



## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Awareness of Death and Personal Mortality:  
Implications for Anthropogeny

Friday, March 3, 2017



**Dora Biro** is an Associate Professor in Animal Behaviour at the Department of Zoology, Oxford University and a Fellow of St Hugh's College. Her research focuses on animal cognition and uses both primate and avian models to elucidate the psychological machinery that allows animals to cope with specific problems they encounter in their environment. Biro's research topics include navigation, numerical and symbolic competence, tool use, social learning, culture and collective decision-making. She received her Ph.D. from Oxford University, she then held a postdoctoral research fellowship and visiting professorship at Kyoto University, Japan, before returning to Oxford as a Royal Society University Research Fellow.



**John Marzluff** is the James W. Ridgeway Professor of Wildlife Science at the University of Washington. His graduate (Northern Arizona University) and initial post-doctoral (University of Vermont) research focused on the social behavior and ecology of jays and ravens. At the University of Washington, he uses neuroimaging techniques to understand the neural circuits underlying various aspects of crow behavior, including their ability to recognize dangers and opportunities. His research team also focuses on the effects of urbanization and agriculture on songbirds in the Seattle area, and the effects of recreation on high elevation birds in Denali National Park. He teaches courses in Ornithology, Conservation, and leads field explorations to Yellowstone and Costa Rica.



**Paul Harris** is a developmental psychologist. He taught at the University of Oxford for 20 years before moving to Harvard in 2001 where he is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Education. His recent books focus on the development of children's imagination (*The Work of the Imagination*, published by Blackwell/Wiley in 2000) and children's learning from other people (*Trusting what You're Told: How Children Learn from Others*, published by HUP in 2012).



**Joseph LeDoux** is a neuroscientist at New York University where his work is focused on the brain mechanisms of memory and emotion. LeDoux is the author of *The Emotional Brain* (Simon and Schuster, 1998), *Synaptic Self* (Penguin Books, 2003), and *Anxious* (Penguin Books, 2016). He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and the lead singer and songwriter in the rock band, The Amygdaloids ([amygdaloids.com](http://amygdaloids.com)), and in the acoustic duo, So We Are ([soweare.net](http://soweare.net)).



**Ajit Varki** is Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Cellular & Molecular Medicine at UC San Diego; Adjunct Professor, Salk Institute; Co-Director, Center for Academic Research and Training in Anthropogeny (CARTA); Co-Director, Glycobiology Research and Training Center (GRTC); Executive Editor, "Essentials of Glycobiology" (Cold Spring Harbor, 2009); Co-author of *Denial* (Hachette, 2013); and member, National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He served as President, Society for Glycobiology; Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Clinical Investigation*; and President, American Society for Clinical Investigation. His research focuses on sialic acids in biology, evolution and disease - in relation to explaining human origins.



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**Colin Renfrew** is Professor Emeritus of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge and was founding Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research. He has excavated prehistoric sites in Greece and in the Orkney Islands, and is interested in archaeological theory including cognitive archaeology. He sits in the UK House of Lords as Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn.



**Rita Astuti** is a social anthropologist. She teaches at the Anthropology Department of the London School of Economics and Political Science and has conducted extensive periods of fieldwork in a fishing village in Madagascar. Astuti published *People of the Sea* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), an ethnographic monograph on kinship, death and identity. In collaboration with developmental psychologists, she has reanalyzed her ethnographic findings through the use of experimental techniques (for example, in *Constraints on Conceptual Development*, published by Wiley-Blackwell, 2004). In her publications and in her teaching, she has advocated a closer integration between anthropology and psychology.



**Sheldon Solomon** is Professor of Psychology at Skidmore College. His studies of the effects of the awareness of death on human behavior are supported by the National Science Foundation and Ernest Becker Foundation, and featured in the documentary film *Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality*. He is co-author of *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror* (American Psychological Association, 2003) and *The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life* (Random House, 2015). Sheldon is an American Psychological Society Fellow, a recipient of an American Psychological Association Presidential Citation, and a Lifetime Career Award by the International Society for Self and Identity.



**Nicholas Humphrey** is a theoretical psychologist who has migrated from neurophysiology, through animal behavior to evolutionary psychology and the study of consciousness. Humphrey researched mountain gorillas with Dian Fossey in Rwanda, he was the first to demonstrate the existence of "blindsight" after brain damage in monkeys, he proposed the celebrated theory of the "social function of intellect," and he has recently explained the evolutionary basis of the placebo effect. He has held positions at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and is now emeritus professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Honors include the Martin Luther King Memorial Prize, the Pufendorf medal and the International Mind and Brain Prize.

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