

# HUMANIZING PSYCHIATRISTS

TOWARD A HUMANE PSYCHIATRY



**NIALL MCLAREN, M.D.**

## Acclaim for the writing of Niall McLaren, M.D.

“Dr. McLaren brilliantly wields the sword of philosophy to refute the modern theories of psychiatry with an analysis that is sharp and deadly. His own proposed novel theory could be the dawn of a new revolution in the medicine of mental illness.”

—Andrew R. Kaufman, MD  
Chief Resident of Emergency Psychiatry  
Duke University Medical Center

“Not only does Dr. Niall McLaren point out the various shortcomings of the established views of psychology/psychiatry, and of some other scientific disciplines, but he also proposes the most cogent model of mind that does not violate fundamental scientific laws and is also compatible with the norms of common sense and logic. He has endangered the foundations of contemporary mainstream psychiatry while, at the same time, creating a rescue channel.”

—Ernest Dempsey, editor of *Recovering the Self Journal*

“This book is a *tour de force*. It demonstrates a tremendous amount of erudition, intelligence and application in the writer. It advances an interesting and plausible mechanism for many forms of human distress. It is an important work that deserves to take its place among the classics in books about psychiatry.”

—Robert Rich, PhD, AnxietyAndDepression-Help.com

“I found Niall McLaren’s book to be an incredibly well-written and thought-provoking. It is not, by any means, easy reading. It is also not for someone who doesn’t have some form of background in understanding the various psychological theories and mental health conditions. I think that this would make an excellent textbook for a graduate class that allows students to question the theories that we already have.”

—Paige Lovitt for *Reader Views*

“It is impossible to do justice to this ambitious, erudite, and intrepid attempt to dictate to psychiatry a new, ‘scientifically-correct’ model theory. The author offers a devastating critique of the shortcomings and pretensions of psychiatry, not least its all-pervasive, jargon-camouflaged nescience.

—Sam Vaknin, PhD, author *Malignant Self Love: Narcissism Revisited*

“McLaren’s book has been thirty years in the making and is obviously well researched and thought-out. The author makes very strong, intelligent arguments that, I believe, will have a large impact on the future of psychiatry. McLaren’s book would make an excellent read for a psychiatry student or for those already in the field.”

—Kam Aures for *Rebecca’s Reads*

“This is an academic book about psychiatric methods. As a psychology graduate as well as a user of the various services, I find this a fascinating subject. It’s not for a beginner, but for someone who has some experience of the mental health services, it’s interesting and thought-provoking. We need to get over the stigma attached to mental health and see it on the same level as physical health issues. It’s not a new theory, but more of an overview of what has gone before and where the future direction of psychiatry should lead.”

—Josie Henley-Einion, author of *Silence*

“Among the theories McLaren shows as severely flawed are behaviorist models, psychoanalysis, and eclectic models of psychiatry. Most importantly, McLaren states that no real foundational theory exists for psychiatry. While definitions of mental disorder exist, no real definition of mental order or normality has been determined. Until it is determined what a normal mental state is, psychiatry cannot accurately determine what is a mental disorder.

McLaren’s thesis is that ‘human behavior is the outcome of a complex interaction between an emergent mind and the physical body.’ While psychiatry has focused on depression as the most popular mental disorder, McLaren believes the focus should be on anxiety, which is the result of the ‘fight or flight’ instinct in most creatures; traumatic events that cause anxiety can lead to depression, so consequently anxiety deserves to be studied as a source of depression. McLaren emphasizes that the human mind does affect the human body, as in cases of mass hysteria, anxiety, and fear that create panic attacks.

Ultimately, McLaren says that any theory of the mind has to provide a rational explanation of mental disorder. He boldly speaks his mind throughout the book, backing up his points with multiple examples, and he is not afraid to cry “Humbug!” when necessary. McLaren has been practicing psychiatry since 1977 in Australia. His discussion of his own education and the shortcomings of the education system he went through as well as weaknesses in current psychiatric practices demonstrate that psychiatry has many more steps to take before it is a completely effective science. This work may well lead to a new understanding of mental illness in future years as younger psychiatrists read his book and follow his example in rejecting the ineffective theories he derides.”

—Tyler R. Tichelaar, PhD

“This is a paradigm-challenging work, to say the very least, and McLaren's views require a person who has a vested interest in these subjects to confront their own resistance to challenge. It's worthwhile, because McLaren's book is affirmative concerning something which many people may have found lacking in modern psychology, and psychiatry: namely, a psyche.

With the technological revolutions occurring in the past century-and-a-half, it seems every scientist wanted to find a way to reduce the psyche to a physical property, or some combination of physical properties, or completely deny its existence (behaviorism). While this has certainly been in vogue, and has yielded many useful results in terms of understanding neurobiology and its connection to moods and perception, it has not been successful in penetrating an understanding of ‘the Self’, or the psyche. Some will say this is because the self/psyche doesn't exist, but is only a fiction that appears to the individual: still, this is just a reduction to absurdity- what is the person who perceives the self, but indeed the self?”

—Kevin Brady, *Clear Objectives*



# HUMANIZING PSYCHIATRISTS: TOWARD A HUMANE PSYCHIATRY

Niall McLaren, M.D.

An application of the philosophy of science to psychiatry

Humanizing Psychiatrists: Toward A Humane Psychiatry  
Copyright (c) 2011 by Niall McLaren. All Rights Reserved.

Cover art produced using Imageware 13.1 surface modeling software.  
Cover design by Victor R. Volkman.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McLaren, Niall, 1947-

Humanizing psychiatrists : toward a humane psychiatry : an application of the philosophy of science to psychiatry / Niall McLaren.

p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-61599-060-3 (trade paper : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-61599-060-7 (trade paper : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-1-61599-061-0 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-61599-061-5 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Psychiatry--Philosophy. 2. Psychology, Pathological. 3. Mental illness--Etiology. 4. Biological psychiatry. 5. Cognitive neuroscience. I. Title.

[DNLM: 1. Physician-Patient Relations. 2. Psychiatry. 3. Humanism. 4. Psychological Theory. WM 62]

RC437.5.M437 2010

616.89--dc22

2010035858

Distributed by: Baker & Taylor, Ingram Book Group, Quality Books

**Future Psychiatry Press** is an imprint of

Loving Healing Press

5145 Pontiac Trail

Ann Arbor, MI 48105

USA

<http://www.LovingHealing.com> or

[info@LovingHealing.com](mailto:info@LovingHealing.com)

Fax +1 734 663 6861

---

**F u t u r e P s y c h i a t r y P r e s s**

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....v

## **Part I: The Logic of Mental Disorder .....vii**

Chapter 1 – Consciousness Unexplained: The Failure Of Dennett’s Functionalism .....	9
1.1: Introduction .....	9
1.2: Dennett And Anti-Dualism: “And Then A Miracle Occurs” .....	11
1.3: A Substitute For Dualism .....	16
1.4: Ectoplasm: The Ooze That Persists .....	17
1.5: My Good Self .....	20
1.6: The Infinitely Regressive Self.....	23
1.7: Conclusion: A Natural Dualism.....	25
Chapter 2 – Can Biological Naturalism Save Biological Psychiatry? Flaws In Searle’s Program .....	29
2.1: Introduction .....	29
2.2: Against Materialism.....	31
2.3: Against Dualism .....	33
2.4: The Mind As A Function Of Biology.....	35
2.5: The Structure Of Consciousness.....	36
2.6: End Of The Monist Road.....	39
2.7: Conclusion: Minds Are Not Bodily Secretions .....	46
Chapter 3 – The Drivel Generators.....	49
3.1: Introduction .....	49
3.2: Turbo-Charged Drivel .....	51
3.3: Automated Drivel.....	54
3.4: Thought Disorder .....	55
Chapter 4 – This Phenomenal World .....	67
4.1: Introduction .....	67
4.2: The History Of Phenomenology (In Two Pages) .....	69
4.3: The Theory Of Phenomenology (In Another Two Pages).....	71
4.4: Taking Phenomenology Seriously .....	73
4.5: Why I Am Not A Phenomenologist: A Polemic .....	76
4.6: Relativism As Institutionalized Hypocrisy.....	86
4.7: Conclusion: Relative Conceit.....	92
Chapter 5 – Phenomenology and Psychiatry.....	97
5.1: Introduction .....	97
5.2: Psychiatry and Phenomenology.....	98
5.3: Psychiatry as a Failed Science .....	103
5.4: To Resurrect Phenomenology .....	105
5.5: Conclusion: The Reality of Mind .....	109

Chapter 6 – The DSM-V Project: From Bad Science to Bad Psychiatry .....	113
6.1: Introduction .....	113
6.2: “What is a Mental/Psychiatric Disorder? From DSM-IV to DSM-V” .....	114
6.3: DSM-V is a Bad Answer to the Wrong Question .....	117
6.4: DSM-V will Lead to Worse Psychiatry, not Better .....	119
6.5: Conclusion: More Will Mean Worse .....	133
Chapter 7 – A Life of its own: The Strange Case of the Biopsychosocial Model .....	135
7.1: Introduction .....	135
7.2: The Myth of the Biopsychosocial Model.....	137
7.3: How Myths Survive .....	139
7.4: Scientific Myths and the Progress of Science.....	142
7.5: Exposing bias and Prejudice Masquerading as Science .....	144
7.6: Two Heads are Better than One... ..	149
7.7:... And a Hundred Thousand are Better Than Six Clones .....	151
7.8: Conclusion: To Destroy a Myth.....	154
<b>PART II: The Many Voices of Mental Disorder .....</b>	<b>155</b>
Chapter 8 – Madness from the Inside Looking Out.....	159
8.1: Introduction: The Semi-Structured Interview .....	159
8.2: The History: My Life as a Nut Case .....	161
8.3: <i>Qui Bono?</i> .....	179
8.4: Conclusion .....	182
Chapter 9 – Accepting the Unacceptable .....	185
9.1: Introduction .....	185
9.2: The History: Damaging a Knee Damages The Head .....	186
9.3: Death before Dishonor.....	203
9.4: Questions from Medical Students (edited) .....	206
Chapter 10 – Locking the Revolving Door.....	213
10.1: Introduction .....	213
10.2: The History: Life’s Little Ups and Downs .....	214
10.3: Conclusion: When Up and Down is Not Bipolar.....	219
Chapter 11 – The Case of A Pain in the Back .....	221
11.1: Introduction .....	221
11.2: The History: Taken Aback.....	222
11.3: Life Experiences vs. Chemical Imbalances.....	228
Chapter 12 – A Case of Somatization .....	235
12.1: Introduction .....	235
12.2: The History: I’m Fine, Can I Go Now?.....	236
12.3: How to Look and Not See .....	246
Chapter 13 – A Case of Personality Disorder or Mental Illness.....	251
13.1: Introduction .....	251
13.2. The History: How to Make a Psychopath .....	253
13.4: How Not to Have a Personality Disorder .....	263
13.5: Mad or Bad? Mental Illness vs. Personality Disorder .....	265

*Contents*

13.6: Conclusion: The Nature of Mind.....	269
References.....	271
Epilogue.....	277
Index.....	279



## Introduction

This is the third in my little series of monographs on the logical status of psychiatry and my suggestions as to how these may be overcome. I would like to be able to say that the world of psychiatry has fairly leapt with excitement over what I have termed the biocognitive theory for psychiatry, perhaps even promoting it to the same status as the spurious biopsychosocial model long enjoyed, but that has not been the case. There is growing interest in this type of work, especially among medical students and psychiatric trainees, but the comfortable world of orthodox psychiatry really doesn't see much need to pay any attention to the scribbblings of yet another quirky provincial who believes he has found the essential fault in the profession. Our elders and betters feel no need to look too closely at what they are doing as they are quite sure that it is heading in the right direction and it is only a matter of time before science churns out the correct Science of Mental Disorder and half the population is put on drugs for life.

The theory outlined in these books is the most highly developed and radical theory in the history of psychiatry. My work says that the entire direction of modern psychiatry is wrong. Mental disorder is not the result of a chemical disorder of the brain but wholly psychological, a matter of "wrong programming", if you prefer. The finer details of this theory are, well, fairly fine, and they certainly need a great deal more work before any reliability will attach to them. However, that job falls to the readers. I have done my bit in formulating this theory to the point where it can be published. Other people have to read it carefully and find the faults setting up a dialectic process which, we hope, will lead to an improved version. However, there is a catch. Anybody who wishes to criticize this work must also, by the rules of science, turn the same critical effort on their own favorite theory. Criticism is the engine of scientific progress but, if you read only the mainstream psychiatric literature or attended their conferences, you wouldn't think so. All too often, our professors take criticism as an intense attack upon themselves and respond accordingly. They didn't read the bit in Popper where he said that "We let our hypotheses die in our stead."

I am most grateful to my publisher, Mr. Victor Volkman of L.H. Press, Ann Arbor, who patiently sorts out the many problems of committing words to paper, and to young friends I have made on my overseas trips. However, the main thanks will always go to my family who patiently endure living with the ultimate outsider.

Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia  
July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010.



**Part I:**  
**The Logic of**  
**Mental Disorder**



# 1

## ***Consciousness Unexplained: The Failure Of Dennett's Functionalism***

### **1.1: Introduction**

Over the past few years, there has been a wave of unsavory events, in which psychiatrists are alleged to have taken large sums of money in exchange for ensuring that their research produced results favorable to certain viewpoints [1, 2]. Coincidentally, those viewpoints happened to be the same as the drug companies who were sponsoring the research. Years ago [3], I predicted that psychiatry would be regularly rattled by scandals of this type. The reason was because there is no formal model of mental disorder to impose limits on the activities of practitioners and researchers. Matters have not improved in the past decade: without a scientific model, there is no coherence, so that the practice of psychiatry is driven by the strongest social forces, rather than scientific forces. At present, a gale of financial pressure drives psychiatry across a wasteland of public indifference, lit only by occasional lightning bolts of media panic. This is the case just because we have no proper models of mental disorder. Since the starting point in any scientific endeavor is a declared theory or model to limit the area of study, the absence of a declared model means the whole field of psychiatry is pre-scientific.

In my previous books, I showed that the various models used in psychiatry, since its beginnings one hundred and fifty years ago, all fail to meet the minimal criteria of what constitutes a science. They don't just fail, but not one of them can be developed to the point where it could form the basis of a general theory of mental disorder for psychiatry. This is of fundamental importance: without a formal, declared model, psychiatry can never progress beyond being mere protoscience. These days, there is no real argument that psychoanalysis and behaviorism have failed, and why they failed. Psychoanalysis showed the folly of unrestrained theorizing when the theories are not anchored to reality. In fact, the history of psychoanalysis is really quite frightening. It shows how easily an attempt to build a rational theory of mind can slide into ideology [4, 5]. Skinner's work also had that totalitarian tendency (for example, his

obsession with ‘prediction and control’ of behavior), but psychiatrists never took him as seriously as he took himself.

However, when we come to the biological approach to mental disorder, psychiatry’s mask of tolerance slips, and a rigid, uncompromising view of human life emerges. Lately, however, psychiatrists seem to have given up the pretence of being masters of their own field and have left the intellectual running, if that is what it is, to neurophysiologists. There are now very few papers published by psychiatrists on the theoretical basis of biological psychiatry. In fact, I have often said that I have published more original work on the theory of biological psychiatry than all biological psychiatrists in history combined, but all my conclusions are unfavorable. This doesn’t stop the claims, though: we are constantly told that reductionist biological science will soon deliver a full and final account of mental disorder. Mental disorder will be shown to be just a special case of brain disorder because, its supporters claim, mental events and brain events are one and the same thing [6, 7]. However, as empirical claims, these have no support and, as logical claims, they are incoherent [8].

So where does this leave us? Since psychiatry has failed to set its intellectual house in order, it is appropriate to look to other disciplines to see what they have to offer. The first and most likely candidate is philosophy, with its ancient tradition of looking closely at complex questions. If we had a formal theory of mind, surely a theory of mental disorder would flow easily from it, wouldn’t it? These days, there are really only two possibilities for the title of ‘the correct theory of mind.’ The first is a reappraisal of the ancient doctrine of dualism [9], now termed ‘natural dualism’ to distinguish it from the many forms of supernatural dualism that went before. David Chalmers’ case is that “consciousness must be taken seriously,” specifically as an ontologically separate and causally effective factor in human behavior.

On the other hand, most modern philosophers embrace one form or other of monism, the notion that mind and body are not ontologically separate but are, in some sense still to be decided, both part of the same realm, meaning the material universe. This means the universe of matter and energy, governed by the fixed laws of physics which, in turn, derive from the fundamental nature of matter. Materialism states that there is nothing in the universe beyond matter and energy and the informational states controlling them. It specifically excludes the possibility of “supernatural” control: no spirits, ghosts, demi-gods, or demons, etc. Everything has a rational explanation. Thus, materialism doesn’t exclude extraterrestrial beings; it simply says that, while they are visiting our solar system, the little green men will have to obey all the rules, and our rules are the same as theirs back home.

The significance for psychiatry is that, if the biological approach is to survive, it will have to fit in with a larger theory of mind. Fortunately, for the “chemical imbalance” partisans, there are several monist models of mind available; so all is not yet lost. In Part I, I will examine two well-known monist theories of mind to see whether they can form the basis of a biological approach to psychiatry. The first is the work of Daniel

Dennett, who holds to a form of functionalism, while the second, John Searle, advocates what he calls “biological naturalism”. Both of these theorists have been around for a long time, with Searle approaching his fiftieth anniversary at Berkeley. Over at Tufts, in Boston, Dennett has been holding the fort for only about three decades. We can assume, then, that their views have been fairly well worked and their more recent publications will most likely be their legacy. In fact, their work hasn’t changed a lot in the last quarter century and neither of them shows any sign of apostasy (recent versions of them can be seen on Youtube).

## **1.2: Dennett And Anti-Dualism: “And Then A Miracle Occurs”**

In his 1991 monograph *Consciousness Explained*, Dennett mounts a vehement case against any and all forms of dualism on the basis that they are irredeemably irrational. His interest goes back to his first year in college, when he read Descartes’ *Meditations* and was “... hooked on the mind-body problem” [10, preface]. The classic Cartesian formulation was that the mind is a real thing which interacts with the brain to control the body. Unlike the body, the mind has no shape, no form or color, no size, or even a location inside the fragile box of bones called the skull. Nobody has ever seen a mind, spirit, or soul; yet, from direct experience, everybody knows that there must be something “in there” that does the thinking, experiencing, and acting. To Descartes, it had to be a special kind of real thing, made not of bone and meat stuff but of spirit stuff, a stuff we humans have but which the lower animals don’t. However, this immediately bothered the young Dennett: “How on earth,” he asked, “could my thoughts and feelings fit in the same world with the nerve cells and molecules that made up my brain?” It seemed to him that the only conceivable way the Cartesian approach could survive was by a small miracle connecting the two realms. He scoffed at this in a cartoon on p. 38 (page references are to the 1993 Penguin edition).

He has been working on the question ever since, making “some progress” to the point where he offered this volume with its provocative title. He gives little time to other philosophers’ attempts to examine this most difficult of areas, dismissing them as yielding only “...self-contradiction, quandaries, or blank walls of mystery...” [11]. His view is that “...the various phenomena (of) consciousness... are all physical effects of the brain’s activities...” [10, p. 16]. He concedes that it is “very hard to imagine how your mind could be your brain—but not impossible.” He is, however, convinced that “...a theory of the biological mechanisms...” would resolve the “...traditional paradoxes and mysteries of consciousness...” His approach would succeed where others’ had failed because they “got off on the wrong foot.”

The first and worst wrong foot is the “forlorn” notion of dual entities, the “...hopelessly contradiction-riddled myth of the distinct, separate soul” [10, p. 430], which sees mind as one substance and the brain as another. Based in his early apprehension of the problem of Descartes’ solution, Dennett sees dualism as crude magical thinking which violates the fundamental laws of the universe, creating endless logical problems

without solving any: “Dualism, the idea that a brain cannot be a thinking thing, so a thinking thing cannot be a brain...” At different points, he rails against it (“accepting dualism is giving up”), belittles it (“I wiggle my finger by... what, wiggling my soul?”), or just mocks it (“ectoplasm, Wonder Tissue”) because it is false, incoherent, and antiscientific: “There is the lurking suspicion that the most attractive feature of mind stuff is its promise of being so mysterious that it keeps science at bay forever... if dualism is the best we can do, then we can’t understand human consciousness” [10, p. 37-9]. His preference is an unalloyed materialism: “Somehow, the brain must be the mind” (p. 41). The book is his attempt to show how that essentially counter-intuitive notion might be the case.

He has no doubt that ectoplasm or spirit stuff is very slippery. One eye must always be kept peeled for it lest it should worm its way into what seems like a brilliant new theory of mind. Sometimes, however, the problem is much more subtle than simply positing a little gremlin or homunculus inside the head. Every now and then, neurophysiological concepts are used to cloak what is, in form, just a rehash of Descartes’ non-solution. That is, it is more important to look at the form of a new theory, and not be beguiled by its content. This is especially the case where somebody uses lots of, say, neurophysiological or data-processing terms to garnish what is essentially a dualist model.

Fortunately, Dennett has an infallible test for mind stuff, the “Cartesian Theater.” If the magical spirit floating in the head is able to see and hear and feel the information being channeled to it from the outside, and to look into the memory banks and then make decisions before sending them to the various effector organs, then any hidden ectoplasm can easily be found lurking where the information flows to or a point it flows past. It’s a bit like an army: if you want to find the general, he’s likely to be hanging around whatever the troops are marching past. Conversely, if the troops are marching in review, somebody is reviewing them. In the brain, that somebody can only be a Big Boss, an Ultimate Executive, spirit, or whatever.

Thus, if the conscious contents are assembled into a stream, or flow, or river, or if they travel along a path or to a specific part of the brain where they cavort in a field or on a stage, or if they are bathed in an inner light or are illuminated or picked out in any way, then the reason is because they will be inspected by an inner eye. In turn, this inner eye must belong to an “inner man” or homunculus whom nobody can see because he/she/it has “no shape, no form or color, no size, or even location.” This is his test: the Cartesian Theater necessarily implies an Observer, and the Observer is necessarily made of magical stuff, the Ghost in the Machine. This means that any hint of the Cartesian Theater means the whole thing is non-scientific. The only solution to magical mind stuff is to get rid of all traces of the observer and of the observed, leaving only a monist theory of mind, such that consciousness can be explained “... without ever giving in to the siren song of dualism” (p. 33).

All this was published in 1991, meaning it was written in the year or two before that. That’s a long time ago, so has Dennett modified his stance

since then? In 1996, he published another book on minds, *Kinds of Minds* [11] which expands on the earlier work. *Freedom Evolves* [12], from 2003, looks at two very important issues for any monist theory of mind, the associated questions of free will and morality. Since then, and despite a bout of serious illness, he has maintained a punishing schedule of lectures and publications but has tended to pay more attention to the question of evolutionary theory.

At first, *Kinds of Minds* seems to have a limited scope, that of asking the right questions to improve our understanding of ourselves and the world. That, however, is illusory and Dennett packs some high-powered philosophizing in a small volume. As mentioned, he much prefers his version of the right questions to those asked by other philosophers, whose efforts lead only to “self-contradictions, quandaries, or blank walls of mystery.” Armed with this self-assurance, he opines: “Dualism (the view that minds are composed of some nonphysical and utterly mysterious stuff) and vitalism (the view that living things contain some special physical but equally mysterious stuff—*élan vital*) have been relegated to the trash heap of history, along with alchemy and astrology. (If you... (believe) that the world is flat and the sun is a fiery chariot pulled by winged horses...” (p. 31), then don't look to Prof. Dennett for comfort. In brief, he argues that our minds evolved from simpler minds, and that there is nothing magic or supernatural about the human mind. However, even though simpler minds are essentially robotic, it does not follow that we are robots ourselves. We have a full range of mental attributes; his task as a philosopher is to give a rational (naturalistic) account of them.

Dennett supports the view of mind called “functionalism,” the notion that a mind is defined by what it does rather than what it is made from or how it does it. Functionalism abstracts away from “some of the messy particularities of performance (to focus) on the work that is actually getting done” (p. 90). So, in theory, we could replace some of the neurons in a damaged brain with a microchip and the person would not be able to tell. Using the criterion of “what gets done,” he assembles lengthy lists of examples to show that, in less complex animals, what appears to be clever or even sentient behavior is just the predictable outcome of information processing according to well-known, natural procedures. The core of his argument is that these processes are sufficient to explain even the vastly more complex behavior of humans. While a very substantial part of the massive increase in our intellectual capacity is the result of language, which allows us to develop “auxiliary brains”, there is nothing magic or supernatural about the explanation of human behavior. Any problems we may have in explaining it arise from our crude and old-fashioned ways of thinking, especially the primitive notion of the Cartesian Theater. This construct inevitably leads to the dualist pseudo-explanation of the “thinking stuff”, Descartes' *res cogitans* or, more scathingly, ectoplasm.

By adhering to a rigid materialism, the “enduring mystery” of consciousness is rendered prosaic: “A mind looks less miraculous when one sees how it might have been put together out of parts, and how it still relies on those parts” (p. 203). Mental contents become conscious, not by

being bathed in an inner glow or scampering through a cerebral field, but by "... winning the competition against other mental contents for... the control of behavior..." and thence to memory (p. 205-6). This is facilitated if we talk to ourselves while we are active. However, some people find this counter-intuitive but they are simply prisoners of the crude Cartesian model: "What you (the reader) are... just is this organization of all the competitive activity between a host of competences that your body has developed" (p. 206; any italics in quotes are in the original). So, is the human mind different in principle from all other minds that have gone before? Yes and no. Yes, it is different in its staggering complexity and its computational scope but no, it is essentially only a very much better (and not always bigger) computational machine which relies on tried and proven processes to achieve minor miracles by quotidian means: "What makes a mind powerful—indeed, what makes a mind conscious—is not what it is made of, or how big it is, but what it can do. Can it be distracted? Can it recall earlier events? Can it keep track of several different things at once... When such questions as these are answered, we will know everything we need to know about those minds... These questions will capture everything we want to know about the concept of consciousness..." (p. 210).

But, a persistent questioner may demand of him, What about pain? Where is there room for pain, for the sheer *experience* of pain, in your model? This brings Dennett to his most contemptuous: if he stamps on your foot, he insists, you will feel only a fleeting pain which is so minor as not to warrant the label of "suffering." It would be a "risible" misuse of the term to apply it to an irritation that is no more than "...a brief, negatively-signed experience... of vanishing moral significance" (p. 220). If we look at the mind from the right point of view (naturalism) and ask the right questions (his), we will eventually get out of the old, magical way of thinking and see the mind for what it is, a virtual machine generated by the high-speed, multimodal, distributed information-processing system, which is our brain. Pain is merely the functional state which inclines you to wince and complain, nothing more.

In *Freedom Evolves* (2003), Dennett sets himself the task of answering an ancient and powerful objection to a naturalistic theory of mind, the question of free will and morality. If molecules don't have free will, and if the human brain is made of molecules, how can we humans have freedom of choice? Similarly, if we write God out of the equation, what is the source of morality? Materialism is such a mechanistic and amoral system that many right-thinking people are simply repelled by it, but Dennett disagrees vehemently. Even if the natural world is truly deterministic, he can show that humans have genuine free will from which derives a non-divine morality. But first, he scathingly dismisses dualist attempts to explain these phenomena: "...like the little green man in the control room of the man-sized puppet in the morgue in the film *Men in Black* (1997)... an immaterial portion of glowing ectoplasm that oozes around in your brain like a ghost amoeba... an angel whose wings are folded till you are

# HUMANIZING PSYCHIATRY TOWARD A HUMANE PSYCHIATRY

**NIALL MCLAREN, M.D.**

**The long-awaited final installment of the Biocognitive Model Series**

*Humanizing Psychiatrists* is the third of a series directed at developing the Biocognitive Model of Psychiatry as the replacement for the three nineteenth century models of mental disorder, psychoanalysis, behaviorism and biological psychiatry.

In this volume, the author continues to explore the logical status of theories used in psychiatry. He shows that Dennett's functionalism and Searle's biological naturalism cannot be used as the basis for a theory for biological psychiatry. He argues that phenomenology is a valuable technique but can never form a genuine theory. In addition, he shows how orthodox psychiatry uses its publishing industry to suppress criticism of itself, which is a gross breach of scientific ethics. He then shows how his Biocognitive Model of Mind can be applied to clinical practice with dramatic results.

**About the Author**

Niall McLaren, M.D. is a psychiatrist practicing in Darwin, in the far north of Australia. He has long had an interest in the philosophical and logical status of theories used in psychiatry. His work is radical in the extreme but he sees no option if psychiatry is to move beyond its present status as an ideology and finally into the realm of the sciences.

Praise for Niall McLaren's Biocognitive Model of Mind

"This book is a *tour de force*. It demonstrates a tremendous amount of erudition, intelligence and application in the writer. It advances an interesting and plausible mechanism for many forms of human distress. It is an important work that deserves to take its place among the classics in books about psychiatry."

—Robert Rich, PhD, *AnxietyAndDepression-Help.com*

"Dr. McLaren brilliantly wields the sword of philosophy to refute the modern theories of psychiatry with an analysis that is sharp and deadly. His own proposed novel theory could be the dawn of a new revolution in the medicine of mental illness."

—Andrew R. Kaufman, MD

Chief Resident of Emergency Psychiatry  
Duke University Medical Center

For more information please visit

[www.NiallMcLaren.com](http://www.NiallMcLaren.com)

ISBN 978-1-61599-060-3



9 781615 990603

