

Psychologist EXPOSES Western Elites | Dr. Niall McLaren

There is a psychological explanation for why Europe and North America is governed by kakistocratic elites. Psychiatrist Niall McLaren joins Pascal to explore how the urge to dominate shapes politics and international conflict. Drawing on his book *Narcisso-Fascism*, McLaren argues that hierarchy and entitlement help explain elite behavior, imperial expansion, and resistance to oppression. They debate individual psychology versus structural explanations, challenge assumptions about human nature, and examine propaganda, group loyalty, and Western decline. The conversation also considers democratic reform, intellectual conformity, and McLaren's distinction between socially reinforced beliefs and delusions in the clinical sense. Niall's Links: Critical Psychiatry and Narcisso-Fascism Substack: <https://www.niallmclaren.com/> Narcisso-Fascism (book): <https://www.lhpress.com/store/Narcisso-Fascism-p626958531> Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Support Neutrality Studies: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Neutrality Studies shop: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Time Stamps 00:00 Niall McLaren and Narcisso-Fascism 03:16 Dominance and the paradox of hierarchy 11:51 Entitlement, wealth, and imperial expansion 15:46 Human nature versus offensive realism 25:17 Can democratic reform restrain power? 31:53 Western decline and enemies within 44:28 Elite rivalry, group loyalty, and social delusions 53:26 Questioning orthodoxy and explaining human nature

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today again with one of my favorite individual psychologists or psychiatrists. You will actually tell me which one it is, Dr. Neil McLaren, who has a long history of actually working in the field of psychology and psychiatry. And we want to discuss a particular topic that he's been exploring. He is the author of *Narcisso-Fascism*, in which he goes into how narcissistic behavior, disorder, or whatever you want to call it, actually then influences politics. And he also now has a very enlightening Substack called *Narcisso-Fascism*, on his book and on his thesis of *Narcisso-Fascism*, in which he recently wrote an article, "Betting on Horses." And there he also mentions Glenn Diesen. And a recent talk I had with Glenn Diesen was the reason why Neil reached out and said, like, look, there's something to discuss about human nature. And that's what we want to do today. So, Neil, welcome back.

#Niall McLaren

Thank you. Yes, so I'm a psychiatrist. I'm actually retired now, fortunately. And I had a lot of military experience, a lot of experience in isolated Australia, working with Aboriginal people, cross-cultural experience in southern Thailand, and very broad... But I've always been on the critical side right

from the beginning. And that hasn't won me any friends among the psychiatrists of this planet. But that's life. You know, we cope with that. And so over the years, I've published a lot of philosophical work on critical psychiatry and pointed out that modern psychiatry is not a science. It lacks the most fundamental element of a science, that is, a model of its field of study. There is no model of mental disorder. It doesn't matter what anybody says. It doesn't exist.

And that left this big vacuum. So I've published a book called *Natural Dualism and Mental Disorder*, which introduces what is called the biocognitive model. So it's biological and cognitive. And it says that mental disorder is essentially psychological. It is not biological. But we have to take cognizance of the body because that's what we are. We are human animals. And then I thought I'd test that model, the biocognitive model, in a completely unrelated field. And I chose politics because I've always been interested in history and politics. And it's terribly important in understanding politics, human affairs, and in military psychiatry, you just can't get away from it. So I chose politics. I wanted to know, how well does the biocognitive model describe what goes on in extremist politics?

And that's led to this thesis called *Narcissofascism*. And it says that one of the most dominant elements in human behavior is the urge to dominate. One of the strongest elements of all in our behavior is this urge we all have to dominate, and we want to dominate. It is biologically very reinforcing. And the opposite side of that is that being oppressed or pushed down the dominance hierarchy is very, very, very unpleasant. People will resist it to death. So we've got this that leads to what's called the paradox of hierarchy. We have an urge to form dominance hierarchies and go up. And at the same time, we have an urge to resist being pushed down. This causes trouble straight away. It's like a car that wants to go to the right and it wants to go to the left at the same time.

It's going to cause trouble. And so the whole thing is to, you know, the whole principle behind narcissophagism is seeing where dominance hierarchies are active. And the answer is everywhere, absolutely everywhere. Practically everything we do is based around getting ourselves higher up a dominance hierarchy or making sure somebody else doesn't push us down. And it starts very young. It starts in kindergarten when children are taken out and they have their little sports day, and the parents are there clapping and cheering when little Johnny comes first and he gets a medal, and little Billy, or whatever her name is, Samantha, who didn't come first, doesn't get anything and nobody cheers for her.

And this goes through school, university, work, the workplace, everything. Politics is all about dominance—the military, police, everything we do, finance. It's all about getting up that ladder and making sure once we get up the ladder, of course, the first thing we do is push the ladder away so that nobody else can get up. And this is universal. It is biologically mediated. It is immensely powerful. And it is not understood at all.

#Pascal

And I mean, part of your work is that you apply it to the larger political developments, right? Which a lot of psychiatrists try not to do because they root their work inside the individual and not in the group. And actually, I've had on this channel other psychologists, like Matthias Desmet, who then argue that, look, there's something called mass psychology, and it's like how masses, how individuals then adjust behavior depending on how others behave and so on. And then they try to root or analyze problems that we're seeing on the political level in these kind of mass psychological phenomena. If I understand you correctly, you would say that's the wrong way to go. We need to always look at the individual and what this drive for dominance does to the individuals that then rise through the ranks, if I remember correctly.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, and my work is preliminary to his. That's what I would say. It comes before his. So he cannot understand, or we cannot understand, what drives mobs of people, groups of people, political parties, churches—you name it. Football teams, it doesn't matter. We cannot understand what drives them until we understand what drives individuals.

#Pascal

Hmm.

#Niall McLaren

And this is where I think international relations is falling down very badly. So if you go back to Durkheim, Émile Durkheim, who was called the father of sociology, he died in 1917, I think. He said that sociology cannot be reduced to psychology. He's quite emphatic about this. He wanted sociology to be a separate discipline from psychology in its own right. He did not want psychologists moving in and taking his territory. Of course, he was trying to exert his independence, make sure nobody dominated him.

#Pascal

Can you put the microphone a little bit up?

#Niall McLaren

Oh, sorry. Yes, I knocked it with my hand, I think. Okay. I tend to wave my hands.

#Pascal

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#Niall McLaren

So you have to start somewhere, and you have to start with the individual. And the individual human has got a biological basis. It's very strong. So, for example, the first and most powerful drive in humans is the social drive. We want to get together in a group. We don't like being isolated. We don't like being alone. If you want to punish somebody, you put them in solitary confinement. If you want to punish somebody permanently for life, you exile him, get him out, send him away. So it's very, very powerful. Once we're in a group, there's two urges. Number one is we don't like the other groups. So xenophobia kicks in. We have a fear of strangers. We like our familiar faces.

We don't trust. We're not comfortable with unfamiliar faces. And the more unfamiliar, the less like us they are, the more we dislike them intuitively. That goes back to childhood. Children can be trained out of this very young, that's for sure, but unfortunately that generally doesn't happen. And it's not until they become teenagers that they have to start to meet people of other races, religions, cultures, etc. By then it's a bit late for a lot of them. So there's the social drive, the xenophobic drive, and then once we form these little groups, the first thing we do in there is we form dominance hierarchies. And the urge is stronger in males.

It is mediated by testosterone, which is a very powerful anabolic hormone. It's not just a sexual hormone. It's very powerful, has many effects right throughout the body and in the brain. So it's a very real thing. And so the first thing, we want to get to the top of the hierarchy. We don't want to be down the bottom. And if anybody's getting up the ladder and then gets pushed down, they go into a grief stage. And so they will fight it. They will resist it. And humans resist oppression very, very strongly. The difference is the dominance urge doesn't last as long. Once a person gets to the top, they get lazy, they get fat, and they get comfortable. But the urge to resist being oppressed never goes away.

It's there forever, and that lasts hundreds of years. And the other thing about people going up the dominance hierarchy is, as they go, their sense of entitlement grows. And it just grows and grows and grows as they go up. And so you get a person who's close to the top of the hierarchy, they have an immense sense of entitlement. And it doesn't occur to them that they need to share. They say, "No, no, no, I've worked hard for this. You know, I've earned this." There's one of these Russian oligarchs who, you know, they're just crooks. He has eight of these gigantic private yachts, you know, these eight of them. What are you going to do with eight yachts?

#Pascal

In your view, what about the people who literally, by the definition of their position, did not earn it? Like, I'm thinking of the King of England right now. By definition, he didn't earn that position, right? He was born into it. How do you think these people rationalize themselves into believing that they earned this or deserve it?

#Niall McLaren

Well, the answer to that would be to ask his brother, Andrew, who to this day absolutely firmly believes he has rights that other humans don't have and that anybody who interferes with those rights needs to be punished. And this, you know, I think Charles probably is more sensible about, and the younger one is a complete idiot. There's no question. But, you know, Charles would say, well, you know, I'm the king, and this comes with being king, and I'm entitled to this palace and that palace and this private plane, Air Force plane, to fly me around. You know, that's part of the job. And he would feel very comfortable, I'm sure. I've never spoken to him, of course. I'm sure he feels very comfortable with what he's got. Then you look across the Atlantic and you look at Trump, who just thinks if he sees something and he likes it, he'll have it. Thank you. Well, Greenland. Oh yes, that looks nice. I think we'll have that.

#Pascal

Yeah, it's interesting also that you call it an entitlement, because that's especially what, from Donald Trump and other leading figures, we see. As in, if you don't give me Greenland, or if I can't have this, if I can't be boss of the heap, then you're taking something away from me, right? Just because you don't... Same with a lot of what we hear from Israel, right? If somebody doesn't agree that the entirety of Palestine is ours, plus, plus, plus, plus, plus, plus, all the other territories, then they're trying to rob us of what belongs to us. And that's the sense of entitlement that grows out of being on top, actually, and then wanting more and more.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah. And it's insatiable. It just grows and grows. Look at this Elon Musk. He became a trillionaire. Now he wants to have two trillion. What are you going to do? There's no end to it. This is the point. This is the crucial point. There is no end to the sense of entitlement.

#Pascal

And that sense of entitlement is then, in your interpretation, what fuels the violence behind the system, because Marxists would say it's the drive for expansionism of the capitalist system that drives colonialism and everything. And you would say, like, no, no, no, it's the psychology that drives it and that makes a capitalist a capitalist in the first place.

#Niall McLaren

Yes, but what is a capitalist system if it's not a whole lot of little capitalists sitting down, talking to each other and saying, "Let's have that. Oh, look, you know, the British capitalists, look, look at all that land there called India. What about we get that?" And so they got a little bit. They got the station in Calcutta, and they started there, the East India Company. Then they decided, "Well, we need this bit, and we need this bit." And then eventually they ended up with this gigantic empire: Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar. That's what India was. The Indian Empire was this vast, vast territory. And they just kept wanting more and more. Then they wanted Afghanistan. What are they going to do with Afghanistan? Well, they didn't want the Russians to have it, you see. But it's worse than children in a playground. The adults are worse than children.

#Pascal

And then in international relations, what this comes down to is, of course, this debate on whether it is the structure that determines the movement of the entire system or whether it is actually rooted in human nature, right? And the stupid version of this, I think, is to say, like, "Oh, humans are just naturally violent, therefore the groups we form must be violent." Mm-hmm.

#Niall McLaren

Well, yeah, that's a very complex issue. Humans have an urge to get to the top. And there's a gradation in people who can say, well, I will not use violence. I don't like violence. I think it's horrible. And I'll get to the top just by diligence and hard work. There's other people across the spectrum who say, no, no, no, I will do what I like. I will kill anybody who gets in my way in order for me to get to the top. And that's what they do. So the system is bad. The system, the larger political system, consists of individuals, and they work together. Sometimes they work together to get themselves on top, and then they might have a palace coup. So there's this constant ferment of people trying to force their way to the top and others being pushed aside. It's never static. There's a lot of feedback loops in all of this. It's a very, very complex system.

I would not like the idea of trying to reduce anything as complex as international relations to a simple formula. It's not. It's very complex. There's all sorts of factors coming in. There's religion, there's culture, there's history, there's geography. And we've got to take account of all of those. But one of the main theories in international relations, probably the most common one that we come across now, is what's called offensive realism, which says that international relations are anarchic. Therefore, countries must struggle and strive to exert local hegemony in order to protect their interests. And probably the most prominent speaker in that field would be the American—sorry—Chicago University's John Mearsheimer. And so he says, international relations are anarchic. Therefore, we must struggle. And I say, no, that's actually back to front.

#Pascal

I think he would say, therefore, the countries will struggle. Not necessarily that it's an imperative, not a moral imperative, but more of a system imperative, right?

#Niall McLaren

It's a practical imperative. Yes, if you don't want to be crushed, you must be the crusher. And as they say, offense is the best form of defense. So if you see international relations as this maelstrom of violence and greed and oppression and everything, then you're going to be ultra-defensive. And you're going to start to see your neighbor as aggressive, and you will want to get in first. It's as simple as that. Now, I say that's actually back to front. International relations are anarchic because nations strive for hegemony. Why do they strive for hegemony?

Because humans, individual humans, strive for hegemony, want to be dominant. They want to take control and to be the boss. And so it's the individuals coming together who look at their neighbour and say, "Oh yeah, we'll have that, because if we don't have it, they'll have it." As I mentioned, Afghanistan, that's just been going on forever. So I think there's a different way to look at international relations. Rather than saying the explanation stops at the level of the mass, it doesn't. The mass is only doing what the individuals do. We need a reductionist explanation, same as in physics.

#Pascal

So, and you know, within a lot of disciplines in academia, there's a big debate whether reductionism is the right way to go, or if, at certain levels, there are so-called emergent properties that then will determine that the higher-level system works inherently differently than the lower level. But this is—we cannot settle this debate—but we are within that kind of context, right? And you're going and saying, like, no, no, we need to reduce to first principles of psychology, actually, if we want to remedy the international violence.

#Niall McLaren

Yes. So you could look at the U.S. now, in fact, for the last hundred years, and you could say, well, you know, this country firmly believes it has the right to run the world. They all believe this. And I could give you hundreds of quotes of, you know, going back a long...

#Pascal

The political class, right? Not necessarily the individual little guy who struggles in a Walmart, but, you know.

#Niall McLaren

That's absolutely right. It is the, what they call the 1%, the power elite. I call them the power elite because I don't know how many there are.

#Pascal

The people who have already made it to the top, right? The ones with this entitlement feeling already. Yes.

#Niall McLaren

And they have an exaggerated sense of entitlement, and they feed on each other. This is very important. They are reinforcing each other all the time. Nobody is allowed to stand up and say, look, America doesn't have to be dominant. We do not need a Monroe Doctrine. We can get by perfectly well without one. And it's like Japan, Japan pre-Second World War. If anybody had stood up and said, we do not need an empire in China, we can be wealthy without it, he would have been dragged out and kicked to death.

#Pascal

Yeah, we know that. I mean, they were assassinated in the 1930s, the big assassination campaign from militarists and unsubordinated officers, including a prime minister who had to hide in a cupboard and a very prominent finance minister who was murdered in his house. So, I mean, we know that. Yeah.

#Niall McLaren

So you have this half-witted Jacob Rees-Mogg in England, who really is the epitome of everything that Australians hate about the English. I was brought up hating the English, so that's fine. I don't mind. And he said, you know, we've got this entitlement, and we've got to get ready to fight a war against Russia, and everybody should be prepared to sacrifice themselves for the greater glory of England. It was some nonsense he was going on with. And nobody is able to stand up and say to him, "You're a moron. Have you forgotten your history? Did you ever know any history?" The answer is no. The only thing we learn is that people don't learn.

#Pascal

Why is it then that these people psychologically can take themselves out of the duty of implementing that, which is something that I have a lot of difficulty understanding? The people who call the loudest for war with Russia are those who would never, ever, not even close, go to one of these battlefields. They will always send others, and they will find all of these reasons why they have to. And it's very similar to the ecology debate, where people who make all of these rules, oh, by the way, CO2, carbon emissions, very bad.

If you want to fly around in economy class, you have to pay more in order to plant trees. And those are the people who fly with an airplane from Brussels to Berlin instead of taking the train. But they exempt themselves from all of these obligations that they want to put on others. And the ultimate obligation is, of course, the obligation to give up your life for fighting for your country, and they will never do that. But then they will be remembered as the Winston Churchill, great leader, right? Why? And why does that work?

#Niall McLaren

Well, this is what I mentioned about the sense of entitlement. They can always justify what they want to do, and they can say, "Well, I'm terribly important, so I've got to go to Berlin. I can't do it by Zoom. I have to go and see my friends." And they will justify it, and people do. But really, it's just self-interest. It's naked self-interest. And they can talk quickly, and they fool people into thinking, "Well, he's sacrificing, a very noble person, sacrificing himself." In fact, he's not. He's in it for himself. This is the trouble.

#Pascal

It is the trouble. But, you know, what I find fascinating about this explanation is that if we take that kind of approach, then we might be able to formulate policies to mitigate the worst. In our last discussion, you were the one who said, like out of the blue, when I asked you about something to do against, you know, this tendency of the scum to swim to the top—you know, the most ruthless and so on—they all end up in the same circle, for instance, in parliament. And then you had the idea, well, how about we just put 50% of parliament—50% are just randomly selected people by lottery—in order to break that kind of, you know, that sociology of the scum swimming to the top. And something like this would be very, very innovative as an additional pillar to democracy, let's say traditional democracy, to say, like, well, we need to randomize stuff. What other kind of remedies can you think about to remedy this situation that the most violent seem to make it to positions of power?

#Niall McLaren

Well, the trouble at the moment is the concept of the neoliberal economy. And so the people who hold power built an economic system that will reinforce their power. And we have to break that. We've got to get rid of that. And so they have got this wonderful propaganda machine going which says—screams out—"Socialist!" You know, "Communist!" I mean, they've resurrected that. In July, the U.S. State Department cranked out this hundred-page report on Cuba as a nest of communist vipers trying to overturn the U.S. government. This is just lies. Did you see that report?

#Pascal

I would never read that thing, but it's this kind of, I think, another phenomenon, which is projection, right? When you are obviously in the business, in the game of trying to stifle and change the government of Cuba with brute force, you are then accusing them of trying to do that to you. And it's like, it's just an insane version of kind of projecting yourself. And we see the West doing that time and time again right now.

#Niall McLaren

Nonstop, nonstop. We've got to get ready to attack Russia because Russians want to attack us. No, they don't. All the Russians want from Europe is, stop threatening us. That is all they want. Leave us alone. We've got this gigantic country, 17 million square kilometers, we've got to look after and develop. And, you know, this huge country, we've got pockets of poverty. We've got to fix all that. Just bugger off and leave us alone. And the West, Europe can't. They want to dominate Russia. This goes back forever. They just want to dominate. Queen Victoria—I mean, the Tsar was, Nicholas II was one of her grandchildren—and she hated the Russians. Winston Churchill, you mentioned. Churchill loathed the Russians. And that's all there is to it. He just couldn't stand them. And that's never changed. And they want to dominate them. They can't stand the idea of this huge country with a large population of very cultured, intelligent people who won't do as they're told.

#Pascal

How far does this interpretation of yours then go when it comes to other cultures? Because, for instance, I've met several Chinese colleagues who make arguments about China being a civilizational state and them not having this same drive of dominance as the West. All they want to do is to develop and then leave it at that. So they kind of contradict Mearsheimer from the other side, saying, like, look, what you're doing is you're putting the Western neoliberal framework on the whole of humanity. But actually, humanity has different categories, and we are in a different category. We don't try to dominate. Do you buy that, or do you think this is just an underdog making its way slowly up the ladder?

#Niall McLaren

I think China was so big that they knew that this is all we can do. We don't need to deal with them. They're inferior. They're sort of barbarians. And the Japanese have got this very badly too. We don't need any more. We can just deal with what we've got. And I think that's carried through. But the Chinese fear of chaos is so intense that it overrides the need to dominate. Maybe one day they'll say, "We're going to take control of the world so that there is no chaos." I don't know. I don't think so. I really don't think they particularly like Europeans. They think Europeans are rather horrible people, which is true, no question. You know, you look at Europe's history, white people's history, it's absolutely appalling. And I think the Chinese are saying, well, you know, if we just sit here and keep quiet, then we're not like them. And that is their sense of dominance.

#Pascal

Ah, the essence of dominance can also manifest itself not in trying to control everything, but in trying to be different and being better. Better in the sense of not being like that.

#Niall McLaren

Yes, absolutely. It takes many forms. You know, a person could say... a person wants to collect stamps, he becomes dominant in his field, his little field. As long as everybody leaves him alone, he's happy collecting his stamps and having his perfect stamp set. Yes, it takes many forms, but the form we have to deal with is the form that is taking control of politics and commerce and finance throughout the world. And that's where we've got to work.

#Pascal

If we look at how world politics moves at the moment, it seems to me that unless something happens that escapes my analysis, the Western model of doing things, of doing world politics, is actually running into several walls right now. It's running into the Russian wall, into the Iranian wall, into its own internal walls, the contradictions that it still portrays. The United States portrays itself as it was at the pinnacle of its power, you know, where it was in 1950, '56 or '60, when in fact it's 2026. And, you know, a lot of the industrial capacity has already decayed and it's gone and so on. But the mentality has not caught up with that. Now, when that happens, when this drive to dominate runs into these walls, these insurmountable walls, what does this do to those affected by it, like the Donald Trumps and the like and the neocons and the like? I mean...

#Niall McLaren

You would expect them to redouble their efforts. That's what humans do. If we're trying something and it doesn't work, we will do it twice as hard. Then if it still fails, we'll blame other people and attack them. And then when that fails, which is where we're at now, then I think we're going to start to see countries fall apart. So Britain is declining, has been declining since the First World War. And they've lost all of their colonies. They extracted something of the order of \$43 trillion in modern currency from their Indian Empire. \$43 trillion. And without that, they can't function. They're falling further and further down all the time. They talk about it, you know, we've got to attack Russia. We're going to be at war with Russia. They're fools, complete fools. They don't have any military of any standing. It doesn't exist. So they're, you know, they're just going to crumble and fall apart.

#Pascal

I mean, the danger that I see, of course, is that, yes, the Brits might not have it on their own, but this is an all-of-European kind of project by now. The Russophobia and the coordination. Also, if you

look at the sanctions question, I mean, this is like Britain is part and parcel of a larger whole. And it seems to me that, you know, the political West, as Richard Sakwa calls it, is in that crisis together because it's a system that works together. I look at it as kind of one body, and even when it comes to stuff like Israel, it's kind of, you know, it works together as a unit, and these different elites then among themselves also exchange as part and parcel of the same club. But that whole thing now seems to have exhausted itself. And will that then lead to, you know, a turn inward and the violence then that doesn't have output outwards anymore being directed toward the inside?

#Niall McLaren

That's what I would expect. And that, once it becomes clear to them that they cannot just order the world to do as they want. And the Iranians, you know, they need a medal, a national medal, for being the people to put their hands up and say, "Stop, stop." And they've done it, or they're doing it. And so the violence will turn in, because the next phase is always to find an internal enemy. This is absolutely central to fascism. They must have an internal enemy. At the moment, the Americans have got migrants. They've run out of communists, but they're picking on migrants. So they try and expel them, which means that their agriculture starts to collapse, their building industry starts to collapse, and all of these things. So you see the clay feet, the statue that had a head of gold and clay feet.

Their clay feet are starting to fall apart. And this will happen. German industry is struggling. They can't make it anymore. Volkswagen is putting off 50,000 workers, something like that, some gigantic number of workers. The British car industry is essentially dead. They cannot make any major industrial project work. Their Hinkley Point is decades behind and, you know, about three times over cost. HS2, that's their high-speed railway. They just, it doesn't work. So the entire neoliberal model, colonial mentality model, is collapsing. And, you know, we live in very, very interesting times. I wish we didn't. But I really think that what we're going to be seeing over the next 20 years is the spreading chaos. It's going to happen.

#Pascal

But then chaos actually based upon still this domination drive of the leadership. But do you think that this will be a conscious process? Or is it that the people who then take these decisions, are they not aware of the ramifications of what they are doing?

#Niall McLaren

No, no, they are utterly insightful, utterly insightful.

#Pascal

The other question always on my mind is, do these people believe the crap that they're saying? About Ukraine about to win the great victory and Russia about to collapse, the Russians fighting with shovels, or Israel just defending itself and the genocide just being Hamas hiding behind civilians. I mean, do they believe all of that stuff? Or are they aware that those are just dumb lies, like talking points, in order to justify whatever the real agenda is that you're trying to implement?

#Niall McLaren

That's correct. Right. So, no, they don't believe their shit at all. Excuse the language, but they don't believe that. Their real agenda is to dominate at any cost, at any price. It doesn't matter. Israel doesn't care. And this is not just the political class in Israel. This is practically the entire population. They don't care about how many Palestinians they kill, how many Palestinian houses or Lebanese houses they bulldoze. In fact, the more they bulldoze, the better. They don't care. And so they will say, "Oh, you're not allowed to criticize us. That's anti-Semitism." But they don't believe. None of them believe that. They know damn well it's got nothing to do with that at all. It's just an excuse.

#Pascal

How do people live, though, with this cognitive dissonance? Like, if you know you're lying in order to get your way, I mean, how do they reconcile themselves?

#Niall McLaren

Your problem is, you're an honest person.

#Pascal

Maybe. So these dishonest people have no problem with, like, lying to the face of others.

#Niall McLaren

No, couldn't care less. They're like Trump. Trump stood in public at one of his rallies and said, "I don't pay tax, and that proves I'm smart." Yeah. And their attitude is, if we fool the general public, that proves that we're so clever and they're so stupid, and they deserve to be fooled, and we deserve to be in charge. That's their attitude.

#Pascal

The government of the wicked, who don't care about being wicked, or who see it as a badge of honor to be able to do that.

#Niall McLaren

A lot of them do. They say, well, you know, I fooled these people. They really do get a kick out of it. They say, I'm smarter than them. I fooled them. They don't realize that they didn't fool them at all. They just broke the rules. And it doesn't take any brains to break the rules.

#Pascal

I had this fascinating talk, you know, the weekend before last. I was in Istanbul at the East-West Forum. And on the panel that I chaired, there was a young Palestinian intellectual who told the story of him actually having had the chance two years ago, or a little bit more, to talk to a top EU official. He wouldn't tell us the name, but he said he was a top guy in the top ranks, and that he prepared for that discussion for weeks because he thought if he can convince this person of what's actually happening on the ground, then they might be able to do something against it. And he got even much more desperate than he was before when he realized, after meeting that person.

That person told him, look, what the Israelis are doing with you is a genocide. I mean, look at these pictures before and after. We know that they are implementing mass executions and whatnot. That's what the official said, and said, look, I feel very strongly for you. And the moment he left the room, he completely changed his tune. Like, the political speech versus the real speech in the background are two opposite points. And I'm almost certain that was Borrell. Almost certain it must have been him. He wouldn't have told me, but you know that people actually then live with the fact that they're basically in a construct of lies, but they need to do it in order to remain on top. And is that part and parcel of then this sociology and psychology of power?

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, it is. It's the psychology of power. You put your finger right on it, and the psychology of dominance, because it is so rewarding. Being at the top feels so good that it doesn't matter what they have to do to get there. And that's all. I mean, you can look at the Nazis planning their invasion of the Soviet Union. They planned to kill 30 million people in the first year. That was their plan.

#Pascal

Holy Jesus.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, that was their plan. And their justification was, "We are superior people, and they are inferior, and their role in life is to serve us better. They're Slavs. We're Aryans. Their role in life is to serve us." That's it. And so they, you know, but they know damn well they can't stand up in public and say that. So they just spread all this other stuff around, just spreading lies. But yeah, so do these people know? Does Jared Kushner know that he is egregiously dishonest? Does he know? No, of course he

knows. He knows perfectly well that you should not be conducting private business to the tune of billions of dollars with the Saudis when you're negotiating with somebody, wherever he was negotiating. And he knows perfectly well that he should not be doing it. But his answer would be, "Well, I'm a very intelligent, well-connected person, and if I can do this, that proves I'm better." And therefore, he feels justified.

#Pascal

I mean, what about these people? And how about this network effect? You know that they are each also enemies to each other, right? And I think you see that quite clearly also in the EU with Ursula von der Leyen and Kaja Kallas. I mean, they all must distrust each other. And how does that then affect this constant competition, even at the top of the competition, that you must remain on top of the heap? How does that then influence how you interact with the outside world?

#Niall McLaren

Because they're fighting each other, but the moment somebody outside their little group—and this is where the xenophobia comes in—the moment somebody outside their little group says, "Hey, what are you people doing?" they gang up. They link arms, and they present a united front, and they all do that. So you can have two football teams who absolutely loathe each other, and they can barely be stopped from bashing each other on the field. But if somebody says, "We're going to bulldoze that football stadium and put up housing for old people," they will join hands and fight them.

#Pascal

Okay, common enemy. Okay, nothing surprising there. But in that case, the worst thing that Russia or China could do is just to leave them alone, because then they would be each other's wolves again. I don't think they can. I mean, if there was no enemy, if there was no common enemy, maybe the Europeans would start taking each other down again.

#Niall McLaren

Yes, I think so. My feeling is that everybody in the world, you know, the 90% of the world who are not America and not Europe, should just cut them off. Just completely cut them off, cut them out. And they can do what they like, but somewhere else. And then the rest of the world will, we hope, learn from that and try and build some sort of stable international system. It's not very promising.

#Pascal

No, no. But I mean, if I interpret Vladimir Putin's speech in Valdai recently correctly, then he basically said that. I mean, we don't even need to fight them. They're taking themselves down. And we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We already have a pretty good order, which is the United

Nations. The job is to make it work. I mean, also this kind of, okay, if we could just wind down the Ukraine war and build a big fat wall and just let the Europeans rot on the other side, that would also take care of the whole affair.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah. I think Mr. Putin has to stand up and say to the U.S. and to Europe, "Stop threatening us, because you need us more than we need you." And they do.

#Pascal

They just haven't realized it. I mean, they could starve in the EU, and they would rather do that than accept grain from Russia. I mean, we're on that level. I mean, that's what we are already doing with energy. Does your model have an explanation for what some people would call a mass psychosis, when entire groups of people run into an obvious knife that's in front of them?

#Niall McLaren

Well, look at Israel. The notion that God gave us this gigantic swathe of land from the Nile to the Euphrates, and up into Turkey and down halfway through Saudi Arabia—that that's ours. They all believe this. Even atheist Israelis believe that they have this entitlement. And that's because none of them are prepared to stand up in public and say, "This is ridiculous. We cannot push 150 million people off their traditional land just because we've got some primitive notion from two and a half thousand years ago." So that, in a sense, it's a sort of mass delusion, except it's not a delusion in the strict medical sense because they choose to believe it. And they choose to believe it because it feels so damned good.

#Pascal

A medical delusion would be one that you don't choose to believe.

#Niall McLaren

You have no control. So a social delusion is a completely wacky belief that everybody believes. They like it, and they believe it because it feels so good. So the British genuinely believed they were the superior race. And, you know, they're the most miserable people. I've been to England.

#Pascal

Yeah, you don't like them very much.

#Niall McLaren

Well, I didn't meet very many English people. We went to Scotland, and we only met Poles and Germans and Japanese, and they were lovely. But I didn't get to practice my Scottish accent. But anyway.

#Pascal

But in this sense, it's not a chosen belief, right? In this sense, also with Israel, I mean, if you were born and brought up in the belief that you are entitled to this land, then in a sense, it's not chosen, right? You have no choice but to actually agree to that because that's all you've ever known.

#Niall McLaren

They are brainwashed, and this is why they have universal conscription as far as they can, because the army, the Israeli army, conducts what they call education, but is in fact brainwashing. And it is very, very well organized, very successful. And, you know, an 18-year-old conscript is not going to stand up and say to the captain, "Look, sir, this is complete rubbish." They're just not going to say it. And if he wants to keep any friends, he has to join the group. If you don't, you are ostracized. And as I said right at the beginning, the fear of isolation is very, very powerful. Ask me. I know. I am totally isolated within the psychiatric community.

Almost totally, and have been since almost day one in psychiatry, because I came into psychiatry from neurosurgery. I was going to do neurosurgery, so I'd been studying that and then realized, no, actually, this is what I want. They gave me a term of psychiatry just to fill in, and I realized that's what I want. That's what I've always wanted, is people. And so I came into psychiatry, and then the professor's sitting there talking about brain enzymes and genes and neurotransmitters. I said, "Excuse me, sir, that's actually wrong. What you're saying is wrong." Well, that was it. Don't tell the professor he's wrong. And so my career suffered as a result.

#Pascal

Especially in professions that, you know, believe in their own jargon, or live in their own jargon—not believe, but live in it, as in, you know, this is all you know. And we see this in many fields, actually, how then the jargon gets crustier and crustier, and then people go into minute little details. But if you start questioning the fundamentals, then they must get rid of you.

#Niall McLaren

They will expel you. They will expel you. You will be extruded.

#Pascal

I do think, you know, in international relations, we have a lot of bullshit terms that I personally don't think do much. I mean, my favorite is, for very selfish reasons, that I kind of oppose the idea of balancing and hedging, because those are just, like, ways to explain away, like, neutral behavior, which I, for selfish reasons, kind of try to say, like, look, this is actually what explains what these states are doing. But they are very encrusted. They are very deep in there. They are only about 60, 70 years old, those terms, but they are fundamental to a lot of research in the field.

#Niall McLaren

Yes, and that's true in psychiatry. My research very early showed that there is no model of mental disorder. You try getting that published. Very, very difficult to get that published. And these are supposed to be educated people who are prepared to be self-critical. No, they're not.

#Pascal

Yes, although being self-critical, we must also accept it's theoretically possible that we are the crazy nuts. They got it right. How would you check? How do we check if we are the nuts?

#Niall McLaren

You just put your material out in public. You put it out there and you say to people, criticize it if you can. Right. So, you know, I say to Professor Mearsheimer, the concept that international relations are anarchic is incomplete. You must now explain why they're anarchic. And so to Professor Deason, who invoked human nature, I said, you must explain what human nature means. What is it? You can't use that to stop further discussion. What we call a gobstopper.

#Pascal

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, because this human nature, the term human nature, is why we discussed today in the first place. And so your appeal here would be to say—not appeal, sorry—what you want to get across is that if we discuss human nature, we should actually understand human nature as rooted in psychology and then look at the psychological drivers, right?

#Niall McLaren

Yes. Yeah, that's right. So we've got to go—you've got to keep going down, down, down to the fundamental explanation. And the biocognitive model—that's my model—says the mind is an emergent phenomenon, but it is bound by biological constraints. And one of the most powerful constraints is this urge to be dominant. That is so powerful because it's immensely rewarding. It's immensely, as the psychologists say, reinforcing.

#Pascal

Is it a biological process that is ultimately responsible for that, like testosterone or something?

#Niall McLaren

Yes, it is, because that's been known for a long time. If you go up the hierarchy, your testosterone level rises, you feel good. If you are pushed down it, within an hour, it's dropping and you feel bad. And if you go back up again, your level goes up and you feel good. And this is, you know, we can do this if we had a...

#Pascal

Just out of pure curiosity, if we had the ability to give every single decision-maker in positions of power one single substance, like into their arm, what would you give them in order to drive it down?

#Niall McLaren

Testosterone blocker.

#Pascal

Testosterone blocker. You put that into Ursula von der Leyen, into Donald Trump, into all of these people, and suddenly they will go like, "Maybe we should talk to Russia?"

#Niall McLaren

No, they would say, "I can't be bothered with this. If they want it, they can have it." I don't think they would go over and be friendly, but they wouldn't be antagonistic. I think they would just lose interest. Trump is driven by the urge to dominate. So is Rubio, Hegseth, or Starmer in England. Merz, I don't know about Merz. I don't know what he's driven by. Such an unfortunate fellow. But anyway, you go back in time to Göring. Hermann Göring made no secret of the fact that he wanted to dominate everybody. He was very good at it. Mussolini, Modi in India. I don't think Xi Jinping is driven by the urge to be personally dominant, but I think he is driven by a very strong urge to make sure nobody dominates China. And I think that's much more beneficial. Trump just wants—yeah, he just wants to be sitting on top of a pile of gold. That's all.

#Pascal

But, you know, I like this concrete answer: testosterone blocker. I mean, I like that big stick. We could start talking to the pharmaceutical industry and see if they wanted to roll out a program to give a bit of testosterone blocker to anyone in a position of power.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, just put it in the water supply.

#Pascal

Yes, yes, only theirs. Like, you know, the high-class Fiji water that they all drink.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, that's right. It goes into the Fiji water, I think you said, and Perrier and the, what's the, Pellegrino and the Russian one. You know, they've got the Russian equivalent of Pellegrino.

#Pascal

Yeah, yeah, the salty one, yeah. Good, good. We got one step further. That's very nice. It's a very nice conclusion, Neil. I like advancing. Next time I will ask you about the hard problem of consciousness research, if we should root consciousness as well in individual psychology, but that's for another day. Neil, anything we haven't mentioned? Yeah, lots. Please tell us the one thing that you would still like to mention, and then tell us also where people can find your work. I mean, of course, it's in the Substack, but tell us where.

#Niall McLaren

Well, yeah, that one, that's the Narcissofascism file. I've also got the Critical Psychiatry file that comes out on Tuesdays, and the other one on Thursdays. And the books are available at bookshop.org and on Amazon. This one is readily available online. They're fairly cheap. We try and keep them cheap. And I'm available. I do answer emails where possible, and I check the comments on my Substacks and respond to them where possible. So, what could we talk about next time? I think it would be interesting to talk about this concept of, you said, the mass psychosis, the mass delusion, the British delusion that they were the dominant race, the French delusion that they're the only people with culture, the American delusion that they have the right to run the world, and so on. But really, it's maybe there's a basic delusion to it all, which comes from this xenophobia that we're better than them. Doesn't matter where you go, you run into that. We are better than them. The street gangs, they all want to be better than them.

#Pascal

Although there is also another phenomenon, which is like people who put themselves lower in the hierarchy than others. I have examples of that, or anecdotes about that. But again, that's a discussion for next time. Otherwise, you would run out of things to talk about. I would like to thank you very much for your time, and see you next time.

#Niall McLaren

It's my pleasure. Thank you.