

R.D. Laing

IN THE 21ST CENTURY

June 27 – July 1, 2022
ESALEN INSTITUTE
Big Sur, California

SYMPOSIUM SPONSORED
& ORGANIZED BY
Free Association, Inc.,
San Francisco, California

PRINCIPAL FACULTY
Fritjof Capra, Ph.D.
Nita Gage, DSPS
Michael Guy Thompson, Ph.D.

GUESTS
Rebecca Esho Greenslade
Heather LaFace, Ph.D.
James Norwood, Psy.D.
Astrea Ribeiro
Sanford Rosenberg, Ph.D.
Rinat Tal, M.D.
Andrew Turkington, RN, LMFT
Dina Tyler
Scott Von, OMD, Ph.D.

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WHAT IS ETHICAL? MORAL?
A FIVE-DAY SYMPOSIUM & WORKSHOP AT

Esalen®

R. D. LAING wore many robes in his career including psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, social critic, author, poet, and mystic, and at the peak of his fame in the 1970s, he was the most widely-read psychiatrist in the world. Arguably the most controversial psychoanalyst since Freud, Laing's meteoric rise in the 1960s was the result of his rare ability to make complex ideas accessible with such best-selling classics as *The Divided Self* (1960), *Sanity, Madness and Family* (1964), *The Politics of Experience* (1967), *Knots* (1970), and many others. Laing's impassioned plea for a more humane treatment of those in society who are most vulnerable catapulted him into the vanguard of intellectual and cultural debate about the nature of sanity and madness, and inspired a generation of psychology students, intellectuals, and artists to turn this disarming Scotsman into a social icon.

One of the most seminal aspects to Laing's approach to the human condition was his exploration into how human beings treat each other: the ethical dimension to relationships. Laing was psychoanalyst, philosopher, and existentialist, with a no-holds critique of both the dark side of the human condition, as well as its virtue. Our workshop this year will explore what it means to be ethical from the broadest possible perspective, including secular, religious, and philosophical dimensions as conceived over the millennia, including the Greek era, Buddhism, and common wisdom.

This workshop, designed for those seeking answers to what is right and wrong, is a continuation of our previous Esalen workshops that focused, in turn, on Laing's take about the nature of sanity and madness, the therapeutic relationship, altered states, the nature of love, authenticity, spirituality and, last year, happiness. **This workshop is best suited for those who are familiar with Laing's work and who wish to explore it further.** Our three workshop leaders will be joined by a dozen guest speakers (many of whom worked intimately with Laing), to assess the question of morality at the most fundamental level. The workshop will be comprised of theoretical presentations, panel discussions, and experiential exercises to demonstrate practical aspects of Laing's legacy.

Among the questions we will explore:

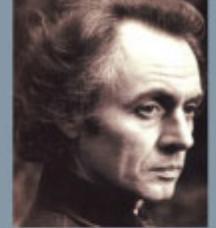
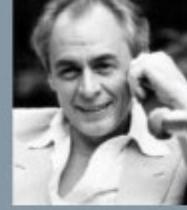
1. What is the relation between the ethical and the moral? Or is there a difference?
2. How have our views about the nature of the moral evolved over the millennia?
3. Does the ethical person have a better chance at happiness? Does it insulate us from suffering, or increase it??
4. How does the Greek conception of ethics differ from the modern conception, rooted in the social contract?
5. Is it possible to transcend good and evil? What role does love play in our notion about morality?

Join us for five breathtaking days at Esalen Institute on the Pacific Coast to explore how we can promote more humane and effective ways of helping those suffering from everyday life.

—MICHAEL GUY THOMPSON, NITA GAGE, FRITJOF CAPRA



R.D. Laing in the 21st Century



WHAT IS ETHICAL? MORAL?

Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California • June 27 – July 1, 2022

Symposium Workshop Co-Organizers & Faculty: Fritjof Capra, PhD • Nita Gage, DSPS • Michael Guy Thompson, PhD

MONDAY – JUNE 27

8:00 – 10:00 pm

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD, Fritjof Capra, PhD, Nita Gage, DSPS
Welcome! Let's Get Acquainted!

We will spend this initial, breaking-in meeting to introduce ourselves to each other and give you an idea of what our five days together will be like. We will begin with introducing the three principal faculty and organizers of our Laing Workshop, then our guest speakers, and finally a chance for everyone attending this special week to introduce yourselves and what you are hoping to gain from this experience.

TUESDAY – JUNE 28

9:30 – 10:40 am

Fritjof Capra, PhD and Nita Gage, DSPS

The Biology of Ethics

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Though ethics is usually associated with philosophy or religion, Fritjof consider its relevance to biology, science, and evolution. Nita will situate some of Fritjof's thesis into R. D. Laing's concerns about the fragility of the human life cycle, including his preoccupation with birth in the context of medicine.

10:40 – 11:40 pm

Rinat Tal, MD

The Ethics of Treating the Psyche

(moderated by Nita Gage)

Rinat will explore the role of ethics and morality in the context of psychotherapy and psychiatry.

11:40 am – 1:00 pm

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD

R. D. Laing's Ethical Imperative

(moderated by James Norwood)

Drawing on his long association with Laing, including seven years in London while training with Laing as an existential psychoanalyst and living in one of Laing's post-Kingsley Hall residential houses for psychosis, Michael will review how Laing's own conception of ethics played a fundamental role in his work with patients.

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Lunch Break and Play Time

Lunch at the Dining Hall. Enjoy the rest of the break to relax and smell the ocean. Please return to the afternoon portion of today's program promptly at 4:00 pm.

4:00-5:00 pm

Heather LaFace, PhD

REENTRY: The Ethics of Intimacy and Alienation

(moderated by Nita Gage)

Using art and image, Heather will explore the story of REENTRY, that tells us neither experience nor self nor consciousness happens inside of us, but as life happens, as a REENTRANT dynamic through which we participate, whether we like it or not, in spite of ourselves.

5:10-6:30 pm

Sanford Rosenberg, PhD

Standing for Something: Embodied Morality and Ethics

(Upright Qi)

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Essential to all the Taoist Internal Arts are the practices know as Wuji Qigong. This standing meditation practice strengthens our Qi (or life force), aligns us with the energies of heaven and earth, and helps us find our Upright Qi. If we cultivate our Upright Qi so will those around us. I will introduce standing meditation and Taoist exercises having to do with breath and longevity.

6:30 – 8:00 pm

Dinner Break – followed by a FREE EVENING!

Dinner in the Esalen Dining Hall and outdoors.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening by the Fire Pit, the Terrace off the Dining Hall, or Esalen's legendary Hot Tubs.

WEDNESDAY – JUNE 29

9:30 – 10:30 am

Nita Gage, DSPS, Heather LaFace, PhD and Workshop Participants!

All-Day Breath Workshop — A Tribute to Laing's Famous Workshops from the 1970s

(moderated by Nita Gage)



Part I: Breath Work

Well Being and Breath Work in the Tradition of R. D. Laing
(moderated by Nita Gage)

Drawing from her own extensive experience moderating such workshops, Nita Gage will facilitate an opportunity for anyone who is interested in participating in this exercise to access mild altered states via guided imagery and deep breathing. This workshop is intended to simulate the kind of workshops Laing was famous for initiating in London among his students in order to gain greater awareness of the potential for expanded modes of consciousness readily accessible to us. This one-hour introduction will presage a two-hour morning session in which participants will participate in a breath work experiential exercise.

10:30 am – 1:00 pm

Breath Work (continued)

Experiential Exercise

Part II: Breath Work Experiential Session

(moderated by Nita Gage)

Nita will facilitate the chance to experience states of expanded consciousness elicited via deep breathing and other Shamanic exercises, followed by the opportunity to process these experiences in a warm and safe environment. We will repeat this exercise in the afternoon portion of this all-day experiential exercise.

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Lunch Break and Play Time

Lunch at the Dining Hall. Enjoy the rest of the break to relax and smell the ocean. Please return to the afternoon portion of today's program promptly at 4:00 pm.

4:00 – 5:30 pm

Breath Work (continued)

Experiential Exercise

Part III: Breath Work Experiential Session (continued)

(moderated by Nita Gage)

In this 90-minute session Nita will continue to facilitate the chance to experience states of expanded consciousness elicited via deep breathing exercises, followed by opportunities to process these experiences in a warm and safe environment.

5:30 – 6:30 pm

Breath Work (continued)

Breath Work Group Process Session

Part IV: Break up into small groups for processing today's experience

(moderated by Nita Gage)

6:30 – 8:00 pm

Dinner Break – followed by a Free Evening!

Dinner in the Esalen Dining Hall and outdoors.

Please enjoy the evening by the Fire Pit, the Terrace off the Dining Hall, or Esalen's legendary Hot Tubs!

THURSDAY – JUNE 30

9:30 – 10:30 am

Rebecca Esho Greenslade

Toward an Ethics of Care

(moderated by James Norwood)

Rebecca will explore the relationship between a feminist ethics of care and psychotherapeutic praxis. She will also look at the potential for a subversive, critical and disruptive feminist therapeutics, rooted in an ethos of collectivism, where self-care is intrinsically intertwined with the care of others.

10:40 – 11:50 am

Scott Von, OMD, PhD

The Ethical Sociopath

(moderated by Nita Gage)

The Morality of the social contract asks us to feel guilt for following our desire. The higher calling of Ethics asks that we do not back down from the path we are committed to. This journey was Buddha's and Christ's path, as well as that of analyst and analysand.

12:00 – 1:00 pm

James Norwood, PhD

Love and Authenticity: The Heart of What is Good About Ethics

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

James will explore how ethics can lead to harmful and irresponsible approaches to life. He will explore contributions from Hannah Arendt, R. D. Laing, Julius Heuscher, and Soren Kierkegaard to advocate an ethics that features *Agape* love as essential to authenticity.

ETHICAL? MORAL?

SPECIAL THANKS TO ESELEN INSTITUTE & FREE ASSOCIATION, INC.

For more information and inquiries, contact Michael Guy Thompson, PhD: michaelguythompson@mac.com

1:00 – 4:00 pm

Lunch Break and Play Time

Lunch at the Dining Hall. Enjoy the rest of the break to relax and smell the ocean. Please return to the afternoon portion of today's program promptly at 4:00 pm.

4:00 – 5:10 pm

Andrew Turkington, LMFT

For and Against Ethics

(moderated by Michael Guy Thompson)

Can there be an ethics that espouses principles that are universal, or should we, in aiming to live the good life, just accept the practices of our own culture?

5:20 – 6:30 pm

Astrea Ribeiro

Being Conscious of Your Own Limits as an Ethical Value

(moderated by Nita Gage)

The idea of understanding and accepting that everyone has their own place in the world implies that there is a comfortable way of moving around your own space; beyond that space you may hurt yourself and others. An ethical attitude is to recognize your own limits, by controlling your hubris.

6:30 – 8:00 pm

Dinner Break followed by our end of the Workshop Party!

Dinner in the Esalen Dining Hall. Please join us on the lawn after dinner for our Circle of Joy to celebrate our Esalen workshop with song and good cheer!.

FRIDAY – JULY 1

9:30 am – 12:00 noon

Michael Guy Thompson, Fritjof Capra, Nita Gage, DSPS

Closing Comments and Audience Discussion!

We want to spend this last block of time together to review our five days at Esalen and what it has meant to you.

How can we stay in touch and help make the connections we made with one another this week endure?

We also want to look ahead to next year, when we will host another five-day experience of *R. D. Laing in the Twenty-First Century*.

We hope you will be able to join us again next year for another exciting time together at Esalen!

Good-bye!

DON'T FORGET! Check-out is 10:00 am (BEFORE our Friday morning wrap-up).

Make sure you are ready if you have booked a return shuttle to the airport.



Fritjof Capra, PhD, physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, CA. He serves on the faculty of the Amana-Key executive education program in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is a Fellow of Schumacher College (U.K.), and serves on the Council of Earth Charter International. Dr. Capra is the author of several international bestsellers, including *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Web of Life* (1996), and *The Science of Leonardo* (2007). He is coauthor, with Pier Luigi Luisi, of the multidisciplinary textbook, *The Systems View of Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). His new online course (www.capracourse.net) is based on his textbook. He lives in Berkeley, CA.

Nita Gage, DSPS, 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 (with Linda Star Wolf) of *Soul Whispering: The Art of Awakening Shamanic Consciousness*, and lives in Vallejo, California.

Rebecca Esho Greenslade is an existential and feminist psychotherapist and supervisor working in London. She is the Founder of Gaia Therapy Project, a community therapy project in East London. Rebecca is a faculty member at the Minster Centre as well as the New School for Existential Psychoanalysis. She is currently undertaking PhD research with the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, and is a Zen practitioner and student in the White Plum lineage.

Heather LaFace, PhD, is on the adjunct faculty at Antioch University Santa Barbara as well as at Pacific Graduate Institute. She is in private practice in Los Angeles and Orange County where she works within a framework of attachment and relational theory. Her current writing and research interests explore paradigm-shifting connections between neuroscience, philosophy, and social theory, with a special interest in approaching extreme states from a developmental systems orientation. She lives in Los Angeles.

James Norwood, PhD, is a graduate of the California Institute for Integral Studies (San Francisco), PsyD program in Clinical Psychology. James has been studying existential psychoanalysis with Michael Guy Thompson for the past 6 years and practices psychotherapy in San Francisco. He has also been one of the primary people involved in Gnosis Retreat Center, a residential project to provide respite for people experiencing extreme states.

Astrea Issler Ribeiro is a psychoanalyst in Sao Paulo, Brazil and in addition to a private practice she conducts outdoor sessions with people on the streets. She also has been working at the public psychiatric day hospital and coordinates therapeutic groups. She is also an artist and philosopher.

Sanford Rosenberg, PhD, is President of Media Research Associates, and has thirty-five years of experience in Media Psychology. He is a clinician, executive coach, educator, and consultant on media projects including movies, games, and the web, applying the methods of dream psychology and personal mythology to media. Sandy specializes in qualitative knowledge-based research and clinical applications, examining the relationship between language, story, structure, symbol, image, emotion, and experience.

Rinat Tal, MD, is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist in private practice in Los Angeles. Her work focuses on minimizing medication management with clients with various conditions, including extreme states, incorporating a variety of influences that focus on the transformative aspects of the client-practitioner relationship. She has an abiding interest in alternatives to conventional psychiatry.

Michael Guy Thompson, PhD, received his psychoanalytic training from R. D. Laing and Hugh Crawford at the Philadelphia Association in London, and served as the organization's administrator from 1973–1980. He is Personal and Supervising Analyst and Faculty Member, Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California, San Francisco, and former Adjunct Professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies, in San Francisco. He is the author of numerous journal articles, book chapters, and reviews, as well as five books, *The Death of Desire: A Study in Psychopathology* (1985), *The Truth About Freud's Technique* (1994), *The Ethic of Honesty* (2004), *The Legacy of R. D. Laing: An Appraisal of His Contemporary Relevance* (2015), and most recently, *The Death of Desire: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (2016), an extensively revised and expanded edition of the original, published by Routledge. He is founder and director of **New School for Existential Psychoanalysis**, a two-year virtual training program modeled on his own training with R.D. Laing, and lives in Berkeley, California. His current project is a book on the relation between love and happiness: *The Heart of the Matter: The Trials and Tribulations of Love Relationships*.

Andrew Turkington, RN LMFT, has practiced in hospitals, prisons, homes and the consulting room during his career. He was also an Assistant Professor of Nursing at Unitek College, California. He is in private practice in Oakland, California. He practices Wild Goose Qi Gong.

Scott Von, OMD PhD, is a physician, psychoanalyst, philosopher, poet, and artist. He is Director of the New Clinic for Integral Medicine & Psychiatry (newclinic.org) and Director of Analytica psychoanalytic institute (analytica.org), both based in New York and Los Angeles. He completed his Doctor of Medicine specializing in Neuropsychiatry at ACTCM-Shanghai University and his PhD in Psychoanalysis at LSE-University of London, and served as a professor and supervisor at NYU, CUNY, CIIS, and Pacific College. He is author of the four-volume book and multi-modal artwork *Autopoiesis* which he has exhibited and performed internationally, and author of the clinical books *Schizoanalysis: Chaos & Complexity in Clinical Practice* and *Orgonomy: Integral Medicine & Psychiatry*. (drscottvon.com)