

From: "jeffrey E." <jeevacation@gmail.com>
To: John Brockman <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Invitation to the first "Brockman Conference" Sept 7-9thY
Date: Sat, 21 Jul 2018 19:34:04 +0000

i will fund the entire thing .

On Sat, Jul 21, 2018 at 9:17 PM, John Brockman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

JE:

1. BELOW IS A DRAFT OF THE INVITATION I AM SENDING THIS AFTERNOON.
- 2.. THANKS TO YOUR COMMENT ON "DEEP THINKING" WE HAVE A NEW TITLE "POSSIBLE MINDS".
3. I HAVE COME UP WITH A VERY AMBITIOUS PLAN AND LONG TERM AGENDA WHICH IS TO RESURRECT THE HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL MACY CONFERENCES OF THE 1940S-1950S (WIENER, MCCULLOCH, PITTS, VON NEUMANN, SHANNON, BATESON, MEAD). KAHNEMAN HAS AGREED TO CHAIR THE FIRST "BROCKMAN CONFERENCE" (BELOW).
3. ON FURTHER DISCUSSION CARNEGIE HALL DOESN'T WORK FOR THE GROUP OR FOR ME. I TALKED TO NUMEROUS PEOPLE THAT DO THIS KIND OF THING AND ALL STRONGLY ADVISED AGAINST IT. IT'S HARD TO FILL A HALL; IT'S A FULL-TIME JOB AS PRODUCER (A JOB I DON'T WANT OR NEED); FAILURE IS A BIG POSSIBILITY; I HAVE NO INTEREST IN, AND DON'T DO EVENTS FOR THE PUBLIC. I KNOW WHO I WANT TO TALK TO AND WHY. AND LIKE YOU, I ONLY WANT TO TALK TO SMART PEOPLE. WITH A PUBLIC EVENT YOU ALSO HAVE TO DEAL WITH HOW MANY OF THIS OR THAT SEX, RACE, AGE, ETC. I DON'T WANT OR NEED TO GO THERE. WHAT I'M PLANNING IS MORE SIGNIFICANT, CONSEQUENTIAL, AND FUN.

GIVE ME A CALL. I'M AT THE FARM.

Eastover Farm
[325 Guilds Hollow Road](#), RR 132
Bethlehem, CT 06751
Map: [bit.ly/2HXNACC](#)
[REDACTED]

To: Chris Anderson, Rodney Brooks, George M. Church, Daniel C. Dennett, David Deutsch, Anca Dragan, George Dyson, Peter Galison, Neil Gershenfeld, Alison Gopnik, Tom Griffiths, Danny Hillis, Caroline A. Jones, David Kaiser, Seth Lloyd, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Judea Pearl, Sandy Pentland, Steven Pinker, Venki Ramakrishnan, Stuart Russell, Jaan Tallin, Max Tegmark, Frank Wilczek, Stephen Wolfram

From: John Brockman

I am writing to invite you to the first "Brockman Conference" and to give you an important update on the book regarding a change of title.

UPDATE ON THE BOOK

DEEP THINKING:
Twenty Five Ways of Looking at AI

Just as the book went to the printer, we realized that Gary Kasparov has recently published a book with the same title. After some consideration and asking for suggestions, Kevin Kelly came up with a much better title that does a better job of framing the overall content of the essays:

POSSIBLE MINDS:
Twenty Five Ways of Looking at AI

Stewart Brand has contributed the first jacket blurb:

"Intelligences born and intelligences made have a lot to offer each other. For that beneficial blend to occur, the contextual framing that the voices in this book spell out will be crucial." —Stewart Brand

THE BROCKMAN CONFERENCE

Two years ago, I organized a weekend conference in Washington, CT which resulted in twenty five important thinkers writing consequential essays that are part of a new, and important conversation. When I wrote to the participants last month regarding the possibility of another conference, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Thus, save the date:

WHEN
5pm Friday, September 7th — Sunday noon, September 9th

WHERE
At the beautiful high-end resort, Winvian Farm ([REDACTED]), a 5-star Relais & Chateaux resort hotel in Morris, CT, six miles from Eastover Farm. I have reserved their

conference room, and have a hold on 15 guest cottages for Friday and Saturday nights (bit.ly/2uObx1e).

WHAT

The first meeting two years ago was very consequential and resulted in 25 essays that are the beginning of a new conversation that reclaims the narrative about AI for science.

RSVP

The hotel has a beautiful conference space can accommodate a maximum of 22 people. I need a response by Wednesday next week, July 25th.

AGENDA

The purpose of this initial conference is to explore a plan to update to The Macy Conferences of the 1940s and 1950s. The original participants wanted to create a new social science for their time and, in so doing, asked people in various disciplines to talk and interact with each other. Participants included a who's who of cutting edge scientific intellectuals: H. Ross Ashby, Gregory Bateson, Julian H. Bigelow, Warren McCulloch, Margaret Mead, F.S.C. Northrop, Walter Pitts, Arturo Rosentbleuth, John Von Neumann, Claude Shannon, Heinz Von Foerster, W. Grey Walter, Norbert Wiener, and J.Z. Young. A list comparable to the participants in the Possible Minds Project, I might add.

McCulloch, as Chairman, presided over the sessions and decided who to invite and what they should talk about. von Foerster, as Secretary, was the driving force of the project. It was McCulloch who insisted over Norbert Wiener's objections that "mind" be introduced into the mix, and for this, he recruited Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. The disciplines represented over the decade ranged across economics, electrical engineering, biology, chemistry, medical research, neuroscience, philosophers, physics, physiology, psychiatry, and zoology.

The ambition for their agenda seems remarkable but not when you consider it in the context of WWII and the postwar cold war and nuclear threat. Interestingly, although people look at cybernetics as a necessary defense effort, the people involved were almost all deeply humanistic while at the same time being erudite and leaders in their respective scientific disciplines. (For examples of the interdisciplinary aspect of the Macy Conference, see selected title of talks below.)

I am inviting the participants in the POSSIBLE MINDS book and a few other people who have important insights and expertise to contribute. Just as McCulloch invited Bateson and Mead to emphasize mind, I was to balance the narrative concerning technology and engineering with a focus on human intelligence and thinking. In the regard, Danny Kahneman has agreed to serve as chair of the meeting.

I am very excited about this project and very much want your participation.

Best,

JB

John Brockman
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SELECTED MACY CONFERENCE TALKS

The Psychological Moment in Perception
John Stroud

The Neurotic Potential and Human Adaptation
Lawrence S. Kubie

Quantum Mechanical Theory of Memory
Heinz von Foerster

Sensory Prostheses
Norbert Wiener

The Manner in Which and Extent to Which Speech
Can Be Distorted and Remain Intelligible
L.C.R.Licklider

The Redundancy of English
Claude E. Shannon

Experience in Learning Primitive Languages Through the
Use of Learning High Level Linguistic Abstractions
Margaret Mead

On the Development of Word Meanings
Heinz Wenner

The Development of Language in Early Childhood
John Stroud

Body Symbolization and Development of Language
Lawrence S. Kubie

Communication Patterns in Problem-Solving Groups
Alex Bavelas

Communication Between Sane and Insane: Hypnosis
Lawrence S. Kubie

Communication Between Animals
Herbert C. Birch

Presentation of a Maze-Solving Machine
Claude Shannon

In Search of Basic Symbols
Donald M. MacKay

The Position of Humor in Human Communication
Gregory Bateson

The Place of Emotions in the Feedback Concept
Lawrence S. Kubie

Homeostasis
W. Ross Ashby

Discrimination and Learning in Octopus
J. Z. Young

Mechanical Chess Player
W. Ross Ashby

Investigations on Synaptic Transmission
Walter Pitts

Studies on Activity of the Brain
W. Grey-Walter

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