THE HARD PROBLEM
BY Tom Stoppard
DIRECTED BY Blanka Zizka
January 6 – February 6, 2016

Sarah Gliko as Hilary
Photo by Matt Saunders
“Materialism is in trouble, and we’re all materialists now. Everything is matter. There is no science that says beauty is truth or truth is beauty, but the gondolas are heaving with name-tagged materialists having their minds blown by Venice. What is to be done with the sublime if you’re proud to be a materialist?” Hilary poses this question to her friend, Spike, a material scientist who believes every human behavior can be explained by evolutionary science.

In *The Hard Problem*, the lives of the characters are shaped by their specific understanding of and belief in what meaning, life, and existence are. They don’t seem to have pasts, or at least, Tom Stoppard is not interested in their pasts. He’s interested in the clash of the ideas they live by and, simultaneously, in asking questions: How does one explain consciousness? What does it mean to be good? Does true altruism exist? Is it necessary to have motives in order to be good and can we prove what these motives are? How does materialistic science explain sorrow? The energy of the play is born out of deep persuasions formulated into vivid verbal expression; the language is precise and can be treated almost musically. For that reason, I have stripped the production to the bare minimum so that nothing prevents us from hearing the complex thoughts.

Early in the play we learn that when Hilary was only fifteen years old, she gave birth to a girl. At the time, everyone around her felt it would be the best thing to do, for both Hilary as a young mother, and for the baby, to place her up for adoption. I think about this decision as a moment of time that has been frozen and becomes what Hilary carries with her, always. I wanted to give voice to this frozen time, and decided to do so by adding a live saxophone player to the production. This musician becomes Hilary’s observer, inner voice, sorrow, and hope — her consciousness.

I hope you will enjoy the production.

Blanka Zizka
According to a recent article in *Philadelphia Magazine* about Tom Stoppard’s visit to our city, “The Wilma has arguably become America's foremost interpreter of the playwright's work, thanks mostly to the organization's artistic director, Blanka Zizka.”

Here at the Wilma, we constantly strive to bring you transformational experiences in the theater. Given my personal passion for *The Hard Problem* and the characters' fervor around their beliefs, I expect the Stoppard/Zizka combination will once again transform our consciousness by the play's end. This was definitely my experience when I first attended the Wilma in 2000 for *The Invention of Love*.

Indeed, “transformation” is the word of the moment at the Wilma. Or perhaps I should say it’s the word of the future. With the introduction of Wilma WynTix, the launch of the Wilma HotHouse, and more exciting developments to come, we look forward to sharing news throughout the season about how your experience of attending the theater will be enhanced.

We also look forward to sharing profiles in national publications about Blanka and her vision for the future of the Wilma. Blanka and I have spent a great deal of time discussing and dissecting current regional theater models and arriving at the ultimate determination that business as usual is certainly not the model for future sustainability.

Have I piqued your curiosity? 2016 promises to be a year of change and renewal. And it just so happens to be the 20th Anniversary of the opening of our theater on the Avenue of the Arts.

Stay tuned for more information about how you can be involved in transforming the future of the Wilma.

James Haskins
The Wilma Theater is grateful for significant support provided by:

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THE HARD PROBLEM
by Tom Stoppard

featuring
Shravan Amin, Krista Apple-Hodge*, Ross Beschler*, Gaby Bradbury, Taysha Canales, Sarah Gliko*, Steven Rishard*, Lindsay Smiling*, Jeena Yi*

Set Designer
Matt Saunders

Costume Designer
Vasilija Zivanic

Lighting Designer
Thom Weaver

Composer and Sound Designer
Daniel Perelstein

Musician
Michael Pedicin

Production Manager
Clayton Tejada

Dramaturg
Walter Bilderback

Resident Stage Manager
Patreshetarlini Adams*

Director
Blanka Zizka

*Members of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

THE HARD PROBLEM was first presented at the Dorfman, Royal National Theatre, London, on 21 January 2015.

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This theater operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
Cast of Characters

Shravan Amin ................................................................. Amal
Krista Apple-Hodge ........................................................ Ursula
Ross Beschler ............................................................ Spike
Gaby Bradbury .......................................................... Cathy
Taysha Canales ............................................................ Julia
Sarah Gliko ............................................................... Hilary
Steven Rishard ........................................................... Jerry
Lindsay Smiling ............................................................ Leo
Jeena Yi ....................................................................... Bo

Place: The Krohl Institute for Brain Science & other locations.
Time: 2001- November 2007

This production will be performed with no intermission.

The Wilma Theater is a member of the following organizations: Avenue of the Arts, Inc., Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, League of Resident Theatres, Midtown Village Merchants Association, and Theatre Communications Group, Inc.

Please note
Photography or sound recording inside the theater, without the written permission of the management, is prohibited by law. Violators may be asked to leave the theater and may be liable for financial charges.

Children Policy
Some subject matter may be deemed objectionable for children; therefore, children under 12 will not be permitted in the theater.

Distracting Noise and Light
The noise of cellular phones and candy wrappers, and the light from electronic devices, are distracting to both audiences and actors. Please turn off all cellular phones and electronic devices. Also, please be sure that your watch alarm does not sound during the performance.

Smoking, eating, and drinking are prohibited inside the theater.
TOM STOPPARD (PLAYWRIGHT)

Tom Stoppard wrote his first play, *Enter A Free Man*, while working as a journalist in Bristol. He was introduced to American audiences in 1967 with the Broadway hit *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which was followed by *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Dirty Linen*, *Newfoundland*, *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Artist Descending A Staircase*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *Arcadia*, *The Invention of Love*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, and his newest play *The Hard Problem*. His off-Broadway productions include *Enter A Free Man* and the double bill of Dogg’s *Hamlet* and Cahoot’s *Macbeth*. For television, Stoppard’s work includes the highly-acclaimed adaptation of the 1889 British novel by Jerome K. Jerome called *Three Men in a Boat*, seen on American public television in 1979. *Professional Foul*, a play he wrote for television, has won awards from BAFTA and the Broadcasting Press Guild. Most recently he won awards for Best Screenplay from Biarritz International Festival of Audiovisual Programming and the Writer’s Award from the Broadcasting Press Guild for his work on the five-part BBC/HBO/VRT television mini-series *Parade’s End*. His radio plays include *If You’re Glad I’ll Be Frank*, *Albert’s Bridge* (Italia Prize Winner), *‘M’ Is for Moon Among Other Things*, *The Dissolution of Dominic Boot*, *Artist Descending a Staircase*, and *Darkside*. Tom Stoppard has written screenplays for the films *Despair*, *The Romantic Englishwoman*, *The Human Factor*, *Brazil*, *Empire of the Sun*, *The Russia House*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Tulip Fever*, *The Golden Compass*, he is co-screenwriter of *Shakespeare in Love* for which he received an Academy Award, and most recently he wrote the screenplay for *Anna Karenina*. He directed and wrote the screenplay for the film version of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The Wilma Theater productions of Stoppard’s plays include *Travesties*, *Arcadia*, *On The Razzle*, *The Invention of Love*, *The Real Inspector Hound*, *Indian Ink*, *Night and Day*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor*, *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, *The Real Thing*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and now *The Hard Problem*.

BLANKA ZIZKA (DIRECTOR)

has been Artistic Director of The Wilma Theater since 1981. In the fall of 2011, Blanka received the Zelda Fichandler Award from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation, which recognizes an outstanding director or choreographer transforming the regional arts landscape, and she was a Fellow at the 2015 Sundance Institute/LUMA Foundation Theatre Directors Retreat. For the past four years, she has been developing practices and programs for local theater artists to create working conditions that support creativity through continuity and experimentation. She has directed over 70 plays and musicals at the Wilma. Most recently, Blanka directed *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Hamlet*, Paula Vogel’s World Premiere *Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq*, Richard Bean’s *Under the Whaleback*, Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, Tadeusz Słobodzianek’s *Our Class*, Sarah Ruhl’s *In the Next Room*, and *Macbeth*, which included an original score by Czech composer and percussionist Pavel Fajt.
SHRAVAN AMIN (AMAL) is making his Wilma Theater debut with *The Hard Problem*. Based in Washington, DC, his recent appearances include *Smartphones* (Ambassador Theater), *If All the Sky Were Paper* (Kennedy Center), and *Very Still & Hard to See* (Rorschach Theatre). Shravan regularly performs improv comedy at DC Improv, Washington Improv Theater, and in regional improv festivals. Shravan has gone through Studio Theatre’s (DC) Acting Conservatory.

KRISTA APPLE-HODGE (URSULA) Wilma credits include *Hamlet*, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead*, *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, *Our Class*, *Macbeth*, *Leaving*, and *In the Next Room, or the vibrator play* (2011 Barrymore, Best Supporting Actress). Also in Philadelphia: Arden Theatre (*Metamorphoses*), Walnut Street Theatre (*Other Desert Cities; Proof*), Lantern Theater (*Henry V*), InterAct, PlayPenn, Theatre Exile, and the Philadelphia Artists’ Collective/PAC (*Mary Stuart, Creditors*). Film/TV: *Law & Order, the_source*. She is a current faculty member at University of the Arts, and a graduate of Temple University (MFA, Acting) and Kenyon College (BA, English/Theatre). More at kristaapple.com.

ROSS BESCHLER (SPIKE) Previously at the Wilma: *Our Class, Under the Whaleback, Bootycandy, Hamlet, R&G Are Dead* and *Antigone*. Other shows include *The Dangerous House of Pretty Mbane* (Interact), *The Lady from the Sea and Hell* (EgoPo), *Knives in Hens* (Theatre Exile), *Mary Stuart* (PAC), *Maple & Vine* (City Theatre), *The Lonesome West* (Lantern), *Kate Crackernuts* (The Flea) and *End Days* (People’s Light & Theatre). MFA: Temple. Film: *Flight of the Cardinal*.

GABY BRADBURY (CATHY) is thrilled to be returning to the Wilma where she previously played Elly in *Under The Whaleback*. Broadway: *Annie* (Pepper, u/s Annie) Palace Theatre. Regional: *Oliver!* (Ensemble), *A Christmas Carol* (Tiny Tim) and *The Music Man* (Gracie Shinn) Walnut Street Theatre; *Gypsy* (Baby June) and *Inherit The Wind* (Melinda Loomis) Bristol Riverside Theatre. Other performances: *Dani Girl* (Dani) 11th Hour Theatre; Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade with the cast of Macy’s *Yes, Virginia: The Musical*, *The Nutcracker 1776* and *Enchanted Forest* at the Merriam. Recordings: Carols for a Cure, Disney’s The Lion King kids (MTI), Educational Video for children with Autism (CHOP). Special thanks and love to God, Blanka, everyone at the Wilma, school, family and friends.

SARAH GLIKO (HILARY) is a company member at The Wilma Theater, where she last appeared in Antigone, Hamlet/Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead, and Paula Vogel’s world premiere Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq. Other credits include: Parade, Charlotte’s Web (Arden Theatre Co.), My Dinner With Dito (Bearded Ladies Cabaret), The Screwtape Letters, The Liar (Lantern Theatre), Around the World in 80 Days, Love Story, The Ugly One (Wald St. Theatre), Pumpgirl (Inis Nua Theatre), and John & Jen (Act II Playhouse). Special thanks to Blanka, Mr. Stoppard, and the Wilma’s incredible staff of artists.

STEVEN RISHARD (JERRY) most recently was at the Wilma as the Messenger in Antigone. Other theatrical credits include Claudius in Hamlet and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern at Wilma, Dan in Detroit at Philadelphia Theatre Company, Useless at IRT, Luz at La Mama, The Bacchae for Public Theater’s Shakespeare in the Park, A Heartbeat to Baghdad at The Flea Theater, In the Penal Colony at Classic Stage Company. With Division 13 Productions; Act Without Words 1, Cascado, and Journeys Among the Dead. Quartet at Court Theatre, The Rainmaker at Triad Stage, and The Beautiful Dark at Premiere Stages. TV credits: Law & Order, Law & Order: SVU, The Americans, Kings, and Treme. Film: Shelter (6 Souls) and Hal Hartley’s latest film Meanwhile.

LINDSAY SMILING (LEO) is thrilled to be back on the Wilma stage where he appeared in Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq, Macbeth, Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train, and Resurrection Blues. Recent stage credits include Metamorphoses (Arden Theatre Co.), Moon Man Walk (Orbiter 3) The Learned Ladies (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ), North of the Boulevard (Theatre Exile) and Othello (Milwaukee Rep). Mr. Smiling has performed Off-Broadway and at many regional theaters including: Syracuse Stage, Walnut Street Theatre, People’s Light and Theatre Co., Pittsburgh Public, Two River Theatre, Victory Gardens, ACT, Dorset Theater Festival, Human Race Theatre, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood Theater, Bristol Riverside Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theater, Lantern Theater Co, and Shakespeare on the Sound. For more info: www.lindsaysmiling.net

JEENA YI (BO) is thrilled to make her Wilma debut. Jeena was recently seen playing Grace in Lights Rise on Grace by Chad Beckim and directed by Michael John Garcés at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. Other credits include Chairs & a Long Table (Mayi Theatre Co.) Osip in The Government Inspector (Dir. Jesse Berger) at 3LD Arts Center in NYC and Amanda in Amy Herzog’s 4000 Miles at The Hangar Theatre. Jeena is a proud graduate of Columbia University’s MFA program. Special thanks to Adam, Blanka and Nell.
MATT SAUNDERS (SET DESIGNER) Recent Off-Broadway includes, *Futurity* for Soho Rep and Ars Nova, *Good Person of Szechwan* at The Public Theater, *The Tempest* for The Public Theater at the Delacorte, and *As You Like It* for The Acting Company at The New Victory and Lincoln Center. Regionally, Matt has designed at the Mark Taper Forum, Huntington Theatre Company, Guthrie Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Actor’s Theatre of Louisville, Children’s Theatre Company in Minneapolis, Spoleto Festival, Arden Theatre Company, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, and Yale Repertory Theatre. Matt is a long-time collaborator with Blanka Zizka, and *The Hard Problem* is his 11th design here at the Wilma. Last season, Matt designed *Hamlet* and *R&G*. In addition to *The Hard Problem*, this season at the Wilma, he will also design *An Octoroon* and *The Christians*. Matt holds an MFA from Yale School of Drama (’12). He is a 2014 Pew Fellow in the Arts, as well as 2015 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University. Matt is the Associate Artistic Director of the OBIE Award-Winning theatre company, New Paradise Laboratories; and the Assistant Professor of Design in the Department of Theater at Swarthmore College. mattsanders.net

VASILIJA ZIVANIC (COSTUME DESIGNER) Recipient of the Kahn Career Award for Exceptional Talent, Ms. Zivanic’s credentials include *Hamlet, R&G Are Dead, Don Juan Comes Home From Iraq* by Paula Vogel and *Leaving* by Vaclav Havel (The Wilma Theater), *The Daughters of the Mood* (Edinburgh Festival), *Cosi Fan Tutte* (Huntington Theatre), *Venus, Necessary Targets, Godspell, La Lorona* (The Beckett Theatre, NYC), and *The Magic Flute*; fabric painter for leading New York studio Parson Meares on Broadway including *The Lion King, Wicked, Spampalot, Dracula,* and Disney’s *Finding Nemo, Monsters, Inc.,* and *Aladdin*. Ms. Zivanic works as a fashion designer and illustrator for various clients in the US and Europe. She is Professor at Parsons and FIT in NYC. Some of her work is published in *The Big Book of Contemporary Illustration* by M. Dawber and *Fashion Drawing* by M. Bryant.


DANIEL PERELSTEIN (COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER) is a freelance sound designer, composer, and musical director in Philadelphia. An Associate Artist at the Wilma, Daniel has created music and sound for *Don Juan…, Under the Whaleback, Our Class,* and other plays directed by Blanka Zizka. Recent designs and original music at McCarter Theatre, Opera Philadelphia, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Arden Theatre, InterAct Theatre, FringeArts, People’s Light, Kimmel Center, Theatre Exile, others. Daniel is the resident sound designer for the Bearded Ladies Cabaret. He received Barrymore Awards for *Don Juan…* at The Wilma Theater and *Knives in Hens* at Theatre Exile with Christopher Colucci. Daniel has received fourteen Barrymore Award nominations in three categories. Independence Foundation Fellowship, 2013. B.S. Engineering, B.A. Music, Swarthmore College. In memory of Dad and Anna.
MICHAEL PEDICIN (MUSICIAN) was born and raised in Philadelphia. He was immersed in music, making jazz his early passion. As a young musician, Pedicin studied with legendary teacher Denis Sandole. While accepted to Juilliard, he stayed in Philadelphia and graduated as a composition major from the University of the Arts. During the 1970’s, Pedicin was a first call saxophonist for Philadelphia International Records, also having his first solo release by Gamble and Huff in 1980. In the 1980’s Pedicin toured the world as the saxophonist in the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Twelve solo albums followed, as did teaching positions at Temple University, University of the Arts, and Stockton University. On the way, Pedicin attended medical school and completed a PhD in clinical psychology. Always allowing improvisation to be part of his life, he currently teaches a college course called “Improvisation, Creativity, and Consciousness,” while always playing his saxophone.

PATRESHETTARLINI ADAMS (RESIDENT STAGE MANAGER / AEA) has been the stage manager at The Wilma Theater since the theater made its home on the Avenue of the Arts in 1996. “Pat” is celebrating her TWENTIETH SEASON at the fabulous Wilma! Her career has included 7 seasons as stage manager at the Tony Award winning Crossroads Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ and, in past years, Pat has worked the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta, GA and the National Black Theater Festival in Winston-Salem, NC. She has also found herself traveling the world with critically-acclaimed dance company Noche Flamenca! Most recently, she is using all her free time to spoil her grandsons, Isaiah and Elijah. God Is Good!

WALTER BILDERBACK (DRAMATURG) has been at The Wilma Theater since 2004. Before that, he held staff positions at La Jolla Playhouse, Baltimore CenterStage, The Alliance Theatre, (Atlanta), and Dallas Theater Center, in addition to freelance work including Broadway. Walter is happy to be working on his third production of a Tom Stoppard play at the Wilma (Night and Day, 2004; Rock ’n’ Roll, 2008). His article about Blanka Zizka’s artistic development since Our Class, “Creating a Thinking Body for a Thinking Theatre,” appears in the Winter issue of SDC Journal.

CLAYTON TEJADA (PRODUCTION MANAGER) is celebrating his twelfth season at the Wilma, serving the first seven as Technical Director. Clayton started his professional career as an Apprentice at Arden Theatre, and then worked there for several years as Stage Supervisor. Before coming to the Wilma, he worked as a freelance Technical Director or Production Manager for 1812 Productions, Mum Puppettheatre, Lantern Theater, and Azuka Theatre. Clayton is a graduate of the Theater Arts program at The University of Puget Sound. He is proud to make Philadelphia his professional and artistic home. Thanks and love to his sweet Kate, and his boys Alex and Gabriel.
JAMES HASKINS (MANAGING DIRECTOR) is now in his tenth season in partnership with Blanka Zizka, the Board of Directors, and staff to advance the mission of The Wilma Theater. James began his work in theater administration at Circle Repertory Company, where he learned early on the value and resonance of an artist-centered approach to running a theater company. He went on to work with a variety of theaters in New York and Seattle as an actor, director, and administrator. Upon moving to Philadelphia, James worked as Managing Director of InterAct Theatre Company and then Executive Director of the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia before coming to the Wilma. As a theater artist, he is most proud of his directorial and dramaturgical work on the plays of his husband Michael Whistler. James holds an MFA from the University of Washington and a BA from The College of Wooster (Ohio), where he currently serves as President of his alumni class.

WILMA HOTHOUSE

Introducing the Wilma HotHouse, an incubator for artistic investigation and experimentation that allows a company of actors to dare and explore under the Wilma's auspices. The HotHouse allows the Wilma to develop new works specifically for our company of actors; to conduct readings, intensive workshops, and other experiments with company members and guest artists; and to hone a unique theatrical aesthetic for the Wilma through rigorous actor training.

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Taysha Canales
Sarah Gliko
Justin Jain
Jenn Kidwell
Jered McLenigan
Campbell Meaghan O'Hare
Brian Ratcliffe
Steven Rishard
Lindsay Smiling
Ed Swidey

Associate Artists
Krista Apple-Hodge
Keith Conallen
Kate Czajkowski
Zainab Jah
Forrest McClendon
Kevin Meehan
Dan Perelstein
Matt Saunders
Thom Weaver
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SPECIAL THANKS

SPECIAL THANKS
What's so good about Good?

In Tom Stoppard’s 1972 play Jumpers, a character asks “What’s so good about Good?” Mentioning this line in a note on his new play, The Hard Problem, Stoppard notes “I haven’t gotten any further.”

The question remains the same, but, as Stoppard has noted, who asks it has changed drastically in the interim. In 1972 the question, if it came up, was the province of moral philosophers. In 2015, a book was published with the title Does Altruism Exist? It’s written by an evolutionary biologist and shelved in the Science section. For The Hard Problem, Stoppard’s characters are no longer tweedy (if acrobatic) Oxbridge dons, but trendy scientists of both the hard and soft variety, working at a prestigious Institute for Brain Science, trying to discover the secret of consciousness. (Some work for a hedge fund – the skillset seems basically interchangeable).

Before the 1990s, studying consciousness was to risk ostracism in the field and career suicide for a scientist without tenure. The entry for “Consciousness” in The International Dictionary of Psychology (1989) reflects this low status:

“Consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it has evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written about it.”
Why did this change? Some of the change was due to advances in neuroscience that showed connections between specific cognitive functions and specific areas of the brain. Another reason was the development of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which allows scientists to observe living brains responding to stimuli. Another reason may have been the growth of “neo-Darwinian” thinking. Popularized best in Richard Dawkins’ best-selling *The Selfish Gene*, this school holds that competition between individual organisms to reproduce is the only engine of natural selection and has a strong naturalistic, anti-metaphysical bent. The combination provoked work by scholars in a wide range of fields: evolutionary psychology and biology, neuroscience, philosophy, even physics. In 1994 a young philosopher named David Chalmers delivered a lecture that gave the quest a name equivalent to their Holy Grail: The Hard Problem. In his book *The Conscious Mind*, published the same year, Chalmers explained:

“**There is nothing we know about more directly than consciousness, but it is far from clear how to reconcile it with everything else we know. Why does it exist?**

**What does it do?** How could it possibly arise from lumpy gray matter? *We know consciousness far more intimately than we know the rest of the world, but we understand the rest of the world far better than we understand consciousness.*”

Despite two decades of research, it’s questionable how much more we know now than in 1994. The hard evidence indicates that the mind, the me with which each of us is most familiar, originates in the physical properties of the brain, although few of us feel experiences are only a series of neurochemical reactions.

*Tom Stoppard* vintage photo. Photographer unknown.

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Which leads to a harder Hard Problem that lies at the heart of Stoppard’s new play: If this is so, what is so good about Good? “The question one has to ask,” Stoppard has said, “about good and bad and right and wrong is, why is the comparison between the two in order? Why are we even bothering to label things as good and bad? Where’s that coming from?”

For a hardcore neo-Darwinian, the answer would seem to be “our imaginations.” Alongside Dawkins’ “selfish gene” were other scholars making assertions like this:

“No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes for co-operation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation... Given a full chance to act in his own interest, nothing but expediency will restrain [a person] from brutalizing, from maiming, from murdering - his brother, his mate, his parent, or his child. Scratch an ‘altruist’ and watch a ‘hypocrite’ bleed.” (Michele Ghiselin, 1974)

Neo-Darwinism’s development was paralleled by game theory, which, at its most simplistic, also reduced all human interactions to head-to-head competitions, where the option “do good” didn’t exist. Humanity, seen from this perspective, could resemble an asylum full of marauding sociopaths. While Dawkins has said the “selfish gene” is a metaphor and not a microscopic Ayn Rand, Jeffrey Skilling, the notorious former CEO of Enron, declared The Selfish Gene his favorite book and used it as a management bible, helping to create one of the most amoral, rapacious corporations in recent history before its implosion.

In more recent years, other perspectives have made themselves heard. Studies have indicated that a sense of fairness, if not altruism, is innate in infants and even in monkeys. Other scientists have argued for group-level selection and cooperation as engines in evolution. And philosophers such as Colin McGinn or Thomas Nagel, while denying a divine existence, even suggest the answers to both consciousness and our moral sense may not be answerable, and “almost certainly” not through the mechanisms of natural selection as we know them. All these however, still skirt Stoppard’s question: “Why?”
Rebecca Saxe, one of the scientists who created this image, described it as “a depiction of one of the hardest problems in neuroscience: How will changes in that specific little organ accomplish the unfolding of a whole human mind?”

“As for me, I saw a very old image made new. The Mother and Child is a powerful symbol of love and innocence, beauty and fertility. Although these maternal values, and the women who embody them, may be venerated, they are usually viewed in opposition to other values: inquiry and intellect, progress and power. But I am a neuroscientist, and I worked to create this image; and I am also the mother in it, curled up inside the tube with my infant son.”

FURTHER READING:

Colin McGinn: The Mysterious Flame: Conscious Minds in a Material World
Thomas Nagel: Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False
Christof Koch: Consciousness: Confessions of a Romantic Reductionist
Daniel Dennett: Consciousness Explained
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