Transcript _ Raymond Tallis “On Tickling”_english version

Voice_

What’s it like to work out there, unattached to the shuttle, and manoeuvring freely in space?

Astronaut_

We've had a great deal of training, Sir. So it feels quite comfortable. The view is simply spectacular.

Raymond Tallis_

The fact that we can’t tickle ourselves is quite intriguing. Because the stimulus you apply to the skin is the same as the stimulus that somebody else would apply to the skin. So you would expect that your tickling me and my tickling me would feel the same. But it isn’t. I can’t tickle myself. Tickling is about surprise. Tickling is about a sense of the unpredictability of other people. A sense of their otherness.

RAYMOND TALLIS | on tickling

Raymond Tallis_

Probably the most famous moment in Western philosophy is Descartes’ cogito argument. “I can doubt everything”, he says, “apart from the fact that I am”. Because the very fact that I’m thinking, proves that I am. But if we look a little more closely at the argument, it doesn’t deliver all that much. What is the ‘I’ that Descartes thinks that he’s found? By itself, the standalone ‘I’, is alien in a curious sort of way. Because the ‘I’ in many ways is constructed out of ‘we’, as of our shared experience of the world.
There’s a tendency when we think about human consciousness, to think of it as something inside our heads. But consciousness, right from the beginning, is profoundly relational. If one was really doing Descartes’ insight justice, we could translate it as “we dialogue, therefore we are.”

tv debate_

— A corrupt deviant is he who supports the Assad’s regime.
— You are the deviant.
— A corrupt deviant is he who makes trade-offs between his stand.
— You tell me to shut up?
— No, no.
— Shut up!
— Shut up!
— No.
— You tell me to shut up? You shut up!

Raymond Tallis_

Politics begins in a community of minds. This is a point that was made by Hegel 200 years ago. That human self-consciousness needs to be satisfied by another self-conscious. It needs to be recognized.
There is as it were, the collective consciousness out there, in which we're drawing upon to make sense of ourselves.
I think one of the difficult things about human being is to negotiate the balance between separateness and connectedness. In a sense we are ourselves only through being in dialogue with others.

Woman:

A croissant?

Raymond:

A croissant? That would be lovely. Then… then you'd have to inspect me from crumbs in my beard. Otherwise the audience will be mesmerized by the crumbs in my beard. Thank you.

Raymond Tallis_

Some neuroscientists started to believe neuroscience can explain everything. Even profound and eternal mysteries such as being in love. But as far as I know, and in my own experience of love, it's not just a response to a material stimulus. Being in love is a long story. With all sorts of behavior. Caring for somebody. Desperately wanting to turn up to appointments on time. Or equally desperately, not wanting to turn up to appointments on time. It consists of being preoccupied by the loved one. And wondering what she or he is thinking and so on. And none of that is captured in a response to a simple stimulus.
Those who would like to reduce us to the status of an organism, often appeal to the notion that the mind is essentially brain activity. Because the extreme development of that line of thought is the question whether human beings are conscious or not. The question is clearly self-refuting because to entertain that question you clearly have to be conscious. Just like we couldn't be zombies because we wouldn't even form the concept of zombies.

Is that my tummy rumbling again. Oh God!…So I was claiming I wasn't an organism, meanwhile the organism is fighting back.

I think in many ways we should be in a state of extreme excitement at the moment. Because some of our fundamental ways of seeing the ontology of the universe, the stuff of which the universe is made, is being challenged. Our inability to understand the relationship between brain and consciousness isn't just a little local difficulty, it actually tells us that something fundamental is missing in our understanding of the world. It raises large questions about the relationship between the mind and the cosmos, as Thomas Nagel says. If we try and pretend we already know and can demonstrate that neural activity and human consciousness are the same, then we're going to miss a big opportunity. Can I run with it another way, which is to say that, the belief is nowadays that, really, if you measure something, you've got its essence. Plotinus over 2000 years ago said: "to measure something isn't to grasp it." We must set aside the notion that quantity captures everything.

6:34 - 6:38 _ inaudible

Raymond Tallis_

Richard Feynman, the great physicist, once said of the Schrödinger wave equation — one of the most fundamental equations of physics — "It doesn't really tell us whether there are frogs or symphonies, or morality in the universe. We need better equations, that aren't based just on

quantities. (7:03 - 7:05_ inaudible) We need something better than better equations. We need to recover qualities."

7:17 - 7:21 _ inaudible

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RAYMOND TALLIS
courtesy of *Shadow World Productions LLC*

director of photography
NICOLE MACKINLAY HAHN

additional camera
SIMONE SULTANA

sound recording
LEKE AWOYINKA

edited by
SABINE GROENEWEGEN
PEDRO COLLANTES DE TERAN BAYONAS

original score
KARSTEN FUNDAL

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for ZAP-O-MATIK

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