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THE PHILOCTETES CENTER
FOR THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF IMAGINATION
AT THE NEW YORK PSYCHOANALYTIC INSTITUTE

The Origins of Norms: The Place of Value in a World of Nature

Ever since Max Weber lamented the rationalization of the world—the intellectualization precipitated by the social and personal disenchantment of modernity—the meaning of value has been thrown into question. Can we account for the nature of value and its implications for normative thinking and behavior in a world dominated by the methods and concepts of natural science? If so, how might we elaborate those methods and those concepts? If not, what are the alternative forms of accounting for value? These and related questions were addressed in a three-day symposium that brought together a distinguished group of philosophers, scientists, and historians of science. *The Origins of Norms: The Place of Value in a World of Nature*, held from Thursday, April 26, to Saturday, April 28, was jointly sponsored by the Philoctetes Center and the Heyman Center for the Humanities at Columbia University, and organized by Lois Oppenheim, Akeel Bilgrami, and Center Co-Directors Francis Levy and Edward Nersessian.

Lawrence Friedman & Gerald Edelman

Before introducing the first evening's speakers, Ms. Oppenheim, Professor of French and Chair of the Department of Modern Languages at Montclair State University, remarked that an inquiry into the origins of normative thinking might lead to a narrowing of the divide between the humanities and the sciences. **Gerald Edelman**, founder and Director of The Neurosciences Institute in San Diego, Professor of Neurobiology at The Scripps Research Institute, and recipient of the 1972 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, began his presentation with the assertion that science reflects only a partial experience of consciousness, and that empirical scientists rarely talk about the mind. In an effort to clarify the functioning of the brain itself, Edelman explained the complex system of neurons and synapses that process human perception. Using visual maps of excitatory and inhibitory neurons, he illustrated the infinite variation and changeability of human cogni-

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A Note from Co-Director Francis Levy: Closet Dualist

It was in the middle of our recent panel on extraterrestrial intelligence that it dawned on me that consciousness need not necessarily be tethered to a life form and that perhaps consciousness could be perpetuated without the form of life as we know it today. The panel began with moderator James Ferris proposing the definition of life as a system that is capable of replication with change. Carbon is necessary and water is the solvent. I kept glancing at the Alaska-based science fiction writer David Marusek, author of the novel *Counting Heads*, and Dave Itzkoff, the science fiction columnist for *The New York Times* Book Review, who has also written extensively on the subject, and who now had a bemused expression on his face. The idea of a basic biologic paradigm for life seemed provincial, almost quaint. The scientists seemed to be living in a smaller universe than the science fiction writers, limited by scientific method itself. (Kepler, for instance, believed there was extraterrestrial life based on his erroneous interpretation of the perfectly round craters on the moon.) Science fiction, after all, is not only an allegory—as when *The War of the Worlds* caused mass hysteria in 1938 amidst the gathering clouds of the Second World War—it's actually in the business of social and mechanical engineering. One need only look at the work of Jules Verne, whose science fiction foresaw technological innovations like the submarine. In this case the artists might have said to the scientists, "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

One of my obsessions over the past few years is the Steven Spielberg movie *A.I.* The film was not very well received, either by the press or the public, and I'm convinced that it was subliminally rejected because it stated something that moviegoers didn't want to hear, in much the same way that Copernicus's proof that the earth

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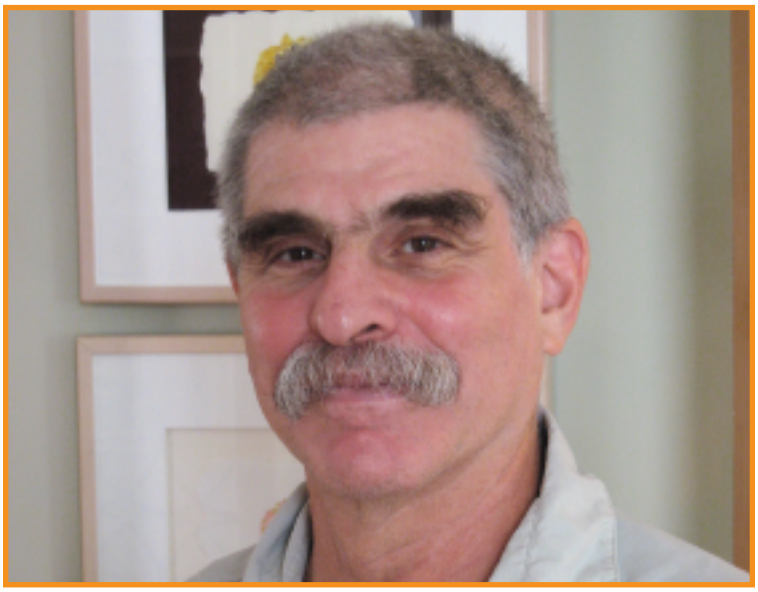

Francis Levy

was not the center of the universe was looked at as heresy, or that Freud's description of infantile sexuality created a collective resistance to psychoanalysis. What Spielberg was saying is that consciousness could exist without the materialized form of human life as we know it today—not mind *versus* body, but mind *without* body. The consciousness of the race could be sustained without mankind itself—*post-biologic man* was the term coined by Dr. Steven Dick, Chief Historian of NASA, who was also a member of the panel.

But something was still wrong. While I was steadfast in my admiration for the movie, I was reminded of a line from Joseph LeDoux's *The Emotional Mind*: "Consciousness is just the tip of the iceberg." Yes, consciousness could continue to exist in the mind of a computer and, if Moore's law is correct, in the ever more powerful generations of microprocessors that give birth to each other. But the self-reflexive ability, self-regard, self-awareness, or any possible definition we give to consciousness that accounts for a computer finally concluding, "I am just a computer; I have no body," does not necessarily make it a life form. One of the points that LeDoux argues in his book is that emotions are biological processes that exist before we are able to think about them, which is why cognition is often frustrated by the unpredictability of the more ancient emotion-based drives. *Sum ergo cogito*.

Is this just semantics? Words can be hypnotizing. Throughout the afternoon we heard about "endorphs," "anti-matter engines," "singularities," "astronomic time," "heliopas," Crick's "directed transpermia," Drake's equations, and the Shklovsky/Sagan theorem. Consciousness or life? Had I argued myself into some bizarre new form of dualism? Yes, consciousness could continue, but consciousness was not necessarily all there was to being human, and it was not necessarily the end result of evolution. We usually think that it is reflexive consciousness that separates us from animals, but if LeDoux is right then it is not as significant a separation as we might previously have thought. Actually, consciousness, which neuroscientists tell us is the result of the evolution of the cerebral cortex, may result (with the advent of ever-advancing generations of computers and consequently stronger and stronger A.I.) in inadvertently perpetuating "cybernetic" mind in the absence of carbon, oxygen or even emotion—the very requisites of avian and mammalian biology as we understand it today. *F.L.*

Acting and Mirror Neurons

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 someone else. Many scientists consider mirror neurons one of the most important recent findings in neuroscience, in part because they are thought to be responsible for the empathic response in humans. How does this adaptation come into play for an actor? Actors must draw on various sources–memory, imagination, observation–to elicit their own deep emotional responses. This emotional activity must have a level of authenticity, on a physiological and even neurological level, in order to provoke empathy in the observer, whether it's another actor or a member of the audience. Drawing on the perspectives of neuroscience, drama therapy, kinesiology, and acting technique, the roundtable *Acting and Mirror Neurons*, held on Wednesday, April 25, addressed phenomena that come into play when an actor moves an audience emotionally.

Vittorio Gallese

Adam Ludwig, Editor of *Dialog* and an actor working in theater, television, and film, moderated the event. He began the discussion by quoting the actor Forrest Whitaker, who said in his Oscar acceptance speech that acting drew on a "connection so deep that we feel it." **Vittorio Gallese**, Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Parma, gave some background on the work that led to the discovery of mirror neurons in macaque monkeys, and elaborated on the ongoing research that has connected mirror neurons not just to human motor function, but to emotions as well. "What's most important probably for the discussion tonight," he continued, "is the intimate relationship between this mirroring mechanism and imitation–mimetic skills." **Joe Grifasi**, an actor who has appeared on Broadway and in over 70 films, and can be seen playing Yogi Berra in the recent ESPN mini-series, *The Bronx is Burning*, said that his reading on mirror neurons led him to believe that they are part of a process that allows an audience to complete gestures that actors initiate on stage. This is a critical mechanism in the theater, he went on, because storytelling relies on suggestion and inference.

Blair Brown, who won a Tony award for her performance in *Cophenhagen* on Broadway and appears regularly in television and film, said that the fact that mirror neurons seem to reveal an inherent social, connective need made her feel that theater was a natural endeavor. "People come to the theater to be together," she observed, "to connect." **Tom Vasiliades**, Assistant Professor and Chair of the Movement Department at the New School for Drama and an instructor of the Alexander Technique at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts and The Juilliard School, elaborated on the ways in which audiences relate to an actor, commenting that a performer who can undo excessive or unnecessary physical tension can express movement and gesture in a way that impacts an audience in a deeper way. **Robert Landy**, Founder and Director of the Drama Therapy Program at New York University, proposed that an additional relationship that plays itself out neurologically is one between the actor and his role. The interplay between an actor and his conception of the character he is playing, both physically and emotionally, influences his relationship to the other actors on stage, and this shared experience flows to the audience. Responding to this idea, Professor Gallese commented, "In a sense, one could think that your relationship with the character you're supposed to play is intrinsically relational. So you try to enter into, metaphorically, or even literally, the body of someone else–in the body, in the gesturing, in the mind. So, more than a mirroring mechanism, it's an imagery mechanism, which partly impinges upon the same neuro-circuits that are involved in action observation." This led to a discussion of acting technique, the power of the voice, and the distinction between empathy and sympathy. *A.L.*

Joe Grifasi

Eye of the Beholder

The continued exploration of neuroscience offers the possibility of understanding long-standing aesthetic processes such as the propensity to imitate and the facility to create narrative and non-narrative representation. The roundtable *Eye of the Beholder* focused on the visual and plastic arts as they relate to the phenomenon of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are widely considered to be 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 discussion centered on the ways in which discoveries in neuroscience can illuminate creativity and influence our understanding of how we perceive art.

Edward Nersessian, Co-Director of the Philoctetes Center and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, moderated the event, which was held on Monday, April 23. **Vittorio Gallese**, Professor of Human Physiology at the University of Parma, was part of the Italian team of scientists that discovered mirror neurons in July of 1991. Dr. Gallese recounted that experiments on the motor neurons of macaque monkeys led to the surprising observation that a set of neurons that was activated when a subject performed an action was also activated when the subject observed the same action performed by another monkey. The team then conducted experiments using PET scans and fMRI to determine if the same mirroring mechanism could be detected in the human brain. After concluding that mirror neurons were active in humans, they extended their investigation to emotional activity, analyzing autonomic responses to stimuli in the frontal lobe, and concluding that a subject observing an emotion mirrors the subject experiencing the emotion.

David Freedberg, Professor of Art History at Columbia University, introduced the concept of the emotional dimension of aesthetic response. He applied the example of mirror neurons to the realm of visual art, observing that when we unconsciously emulate an artist's work, we see gestures in our mind's eye. This response, he went on, is connected to how we imagine the artist's process of creating a work. **Barbara Maria Stafford**, William B. Ogden Distinguished Service Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago, noted that imitation is one of our initial responses to the world–it is the first thing we do as children. Professor Stafford speculated that the mimetic adaptation illustrates how we experience the world and process our experience into action. **Francis Baudry**, Training and Supervising Analyst at The New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, discussed the relationship between imitation and music. He cited Freud's opinion that what engages an audience is the artist's intention, and that the artist aims to reproduce the moment of insight that induced him to create. **Suzanne Anker**, a visual artist and theoretician working with genetic imagery, challenged this conception, stating that there isn't always a correlation between what an artist believes they are doing and what they actually achieve. Dr. Baudry conceded that an artist often has little conscious thought about his own intentions. Professor Stafford asserted that deeper comprehension of mirror neurons and related phenomena has the capacity to bring biology and culture closer together in our awareness. Dr. Gallese explained that the degree and intensity of mirror neuron response are driven by the experiential history of the individual. For example, trained dancers who watch other dancers perform exhibit greater neuronal stimulation than non-dancers who watch the same performance. The panelists went on to discuss the concepts of mimesis, ritual, and the evolution of language. *A.L.*

Perspectives on Transference

Transference is a phenomenon that all psychoanalytic practitioners view as being a core part of the psychotherapeutic process. Traditionally, it has been thought of as an artifact of the psychoanalytic situation, in which the patient unconsciously finds in the therapist features relevant to his or her psychic history. More recently, transference has been viewed as part of all human psychic functioning and all social relationships, and psychoanalysis takes unique advantage of this generic process. Is transference a function of the brain that has evolutionary antecedents in other species? The paper "A Neurobiological Model of Perception: Considerations for Transference," co-written by David Pincus, Walter Freedman and Arnold Modell, addresses this question, and served as the point of departure for the roundtable *Perspectives on Transference*, held on Saturday, June 2.

Dr. Pincus, Director of the MindBrain Consortium at Summa Hospital of Akron, moderated the event, and began by stating that while transference is a ubiquitous phenomenon, many things about it are in dispute–some consider it a pathological phenomenon, while others view it as a universal part of social reality. **Dr. Freeman**, Professor of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of California at Berkeley, described transference as a universal neurobiological model of human perception that enriches our experience in a way that is not common in other species. He went on to explain some of the neurobiological processes of unlearning, including the generation of the hormone oxytosin during bonding, which enables transference to occur. The action of this phenomenon can be seen most palpably when an adolescent begins to dissolve the parent-child bond and form new loving attachments. **Charles Brenner**, Training and Supervising Analyst at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, emphasized that transference was only one element of the analytic situation, and that the difference between analysis and other situations in which transference occurs is that in analysis the transference is interpreted. He also pointed out that we learn about normal situations through pathology. **Norman Doidge**, a member of the Research Faculty at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and author of *The Brain That Changes Itself*, discussed the plasticity of the brain and cautioned that the potential of transference for dissolving past associations is not without risk, in that it can result in harmful effects on a patient due to neuronal susceptibility. He went on to point out that for certain patients, giving up problematic internal attachments in transference situations feels like a kind of death. **Bradley Peterson**, Suzanne Crosby Murphy Professor in Pediatric Neuropsychiatry and Director of Neuropsychiatry Research at Columbia University, raised the idea that humans are not completely passive in forming associations and responses based on past experiences. Important experiences, he went on, may influence a person to preferentially process the daily onslaught of stimuli and detect certain repetitions. **Dr. Modell**, Training and Supervising Analyst at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, asserted that the information-theory approach, by which the mind translates an external event into an interior representation, was a misconception that Freud drew from John Stuart Mill by way of John Locke. Dr. Modell described transference as an "emulator of the future" and "a simulation of what might happen if we act on what we are feeling." The question of transference as a conscious or unconscious process was relegated to future discussion. *F.L.*

The Mind of the Collector

Behind every collection there is a collector whose motivations may run the gamut from a quest for scientific knowledge or class status, to obsession, compulsion, or greed. Is the desire to collect a genetic predisposition, a relic of our hunter-gatherer past, an act of individual imagination? The processes of collecting and acquisition are rife with psychological, cultural, and political meaning. Collections themselves offer occasions for a multitude of interpretations. What narratives do they tell? The roundtable *The Mind of the Collector* explored the ways in which collectors–and their collections–create meaning.

Leah Dilworth

Leah Dilworth, who serves on the Board of Directors of the City Reliquary, moderated the event, which was held on Wednesday, May 23. She began the discussion by posing some questions. What impulses account for the urge to collect–desire, compulsion, curiosity, wonder? What are the epistemological ramifications of collecting and how does it create meaning? And how are collections shared, displayed, contained and organized? **Eric Edelman**, a collagist and found-object sculptor, explained that his early collecting began when he used spare change to buy compasses as a child. He also recounted an influential early experience of seeing a work by Joseph Cornell, who became a major influence on his art. **Bill Scanga**, Vice President of Collections at the City Reliquary, explained that his father was a collector while his mother was collection-phobic, and said that his interests have ranged from bicycle parts to the bristles on street cleaning brushes. **Steve Heller**, Co-Chair of the Designer as Author program at the School of Visual Arts and a self-described "competitive collector," described how writing a book about his collection of mini mannequins ironically ended up pricing him out of the market for such items. He added that his collection of fascist images for a book he is writing about the branding of ideologies and his collection of "Ostalgia" (items from the former German Democratic Republic) have also made him a documentarian. **Tyler Volk**, Associate Professor of Biology and Director of the Environmental Studies program at New York University, related the discussion to data collection in the natural sciences. He pointed out that Kepler wouldn't have been able to devise his theories about the elliptical orbit of the earth if it hadn't been for Tyco Brahe's collecting of data about the latitudes and longitudes of stars, and added that Darwin and Wallace were also great collectors. Mr. Edelman said that Francis Bacon believed he could understand the laws of science if he collected enough phenomena. **Dorothy Globus**, Curator of Exhibitions at the Museum of Arts & Design, expressed her interested in the taxonomies of collecting. She collects objects like folding hangers and antique doorstops, which are remnants of a way of life that no longer exists. The objects she collects tell a story, and her method of locating objects at flea markets rather than on eBay reflects an immersion in the past. Paraphrasing a remark by Joseph Cornell, Mr. Edelman commented, "Who knows what an object may tell a collector?" Ms. Dillworth brought up the Bower Bird and wondered if the collecting impulse, which we usually consider a product of human cultures, could cross species. Collecting as an obsessive and often addictive activity was a constant theme throughout the discussion, as was the level of discomfort collecting causes family members, who are forced to live in houses filled with a surfeit of objects. *F.L.*

Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems:
George Oppen

"George Oppenheimer was born in 1908 in New Rochelle. His family was affluent, but his childhood was scarred by tragedy and family displacement. His mother shot and killed herself when Oppen was four. The family moved to San Francisco, but he didn't get along with his stepmother. As a teenager, he attended a military academy and was driving a car, had an accident, somebody was killed, and he wound up leaving the school." These laconic biographical notes, offered by Michael Braziller, served as an introduction to the work of George Oppen, the focus of the May 22 session of the Philoctetes course *Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems*. Braziller went on to describe Oppen's itinerant life, which took him from Oregon State University to Brooklyn, where he worked as a communist party organizer, and Detroit, where he worked as a craftsman, mechanic, and carpenter, before joining the army and receiving a Purple Heart for service in the Second World War. He lived in Mexico for ten years during the McCarthy era, then moved back to Brooklyn, where, after a 25 year hiatus from writing, he began producing a significant body of poetic works. He went on to win the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/West Rediscovery Award, among other honors.

Guest poet Louis Glück, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of numerous books of poetry, including, most recently, *Averno*, a finalist for the 2006 National Book Award in Poetry, read at length from her book *Proofs and Theories*, which includes an essay about Oppen. "George Oppen is a master of white space," she quoted, "of restraint, juxtaposition, nuance. His art, though exquisite in detail and scrupulously precise, attains to scope and grandeur through what seems, in some ways, a mastery of perspective." Her reflections on Oppen's work revealed a high regard for the poet's moral resilience and linguistic spareness.

Glück read "Street," afterwards commenting, "Oppen has a way of replicating, on the page, the impression of a mind engaged in debate with itself." Braziller noted the poem's highly accessible quality of diction. He summed up his impressions of the piece, remarking, "We see this spare, very complex thinking, but there always seems to be a strong social awareness and a moral kind of a concern for our condition." Braziller and Glück went on to read "Niece," "Philai Te Kou Philai," "Psalm," and "Boy's Room." Perhaps more so than in past evenings, audience contributions to the discussion came early and frequently, which gave an interactive feel to the in-the-moment analyses of each of the poems. Rather than simply answer questions, Glück engaged the audience in a dialogue about possible shades of meaning in some of the more complex passages. She went on to read her own six-part poem "October," a plaintive interior monologue about the passage of the seasons. *A.L.*

Dance, Movement, and Bodies

"We come into the world moving. We're precisely not stillborn. Indeed, movement forms the 'I' that moves, before the 'I' that moves forms movement." With this statement, **Maxine Sheets-Johnstone**, an interdisciplinary scholar affiliated with the Department of Philosophy at the University of Oregon, introduced the central idea behind the roundtable *Dance, Movement, and Bodies: Forays into the Nonlinguistic and the Challenge of Languaging Experience*, which was held on Wednesday, June 27. Ms. Sheets-Johnstone, who the previous evening conducted a movement workshop in connection with the roundtable, went on to propose that creative movement is one of the core experiential dimensions of our lives as infants, and later influences our emotional expression and our capacity for play. The influence of early movement and play experience, she continued, even governs our formation of language. Ms. Sheets-Johnstone screened three video clips to introduce perspectives that the other panelists would bring to the discussion. The first excerpt showed two wild bears engaging in play, and was provided by **Robert Fagen**, retired Professor of Biometry at the University of Alaska and author of *Animal Play Behavior*. The second clip was from a rehearsal of a dance form called contact improvisation, and featured **Steve Paxton**, a dancer and choreographer who developed the style in the 1970's, and has since been awarded grants from the NEA and the Rockefeller Foundation to fund his work. The third piece was excerpted from a performance by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and was contributed by **Joanna Gewertz Harris**, a dancer and choreographer who writes about dance and teachers at Diablo Valley College and the Berkeley Modern Dance Center.

Taking up the themes raised by Professor Sheets-Johnstone, **Daniel N. Stern**, Professor of Psychology at the University of Geneva and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at Cornell University Medical Center's New York Hospital, postulated that the reason babies don't talk for the first two years of their lives is due to the fact that their exploration of movement and touch, during which they learn, for example, how to kiss, prepares them for language. Language might only interfere with their corporeal learning about the world, he concluded. Professor Gewertz Harris added that in dance therapy, the task is to create an environment where body learning, or expression through movement, can be trusted again. The limits of language and the restrictions of socialization, she elaborated, often create internal resistance and block expression, disconnecting people from their own bodies. Professor Fagen said that play between a mother and her offspring–in humans and in sophisticated animals–is a critical formative stage, and that in deer the young learn basic social skills through movement. Mr. Paxton explained that the lack of structure in improvised dance eventually, through practice and repetition, becomes highly structured and codified, and that maneuvers that appear to be risky and unpredictable are actually very safe–the product of a cultivated trust environment. His experiences led him to believe that dance, and especially contact improvisation, relates to how we attune to others. Ms. Sheets-Johnstone asserted that learning about how we move allows us to break through habits in every day life, and that breaking movement patterns can be a way of liberating not only our bodies, but our minds. *A.L.*

Extraterrestrial Life

Many people think of extraterrestrial life as the province of science fiction, but in fact there are eminent scientists looking for a signal from intelligent life (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, or SETI, is the best known). The inquiry into the existence of such life begins with a basic agreement about what the requirements for life are and whether these requirements provide clues to where life may be found in the Universe. The roundtable *Extraterrestrial Life* examined how human imagination, innovation, and invention can be marshaled to explain, define, and explore the meaning of extraterrestrial life.

James P. Ferris, Research Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Director of the New York Center for Studies on the Origins of Life, moderated the roundtable, which took place on Saturday, April 14. He began the discussion by proposing that life is defined as a system capable of replication with change, and speculated about further refinements to the definition. Does life necessarily entail the capacity to communicate? How does life maintain itself? **Avi Loeb**, Professor of Astronomy at Harvard University, attempted to address these questions by explaining the process by which life first formed on earth. Since water is the element that allowed for the chemical reactions that created life on earth, the search for liquid water is of primary importance in determining the potential for life formation. Professor Loeb went on to ask if other liquids, such as ammonia, might support other types of life. **Debra Fischer**, Professor of Astronomy at San Francisco State University, whose work involves locating planets that orbit nearby stars, emphasized that any search for life must focus on recognizable forms, which are carbon-based. While there may be silicon-based life forms, she went on, tests used to look for extraterrestrial life must be based on what we know. **Steven J. Dick**, Chief Historian at NASA and author of *Life in Other Worlds*, related that when Johann Kepler discovered circular craters on the moon, he thought they were created by intelligent beings. Dr. Dick distinguished between the search for primitive life and the search for intelligent life, the latter being capable of technological civilization and radio communication. Professor Loeb emphasized that intelligence is not a guarantee for survival, citing the fact that animals that have little intelligence often adapt themselves in order to survive. **David Marusek**, author of the novel *Counting Heads* and the short story collection *Getting to Know You*, added that the portrayal of intelligent extraterrestrial life was more effective in science fiction literature than the portrayal of non-intelligent forms. Professor Loeb discussed the technologies that are being developed to detect signals emanating from hundreds of light years away. **Dave Itzkoff**, author of *The New York Times* Book Review's "Across the Universe" column, which focuses on science fiction and fantasy, asked if other life forms are equipped to detect our transmissions–if we send them–and decipher their content.

Professor Ferris shifted the discussion to the possibility of locating life in our solar system. Professor Loeb explained that Europa, a moon of Jupiter, has ice on its surface, beneath which could be liquid water capable of supporting life, while Dr. Dick reported that the search for life on Mars has long driven the space program. Mr. Marusek asked why discovering extraterrestrial life was so important to humans, sparking a discussion about the impact such a discovery might have on our religious conceptions. Professor Loeb equated our need to know about extraterrestrial life with our need to know about our own origins. Before the panelists took questions from the audience, Mr. Marusek offered an outline of the history of aliens in literature and film, highlighting their evolution from the hostile invaders in H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* to benign visitors like *E.T.* and the cyborgs gone haywire in *Battlestar Galactica*. *A.L.*

Crazy Love

In the summer of 1959, Burt Pugach, a 32-year-old married attorney, met Linda Riss, a beautiful 20 year-old from the Bronx, and the two carried on a whirlwind romance. After discovering that Pugach was married, Riss refused to speak to him, despite his insistence that they remain involved. Angry and desperate, Pugach hired a man to throw lye in her face, subsequently blinding her. The story was covered widely in the press and shocked the nation. He went to jail for the crime, but never stopped contacting Riss to profess his undying love. After serving his sentence, Pugach continued his relentless courtship of Riss, who for her part dated other men unsuccessfully. She eventually relented, and the two have been married ever since. *Crazy Love*, directed by **Dan Klores**, recounts this disturbing story of love and obsession. With the cooperation of Burt and Linda Pugach, now aged 79 and 67, Klores examines the human psyche and the concepts of love, loneliness, insanity, hope, and forgiveness. The Philoctetes Center held a screening of the film on Thursday, May 31, followed by a roundtable discussion entitled *Crazy Love: Who's Tormenting Whom?* Daphne Merkin, author of the novel *Enchantment* and the collection of essays *Dreaming of Hitler*, and a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *Elle*, moderated the event.

Professor Harris recognized Burt as a deceiver and a spin-doctor whose term in jail did little to reform him. She concluded that while the film addresses themes of heterosexuality and gender tension, it is not about love.

Ms. Merkin began by stating that the categorizations used in psychoanalysis were not useful in assessing the behaviors depicted in the film and urged that terms like bi-polar and borderline personality disorder be avoided. She rejected the idea that Burt is a psychopath. **Glen Gabbard**, Brown Foundation Chair of Psychoanalysis and Professor of Psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine and author of *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, *Psychoanalysis and Film*, and *The Psychology of the Sopranos*, speculated that the love that Burt professes for Linda may in fact be a form of projection, in which the lover constructs a passion without really seeing the love object. He injected a note of humor by citing a quote by George Berrnard Shaw: "Love doesn't make the world go round, it just makes the affected parties dizzy." **Adrienne Harris**, a faculty member and supervisor at the New York University Post-doctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, reported that she was shocked when members of the audience laughed at Burt's comments and behavior. Professor Harris recognized Burt as a deceiver and a spin-doctor whose term in jail did little to reform him. She concluded that while the film addresses themes of heterosexuality and gender tension, it is not about love. Mr. Klores, whose other films include *The Boys of 2nd Street Park*, *Ring of Fire: The Emilie Griffith Story*, and *Viva Baseball!*, described the elements that originally attracted him to the story. He explained that the film is not only about crime and romance, but also about media and the New York City of his youth. Although he related to the principal characters' feelings of aloneness, he reiterated that Burt and Linda are not in love.

"The tragedy of human nature is that we have the most prolonged dependence on adult caretakers of any species. And that affects us and our notions about love, and our myths of love, forevermore."

Michael Miller, a clinical psychologist in private practice in Cambridge and the author of *Intimate Terrorism: The Crisis of Love in An Age of Disillusion*, asserted that the film is an epitaph of modern love and that Burt is a Gatbsy-like figure, creating wealth to win a woman. Addressing the themes of love and tragic dependence, Dr. Miller commented, "The tragedy of human nature is that we have the most prolonged dependence on adult caretakers of any species. And that affects us and our notions about love, and our myths of love, forevermore." Ms. Merkin responded by pointing out Burt's unusually intimate relationship with his mother, who bathed him until he was 11 or 12 years old. As if to underscore Burt's continued instability, Mr. Klores recounted that after demanding a greater share of the film's revenues with threats to the filmmaker's family, Burt later called him to say, "I love you." *A.L./S.S.*

Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures and Shoot the Moon Productions.

Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems:
Sylvia Plath

The fourth workshop in the poetry series *Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems* was held on Monday, July 9, and addressed the work of Sylvia Plath. Michael Braziller led the course with guest poet Carol Muske-Dukes, author of seven books of poetry, including *Sparrow*, a National Book Award finalist, and four novels. Muske-Dukes is Professor of English and founding Director of the new PhD Program in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Southern California. She opened the evening with a brief biography of Plath, cautioning that discussion of the late poet's life is often prone to sensationalism. Born in 1932, Plath was considered a child prodigy, winning many prizes and awards at a young age. She received a scholarship to Smith College in 1950 and later landed a position as *Mademoiselle* College Fiction Editor. While struggling with depression, she was administered electroshock therapy, and later tried to take her own life with pills. Upon graduating college she received a Fulbright scholarship to study at Cambridge, and in 1956 married the poet Ted Hughes. Four years later, Plath published her first book of poems and gave birth to the first of two children. While poems about her children are filled with joy and wonder, Plath's focus seems split between a desire for death and a desire for life. Professor Muske-Dukes raised the possibility that Plath was bi-polar, a condition that may have contributed to her suicide in 1963.

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After reading "Daddy," Professor Muske-Dukes and Mr. Braziller agreed that the poem's nursery-rhyme quality effectively conveys its childlike sentiments. Professor Muske-Dukes deflected questions about the poem's autobiographical implications, commenting that great poetry is timeless and exists separately from biography. Mr. Braziller felt that in the next poem, "Elm," Plath imparts her awareness that she is small, but Professor Muske-Dukes countered, "She feels huge–the taproot goes all the way down." They went on to read "The Moon and the Yew Tree," "The Arrival of the Bee Box," and "Edge." The poems are full of double meanings, with inanimate objects taking the place of characters from Plath's life. Mr. Braziller pointed out the brilliant use of colloquialisms interjected throughout Plath's poetry. Professor Muske-Dukes asserted that the final poem, "Words," was not a plea for sympathy, but rather a portrayal of the struggle with the inevitability of death and the promise of the creative process to combat fate.

Carol Muske-Dukes & Michael Braziller

Throughout the discussion, Professor Muske-Dukes insisted on the importance of defending Plath from psychoanalysts, a group well represented at the Philoctetes Center. She took the view that examining Plath's mental problems was a way of cheapening the brilliance of her art. Certainly, the Philoctetes Center engages in an inquiry into the mind of the artist and the artist's audience, more so than a pure exploration of art itself. Professor Muske-Dukes expressed a passionate allegiance to Plath and, although some might view her demeanor as purely contentious, she was vigilant in trying to keep her heroine off the psychiatrist's couch. As an embodiment of the concept of the wound and the bow, the life and artistry of Sylvia Plath serve as a prime example. *S.S.*

Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems:
W.B. Yeats

The final evening of the course *Our Life in Six Lyrical Poems*, conducted by Michael Braziller, was held on Monday, June 11, and focused on the poetry of William Butler Yeats. Mr. Braziller's guest was Eamon Grennan, retired Dexter M. Ferry Jr. Professor of English at Vassar College, author of over nine collections of poetry, and recipient of the PEN award for Poetry in Translation and the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. Mr. Grennan began the evening with a biography of Yeats. He warned that the difficulty of packing Yeats into an hour and a half was "like trying to pick up dust with a fork." Born in Ireland in 1865, Yeats became passionate about poetry at a very young age. His work spans from the 1880's to the 1930's, and it changed constantly over the years. Grennan professed that Yeats is a model of the poetic career, but cautioned that imitating him was futile. "His voice is entirely his own, and if you did try, you'd fall on your face, among other things." In addition to landscapes, Yeats' chief inspirations were his lifelong loves, in particular Maud Gonne, her daughter Iseult, and Olivia Shakespeare. Yeats was involved not only in poetry, theater, and the occult, but in politics as well, becoming a senator in 1922. Grennan observed that Yeats' poetry kept pace with his life at every step and mapped "the world of fact and of feeling with language that is adequate to it."

Mr. Braziller read the evening's first selection, "When You are Old," written in 1891 when Yeats was 26. Grennan commented that even as a young man, Yeats was obsessed with aging and loss.

In the Kitchen with Yeats

Since the poet is never the man
who sits down to breakfast,
never that bundle of fragments,
but the composed whole bloke,
buzzing iambics behind a closed door,
I suppose he wasn't one to linger
if ever he visited the kitchen–
his sense of smell confined
to incense, honey, wine
and other emblematic fragrances.
So what will he make of me
in this cottage kitchen on his birthday,
stirring a sauce for pasta, one hand
holding a wooden spoon, the other
his collected poems, a fresh edition?

With one ear, I listen
to the homely little splutter
of tomatoes, spices, garlic, a diced onion
as they bubble
towards their unity of being,
while with the other I can hear
the clear austere music
of "The Wild Swans at Coole,"
the ache of its defeats beating
through that one lost rhyme each stanza,
and through those clean life lines of his
that keep cheating us out of ease,
but lead to grace.

(excerpt from a poem by Eamon Grennan)

Braziller noted that the poem is a premonition of a theme that would emerge repeatedly in Yeats' work–the unfairness of love. "He loved her with more complexity and with more truth and with a greater intimate knowledge than all the others," he elaborated, referring to the speaker in the poem, "but he lost her anyway." Grennan concurred that Yeats was fascinated by the dynamics of desire, and went on to point out that the poem has great architectural power, while still moving fluidly.

Eamon Grennan & Michael Braziller

Grennan then read "The Wild Swans at Coole," written in 1917. He observed that Yeats isn't a great describer, but rather a great evoker. "It's simple, it's straightforward, it's idiomatic," he continued, "and yet it's beautiful in its fluency and in its lyrical kind of containment." Braziller read "Memory," noting that the poem turns from a cavalier tone to something deeply loving, depicting an unforgettable impression made on Yeats, presumably by a woman.

Braziller and Grennan moved on to "The Tower," a long poem written in three sections of contrasting style and tone. While agreeing that the poem is a coming-to-terms with aging and decay, they noted that it concludes with a joyous catharsis. Following a reading of "A Dialogue of Self and Soul–Part II," Braziller marveled at Yeats' tremendous courage in expressing his self-doubt, while Grennan praised the poet's ability to find language powerful enough to do so. "The poem isn't the finished product of thought," he elaborated, "the poem is the enactment of the thinking through of something."

After reading "Politics," a poem that returns to the themes of sensuality and yearning, Grennan read two of his own poems. The first, "Beholding a Hare," is set in the landscape of Yeats, while the second, "In the Kitchen with Yeats," is an affectionate recognition of Grennan's debt to the poet. In it, the speaker lovingly describes preparing a bowl of pasta while attempting to memorize "The Wild Swans at Coole," a feat that Grennan confirmed he had in fact accomplished. Throughout the evening, Grennan cited anecdotes about Yeats that made the poet's life and work come alive. Not only did he offer insights, he was able to make new discoveries as he interacted with the audience. Both Grennan and Braziller expressed a deep reverence for Yeats and a strong identification with the themes explored in his work, which contributed to their vivid readings of the poems. *A.L./S.S.*

The Origins of Norms (continued from front page)

tive function. Dr. Edelman recounted his team's efforts to employ robotics to reproduce the functioning of the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for episodic memory. He concluded by speculating that while machines are capable of imitating certain aspects of consciousness, humans are not just complex machines, but products of many years of evolution in which sensory-motor discrimination has served as an advantageous adaptation.

Lorraine Daston, Director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin and author of *Biographies of Scientific Objects* and *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment*, gave the evening's second lecture. She attempted to define order in nature, remarking that human attempts to impose order have historically been disastrous, while nature has proved heartless and even incomprehensible at times. The most fearful paradigm for humans, she continued, was chaos. A land in which no promises are kept, in which the sun does not rise and set in a predictable way, is a no man's land where survival is impossible and all is left to chance. All social orders, Professor Daston asserted, are based on a foundation of norms, a conception of what should be. It is at the boundary between natural and social orders where the temptation to seek rational explanation founders. Even if we divest nature of all of its divine authority, she continued, we can't exist without it—our imperative to find meaning in nature is irresistible. Professor Daston concluded by proposing that extracting norms from nature was a historical enterprise that defied liberal or conservative leanings, and that escaping the dictates of social Darwinism was hopeless.

Disillusionment with the human condition may be a good thing, in that it allows us to get past illusion and incorrect preconceptions.

Anne Harrington, Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University and Co-Director of the Harvard University Mind, Brain, and Behavior Initiative, began the event's second evening with a lecture entitled *Buddhist Brains: A Case Study in the Re-enchantment of the Brain Sciences*. Her premise was that the search for values and norms in a world of nature was a "fool's errand" that led to widespread disenchantment in the sciences. Citing a 1919 lecture by Max Weber, she posited that science becomes meaningless because it gives no answer to the central question, "What shall we do and where shall we live?" Brain science, Professor Harrington went on, is a disenchanting discipline in that it flattens subjectivity and often seems to reduce human life to the sum of its molecular interactions. Countering this disenchantment, however, is a more positive, resistant movement of "re-enchantment," a movement that has recently found its focal point in the study of the effects of meditation—particularly among Tibetan monks—on the brain. This study has led to speculation that meditation practice allows monks to be more emotionally stable and less prone to stress responses. The monks have also been found to be happier, more able to synchronize different aspects of their being, more capable of compassion, and prone to greater gamma activity. Though such conclusions are difficult to quantify, Professor Harrington characterized the project as distinct from disciplines like neuroeconomics in that it is based on humility rather than bravado. The involvement of the Dalai Lama in the project has generated a great deal of interest, and the possibility that consciousness can affect matter, given the possible health benefits of meditation, has encouraged, according to Professor Harrington, a process of re-enchantment among those seeking a deeper understanding of human thought.

Professor Friedman proposed that while man is driven by biological force, his decisions do have meaning and he is able to have insight into his decisions.

John Forrester, Professor of History and Philosophy of the Sciences at the University of Cambridge and author of *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, gave the evening's second lecture, focusing on the connection between scientific naturalism and psychoanalysis. He cited scientific naturalism as a post-religious movement, in that it removed itself from any concern about piety or atheism. This idea, he continued, correlates with Freud's equating the emancipation from religion with the emancipation from slavery. Psychoanalysis seeks to remove illusions, in particular the kind of hope inherent in religious faith. Professor Forrester proposed that acts founded on religious belief were in truth founded on an unconscious impulse. Evolutionary biology, he asserted, is what moves thought about human behavior beyond the realm of morality, and it has become the scientific naturalism of our age. He observed that evolutionary biology offers a diagnosis, but not an intervention, and psychoanalysis fills this gap as a means of overcoming belief. Professor Forrester concluded on a humorous note, saying that if personal catharsis was equated with religious experience, psychoanalysis was like a religion that allowed Christians and Catholics an opportunity to be what they most aspired to be—Jewish New Yorkers.

Akeel Bilgrami, Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University and author of *Belief and Meaning*, moderated the roundtable held on the event's final evening. He posed a question as the point of departure for the discussion: Are there normative elements in the world that are external to the human subject that are not entailed by natural science or social science? **Joel Snyder**, Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago and Co-Editor of *Critical Inquiry*, the journal of criticism and theory, responded by proposing that disillusionment with the human condition may be a good thing, in that it allows us get past illusion and incorrect preconceptions. However, he went on, it does not mean that we have to get past values. **Lawrence Friedman**, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Weill Cornell Medical College, proposed that while man is driven by biological force, his decisions do have meaning and he is able to have insight into his decisions. Professor Edelman speculated that when we talk about norms and truth, we aren't talking about the brain only, but about the brain, the body, and their embedding in the world. Tracing the sources of disillusionment with the natural sciences, Professor Harrington ventured that reason and consciousness disconnect us from a feeling of being whole and connected in the world. The goal of meditation, she went on, was to move us into a place where value and nature are integrated. Professor Daston rounded out the discussion by questioning whether concluding that values are human constructs makes them any less natural or real. Perhaps agency itself, she continued, falls within the realm of natural and social science. *A.L.*

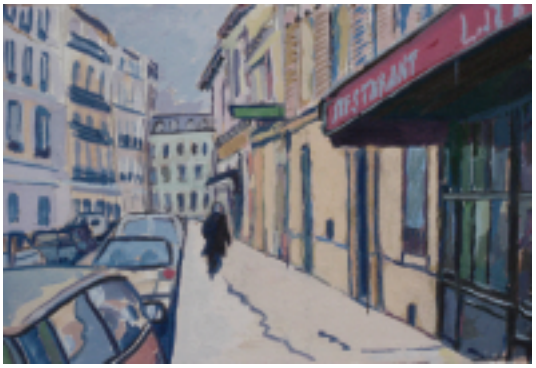
The Doctor's Palette

June 25 – October 1, 2007

Artist's Reception: Saturday, September 15, 5:00-6:30pm
Immediately following the Roundtable Modernity and Waste

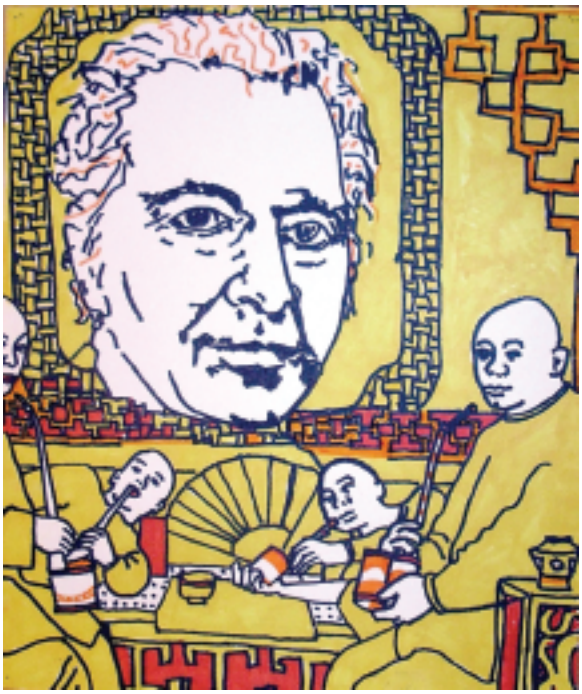
Martin Wilner, *Making History, July 2005*

Susan Ball
Ann Beeder
Paul Rosenbaum
Ladd Spiegel
Martin Wilner



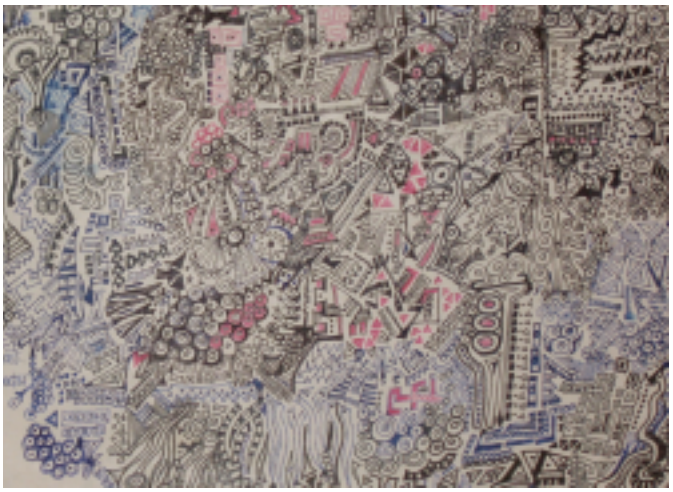
Paul Rosenbaum, *Simple Street*

The Doctor's Palette, which concludes the 2006–2007 season of exhibitions at The Philoctetes Center, demonstrates how art and science find harmony in the individual. The concept of the Center was inspired in part by C.P. Snow's famed "Two Cultures" essay, in which he inveighed against the separation between science and the humanities. This separation expresses itself not only across our culture, but also in the tendency of individuals to compartmentalize creative and scientific aptitudes. The dialogue between the scientific discipline of medicine and the creative play of visual art is evident in the work of the five Doctor/Artists presented in the exhibition. Susan Ball's intricate "doodles" reflect a mining of the unconscious, while her post-card watercolors serve as more literal documentation of her travels. Ann Beeder's colorful silk screens and ink portraits capture the idiosyncrasies of her subjects, who are often patients. Paul Rosenbaum's gouache paintings attempt to bring intimacy to the tourist's point of view. Ladd Spiegel uses printed pages and maps to underlie his geometric, almost clinical abstractions, and Martin Wilner's ink drawings skitter on the boundary between the representational and the fantastical.



Ann Beeder, *Portrait of a Narcissist*

Ladd Spiegel, *Allentown/Bethlehem (Blue Oval)*



Susan Ball, *Doodle (detail)*

Upcoming Events

Modernity and Waste
Roundtable

Saturday, September 15, 2:30pm

Participants: Jennifer Gabrys, William Kupinse (moderator), William Rathje, John Scanlan, Susan Strasser

Freud and the Historical Imagination
Roundtable

Saturday, September 29, 2:30pm

Participants: Richard Armstrong (moderator), Diane O'Donoghue, George Prochnik, Peter Rudnytsky, Joel Whitebook

Daydreaming, Night-Dreaming, and Stimulus-Independent Thought
Roundtable

Saturday, October 6, 3:30pm

Participants: John Antrobus, Eric Klinger, Malia Mason, Ethel Person, Jerome Singer (moderator)

Creativity in Jazz Improvisation
Course

Saturday, October 13, 2:30pm

Participants: Jane Ira Bloom & Lewis Porter

The Future of the Stockmarket
Roundtable

Saturday, October 20, 2:30pm

Participants: Justin Fox (moderator), Bernard Madoff, Robert A. Schwartz, Josh Stampfli

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

The Critic as Thinker: How Eric Bentley, Robert Brustein, and Stanley Kauffmann Re-imagined American Theater Criticism
Roundtable

Saturday, October 27, 2:30pm

Participants: Eric Bentley, Robert Brustein, Roger Copeland (moderator), Stanley Kauffmann

Poetry in the Therapeutic Context
Roundtable

Tuesday, October 30, 7:00pm

Participants: Michael Braziller, Karen Chase, Madge McKeithen

The Role of the Subject in Science
Roundtable

Saturday, November 3, 3:30pm

Participants: Sukanya Chakrabarti, Piet Hut (moderator), Jan-Markus Schwindt, Margaret Turnbull, Edwin L. Turner

Distortions of Memory
Roundtable

Saturday, November 10, 1:00pm

Panelists: Deirdre Bair, Bruno Clément, Maryse Condé, Bill Hirst, Edward Nersessian, Lois Oppenheim (moderator)

Beyond the Haunting Melody
Course

Tuesday, November 29, 7:00pm

Participants: Stephanie Chase & Edward Applebaum

Divided Society/Divided Self
Roundtable

Saturday, December 1, 3:30pm

Panelists: Dan Rather (other panleists TBA)

Sophocles' Philoctetes
Play Reading

Saturday, December 8, 1:30pm

Participants: Bryan Doerries, Jesse Eisenberg, Adam Ludwig

Doctor/Patient Relationships
Roundtable

Saturday, December 8, 3:00pm

Participants: Bryan Doerries, Jonathan Jacobs, Lyuba Konopasek (moderator), Robert Michels (other panelists TBA)

The Future of Technology
Roundtable

Saturday, Decembeer 15, 2:30pm

Participants: David Kirkpatrick (other panelists TBA)

Weather and Imagination
Roundtable

Saturday, January 12, 2008, 2:30pm

Participants: Deborah Coen (moderator), Sheila Jasanoff, Antony Leiserowitz, Stephanie LeMenager, Ben Orlove

All events held at The Philoctetes Center, 247 E. 82nd Street, New York, NY, unless otherwise noted.