



R.D. Laing in the 21st Century



Wagner College, Staten Island, New York • October 25 – 27, 2013

Symposium Co-organizers: Steve Gans, PhD • Miles Groth, PhD • Michael Guy Thompson, PhD

FRIDAY – OCTOBER 25

- 12:30 - 1:00 *Miles Groth, PhD*
Welcome
- 1:00 – 1:50 **Peter Mezan, PhD**
(moderated by Miles Groth)
Who Was R. D. Laing?
Peter Mezan will review Laing's relationship with fame, his charisma, and his skepticism while exploring his enormous impact on 1970s American culture.
- 2:00 – 2:50 **Betty Cannon, PhD**
(moderated by Miles Groth)
Laing, Sartre, and the Practice of Existential Therapy
Betty Cannon will explore the existential philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre's influence on Laing's views about psychotherapy and its impact on her work.
- 3:00 – 3:50 **Edie Irwin**
(moderated by Miles Groth)
Laing and Spirituality
Edie Irwin will review her relationship with Laing, Laing's relationship with spiritual practices, especially Buddhism and how this informed Laing's perspective and impacted her life.
- 4:00-5:20 **Darlene Ehrenberg, PhD and Martin A. Schulman, PhD (Panel Presentation)**
R. D. Laing and American Psychoanalysis
(moderated by Miles Groth)
Dr. Ehrenberg and Dr. Schulman will each explore Laing's impact on their own development as psychoanalysts in America.
- Darlene Ehrenberg, PhD**
Discovering Laing
Darlene Ehrenberg will review how Laing inspired her personal and professional development, from the early 1960s to now: "What a breath of fresh air his early writing was for me!"

Martin A. Schulman, PhD:

R. D. Laing: Pre-Mature Postmodern Psychoanalyst
Martin Schulman will develop the thesis that Laing was a forerunner of contemporary postmodern psychoanalysis, as well as relational theory and practice, yet without his having received due credit.

5:30 – 6:20

Theodore Itten

(moderated by Miles Groth)
Psychotherapeutic Compassion in the Tradition of R.D. Laing

Theodore Itten will discuss how intuition and therapeutic compassion informed the basis of Laing's approach to therapy with all of his patients, whether individual or residential.

6:30 – 7:50

Dinner [on your own]

A list of restaurants is available from Miles Groth.

8:00 – 10:00

Luke Fowler film: ALL DIVIDED SELVES (2012)

All Divided Selves is a rich and intellectually engaging visual biography of the charismatic and controversial Scottish psychiatrist, R.D. Laing, and his contemporaries. This critically acclaimed film was nominated for the prestigious Turner Prize in the UK.

SATURDAY – OCTOBER 26

9:00 – 9:20

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD
Welcome

9:20 – 10:50

Stanley Krippner, PhD and Kirk Schneider, PhD (Panel Presentation)

Laing's Encounter with Existential-Humanistic Psychology
(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)
Stanley Krippner and Kirk Schneider will each explore aspects of Laing's impact on Existential-Humanistic therapy as well as the Humanistic psychology movement in California.

Stanley Krippner, PhD*Models of Madness, Models of Medicine*

Stanley Krippner will discuss how Laing's program for treating schizophrenics inspired another psychiatrist, Humphry Osmond, to create a model of both "madness" and "medicine" that resemble Laing's approach.

Kirk Schneider, PhD*The Centrality of Laing's "Ontological Insecurity," Then and Now*

Kirk Schneider will review the centrality of Laing's concept of ontological insecurity for both existential-humanistic therapy and an awe-informed, revitalized world.

11:00 - 12:00

Andrew Pickering, PhD*Non-Modern Selves*

(moderated by Steve Gans)

Andrew Pickering will focus on the experimental aspect of anti-psychiatry as a quest to explore new sorts of self, altered states, and strange performances.

12:00 - 1:30

Lunch

1:30-2:20

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD

(moderated by Steve Gans)

*Laing and Anti-Psychopathology:**The Myth of Mental Illness Redux*

Michael Thompson will examine how Laing deftly marginalized the contemporary "mental illness" model by substituting in its stead a phenomenological critique of how profound psychological distress is a direct outcome of the human condition, specifically how humans treat each other.

2:30-3:50

Peter Breggin, MD

(moderated by Steve Gans)

R.D. Laing: Human Relationship versus Biological Psychiatry

Peter Breggin will review the reasons for Laing's opposition to medicating psychological distress and the humanitarian alternatives that he advocated.

4:00-4:50

Douglas Kirsner, PhD

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Laing's THE DIVIDED SELF and THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE: Then and Now

Douglas Kirsner will revisit Laing's classic works, *The Divided Self* (1960) and *The Politics of Experience* (1967) by exploring their history, meaning, and significance as well as their enduring relevance today.

5:00-5:50

Fritjof Capra, PhD

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Laing's THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE and Its Echoes in the Emerging Science of Consciousness

6:30-8:30

Fritjof Capra will review how the new discipline of neurophenomenology is taking the first steps toward formulating the science of experience postulated by Laing.

Dinner + R. D. Laing 1972 U.S. Tour Short Film Event

At the dinner a short will be screened that includes excerpts of film footage from R.D. Laing's 1972 American tour. This short film will be presented by Richard W. Adams, and Kenneth Robinson, the son of director/producer Peter Robinson, (*Asylum*, 1972).

SUNDAY – OCTOBER 27

9:00-9:45

Lisa Firestone, PhD

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

A Personal Remembrance by Robert Firestone

Robert Firestone, the renowned psychologist and founder of the Glendon Foundation, was a close friend of Laing's in the last years of his life and was with him when Laing died of a heart attack in St. Tropez in 1989. Though Firestone could not personally attend the Symposium, his daughter Lisa, who is also a psychologist and works with her father, will introduce her father's DVD and discuss it.

10:00-11:50

Nita Gage, Steve Gans, Edie Irwin, Theodor Itten, Douglas Kirsner, Matthew Morrissey, Michael Guy Thompson, Stephen Ticktin (Panel)

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Kingsley Hall and Beyond

The members of this panel all lived in or were intimately involved with one or more of the several post-Kingsley Hall therapeutic communities in London, including Archway Community and Portland Road, during the 1970s. Other members of this panel were involved in houses set up in North America that were inspired by Laing's work, including Soteria House and Shadows in California, and Burch House in New Hampshire. They will share in a group discussion with the audience their experiences in these communities and how they were used for asylum by former or would-be mental health patients who felt that society was destroying them. They will also discuss the emerging Alternatives to Psychiatry Movement in the U. S. and current efforts to open new Laing-inspired therapeutic communities.

12:00-1:00

Brian Evans, Miles Groth, Kyle Glover, Shanti Hellerich (Panel)

(moderated by Miles Groth)

Laing and Undergraduate Students

The panelists, who are all involved with the dissemination of Laing studies in undergraduate programs in the US and UK, will discuss the contemporary relevance for college-age adults of Laing's views about the human condition.

1:00

Steve Gans, Miles Groth, Michael Guy Thompson*Closing Comments and Audience Discussion*

Peter R. Breggin, MD, has been called “The Conscience of Psychiatry” for his reform work in psychiatry. He led the fight against ECT and the massive drugging of America’s children and, with his wife Ginger, founded the journal *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry* and the nonprofit Center for the Study of Empathic Therapy. He has a private practice of psychiatry in Ithaca, New York, and frequently appears in court as an expert witness on behalf of patients injured by psychiatry. His more than twenty books include *Toxic Psychiatry*, *Talking Back to Prozac*, *Medication Madness* and *Psychiatric Drug Withdrawal*. His work has been covered in major print, radio and TV media including *20/20*, *60 Minutes*, *Nightline*, and *Oprah*.

Betty Cannon, PhD, has worked with individuals, couples, and groups in Boulder, Colorado, for over 30 years. She is president of the Boulder Psychotherapy Institute, which trains mental health professionals in Applied Existential Psychotherapy (AEP), which integrates the insights of contemporary existential and psychodynamic approaches with Gestalt and other experiential therapies. Dr. Cannon holds doctorates in both literature and psychology, and is Professor Emerita at the Colorado School of Mines and Adjunct Professor at Naropa University. She is the author of many articles, chapters as well as an internationally recognized book on existential therapy, *Sartre and Psychoanalysis*. She lives in Boulder, CO.

Fritjof Capra, PhD, is a physicist and systems theorist, a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, CA, and on the faculty of the Behrns Environmental Leadership Program at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Capra is the author of several international bestsellers, including *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Web of Life* (1996), *The Hidden Connections* (2002), and *The Science of Leonardo* (2007). He is currently working on a multidisciplinary textbook, *The Systems View of Life*, coauthored with Pier Luigi Luisi, to be published by Cambridge University Press. He lives in Berkeley, CA.

Darlene Ehrenberg, PhD, is a Training and Supervising Analyst and Faculty member at the William Alanson White Institute, Supervising Analyst and Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor at the New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis, on the Faculty at the Mitchell Center for Psychoanalysis, and Supervising Analyst at the Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles. She is the author of *The Intimate Edge: Extending the Reach of Psychoanalytic Interaction* (1992), and is currently working on two new books, one on intergenerational transmission of trauma, the other on issues of desire and therapeutic action. She lives in New York City.

Brian Evans, PhD, teaches at Middlesex and City Universities, where he lectures about R. D. Laing to undergraduate students. He is co-author, with Bernard Waites, of *IQ and Mental Testing: An Unnatural Science and its Social History* (1981) and co-author, with David Marks, of *Health Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice* (2011). He is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Health Psychology*. He lives in London.

Nita Gage, DSPPS, trained with R.D. Laing and his associates at the Philadelphia Association from 1974–1980. She left London and returned to America in 1980 and pursued post-graduate education in psychology and psycho spiritual studies. She trained and studied with shamanic teachers and specializes in integrative psycho spiritual healing. Nita is co-founder of the NeuroImaginal™ Institute, www.neuroimaginalinstitute.com; Director of Healer Within Retreats, www.healerwithinretreats.com, teaching medical and addiction professionals NeuroImaginal Practices for health and well being. She is the author of *The Women in Storage Club, How to Reimagine Your Life*, a book that addresses self-awareness and resiliency through NeuroImaginal practices. She lives in Cambridge, England and Marin County, CA.

Steven Gans, PhD, is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the American Public University and is in private psychotherapy practice at the Center for Relational Psychotherapy in Phoenix, AZ. He worked closely with Laing for many years at the Philadelphia Association and taught in the psychotherapy training program. Dr. Gans is the co-author, with Leon Redler, of *Just Listening: Ethics and Therapy* (2001). He lives in Scottsdale, AZ.

Miles Groth, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at Wagner College, Staten Island, and is the author of numerous papers on existential analysis. He is a trained psychoanalyst and has been in private practice since 1975. Dr. Groth is currently working on a study, *After Psychotherapy*. He lives in New York City.

Eddie Irwin, co-editor of Akong Tulku Rinpoche’s *Taming the Tiger* (Rider) and is the author of *Healing Relaxation* (Rider); both are available online. Eddie studied with R. D. Laing in India and London in the 1970s and since 1980 has worked under the guidance of Akong Tulku Rinpoche. She is currently a member of the Tara Rokpa Therapy Training faculty and practices psychotherapy in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Theodor Itten, is a psychotherapist and clinical psychologist in private practice in Switzerland. He trained at the Philadelphia Association under the tutelage of R. D. Laing and Francis Huxley in the 1970s, before returning to his native Switzerland where he is a Past President of the Swiss Psychotherapeutic Association and currently the Executive Editor of the *International Journal of Psychotherapy*. Mr. Itten is the author of *Rage: Managing an Explosive Emotion* (2011) and co-editor, with Courtenay Young, of *R. D. Laing: Fifty Years Since The Divided Self* (2012). He lives in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Douglas Kirsner, PhD, holds a Chair in Philosophy and Psychoanalytic Studies at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of *The Schizoid World of Jean-Paul Sartre and R. D. Laing* (2003), and *Unfree Associations: Inside Psychoanalytic Institutes* (2009). He lived in one of the post-Kingsley Hall, Philadelphia Association households during the 1970s and has retained a special research interest in Laing’s work. His 1980 interview with Laing has recently been published in *The Psychoanalytic Review* (April 2013). He lives in Melbourne.

Stanley Krippner, PhD, is a professor at Saybrook University, a Fellow in four divisions of the American Psychological Association, a past-president of two of those divisions, and the recipient of six awards from several of those divisions. He is the author and co-author of numerous books, including *Demystifying Shamans and Their World: A Multidisciplinary Study* (2011), and *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Biography of a Disease* (2012). He met Laing on several occasions both in Canada and the United States. He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Peter Mezan, PhD, is a psychoanalyst in private practice in New York City. He was educated at Harvard College, Harvard Medical School, Christ’s College, Cambridge, and the City University of New York. In London, where he lived for many years, he became close to Laing and his circle and, as a free-lance journalist, introduced Laing to the American public in cover articles in major American magazines as well as contributions to several books. He has given numerous papers at psychoanalytic conferences around the world on the psychoanalysis of couples and is currently collaborating on a book on that subject. He lives in Katonah, NY.

Matthew Morrissey MFT, is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco. He is the co-author and co-editor of *A Way Out of Madness: Dealing with Your Family After You’ve Been Diagnosed with a Psychiatric Disorder*. Matthew interned for two years at Burch House, a therapeutic community in New Hampshire modeled after PA households in London.

Andrew Pickering, PhD, is an internationally renowned leader in the field of science and technology studies. For many years, he was Professor of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is now Professor of Sociology and Philosophy at the University of Exeter in England. He has held fellowships at MIT, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, Princeton University, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford and, most recently, Institutes for Advanced Study at the Universities of Durham and Konstanz. He is the author of numerous books, the most recent which is *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future* (2010), which includes a chapter on Gregory Bateson and R. D. Laing, which reviews the antipsychiatry movement and the 1960s counterculture. He lives in Great Britain.

Kirk Schneider, PhD, is a leading spokesperson for contemporary existential-humanistic psychology, and is an adjunct faculty member at Saybrook University, San Francisco and at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Schneider is a founding member of the Existential-Humanistic Institute, and the author or editor of numerous books, including *The Paradoxical Self: Toward an Understanding of Our Contradictory Nature* (1999), *Rediscovery of Awe: Splendor, Mystery and the Fluid Center of Life* (2004), and his most recent, *The Polarized Mind: Why It’s Killing Us and What We Can Do About It* (2013). He lives in San Francisco.

Martin A. Schulman, PhD, was editor of *The Psychoanalytic Review* for sixteen years. He is co-editor of *Failures in Psychoanalytic Treatment* (2001, with J. Reppen), *Way Beyond Freud: Postmodern Psychoanalysis Observed* (2004, with J. Reppen and J. Tucker), and *Sexual Faces* (2009, with C. Schwartz). Dr. Schulman has had an enduring interest in the work of Laing and wrote his doctoral dissertation on Laing’s early work. He lives in Aventura, FL.

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD, received his psychoanalytic training from R. D. Laing, with whom he was in supervision, and Hugh Crawford at the Philadelphia Association in London, and served as the organization’s administrator from 1973–1980. He is currently Personal and Supervising Analyst and Faculty Member, Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California, San Francisco, and Adjunct Professor at the California School of Professional Psychology and the California Institute of Integral Studies, both in San Francisco. He is the author of more than 100 journal articles, book chapters, and reviews, as well as three books, *The Death of Desire: A Study in Psychopathology* (1985), *The Truth About Freud’s Technique: The Encounter with the Real* (1994), and *The Ethic of Honesty: The Fundamental Rule of Psychoanalysis* (2004). He is currently working on a biography of Laing, titled *The Road Less Taken: R. D. Laing’s Quest for Authenticity*. He lives in Berkeley, CA.

Dr. Stephen Ticktin, MD is a Canadian psychiatrist and psychotherapist. He obtained his medical degree from the University of Toronto in 1973 and then spend a year in London, England, as personal assistant to David Cooper. He subsequently studied with the Philadelphia Association from 1978–1984. While in London he helped found the British Network of Alternatives to Psychiatry and the Supportive Psychotherapy Association. He has been a visiting lecturer at Regent’s College School of Psychotherapy and Counseling and was also involved with the New School of Psychotherapy under the direction of Emmy van Deurzen. In 2004 he returned to his native Toronto where he currently lives and works as a GP-Psychotherapist.