



# Synapse



THE WEST HUDSON PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Teilhard de Chardin: Human Consciousness and the Internet

*"The idea is that of the earth not only becoming covered by myriads of grains of thought, but becoming enclosed in a single thinking envelope so as to form, functionally, no more than a single vast grain of thought on the sidereal scale, the plurality of individual reflections grouping themselves together and reinforcing one another in the act of a single unanimous reflection."*

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The above quote is from his philosophical conceptualization of the Internet 50 years before it became a reality: "A Globe, Clothing Itself with a Brain."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was born in 1881, at Auvergne, in France. He developed an interest in geology and minerology while a boarder at a Jesuit school. He joined the Jesuit Order at the age of eighteen and taught physics and chemistry at the Jesuit College in Cairo and Hastings. He was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1912. His goal at this point was to begin a lifelong career of teaching and research in Paleontology, which is the study of ancient plants and animals based on the fossil records preserved in rocks. Paleontology overlaps to some extent with geology, botany, biology, zoology, and ecology, fields concerned with living creatures and how they interact.

His dreams were interrupted when he was conscripted for military service during the first World War. As a stretcher bearer on the front lines, he had a close look at the horrors of the ghastliest battles. Teilhard's personal faith was challenged as he

witnessed the human tragedy of thousands of men being killed or maimed in minutes to no purpose. This set him thinking and developing a vision of an alternative to the intermittent mayhem and destruction that humanity was engaged in.

After the war, he resumed his studies at the Institute of Human Paleontology at the Museum of Natural History in Paris and dedicated himself to study the evolution of human consciousness. He got his doctorate in 1922 at the Sorbonne. While conducting research in the Egyptian desert, Teilhard was digging around for the remains of ancient creatures when he turned over a stone, dusted it off, and suddenly realized that everything around him was harmoniously connected in one vast, pulsating web of divine life. This was a transformative moment and a turning point from which there was no return for him.

Teilhard, in his writings, sometimes drifted into the realm of philosophical speculation. His fertile imagination occasionally led him into a fantasy world foreign to scientists and theologians alike. This partly explains the severity of opposition he faced from both the camps. He was seen by the Vatican as a threat to the integrity of the faith. The mention of "evolution" was an anathema to the Church as it evoked the vision of the dreaded Darwinian controversies. Rome insisted that his religious writings should not be published; he was forbidden to teach or even to speak publicly on religious subjects.

Teilhard faced the crisis of his life. He had continued to explore the lines of thought that had begun with his "Cosmic Life."

Perhaps inevitably, his observations came to the attention of the Church authorities. The reaction to some of Teilhard's ideas was ultimately severe. He was deprived of his teaching position and admonished not to publish his observations on religion and science. He observed that restriction until his death in 1955. Facing the alternative of excommunication, he accepted the assignment to go on a mission to China where he stayed for about 22 years, with only brief visits to France. Yet his ideas were informally and secretly disseminated by friends and colleagues in a small circle of younger priests and theologians. His writings, though never published while he was alive, were thus preserved and surfaced after his death.

In the scientist community his references to God and Divinity were subjected to ridicule in the era of scientific euphoria of the 20th century when scientific "purity"



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## Flawed Child Sex Abuse Evaluations

Oh, for the "good old days" in Psychiatry, when so many theories were accepted at face value with little need to "prove" their accuracy through solid research. But of course, in those good old days, the down-side was that the credibility of Psychiatry was quite low. We have though, entered a new era, fueled by "Practice Guidelines," evidence-based medicine and the federal case of "Daubert v. Dow" which set a high standard for the admissibility of expert testimony, requiring

clear evidence that what the expert will testify to is based on solid, credible research and not simply one's own theories.

Evaluations of child sexual abuse cases in the past, have relied in great measure, on the opinions of "child sex abuse experts and validators" who often themselves, relied on unproven theories and even more unproven evaluation techniques.

Diane Schetky, a renowned forensic child psychiatrist, highlighted this serious problem at the APA in May. In part she said, "I am amazed at experts who despite the lack of evidence, continue to rely on a child's behavior as an indicator of sex abuse."

Years ago, I had a book chapter published on "Intrafamilial Child Sex Abuse." which also focused on the use of such concepts as the "child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome" and the "sexually abused child syndrome," as well as the use of drawings and dolls to gather evidence that a child had or had not been sexually abused. Over the years I and many others, have recognized the serious flaws in those theories and practices, as well as in the interviewing techniques used. We have come to the realization that many interviewers (a child, by the time a psychiatric interview occurred, had already been interviewed by a host of others - pediatricians, police, CPS caseworkers, family members, district attorneys) had so contaminated the child's thinking, that it was impossible to distinguish which information provided by the child was "introduced," willingly or unwittingly, into the child's memory and which was an accurate recollection of events that had actually occurred. Some therapists and others even believed that if memory of sexual abuse was absent, it was due to "repression of memory" and if someone "felt" they had been abused, they had indeed "been" abused.

Frequently, interviewers failed to consider other explanations for a child's behavior or statements, including family sexuality, family violence, activities in day care centers, viewing pornography or even

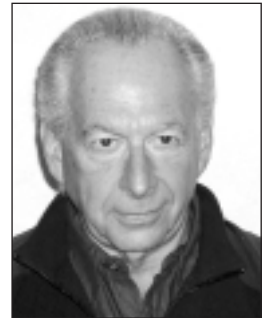
parental (or other) sexual activity or the immense contributions made to an impressionable child's "memory" by overzealous questioners influencing the content of drawings or the inaccurate contamination of memory by the use of "anatomically correct" dolls.

Schetky pointed out over the last several years, that a third of cases of child sexual abuse involved false allegations and that number increased to 50% if the allegations occurred during marital separation or other serious marital conflict. Children under 11 were much more suggestible than older children and preschool children were highly suggestible.

In order to minimize the likelihood of false accusations, the very first interview of the child should only be conducted by an experienced child psychiatrist fully knowledgeable about the current state of the field, and that interview and subsequent ones should be videotaped in order to view the technique and the information gathered (something I have been recommending for many years). In addition, the "most reliable interviewer technique to obtain an accurate narrative history is to use open-ended, non-leading questions and the child's own words." All of the other previously utilized tools were fraught with risk for contamination and inaccuracy.

Today, when an expert testifies in court about child sexual abuse, the opinions must be based on current knowledge in the field and not on previously utilized theories and practices.

Yes, we are getting much more sophisticated in Psychiatry, and thus, our reliability and credibility will benefit as well. ▲



Alan J. Tuckman, M.D.

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SYNAPSE designed by Lydia Dmitrieff

## West Hudson Plans Fall Meeting on Female Sexual Response

One of the clinical challenges we face in the practice of psychiatry involves understanding our patients' sexual functioning. I have found the Masters and Johnson and Kaplan models of human sexual response do not adequately depict what many female patients describe. An exploration of this area revealed that recent research has led to changes in conceptualization of female sexual response. A new model has been embraced by those working in the field of human sexuality as older ideas about sexual dysfunction are being replaced.

Dr. Kroplick and I have been fortunate to engage Sandra Leiblum, PhD., a prolific and distinguished expert in the field of human sexuality, as the key speaker for the upcoming WHPS fall dinner meeting. Dr. Leiblum is a professor in both Psychiatry and Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at the

University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Dr. Leiblum's accomplishments are numerous. At UMDNJ she is director of the Human Sexuality program and the post graduate program in Sex Therapy, as well as the Center for Sexual and Marital Health. She is involved in research in many aspects of human sexuality and serves as editor, consulting editor and journal reviewer for many publications. She has published numerous articles and received many awards, including the Society for Sex Therapy and Research, Masters and Johnson Lifetime Achievement Award, the Richard J. Cross Award for outstanding contributions to the field of human sexuality, and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine Award in Sexuality. Dr. Leiblum is co-editor of Principles and Practice of Sex Therapy, a

leading textbook in human sexual function and dysfunction. She has served in the past and presently serves as a consultant to DSM-V to update the section on sexual dysfunction. She has recently discovered a new diagnostic category describing women with persistent sexual arousal in the absence of desire, and has worked on development of inventories for assessment of female sexual desire.



We are thrilled to give Dr. Leiblum the opportunity to share her knowledge and experience with us at the upcoming meeting, on October 10. Her presentation will be titled: Women's

*Continued on page 6* ➔

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Chardin, cont'd.

was the dominant creed. His work was regarded as 'flaky' and 'weird' and was treated with derision. He was thus isolated and thrown on his inner resources to carry on his paleontological exploration trekking the Gobi desert. In China he lived in a state of semi-exile, while conducting ground breaking research at the Sinanthropus or "Peking Man" site of Zhoukoudian; the Nihewan Basin of Hebei, where archeological excavations have brought to light the oldest well-dated Paleolithic assemblages known outside Africa; and the late Pleistocene site of Salawusu in Inner Mongolia, known for remains of the earliest modern humans in Asia.

Teilhard's philosophy of 'neo-humanism' which unites a scientific appreciation of the reality of evolution as a compelling force of nature with a metaphysical understanding of the human condition, has a profound meaning for all those concerned with the future of humanity in the 21st century and beyond. Sir Julian Huxley states: "Teilhard... effected a threefold synthesis" of the material and physical world with the world of the mind and spirit; of the past with the future; and of variety with unity, the many with

the one..." Teilhard's vision was well ahead of his time and is becoming more relevant with each passing day. The progressive optimism of his message regarding the future mental and spiritual evolution of humankind is a counter balance to the cynicism and parochialism so rampant within modern society.

Teilhard and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Vernadsky inspired the Gaia hypothesis (later defined by James Lovelock and Lyn Margulis): the global ecosystem is a super-organism with a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Suddenly everything, from rocks to people, takes on a holistic importance. A handful of cyber-philosophers are exploring this ideological construct as they search for the deeper implications of the Internet. Teilhard visualized a stage of evolution characterized by a complex membrane of information enveloping the globe and fueled by human consciousness. More than half a century after his death, a vast electronic web now encircles the Earth that permits us to mentally travel, in the blink of an eye, from Detroit to Delhi and beyond, sharing ideas and exchanging views with fellow humans.

In his seminal work The Phenomenon of

Man, Teilhard wrote, "Is this not like some great body which is born - with its limbs, its nervous system, its perceptive organs, its memory...which has come to fulfill the ambitions aroused in the reflective being by the newly acquired consciousness?" According to John Perry Barlow : "What Teilhard was saying can be easily summed up in a few words: the point of all evolution up to this stage is the creation of a collective organism of Mind."

Teilhard conceived all this as a natural culmination of a cosmic process of organization which has never ceased since those remote ages when our planet was young: First the molecules of carbon compounds with their thousands of atoms symmetrically grouped; next the cell which, within a very small volume, contains thousands of molecules linked in a complicated system; then the metazoa in which the cell is no more than an almost infinitesimal element; and later the manifold attempts made sporadically by the metazoa to enter into symbiosis and raise themselves to a higher biological condition. And now, as a germination of planetary dimensions, comes the thinking layer which over its full extent develops and intertwines its fibers, not to confuse and neutralize them but to reinforce them in the living unity of a single tissue. He called it the Noosphere, from the Greek word Noos meaning mind.

Teilhard continues "Really I can see no coherent, and therefore scientific, way of grouping this immense succession of facts but as a gigantic psycho-biological operation, a sort of mega-synthesis, the 'super-arrangement' to which all the thinking elements of the earth find themselves today individually and collectively subject... If that is what really happens, what more do we need to convince ourselves of the vital error hidden in the depths of any doctrine of isolation? The egocentric ideal of a future reserved for those who have managed to attain egoistically the extremity of 'everyone for himself' is false and against

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**Chardin, cont'd.**

nature. No element could move and grow except with and by all the others with itself."

Taking a sweeping look at special groups' privileges he says, rather poetically: "Also false and against nature is the racial ideal of one branch draining off for itself alone all the sap of the tree and rising over the death of other branches. To reach the sun nothing less is required than the combined growth of the entire foliage.

The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human—these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open only to an advance of all together, in a direction in which all together can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth...."

"...we are therefore moving towards some new critical point that lies ahead. In spite of its organic links, whose existence has everywhere become apparent to us, the biosphere has so far been no more than a network of divergent lines, free at their extremities. By effect of reflection and the recoils it involves, the loose ends have been tied up, and the noosphere tends to constitute a single closed system in which each element sees, feels, desires, and suffers for itself the same things as all the others at the same time."

He elaborates further "We are faced with a harmonized collectivity of consciousnesses equivalent to a sort of super-consciousness. The idea is that of the earth not only becoming covered by myriads of grains of thought, but becoming enclosed in a single thinking envelope so as to form, functionally, no more than a single vast grain of thought on the sidereal scale, the plurality of individual reflections grouping themselves together and reinforcing one another in the act of a single unanimous reflection..."

He continues his philosophical discourse: "The two-fold crisis whose onset began in earnest as early as the Neolithic age and which rose to a climax in the modern

world, derives in the first place from mass-formation (we might call it a 'planetization') of mankind. Peoples and civilizations reached such a degree either of frontier contact or economic interdependence or psychic communion that they could no longer develop save by interpenetration of one another. But it also arises out of the fact that, under the combined influence of machinery and the super-heating of thought, we are witnessing a formidable upsurge of unused powers. Modern man no longer knows what to do with the time and the potentialities he has unleashed. We groan under the burden of this wealth. We are haunted by the fear of 'unemployment.' Sometimes we are tempted to trample this super-abundance back into the matter from which it sprang without stopping to think how impossible and monstrous such an act against nature would be."

**The Unity of All Things**

In the seeming myriad of entities around us, Teilhard perceives a unity: "My starting point is the fundamental initial fact that each one of us is perforce linked by all the material organic and psychic strands of his being to all that surrounds him." Moreover, that unity reaches back in time and continues into the future: "If we look far enough back in the depths of time, the disordered anthill of living beings suddenly, for an informed observer, arranges itself in long files that make their way by various paths towards greater consciousness." Teilhard's science had already convinced him of the validity of evolution as a paradigm fundamental to understanding the meaning of human existence. He affirms that "the belief that there is an absolute direction of growth, to which both our duty and our happiness demand that we should conform. It is his [the human] function to complete cosmic evolution." He goes so far as to say: "Christ is realized in evolution."

Teilhard was also convinced that a further and even more profound change had taken place. On the one hand we could see humanity simply swept along in a evolutionary stream into the future over

which he had no control. Or, we could see that an evolution conscious of itself could also direct itself. "Not only do we read in our slightest acts the secrets of [evolutions] proceedings; but for an elementary part we hold it in our hands, responsible for its past to its future." Noogenesis moves ever more clearly toward self-direction; it is now something we determine.

Still, can we make some estimate of where we are going? Man is not the center of the universe as once we thought in our simplicity, but something much more wonderful—the arrow pointing the way to the final unification of the world. This is nothing else than the fundamental vision and I shall leave it at that."

Teilhard was hardly alone in that dream of human unity and its chief benefit, peace. He was also aware of the formidable barriers that lay in the path of its achievement. Indeed, the very awareness of the challenges plays its own role in noogenesis. "I can now add that what disconcerts the modern world at its very roots is not being sure, and not seeing how it ever could be sure, that there is an outcome—a suitable outcome—to that evolution."

It was Teilhard's conviction that should humanity lose hope for the future, the hope of transcending the barriers to human unity and peace, noogenesis would cease. "Between these two alternatives of absolute optimism or absolute pessimism, there is no middle way because by its very nature progress is all or nothing." Yet, does not evolution itself offer hope? It has gone from geogenesis to biogenesis and has entered up noogenesis. Will it now be frustrated at this stage and fail to evolve further into the future? Teilhard clings to hope, "there is for us, in the future, under some form or another, a least collective, not only survival but also super-life." In 1950, Teilhard made what was a final attempt to get his observations published. He wrote a short work, *Man's Place in Nature*, which summarized what he felt was his scientific

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**Chardin, cont'd.**

position. He carefully avoided mentioning the religious aspects of his views. Unfortunately, he was no more successful than he had been earlier. Teilhard does not depart from his earlier views, but he does state them with greater precision.

**A Foretelling of the Internet**

Crucial to the process of human evolution, i.e. to progress is, in Teilhard's view, scientific research. In the past such investigations were isolated, sometimes no more than the hobbies of individuals. "Today we find the reverse: research students are numbered in the hundreds of thousands-soon to be millions-and they are no longer distributed superficially and at random over the globe, but are functionally linked together in a vast organic system that will remain in the future indispensable to the life of the community." One can't but think of today's Internet, yet this was written about 50 years before the advent of the Internet. What did he base this prediction on? Teilhard was aware of the early forms of the computers. He writes "I am thinking of those astonishing electronic machines (the starting point and hope of the young science of cybernetics), by which our normal

capacity to calculate and combine is reinforced and multiplied by the process and to a degree that heralds as astonishing advances in this direction as those that optical science has already produced for our power of vision."

But what of the ultimate future, if any. Teilhard says there are no guarantees, "synthesis implies risk." "Life is less certain than death." However, if evolution does in fact reach a final stage it will be "the self-subsistent centre and absolutely final principle of irreversibility and personalization: the one and only true Omega." Teilhard's hope for the future of the noosphere is found in what he called the "Omega Point," perhaps the most controversial aspect of his thought. To understand it, we return to The Phenomenon of Man.

**Towards Omega**

Here we continue Teilhard's treatment of noogenesis: "We are faced with a harmonized collectivity of consciousnesses to a sort of super-consciousness. The earth not only becoming covered by myriads of grains of thought, but becoming enclosed in a single thinking envelope, a single unanimous reflection." Yet such a unanimity of consciousness implies a

condition that humans generally reject, depersonalization. Indeed, the conclusion seems inevitable: "So that at the world's Omega, as it is at its Alpha, lies the Impersonal." At this point, "Omega," the last letter in the Greek alphabet, simply refers to the final stage of evolution. At the end the noosphere becomes an "all" that absorbs all. In refining his description of "Omega" Teilhard states: "Because it contains and engenders consciousness, space-time is necessarily of a convergent nature [and] must somewhere in the future become involuted to a point which we might call Omega, which fuses and consumes them integrally in itself." Here "Omega" takes on its deeper meaning. Noogenesis, as it evolves, inevitably reaches a single focus. He had said "Everything that ascends must converge." In the midst of a particularly ghastly fulfillment of the dictum "War is hell," Pierre Teilhard de Chardin struggled to hold on to a hope for the human future. Ultimately, he found it in noogenesis and in the future of the noosphere.

Teilhard spent the last four years of his life in America. He died of a coronary artery rupture on Easter Sunday April 10th 1955 in New York city, and was interred in a small cemetery in Rhinebeck, NY. There, still in exile, Teilhard lies under a simple stone inscribed with his name. ▲

Syed Abdullah, M.D.

**Fall Meeting, cont'd.**

Sexual Dysfunction Reconsidered. Challenging Existing Assumptions: Advocating More Accurate Diagnoses.

**SAVE THIS DATE** and join us on October 10. This will be a very special event. Flyers will be mailed when the details of time and location have been finalized. ▲

Jane Kelman, M.D.

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## Amino Acid Treatment

**A**mino acid treatment is efficacious in Tardive Dyskinesia - reducing symptoms by as much as 86 percent in adult males.

A new medical food product, composed of branched chain amino acids was effective in decreasing tardive dyskinesia (TD) symptoms by as much as 86 percent, according to a study published in the June 2003 issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry (Richardson MA, Bevans ML, Read LL, Chao HM, Clelland JD, Suckow RF, Maher TJ, Citrome L. Efficacy of the branched chain amino acids in the treatment of tardive dyskinesia in men. American Journal of Psychiatry 160:6, June 2003).

Thirty-six men in the study were randomly assigned to either high dose active treatment (222 mg/kg of body weight) or placebo. The active and placebo treatments were manufactured by Scientific Hospital Supplies International Ltd. (Liverpool, U.K.) and supplied by Scientific Hospital Supplies, North America (Rockville, Md). Doses were administered three times daily for a period of three weeks. Patients were kept on their same dose of antipsychotic medications from two weeks before the trial until trial completion. TD symptom change evaluations were conducted by the means of a well-established videotape frequency count procedure. Tappings were conducted at baseline and weekly during the treatment phase of the protocol. The first author, who was blind to whether the patient received active treatment or placebo, conducted TD symptom frequency counts from the videotaped study records.

At the end of the three-week trial, the active treatment and placebo groups showed a robust statistically similar difference in treatment response with the active treatment group demonstrating a mean symptom decrease of 36.5 percent and the placebo group a mean symptom increase of 3.9%. A third of the active treatment group experienced a 60 percent or more drop in TD movements, with symptom decreases as high as 86.4% being seen. However, 28% of the active treatment group showed a less than 10% TD symptom decrease demonstrating the heterogeneity of this disorder

suggesting that no one treatment will be effective in all patients with TD.

Symptom reductions occurred in as soon as one week, with the length of time of the patient in the trial not being significantly related to TD symptom response. Active treatment markedly increased plasma concentrations of the branched chain amino acids across the trial without the appearance of tolerance. These findings on time and response and a lack of tolerance in plasma branched chain amino acids suggest that our TD treatment findings could extend beyond the three weeks of the trial.

Careful health monitoring during the trial indicated that side effects were limited, with no clinically significant changes from pre-trial to post-trial laboratory screens and minimal gastrointestinal symptoms seen. TD symptom reduction was not related to changes in antipsychotic and glucose plasma levels. While the latter finding suggests that active treatment does not challenge glycemic status, diabetes needs to be considered a contraindication for the present formulation of the treatment product.

Clinical research findings from prior studies indicated a decreased ability to clear ingested phenylalanine (a large neutral aromatic amino acid) from plasma in men with TD. It is also known that ingestion of branched chain amino acids reduces plasma

levels of phenylalanine and the other aromatic amino acids and thus their availability to the brain. These data led to the invention of the use of the branched chain amino acids for the treatment of TD in men. While adult women were not shown to have associated phenylalanine clearance and TD status, some data suggests that post-menopausal and pre-pubertal females may profit from the treatment. It must be kept in mind, however, that pregnancy is a contraindication for this treatment.

Plasma levels of the aromatic amino acids, phenylalanine, tyrosine and tryptophan, (precursors of the amine neurotransmitters dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin) demonstrated a significant correlation between decreases in their levels and TD symptom decreases. This correlation suggests that decreased monoamine

*Continued on back page* ➔

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## National Depression Screening Day

The West Hudson Psychiatric Society will continue our long tradition of service and outreach to our community by hosting National Depression Screening Day on October 9, 2003. We will again have a booth set up near the Food Court at the Palisades Mall, so that we can provide accessible screening to our community. The goal is to provide education and screening for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and post traumatic stress disorder.

The screening day is being organized under the auspices of screening for Mental Health Inc. and we will be working as well to publicize the event with the Mental Health Association of Rockland County and other mental health clinics and agencies in Rockland and Orange Counties.

Those of you who have participated in the past can attest to this being a rewarding, easy and pleasant experience for our screeners. For those of you who have not participated in the past, make a point of joining us this year. It will be worth your while. Also, I would ask you to please help us publicize the

event- we will be sending you a flier along with your invitation to join us.

For more information, or to sign up to volunteer (we're asking for 2 hours, but you are welcome to stay longer), call me at 845-358-7219 or call Mona Begum at 845-359-7804 ▲

*Mary Mavromatis, MD*

### Amino Acid, cont'd.

neurotransmitter synthesis affected by the decreased brain transport of the aromatic amino acids due to increased plasma levels of the brain-competitive branched chain amino acids is the mechanism of TD symptom response. This mechanism, having been successful in TD treatment, suggests that it may also be useful in the treatment of other movement disorders and certain psychiatric disorders. ▲

*Mary Ann Richardson, PhD*

### Anna J. Munster, M.D. Honored at The Ashville Art Museum, N.C.

Anna Munster, M.D., a long time member of our District Branch, was honored on the occasion of her 90th birthday at the Ashville Art Museum in North Carolina. She donated to the Museum eleven important works of Isac Friedlander (1890-1968). Dr. Munster was a longtime friend of the artist and she shared on the occasion some reflections on Friedlander and his art. It is to be remembered that our D.B had also honored Anna for her contributions to the community as a child psychiatrist and a yoga instructor, in the Spring of 2002. She has finally decided to hand over the active teaching of Yoga to her assistant Linda Morrissey at the Pearl River Library. We congratulate Anna for this latest recognition of her gift to the world of Art, and wish her many more years of active life.

*Syed Abdullah, M.D., Co-Editor*

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