



香港城市大學  
City University of Hong Kong

## City University Distinguished Lecture Series

Speaker

**Sir Colin Blakemore**

*Professor of Neuroscience & Philosophy, School of Advanced Study, University of London  
Emeritus Professor of Neuroscience, University of Oxford*



# What's So Special About the Human Brain?

on

Tuesday, 16 August 2016 at 4:30 pm

at

Connie Fan Multi-media Conference Room

4/F Cheng Yick-chi Building

City University of Hong Kong

Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon

### *Abstract*

The human brain is very big, but not as large as that of an elephant or a whale. The fundamental features of our nerve cells and the structure of our cerebral cortex are very similar to those of a mouse. And one after another, the basic characteristics of human cognition, once thought to be unique to us, have been demonstrated in other species (including in scrub jays, with their tiny bird brains). Yet there clearly is something different about human beings. Elephants can't talk; whales haven't invented science; and, as far as we know, there are no autistic scrub jays. So, what exactly is special about the human brain? The genetic changes that created modern human beings, including the enlargement of the brain, occurred more than 200,000 years ago. So, conventional Darwinian evolution could not have been responsible for the emergence of the modern mind. What could have driven the evolution of culture?

### *Biographical Sketch*

Sir Colin Blakemore, FMedSci, FRCP, FRS, is Professor of Neuroscience & Philosophy at the School of Advanced Study, University of London and Emeritus Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Oxford. He studied Medical Sciences at Cambridge, completed a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. He returned to Cambridge for 11 years and in 1979 he became Waynflete Professor of Physiology in Oxford, where he also directed the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience. From 2003-2007 he was Chief Executive of the UK Medical Research Council. His research has been concerned with many aspects of vision, early development of the brain and plasticity of the cerebral cortex. He now leads a network of philosophers and scientists working on human perception, and he directs the Human Mind Project, which aims to define key questions about the nature and function of the mind. Colin Blakemore has been President of the British Neuroscience Association, the Physiological Society, the British Association for the Advancement of Science (now the British Science Association) and the Society of Biology. He is a frequent broadcaster and writer for the UK national media.

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*Distinguished Lecture Series*

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