from Co-Director Edward Nersessian: The Element of Surprise

The recent roundtables at the center have made me think about the value of being surprised. It is almost thirty-five years ago that I started work as a psychoanalyst, first under supervision, and then on my own. When I look back to those early years, I realize that what I lacked was the capacity to allow myself, and my patients, to be surprised. It is a rather awesome moment as a physician when you have your first



Reverend Thandeka, Mind, Brain & Spirituality

patient, and suddenly your ideas count. When the resident or attending physician is standing next to you, or when as a medical student you show off by throwing around your book knowledge, you have no idea how it will feel when you are by yourself in front of a person who is ill and suffering and you have to make a diagnosis and, once you have made it, know how to treat it. Similar fears are present when, as a student in psychoanalysis, you have your first patient on the couch and must assume that you are going to understand the patient's anxieties, their down moods and difficulties in relationships or at work. In brief, you must believe that you are going to understand someone else's mind. So, you rely on three things: the first is what you are learning in your own personal analysis; second is what your supervisors (whom you meet every week) tell you about your patient; and the third is what you know from reading Freud and his followers. So it was that, relying on these tools and anxiously aware of the enormous responsibility, I saw my first patients and worked to decipher the latent meaning of their associations so I could offer them an interpretation. My mind filled with theory, there was little room left for surprise.

Continued on p. 2

Dialog Staff

Adam Ludwig, Editor
Corrine Brown, Design & Layout

Directors

Edward Nersessian
Francis Levy

Program Coordinator

Ellen Fertig

Research

Oliver Hugh Turnbull
David Younger
Caroline Bowman
Michael Garfinkle

Communications & Media

Matthew von Unwerth
Adam Ludwig

Advisory Board

Joan Acocella
Laurie Anderson
Jason Brown
Jorge Canestri
Hallie Cohen
Susan Crile
Antonio R. Damasio
Paul H. Fry
Paul Harris
Marcel Kinsbourne
Donald Kuspit
Jonathan David Lear
Mary A. Luallen
Barry Mazur
Grace Dane Mazur
Mark Norell
Katherine W. Olivetti
Lois Oppenheim
Elaine Pagels
Jaak Panksepp
Bradley Peterson
Karl H. Pribram
David Silbersweig
Oliver Hugh Turnbull



Note from Edward Nersessian (continued from front page)

My first surprise came after I had been doing analysis for a good five years. Another few years passed before I had my second, and it wasn't until a good decade later that I realized that I should allow both my patient and myself to be surprised. To do this one needs to tolerate uncertainty. Certainty is about closing doors. When you are certain, there is no room for surprise. Being a convert to the value of surprise, I have begun looking back at our roundtables to see if I felt it, or if the participants and audience felt it. I have concluded that it is rare.

Each of the participants in the roundtable on guilt was very knowledgeable about the subject and had strong positions about how to define guilt. Indeed it seemed that their certainty prevented them from being surprised. Yet there is a great deal of uncertainty about guilt, and I would like to raise a particular question about it here. A couple of years ago, it occurred to me to question whether or not there is an emotion that we call guilt and, if so, what role it has, and why it came to exist. I came to the tentative idea that guilt was more of a thought than an emotion. It is often accompanied by an emotion, but the emotion is either fear—that is to say anxiety—or anger at oneself. Now, anxiety and anger have been well studied by researchers and they are in fact emotions.



Edward Nersessian

They are even accompanied by physiological changes. But is guilt the same? In a biographical documentary shown last Winter at the Center, Ingmar Bergman, when asked about whether he felt guilty for having been a bad husband and father, said, no, he did not, because to do so would be self-indulgent. What was important to him was accepting that he had been a bad father and a bad husband and owning up to it. But when it comes to emotions, we cannot choose them; one can almost say they choose us—that is to say, they flood our minds. To say “I feel guilty” or “I feel bad about it” is placating the entity that in our fantasy will punish us. And of course that entity could be an outsider, our own conscience, or the projection of our conscience onto an outsider. So guilt isn't a moral response, but rather a fear of punishment or an expression of anger towards the self. There are, however, claims of moral feelings in the animal kingdom. How do we account for them? Maybe another roundtable will help. In fact, we are hoping to have one and to include animal biologists.

Uncertainty—except in the quantum world—was also not prominent in the cosmology roundtable. However, that evening during a dinner conversation with some of the participants, it was agreed that as beautiful as the edifice of quantum theory is, the mathematics and physics are heavily reliant on a couple of as yet unproven assumptions. Will they be proven, once the Super Collider is finished? Probably. But there is always room for a surprise. ☺

In this Issue

<i>Psychic Trauma</i>	p. 1
<i>Note from Edward Nersessian</i>	p. 1
<i>Neuroeconomics</i>	p. 3
<i>Mind, Brain & Spirituality</i>	p. 4
<i>Six Lyrical Poems: Robert Frost</i>	p. 4
<i>Modern Cosmology</i>	p. 5
<i>Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis</i>	p. 6
<i>Eye of the Beholder</i>	p. 6
<i>What is Guilt?</i>	p. 7
<i>Six Lyrical Poems: Elizabeth Bishop</i>	p. 8
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	p. 8

Neuroeconomics: The Secret Life of Homo Economicus

In recent years the field of economics has begun taking a closer look at the behavior of that economic actor, the human being, and how emotion affects economic outcomes, both for individuals and for society. Behavioral economics has thus become an entirely new branch of economics. Lately the inquiry into what drives economic decision-making has become even more specific: economists together with psychologists are using magnetic resonance imaging and other high-tech observational techniques to examine the brains of individuals as they engage in financial and economic decision-making. The roundtable *Neuroeconomic: The Secret Life of Homo Economicus*, held on Saturday, March 17, brought together two neuroscientists and two economists to examine the relationship between the brain and economics. Can we make better decisions as a society if we understand the neural basis of economic decision-making? What does this field tell us about how we can optimize our own personal decision-making? Why do some economists reject the approach altogether? Where is neuroeconomics taking us? These were some of the questions that the panelists set out to illuminate.

Edward Nersessian, Co-Director of the Philoctetes Center and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Weill-Cornell Medical College, filled in as moderator for David Kirkpatrick, who was unable to travel due to severe weather conditions. **Paul Glimcher**, Associate Professor of Neural Science and Psychology at New York University's Center for Neural Science and author of *Decisions, Uncertainty, and the Brain: The Science of Neuroeconomics*, began the discussion by describing the evolution of neuroeconomics. While psychology attempts to explain an individual's mental life and how he or she makes decisions, neuroscience looks at how the nervous system is involved in decision-making. Psychology is an effective descriptive tool, Dr. Glimcher went on, but neuroscience is needed to bridge economics and psychology. Neuroeconomics attempts to bring neuroscience into the process of adjudicating the disparity between prudent economic choices and what people actually do. **Elizabeth Phelps**, Professor of Psychology and Neural Science at

New York University and President of the Society for Neuroeconomics, highlighted the influence that emotion plays in how people make decisions, adding that emotion changes not only how we learn, but how we remember. Attempting to dispel the notion that economists don't care about actual people's decision-making, **Alberto Bisin**, Associate Professor of Economics at New York University, clarified the concept of rational choice on which economists have long based their models. Although often abandoned by individuals making decisions in real life, rational choice, described by Bisin as a set of rules that an economic actor should satisfy when he or she chooses, is still an effective predictive tool that can be very deep and unifying in macroeconomic theory. **William Brown**, former Chief Economist at JP Morgan and current Economic Advisor to Barclays Capital, reinforced this perspective, stating that the value of rational choice as a model is in its function as a risk-management tool. Irrational decision-making creates greater risk and makes profit less likely, and this premise is fundamental in training and controlling traders and making them effective at their job.

Returning to the idea that neuroeconomics can change fundamental attitudes about human behavior, Dr. Glimcher cited the fact that while animals always behave to perfectly optimize their use of time and energy, human decision-making is not so easily explained, and neuroeconomics can fill this gap in understanding. Professor Bisin conceded this point, but asked if neuroeconomics is able to provide a more effective substitute to the rational-choice model. Dr. Phelps pointed out that if individual responses are understood on the brain level, where economic decisions come from, it will be possible to gain insights about the organization of economic behavior. Dr. Nersessian expressed his skepticism about the practical applicability of findings in neuroscience, observing that the excitement that is generated from fMRI and other study results has not yet been translated into concrete, useful solutions for micro-economic problems. There is a great deal of promise about what neuroscience can offer in fields such as economics and law, but little evidence of its practical value. The panelists then explored the concepts of impulsivity and the neural basis of human trust, and entertained a range of questions from the audience about the possible future paths of neuroeconomics. ☺

Psychic Trauma (continued from front page)

sis but a poetic term used to describe childhood trauma. Dr. Shengold professed his distrust of diagnoses, suggesting that they were reductive and created caricatures rather than recognizing the unique circumstances of each patient's experience. **Marylene Cloitre**, Director of the Institute for Trauma and Resilience and Cathy and Stephen Graham Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the N.Y.U. Child Study Center, stressed the need in the therapy process to understand an individual in relation to a social context. She referenced Freud's assertion that a patient reenacts their past in analysis so that the events can be taken out of the present and placed in the past. In this way, Dr. Cloitre continued, the patient can create a whole out of shattered pieces and can identify their experiences as separate from themselves. This process reverses the effects of stigmatization that disengage the victim from society. Cloitre concluded by noting that the people who recovered successfully from 9/11 were those who had others around them to contain and support their anguish. **Rachel Yehuda**, Professor of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Director of the Traumatic Stress Studies Division at the Bronx Veterans Affairs Medical Center, addressed the different ways

that individuals are equipped to cope with trauma, beginning with the types of survival skills that are transmitted through attachment behavior between mother and child. The ability to mobilize defenses and resources in response to trauma varies from individual to individual, but certain forms, like dissociation, are more common among very young people. In addition, Dr. Yehuda continued, certain disorders, such as anxiety and anorexia, can be traced to the same types of early trauma. **Claude Chemtob**, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Director of the Child and Family Resilience Program, underscored the profound effect that childhood abuse can have on an individual's capacity to stay connected, particularly since the harm is largely invisible to others. He cited Philoctetes, who was sent into exile because his injury was too unpleasant to be seen. Ultimately, Dr. Chemtob maintained, the experience of the victim becomes valuable and recovery does not in fact occur until the gift of insight is found in the midst of the horror. But this process of insight is often obstructed because people find it difficult to see those who are traumatized. Despite significant differences in approach, the panelists concurred on the therapeutic value of identifying skills that allow people to prevent adversities from becoming injuries. ☺

Mind, Brain & Spirituality: Towards a Biology of the Soul



Michael Stone-Richards

The nature of spirituality and the nature of the human soul are at the heart of the human quest for meaning. The late Mortimer Ostow's last book, entitled *Spirit, Mind and Brain: A Psychoanalytic Examination of Spirituality and Religion*, served as the centerpiece for this roundtable discussion on how the subtle aspects of human mind and culture can be elucidated. The panelists approached the topic from psychoanalytic and neuroscientific as well as belief and experience-oriented perspectives. Perhaps the most radical idea to be entertained and debated was that of the soul as a useful construct that is thoroughly psychobiological. The event, entitled *Mind, Brain & Spirituality: Towards a Biology of the Soul*, was co-sponsored by the Hope for Depression Research Foundation.

David Pincus, Director of the Consortium for Mind/Brain Studies at Summa Hospital of Akron and Northeastern Ohio University's College of Medicine, moderated the roundtable, which was held on Saturday, March 3. He began by providing some background on Dr. Ostow, whose book is about spirituality in the context of psychoanalysis. Ostow maintains that a spiritual experience does not necessarily involve belief in a god and discusses in his book the temporal shift that comes in spiritual moments. **Martin Bergmann**, Clinical Professor of Psychology at New York University and Training Analyst at the New York Freudian Society, questioned the ability of psychoanalysis to describe spirituality and the mystical experience. **Siri Hustvedt**, author of *The Blindfold*, *The Enchantment of Lily Dahl* and *What I Loved*, cited the mystic Julian of Norwich, who wrote, "Just as God is our father, God is our mother." Ms. Hustvedt related the beatific moments she experienced before the onset of a migraine and compared this to the ecstatic experiences of epileptics before seizures. **Jaak Panksepp**, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Bowling Green State University and Head of Affective Neuroscience Research at the Falk Center for Molecular Therapeutics at Northwestern University, speculated that the human quest and capacity for a more spiritual world was a reflection of the individual's need for connection to a larger whole.

Reverend Thandeka, Senior Research Professor of Theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and the author of *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self*, reflected that Ostow's book touches on different traditions in classifying spirituality and addressed the involvement of human affect in the spiritual experience. She described the mystical moment as the meeting of the empty mind and the full body, and quoted Aristotle's pronouncement: "How do we know we have a soul? We look up and feel awe."

While Dr. Panksepp pressed for a scientific explanation of human spirituality, Ms. Hustvedt connected the soul to the physical act of breathing, a phenomenon that is inextricably linked with life and renewal. Dr. Bergmann observed that while humans may be the only animals aware of their own mortality, we deny this reality by cultivating the idea of a soul that continues after death. Asked why psychoanalysis could not explain the human soul, Bergmann related that Freud, despite being an enthusiastic atheist, attempted to apply psychoanalysis to areas, such as religion, where it didn't easily fit. Dr. Panksepp insisted that there had to be a neurological basis for the soul and suggested that the ways in which music acts as a catalyst for cells might provide some clues. Reverend Thandeka cited Freud's belief that consciousness was not separate from the body, while Ms. Hustvedt maintained that mind is everything and that the difficulty lies in creating borders between the mind and what is tangible. Members of the audience put forward questions regarding the limitations of psychoanalysis and the persistence of religion in the face of modernity, after which the panelists began to delve into the role of art and creativity in relation to the life of the soul. ☺

Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems: Robert Frost

The second in the series of poetry courses entitled *Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems* was held on Monday, March 19, and focused on the poetry of Robert Frost. The course was led by **Michael Braziller**, the Publisher of Persea Books, an independent literary press he co-founded in 1975, which is devoted almost exclusively to educational and poetry titles. Mr. Braziller's guest, **Edward Hirsch**, Professor of English at Wayne State University and author of six books of poems, including *Wild Gratitude*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award, and four books of prose, including the national best-seller *How to Read a Poem*, began by giving a brief biographical sketch of Frost's life. Describing him as a man who "invented himself," Professor Hirsch characterized Frost as a poet who depicted man's recognition of his own negative potential, while simultaneously cultivating the folksy New England persona for which he is best known. In Hirsch's words, Frost was a poet "strict in his Calvinist self-interrogation" and "dark in what he looks at in himself and in others". Braziller and Hirsch read "My Butterfly," "Home Burial," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Desert Places," "Acquainted with the Night," "Design," and "Subverted Flower," looking closely at Frost's formal evolution and examining the fatalistic and mournful tone of the poems. They concluded that, in spite of Frost's image as a poet of self-reliance and rugged individualism, his best poems deal with fear and great uncertainty.

Modern Cosmology

How did the universe appear and evolve from nothing to its present state? This was the central question addressed by the panelists for the *Modern Cosmology* roundtable, held on Saturday, February 17. Following thousands of years of naïve, mystical attempts to explain the origins of the universe, a new cosmology, based on experimental, observational and reproducible data, is beginning to emerge. Modern cosmology has joined the sector of precise science and has established a framework of theoretical explanations. This new discipline is already beginning to answer such questions as “What is the Big Bang?” and “What is the energy balance of the universe?” Our view of this new universe, how it informs our every-day lives and beliefs, and how it inevitably influences our notions of creativity and innovation, formed the basis of this roundtable discussion.

Dimitri Nanopoulos, Distinguished Professor of Physics and Chair in High Energy Physics at Texas A&M University, moderated the discussion. He began by stating that advances in our understanding of the universe will change us—not only our way of living, but also our ways of perceiving. **Janna Levin**, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Barnard College and author of *How the Universe Got its Spots*, emphasized that the concept of an expanding and accelerating universe has had a particularly profound effect on the perception of our place in the cosmos. **Piet Hut**, Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, pointed out that for many years cosmology was nothing more than astronomy, and that we had no idea that the universe had a finite age. It is now known within 1% of accuracy that the universe is 13.7 billion years old, whereas it was once thought to be ageless. **Charles Liu**, Professor of Astrophysics at the City University of New York and Associate in Astrophysics at the Hayden Planetarium, quoted one of his early teachers, who said that while astronomy won’t affect the price of bread today, it will change the course of history and civilization tomorrow. Professor Liu also raised the notion of alternative cosmologies, explaining that in Chinese thought, the Buddha decreed that the universe is actually in its sixth incarnation, and that it is much older than we can imagine. He reflected on the fact that some people are more comforted by this type of cosmology than by science. **Tu Weiming**, Chair Professor of

In Chinese thought, the Buddha decreed that the universe is actually in its sixth incarnation, and that it is much older than we can imagine.

Chinese History and Philosophy and Confucian Studies at Harvard University and Director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, speculated about the so-called “dark ages” of thought about the universe. He proposed that ancient thought, stemming from the spiritual civilizations that gave rise to movements such as Taoism and Buddhism, could be more relevant than expected, and recounted a meeting with the Dalai Lama in which the spiritual leader mused that ancient, wise voices are often relegated to the background. Professor Tu suggested that perhaps these more intuitive spiritual voices have something to tell us, and that the insistence on the primacy of scientific methods in gaining insight about the universe and our planet may deaden some part of our instinctive wisdom.

Professor Nanopoulos went on to defend scientific method and downplayed the validity of attacks on science by post-modern philosophers. He asserted that cosmology is now able to confront



Piet Hut (top) & Janna Levin

many of the questions that have eluded humankind for thousands of years. He pointed out that recent discoveries reveal that human life is not even constituted of the same stuff as the rest of the universe, which is composed of pure energy rather than matter. Disputing the claim that science is relative and that scientists often change their minds, Professor Levin maintained that in the area of cosmology, none of the most fundamental discoveries have been retracted. Scientists are willing to change their minds—as Einstein once did regarding his claim that the universe was not expanding—only when they are confronted with data. In response, Professor Tu hypothesized that greater knowledge can sometimes lead to a more rigid mentality. Professor Hut compared science to a teenager in relation to art and religion, saying that it was a discipline still finding its confidence. Science, he went on, focuses on the object pole rather than the subject pole, an empirical approach that generates verifiable conclusions that are not prone to the variable influence of subjectivity. Professor Liu elaborated that the theory of the Big Bang consists of predictions and conclusions based on hypotheses and scientific method, whereas creationism is based purely on subjective information. Cosmology, he concluded, brings science to the inquiry into the origins of the universe that has evolved throughout human history. ☺

Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis

In cooperation with Film Forum, New York's leading nonprofit cinema for independent film premieres and repertory programming, the Center presented a screening of the biographical portrait, *Jack Smith and the Destruction of Atlantis*. Karen Cooper of film forum writes:

"For Jack Smith (1932–1989), Atlantis was both the idea of a fantastical utopia and the reality of the Lower East Side apartment in which this prophetic artist staged baroque, improvisational multi-hour one-man theatrical productions, often with a cast of stuffed animals and dolls. An avant-garde photographer; filmmaker; actor; performance artist, and all around 'flaming creature,' Smith has been credited as a major influence by Fellini, Godard and Jarmusch. In Mary Jordan's mesmerizing portrait, he fairly jumps off the screen: a combination mystic, comedian and madman, a protean artist whose vast energy and creativity were undermined (or perversely fed?) by the poverty of his day-to-day life and his paranoid misgivings about just about everything. If there is a heaven for the wonderfully bizarre, Jack Smith resides there, accompanied by his patron saint, Maria Montez."

Roger Copeland, Professor of Theater and Dance at Oberlin College, moderated the discussion that followed the screening,

which was held on Saturday, April 7. **Richard Foreman**, founder and artistic director of the non-profit Ontological-Hysteric Theater, where he has won numerous OBIES for best play of the year and best director, expressed his deep disappointment at the film's style and frenetic pacing, which he felt was a distortion of Jack Smith's aesthetic. Smith's artistic effort and his life's work, Foreman went on, was to challenge notions of time by embracing stasis and forcing the audience to question its habitual perceptions about performance. **Martin Wilner**, a New York-based artist and Clinical Assistant Professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, described Smith as an artist who embraced primary process. Wilner observed that it was nearly impossible to accurately represent on film an artist whose output was so elusive. Professor Copeland commented that Smith was an artist whose work was designed specifically to avoid commodification and **Russell Scholl**, a New York-based musician and curator of film and video, pointed out that after the controversy surrounding *Flaming Creatures*, Smith developed an obsessive fear of people stealing his ideas. Mr. Foreman emphasized that Smith was a baroque artist, whose work transcended the sexual politics and fetishism that many critics used to categorize it. Mr. Copeland speculated that Smith, even as he railed against the lack support for the arts in the United States, would have been a malcontent even if he had received generous subsidies. Foreman concluded the discussion by underscoring Smith's enormous contribution to the arts, in particular methods that force people to experience time and detail in new and revelatory ways. 🍷

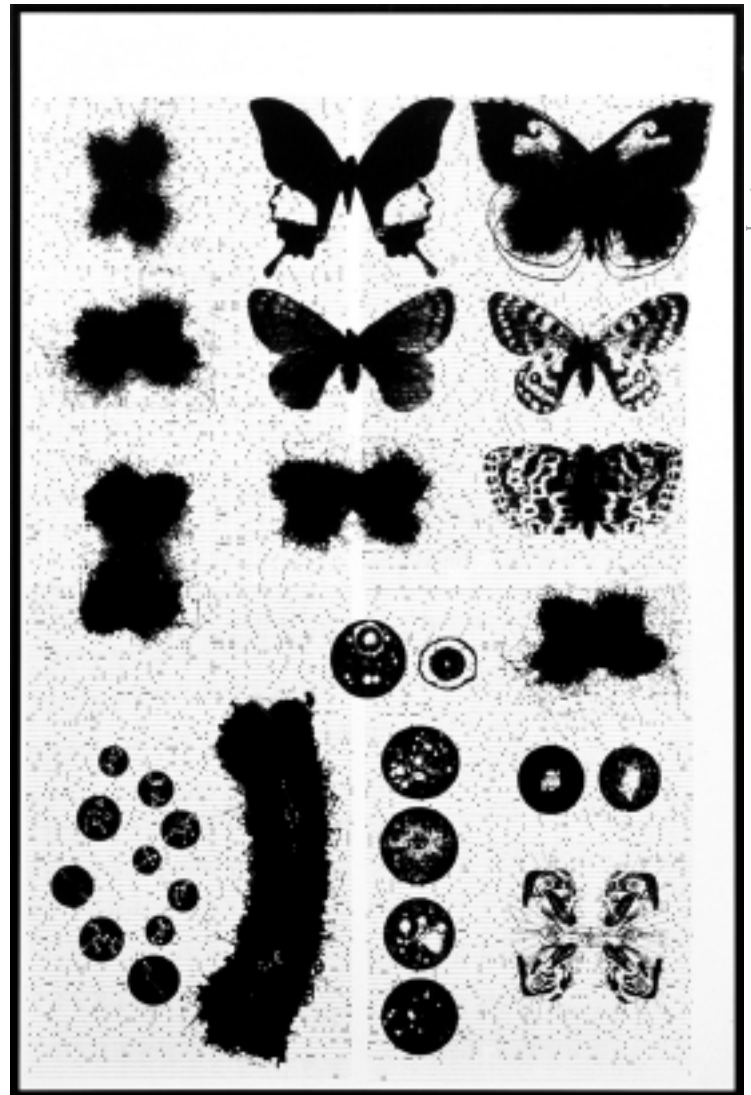
Eye of the Beholder

April 14 through June 2, 2007

Suzanne Anker | Andrew Carnie
David Silbersweig | Emily Stern

The Eye of the Beholder exhibition coincides with a roundtable of the same name that explores the phenomenon of mirror neurons and how they influence the way humans react to and create visual art. A recent discovery in the brains of primates, mirror neurons are special neurons that show activity both when a subject performs an action and when it observes the same action performed by another. Some scientists consider mirror neurons one of the most important findings in neuroscience in the last decade, in part because they are thought to be responsible for the empathic response in humans.

The art that comprises the exhibition explores the themes of cognition, neuroscience, and the structures associated with perception. Drs. David Silbersweig and Emily Stern of Weill Cornell Medical College provide functional magnetic resonance images, which are used to map and probe neural circuits, and associated cognitive, affective, perceptual and behavioral processes thought to be disrupted in neuropsychiatric trauma. These images reveal not only the complexity of the brain, but its surprising structural beauty. Suzanne Anker produces prints and sculpture by using MRI scans, Rorschach inkblots and organic imagery to explore the intersection of art and science. Andrew Carnie's work, produced with input from neuroscientists at the Kings College Medical Research Center in London, centers on memory and the brain.



Suzanne Anker, Papilioin

What is Guilt?

In psychoanalysis, the concept of unconscious guilt is frequently used to explain certain kinds of self-punitive behavior, even though Freud himself questioned the validity of such a conceptualization and appeared to prefer the problematic concept of an unconscious need for punishment. In neuroscience, the relationship of guilt to the primary emotions, with their relatively well-established brain centers, remains ill defined. The study of this relationship is therefore difficult, if not impossible, even in this period of major advances in brain studies brought about through neuroimaging. The panelists of the roundtable *What is Guilt?* took a multidisciplinary approach in examining the topic of guilt and illuminating the difficulties of the concept.

Marcia Cavell, philosopher, psychoanalyst, and author of *The Psychoanalytic Mind: From Freud to Philosophy*, moderated the event, which was held on Saturday, February 22. She began the discussion by saying that her analyst inadvertently gave her the idea for the topic when he pointed out that she didn't have "the right kind of guilt." While guilt can be a highly personal matter—as in the guilt felt for not living up to one's ego ideals—it can also be an objective state, as when someone is guilty of a crime. Real guilt, Dr. Cavell continued, is repressed guilt, while the "right kind of guilt" is felt consciously, as when an individual feels guilt for having hurt someone else. **Jay R. Greenberg**, Training and Supervising Analyst at the William Alanson White Institute and the author of *Oedipus and Beyond: A Clinical Theory*, emphasized the importance of distinguishing between feeling badly about something and feeling guilty. He asserted that the feeling associated with not living up to one's ego ideals is not guilt, but shame. **Michael Lewis**, University Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, as well as Professor of Psychology, Education and Biomedical Engineering at Rutgers University and author of *Shame: The Exposed Self*, argued that semantics confused the issue—there is no way to validate that the words we use to describe an emotional state are accurate. **Donald Carveth**, Professor of Sociology and Social & Political Thought at York University in Toronto and Training and Supervising Analyst at the Canadian Institute of Psychoanalysis, highlighted the different approaches taken by divergent psychoanalytic traditions. While Freud believed guilt was equal to self-punishment, Klein maintained that guilt was depressive anxiety. Dr. Lewis told of an experiment in which three-year-old children were given a doll to play with that was designed to fall apart easily. The children had three distinct responses—they were indifferent, they collapsed in shame, or they attempted to repair the doll. Dr. Greenberg proposed that there is a strong relationship between feelings of responsibility and guilt, and that this was alluded to frequently in Freud's writings as "superego anxiety."

Michael Eigen, psychoanalyst, Editor of *The Psychoanalytic Review*, and author of fifteen books, including *Ecstasy, Rage, Lust, Toxic Nourishment* and *Feeling Matters*, shifted the discussion to the notion of an objectless guilt, a guilt that might be atmospheric and



Jay R. Greenberg

communal. He elaborated that an individual may commit murder just to have something tangible on which to pin their preexisting guilt. Dr. Lewis emphasized that guilt and shame are not pathological phenomena—they are states experienced by everyone. Dr. Carveth maintained that guilt is a useful emotion if it leads to reparation of wrongs, while Dr. Greenberg countered that feelings of concern were distinct from feelings of guilt. Dr. Eigen postulated that the absence of guilt was in itself a form of psychosis, pointing as an example to the current administration, which seems devoid of shame or guilt in light of its disastrous policies. Lewis shifted the conversation to the anomalies of gender, pointing out that men feel shame less readily than women, who own up to their errors with much less resistance. Carveth conjectured that guilt is an indulgence used to avoid reparative action, a notion with which Dr. Cavell disagreed, suggesting that guilt has a strong relationship to self-responsibility. Eigen added that shame can sensitize one to be a better person. The panelists continued to probe the concepts of shame and guilt from various religious and cultural perspectives, returning consistently to psychoanalytic interpretations as a point of reference. 📍

New Interactive Discussion Board

Members may now post comments about upcoming and past events on our website, www.philoctetes.org. This feature is designed to encourage ongoing discussions following our roundtables, courses, and film screenings. In addition, comments posted before an event takes place will foster ideas that can be incorporated into and enrich the ensuing discussion. Simply go to the website, click on any event on the Calendar or Archive pages, and you can post your comment. You will be required to enter your email address and create a password. If you have not already registered on the site, you must do so in order to use this feature. Follow the on-screen instructions or go to the Contact page.

Upcoming Events

Mind of the Collector

Roundtable

Wednesday, May 23, 7:30pm

Participants: Dorothy Globus, Steve Heller
(other panelists TBA)

Transference

Roundtable

Saturday, June 2, 3:00pm

Participants: Charles Brenner, Norman Doidge, Walter Freeman,
Arnold Modell, Bradley Peterson, David Pincus (moderator)

Dance, Movement, and Bodies:

Forays into the Nonlinguistic and the Challenge of Language Experience

Workshop & Roundtable

June 26-27, 7:00pm

Participants: Robert Fagan, Steve Paxton, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone
(moderator), Daniel Stern

Modernity and Waste

Roundtable

Saturday, September 15, 2:30pm

Participants: Jennifer Ganbrys, William J. Kupinse (moderator),
William Rathje, John Scanlan, Susan Strasser

Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems: Elizabeth Bishop

The third evening of the poetry series took place on Monday, April 9, and centered on the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop. **Michael Braziller** conducted the course with his guest, **Alice Quinn**, poetry editor of *The New Yorker*, Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America and Editor of the just-published *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments* by Elizabeth Bishop. Ms. Quinn began by discussing some of the biographical underpinnings of Bishop's work, commenting on the special challenge of presenting the unfinished work of a famous perfectionist. She speculated that Bishop's assiduous perfectionism—it could take her several years to complete a poem to her satisfaction—was indicative of the vital role poetry played in her life. Bishop's endeavor, in Quinn's words, was to "ingest loss and transmute it into art." Though she suffered great personal loss in her youth, and indeed throughout her life, her early writings betray an irrepressible playfulness, mingled with deep seriousness and a spiritual fervor, as evidenced by her love of religious poetry.

Mr. Braziller read "At the Fishhouses," afterwards commenting that the poem speaks to Bishop's search for a sense of belonging and familiarity. Quinn pointed out the intimation of curiosity and awe in

Creativity in Jazz Improvisation

Concert & Discussion

Saturday, October 13

Participants: Lewis Porter & Jane Ira Bloom

Future of the Stockmarket

Roundtable

Saturday, October 20, 2:30pm

Participants: Bernard Madoff (other panelists TBA)

Hypergraphia and Hypographia: Two Diseases of the Written Word

Roundtable

Thursday, October 25, 7:30pm

Participants: Alice Flaherty, Alan Jacobs, Jonathan Lethem, Francis
Levy, Lois Oppenheim (moderator), Pedro Reyes

Distortions of Memory

Roundtable

Saturday, November 10, 1:00pm

Participants: Deirdre Bair, Bruno Clement, Maryse Conde, Bill Hirst,
Edward Nersessian, Lois Oppenheim (moderator), Judith Thurman

Other upcoming roundtable topics include Altruism, Daydreaming, The
Biology of Morality, Magic, and Civil War.

the line, "It is like what we imagine knowledge to be." The poem "Questions of Travel" evokes Bishop's time spent living in Brazil, which Quinn described as a beautiful interlude in the poet's life. Houses appear repeatedly in the poem, and the themes of home and loss of home, which recur in later works, appear for the first time in this poem. Quinn observed that because Bishop was confined for long periods in her childhood due to illness, she developed a unique relationship with inanimate objects such as furniture, which she personifies frequently in her writing. "In the Waiting Room" captures a moment of childhood that is fraught with anxiety, panic, and intimations of the surreal. Quinn noted that the poem manifests Bishop's tendency towards detachment and self-protection—the hallmarks of a sensitive child—and culminates with the revelation of vulnerability as her detachment falls away. Mr. Braziller speculated that the poem captures the moment of a child becoming self-aware. Braziller and Quinn then read "The Moose," highlighting it as a work that reveals, through its meticulous detail, Bishop's love for her native Nova Scotia. Quinn remarked that the moose of the poem is Bishop's expression of rare harmony with other people. A reading of "Poem" illustrated Bishop's use of art as a means of preserving and extending simple moments and gaining insight into life's small joys. Quinn and Braziller concluded with a reading of "One Art," observing that the work exemplifies Bishop's ability to employ humor in communicating sorrow and loss. 🍷