

Café Scientifique

2002-3

Welcome to our fourth series of sparkling conversations about science controversies. From diet to depression, from sun-tans to space, our speakers will entertain and inspire you, even if you haven't studied science since you were sixteen. Our line-up of local heroes and visiting stars can all be seen at Newcastle's Live Theatre (Broad Chare, Quayside) at 8 pm, admission £3 (£1 concessions).

Monday 16th September

John Dupre:

"Beyond Human Genetics"

The genome is an integrated whole that interacts continuously with the environment in human development. This undermines both evolutionary psychology and the idea of single genes or even clusters of genes as defining kinds of people. The relevance of genomics to medicine has yet to be determined, but its limited relevance for understanding human nature is already clear. John is Professor of Philosophy of Science and Head of Sociology at the University of Exeter, and has previously worked at Stanford and Birkbeck. His latest publications are *Human Nature and the Limits of Science* (Oxford, 2001) and *Humans and Other Animals* (Oxford, 2002).

Monday 28th October

Janna Levin:

"How the universe got its spots"

Our universe appears to stretch nearly thirty billion light years across: spacetime appears unlimited. But once it was thought that the earth was flat: we make be equally wrong to think of space as infinite. Space may not only be curved, as Einstein suggested, but also connected, compact and finite. By searching for the shape and extent of space we are trying to locate ourselves in this vast expanding cosmos. Having studied at MIT and Berkeley, Janna is currently in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University. Her diary of unsent letters to her mother has been the popular science 'must read' of 2002.

Monday 18th November

John Burn:

"We are what we ate"

Mankind's evolution has been driven in part by our available food supplies. Many modern diseases result from a diet which doesn't match our genetic makeup. Come and find out about thrifty genes and diabetes and about resistant starch and aspirin in bowel cancer prevention. John is Professor of Genetics at Newcastle and Director of the Northern Genetics Service. He is a frequent contributor to TV, including the "How to build a human" series.

Monday 20th January

Cindy Engel:

"How animals keep themselves well"

Why do dogs eat grass? Why do cattle dig and lick at clay? Why is it important for us to know? Understanding the ways animals manage their own health in the wild can help us improve our own health and that of animals in our care. Author of *Wild Health*, Cindy has a PhD in animal behaviour, has been an associate lecturer in environmental science with the Open University for 15 years and is a regular contributor to the livestock health and welfare debate.

Monday 24th February

Carlo Leifert:

"Is organic farming based on sound principles or consumer hysteria?"

Carlo holds the Chair in Ecological Agriculture at the University of Newcastle and is the Director of the TESCO Centre for Organic Agriculture. He has a background in academic science, and commercial farming. His Centre supports the emerging UK organic farming industry with research and training services. Current research projects focus on crop protection, composting, and animal welfare, as well as research into the benefits of organic production for the environment and for consumers.

Monday 17th March

Martin Conway:

"Diseases of memory"

This title is also the title of an 1883 book by Theodore Ribot - the first book to catalogue disruptions to memory following brain damage. Martin will describe some of the syndromes that can arise following brain damage and in pathological ageing (dementia) and consider what these imply for our thinking about memory and the self.

Martin A. Conway is a leading researcher in the area of autobiographical memory (memory for our lives). He has authored the only text book on this topic and published over 100 papers. He

is currently Professor of Psychology and Head of Department at the Department of Psychology, University of Durham.

Monday 19th May

Steve Wright:

"Surveillance"

Steve is Director of The Omega Foundation, and author of *An Appraisal of the Technologies of Political Control*, a groundbreaking report written for the European Parliament. He will probably speak on the development and proliferation of automatic surveillance, killing and paralyzing systems. Details to be confirmed.

Monday 16th June

Julian Leff:

"The unbalanced mind"

Can biology explain all disturbances of mind and behaviour? What about the psychological, social and cultural factors underlying mental illness? The author of *The Unbalanced Mind* will raise questions including: what is the difference between sadness and depression? Are psychiatric conditions culturally specific? Is there a link between schizophrenia and deprivation? Julian is a researcher in social psychiatry at London's Institute of Psychiatry with a particular interest in the relationships between family members and people with psychiatric illness.

Monday 21st July

Mark Birch-Machin:

"We know what your DNA did last summer"

Is there such a thing as a safe tan? What is 'Sunburnt DNA'? Come and find out what your mitochondrial DNA can tell you about your risk of skin cancer, and what to do to avoid the dangers of a disease which affects another 46,000 Britons every year. Mark is a dermatologist at the University of Newcastle, and a leading expert on skin cancer. He is a Skin Cancer spokesman for Cancer Research UK and his recent research has attracted national media attention.

If you would like to receive details of PEALS seminars, consultation meetings and other events, please contact us at peals@ncl.ac.uk or via 0191 241 8614 to be included on our mailing list.
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