

Strategic workshop on “Naturalistic Approaches to Culture?”

Keynote Speakers



Gergely CSIBRA

www.philosophy.ceu.hu/profiles/faculty/gergely_csibra

Gergely Csibra is a professor of psychology at the Department of Cognitive Science, Central European University (CEU), and, together with György Gergely, leads the Cognitive Development Center at CEU. He obtained his PhD in Budapest, then worked at the MRC Cognitive Development Unit and then at Birkbeck College in London, before returning to Budapest in 2008. His research focuses on various aspects of cognitive development in human infants. Specifically, he studies infants' visual processing from the level of spatial attention and eye-movement control through the intermediate levels of object and face perception to the level of interpretation of observed actions in terms of goals and understanding of communicative signals. He is also interested in how cognitive processes are accomplished by the human brain and how cognitive development can be explained by the neural development in infancy.



Nick ENFIELD

<http://nickenfield.org/>

Nick Enfield is a Senior Investigator in the Language and Cognition Group at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Netherlands, where he has been employed since 2000. He also holds a Chair in Ethnolinguistics at Radboud University Nijmegen. He was first trained in Linguistics and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, and received a PhD from the University of Melbourne in 2000, under the supervision of Nick Evans. Since 2003, he has coordinated a large research project at MPI Nijmegen on comparative approaches to human interaction (project titled “Interactional Foundations of Language”), within the department directed by Stephen C. Levinson. In 2009, he was awarded a large ERC ‘Starting Grant’ to head a five-year project group on “Human Sociality and Systems of Language Use”, running until the end of 2014.

His research focuses on culture, cognition, and semiotic systems including language and hand gesture, with an emphasis on human diversity. His work has been based on long-term fieldwork in Southeast Asia, especially in Laos. A major theme is the micro-macro problem: how are the overarching structures of languages and cultures causally grounded in the mostly face-to-face interaction that occurs among

individuals in historical populations? His book *Linguistic Epidemiology* (2003, Routledge) was a technical study of this problem from a linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective. Other books include *Ethnosyntax* (2002, Oxford), *Roots of Human Sociality* (2006, Berg, co-edited with SC Levinson), *A Grammar of Lao* (Mouton 2007), *Person Reference in Interaction* (2007, Cambridge, co-edited with T Stivers), and *The Anatomy of Meaning* (2009, Cambridge).



Ágnes Melinda Kovács

<http://www.ceu.hu/profiles/research-fellow/agnes-melinda-kovacs>

Ágnes Melinda Kovács is currently a Research Fellow at the Cognitive Development Centre, Central European University, Budapest. She has received a PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience in 2008 from the SISSA, Trieste, where she studied under the mentorship of Jacques Mehler. She has received an MA in Psychology in 2002 from the Babes-Bolyai University Cluj Napoca, Romania. From 2007 to 2010 she was a Marie Curie DISCOS research fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Her research focuses on basic cognitive mechanisms that allow young children to learn *from* social partners and *about* social partners. Part of her research concerns how young infants exposed to a bilingual input manage to learn two languages simultaneously and how bilingualism affects other cognitive abilities, such as executive function development or performance on theory of mind tasks. Furthermore, she investigates how young infants use communicative cues to direct efficient learning processes, how they make inferences about the mental states of other agents; focusing also on the possible deficits of such processes in atypical development.



Oliver MORIN

<http://www.institutnicod.org/notices.php?user=Morin>

Olivier Morin is currently lecturer in philosophy at the Université Paris IV - Sorbonne. In 2010, he received a PhD in philosophy from the École des Hautes Études en

Sciences Sociales, where he worked under the supervision of Dan Sperber. He received an MA in cognitive science from the École Normale Supérieure, and an MA in philosophy from the Université Paris IV - Sorbonne. In 2011 - 2012, he will be a postdoctoral researcher at the cognitive science department of the Central European University, Budapest.

His research focuses on cultural transmission, and whether it depends on specific cognitive adaptations such as imitation or teaching. He argues that it does not: what allows traditions to travel far in time or space is not a special mode of transmission, but a mix of historical and cognitive factors - some quite local and varying from case to case, some more general. Among these more general factors, he is interested in the interplay between some relatively invariant mechanisms of cognitive attraction, and historical factors like demography or institutions. Concerning demography, he has investigated the dynamics of cultural transmission in populations with a high turn-over rate, e.g. in children's peer-culture. He has also done some work in philosophy of social science, to determine how institutions can be represented in human minds. His overall approach could be described as an attempt to bring the field of cultural evolution a little closer to cultural history.



Eugenia RAMIREZ-GOICOECHEA

<http://uned.academia.edu/EugeniaRamirezGoicoechea>

Eugenia Ramirez-Goicoechea is Professor of Anthropology at the Dpt. of Social Anthropology, UNED, Madrid (Spain). She has been Visiting Scholar in the University of Cambridge (UK) (1995-1997 and 2002-2004), in the Human Systematics Laboratory in the Universidad de las Islas Baleares (2009-2010) and Associate Scholar in Newnham College and Pembroke College, Cambridge (UK) (1995-1997 and 2002-2004).

She has taught more than 30 postgraduated courses in different Spanish Universities.

She has done ethnographic fieldwork on ethnicity and otherness, social structure, practices and classificatory systems (Basque Country, Spain, Montevideo). From 1996 she is interested in the ontogeny and phylogeny of social cognition from a neurosocial and embodied perspective of knowledge acquisition. She has carried out epistemological explorations within dynamic (autopoiesis, complexity, chaos) and developmental systems theories. These paradigms have helped her in the

understanding of the social and political co-construction/appropriation of biocultural environments produced by humans along history and course lives. It is within these frames that humans build themselves as biosocial beings in a continuous on-going/becoming process of creation (anthropogenesis), institucionalisation and change. She is currently doing research work on epigenesis, local biologies and political economies and cultures of health and wellbeing.



Peter J. RICHERSON

<http://www.des.ucdavis.edu/faculty/Richerson/Richerson.htm>

Peter J. Richerson Is Distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at the University of California—Davis. His research focuses on the processes of cultural evolution. His 1985 book with Robert Boyd, *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*, applied the mathematical tools used by organic evolutionists to study a number of basic problems in human cultural evolution. His recent books with Boyd include *Not By Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*, an introduction to cultural evolution aimed at a broad audience and *The Origins and Evolution of Cultures*, a compendium of their more important papers and book chapters. His recent publications used theoretical models to try to understand some of the main events in human evolution, such as the evolution of the advanced capacity for imitation (and hence cumulative cultural evolution) in humans, the origins of tribal and larger scale cooperation, and the origins of agriculture. He collaborates with Richard McElreath and Mark Lubell in an NSF funded research group devoted to the study of cultural transmission and cultural evolution in laboratory systems. His current projects include work with Charles Efferson on models of human evolution using the Lotka-Volterra formalism borrowed from ecology and a book with Joe Henrich on the evolution of human social organization.