

# Neuroscience—Brains, Minds, and Selves: What Is It Like To Be A Bat, And What Does It Matter?

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The field of neuroscience has achieved considerable insight into the workings of the brain. While the most essential question—how brains produce consciousness and mind—remains enigmatic, what is becoming increasingly evident is that even simple brains enable a variety of complex functions—including the capacity to think, feel pain, and be self-aware. Thus, it appears that if an organism has the neurological “wetware”—that is, a brain of some sort—it is possible that it will be able to run a “program” that produces a mind.

In this lecture, Dr. James Giordano, a neuroscientist and neuroethicist, argues that the cornerstone question is not if other organisms have a mind, but what kind of mind they have. He discusses whether neuroscience and technology can provide some insight into philosopher Thomas Nagel’s metaphorical query, “What is it like to be a bat?”

Dr. Giordano discusses key questions and issues that have arisen in, and from modern neuroscience, including: “Do all brains give rise to minds?”; “Do all minds give rise to a “self?”; “How much brain is required to evoke and sustain a mind or self?” and “How much brain must be changed to change a mind or self?”

Giordano addresses how things “neuro” can be misinterpreted, misperceived, and misused by the public, market, and socio-political agendas. In cautioning against such misdirection, he argues for a neuroethics that enables science and society to use current knowledge in ways that prudently inform and guide our treatment of both human and non-human “selves.”

James Giordano Ph.D, M.Phil., is Director of the Center for Neurotechnology Studies and Chair of Academic Programs at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Arlington, VA, and is Senior Research Associate of the Wellcome Centre for Neuroethics, and Uehiro Centre for Practical Philoso-

phy at the University of Oxford, UK. He is IGERT Professor of Science, Technology, Ethics and Policy at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; Distinguished Visiting Professor of Neuroscience and Neuroethics at Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelm’s Universität, Bonn, Germany; and is Chair of the Capital Consortium on Neuroscience, Ethics, Legal and Social Issues ([www.ccnelsi.org](http://www.ccnelsi.org)).

Dr. Giordano’s most recent books include *Scientific and Philosophical Perspectives in Neuroethics* (with Bert Gordijn, Cambridge University Press); *Pain, Mind, Meaning and Medicine* (PPM Press), and *Pain Medicine: Philosophy, Ethics, and Policy* (with Mark Boswell; Linton Atlantic Books). He is the Editor-in-Chief of the journals *Philosophy, Ethics and Humanities in Medicine*, and *Synesis: A Journal of Science, Technology, Ethics and Policy*; Associate Editor of the international journal *Neuroethics*, and Series’ Editor of *Advances in Neurotechnology: Ethical, Legal and Social Issues*, published by CRC Press. He and his wife Sherry, a naturalist, writer, and artist, “commute” between Old Town Alexandria, VA, and Oxford, UK. (For further information, please see: [www.neurobioethics.org](http://www.neurobioethics.org))

**Saturday, Feb 20, 2010**

**1:30 pm**

National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd, Room 110  
Arlington, VA 22230  
(Ballston Metro stop)

Enter NSF from the corner of 9th N & N Stuart Streets,  
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## Mark Your Calendars: Ray Hyman and D.J. Grothe

Be sure to join us at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 24 at National Science Foundation when NCAS presents its 2010 Philip J. Klass Award for outstanding contributions in critical thinking and scientific understanding to Ray Hyman, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Oregon. Hyman was a founding member of what is now the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and is considered a leading skeptical expert regarding parapsychology. His scholarly publications and his consultations about psychic research (most notably for the US Department of Defense) have enlightened both the public and public policy for decades. Special guest D.J. Grothe (president of the James Randi Educational Foundation, former host of the weekly radio show and podcast "Point of Inquiry," and now host of the new podcast "For Good Reason") will interview Hyman following the award presentation. ☞

## How to Solve Unexplained Mysteries

On Saturday, March 13, Center for Inquiry-DC is hosting a three-hour intensive workshop taught by Benjamin Radford, a Research Fellow with the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, columnist for [LiveScience.com](http://LiveScience.com), and author of five books and hundreds of articles on skepticism, investigation, and the paranormal. He will share his experience and insights gained over a decade of first-hand field investigations of mysterious phenomena. Drawing from dozens of case studies involving monsters, psychics, and ghosts, Ben will explain the step-by-step process in investigations, including critical thinking, evaluating unusual claims, interviewing

eyewitnesses, and conducting field experiments. Visit [ga1.org/center\\_for\\_inquiry/events/IIG](http://ga1.org/center_for_inquiry/events/IIG) or call 202-546-2332 to register. ☞

## Drinking Skeptically

**Note:** due to inclement weather, the February 10 Drinking Skeptically has been canceled. On Wednesday, March 10, come to Jackie's Restaurant at 8081 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring at 7:00 p.m. to join fellow NCASers for the next DC-area *Drinking Skeptically* event. *Drinking Skeptically* is an informal social event designed to promote fellowship and networking among skeptics, critical-thinkers, and like-minded individuals.

Don't drink? Don't let that stop you from joining us! Some of the world's most famous skeptics are teetotalers, and we are happy to have you!

[ncas.org/ds-ncas.html](http://ncas.org/ds-ncas.html)

[www.jackiesrestaurant.com](http://www.jackiesrestaurant.com)

[www.drinkingskeptically.org](http://www.drinkingskeptically.org)

There's no cover charge, and if you order from their very reasonably-priced menu, you'll be delighted. (January's *Washingtonian* magazine rated Jackie's #82 of all DC-area restaurants.)

Remember that drinking skeptically means drinking responsibly. If there's one thing science has taught us, it's the effects of alcohol on the human body. ☞

## New Issue of Skeptical Eye

Be sure to check out the latest issue of the NCAS newsletter *Skeptical Eye*, available online at [ncas.org/eye.html](http://ncas.org/eye.html). (Webless? Give us a call at 301-587-3827 and we'll mail you a hardcopy.) ☞

