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Update: Science writer speaks at FSU

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8:43 p.m. Update

Science journalist Lone Frank stood before the audience of nearly 100 people Sunday to discuss two emerging revolutions affecting science and culture: genetics and neuroscience.

"Science and culture are often treated as two different worlds," Frank said. "What I find most fascinating about science is it determines and changes our culture. What comes out of science is new knowledge."

During the first half of the discussion, Frank focused on how neuroscience has shown that humans are ruled by the brain rather than a soul, and that we aren't born with personality traits, we can change them.

"Everything that used to be called 'self' and 'soul' is now being anchored in the brain," she said. "We are coming to think of ourselves as what we are, bags of neurons. We are our brains."

"There is no essential you," she added. "It's not about finding yourself, it is about creating yourself."

During the discussion's second half, Frank focused on the genetic revolution and its rising accessibility in the public realm. Equating it to the use of the personal computer, she focused on what the reaction may be if every human were able to gain access to their own genetic code.

"How is this going to change the way we feel about ourselves?" she asked. "There is no evidence at all of raised anxiety using genetics to find out what diseases you may be susceptible to. Just like everyone wants you to be computer literate, we will want them to be bio-literate in the future."

Frank, who lives in Copenhagen, Denmark, has been a science writer for about 13 years. She has a Ph.D. in neurobiology and has published three books and just finished a fourth. She is also a staff writer at Weekendavisen, a newspaper in Denmark.

Held at the Florida State University College of Medicine, the event was hosted by the Center for Inquiry, a group dedicated to promoting science, reason and compassion and sponsored by several other groups and individuals including the Alpha Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa and Tallahassee Mensa.

"We think it's important because it is a way of communicating the developments of science to the public," said Center for Inquiry treasurer Richard Hull.

"Academics often talk only to academics, and we think that is unfortunate. We are encouraging conversations between scientists, science journalists and the public."

"More dialogue is always important," said Alex Gacic, who helped bring Frank to town after reading her book, "Mindfield."

"People have to become more critical in their thinking. There is so much more to learn about ourselves," he said.

On April 11, the center will present Tom Flynn, editor of Free Inquiry Magazine and author of the book "Trouble with Christmas," who will talk about the "Trouble with Easter."

First update

Denmark journalist and author Lone Frank will be speaking about "Science: The Great Changer of Minds" at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Florida State

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University College of Medicine Auditorium, Room 1400.

The conversation will focus on the neuro-revolution and how scientific findings don't just advance technology, they shape our culture.

Frank has a Ph.D. in neurobiology, has a research background and has published four books, including most recently, "Mindfield" and "My Beautiful Genome."

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