
CELEBRATING OLIVER SACKS

"Above all, I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet,
and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure."

Oliver Sacks

28TH APRIL 2017

TALKS

THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, SHULMAN AUDITORIUM

PROFESSOR JONATHAN COLE - OLIVER AND IAN; FROM AWAKENING
MEDICAL ELECTIVE TO LOSING TOUCH AND PROPRICEPTION

13.00 - 13.30

In the mid-1970s, when a medical student, I studied in New York with Oliver, the beginning of a 40-year friendship. As Oxford imbued me with a love of empirical neuroscience, so Oliver encouraged me to explore the first person experiences of chronic neurological impairment.

My talk will give some details of my time with Oliver and of studies with Ian Waterman, a man who, aged 19, lost the sense of touch and sense of movement/position from the neck down. Meeting him in the mid-1980s has led to a thirty year neuroscientific and phenomenological study. Moreover, Oliver and Ian's paths merged on several occasions in rather typical ways for Oliver; for instance at NASA and The National Theatre.

HEATHER BOAGEY, STUDENT - A LEGACY TO STAND ON: LIFE LESSONS FOR
STUDENTS FROM A WEIGHTLIFTING-CHAMPION NEUROLOGIST

13.35 - 13.50

In the 60 years since his time at Queen's, Oliver Sacks achieved international acclaim in his capacity as a physician and writer. Yet few are aware of the plethora of alternative interests, from cephalopods to wild swimming, which shaped his outlook on life. We consider some of Sacks' lesser-known passions and the relevance of his philosophy for students today.

LIZ JENSEN IN DIALOGUE WITH MORTEN KRINGELBACH – THE WRITER'S
BRAIN AND THE MECHANISMS OF INVENTION

13.55 - 14.25

"The act of writing is an integral part of my mental life; ideas emerge, are shaped, in the act of writing...a special, indispensable form of talking to myself." - Oliver Sacks.

Novelist Liz Jensen and neuroscientist Morten Kringelbach discuss how Sacks combined his unique talent for empathy and communication with his deep insights into brain and perception to ask: how does the brain negotiate the frontier between the real and the imagined - and should we even call it a frontier at all? Where do stories come from? And why does Homo sapiens sapiens have such a furious appetite for them?

ZACHARY TAIT, STUDENT – SACKS AS A PATIENT: A DOCTOR'S REFLECTIONS
ON MORTALITY AND MEDICINE

14.30 - 14.45

Oliver Sacks' wonderful work encompassed many of the qualities we value in our physicians: empathy, detail, clarity. But his later work, especially those articles which formed the collection *Gratitude*, are even more philosophical in their tone and consideration of our lives than his previous work. By looking to Sacks' reflections on his own life and his time as a patient, we can perhaps draw lessons for working with patients and reflecting on our own lives and work.

COFFEE BREAK

15.00 - 15.30

DR LIZZIE BURNS - LEONARD'S MEDICINE FOR THE MIND

15.40 - 16.10

Over the past decade of working regularly with adults in a hospital in London, scientist-turned-artist, Creative Specialist Dr Lizzie Burns will share some individual uplifting stories with the insight this has brought. The revelation from one patient is leading to the uncovering of a surprising overlooked aspect of becoming unwell. What about the mind in hospital? In the words of Oliver Sacks, *"animals get diseases, but only man falls radically into sickness"*.

MATTHEW TOMPKINS, STUDENT – ON SCIENCE AND STORYTELLING

16.15 - 16.30

"If we wish to know about a man, we ask 'what is his story – for each of us is a biography, a story.'" One of the hallmarks of Dr. Sack's writings is his skillful blending of narrative, science, history. Matt Tompkins is a doctoral researcher in Experimental Psychology who will discuss how Dr. Sack's stories can inspire both research and science communication.

DR ROMAN KRZNNARIC – EMPATHY AND THE REVOLUTION OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

16.30 - 16.45

Oliver Sacks played a key role in creating a new public conversation about the role of empathy in society. In this short talk, philosopher and cultural historian Roman Krznaric, author of *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution*, reflects on Sacks's role as an ambassador of empathic thought and practice, and why the imaginative capacity to understand others' feelings and perspectives is so essential for both the art of living and social change. Krznaric explains why we must expand the cultural conversation around empathy in our growing age of extremism, through creative projects such as the Empathy Museum, of which he is founder.

CLARE PATEY – HOW TO MAKE AN EMPATHY MUSEUM

16.45 - 17.00

Two of the qualities for which Oliver Sacks was best known were his ability to tell stories and his ability to empathise. How can artists create new public spaces where people can practice empathy? How do we harness the power of storytelling to explore our shared humanity, engage participants in a transformative experience and open up new public conversations? The artist and curator Clare Patey will discuss what these new spaces might look like and reflect on her first project for the Empathy Museum - 'A Mile in My Shoes'.

DRINKS RECEPTION

17.00 - 18.30

ARTS AND SCIENCE EXHIBITIONS

11.00 - 18.00

ANNIE CATTRELL – FROM WITHIN

Magrath Room

CLARE PATEY – A MILE IN MY SHOES

Shulman Auditorium Foyer

OLIVER SACKS WORLDWIDE

Shulman Auditorium Foyer

ANCIENT BOOKS EXHIBITION

Magrath Room

DIRECTIONS

High St, Oxford OX1 4AW

COMMITTEE

CECILIA HØGFELDT
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