

Psychiatrist EXPOSES the Sickness of Collective West Leadership | Niall McLaren

What if the world at the moment seems insane because the people running its conflicts are in fact clinically psychotic? This is what I discuss today with the retired psychiatrist Dr. Niall McLaren. We talk about his biocognitive model and how a craving for dominance dictates the actions of modern empires. His book, *Narcisso-Fascism*, explains why nations act like playground bullies and why we keep electing narcissists who love the rush of power. It is a deep dive into the testosterone economy and the biological reasons why peace is so hard to find in a world obsessed with being number one.

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Timestamps: 00:00:00 The biocognitive model of politics 00:03:14 The testosterone economy and dominance 00:07:22 Psychology versus offensive realism 00:14:10 American psyche and the colonial mindset 00:21:30 How hierarchies attract the wrong people 00:28:00 Treating the narcissism of a nation 00:36:50 The fatal flaw of human competition 00:51:30 Replacing elections with random lotteries 00:54:30 Setting limits on global power struggles

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. Today we're joined for the second time by Dr. Neil McLaren, a retired psychiatrist with an extensive publishing record in the field of critical psychiatry and the application of the philosophy of science to psychiatry. Neil, welcome back.

#Niall McLaren

Good morning. How are you?

#Pascal

Very good. And I'm very glad you reached out to me again, because you reacted to one of the videos I put out the other day—and you complained about it. I thought that was very interesting, so I wanted to have you back. Can you maybe tell us first a little bit about yourself? Why is a psychiatrist so interested in world politics? And then take it from there.

#Niall McLaren

Well, there's always that saying that you may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you. We just can't escape it. My background is in psychiatry, and a lot of that work was in the north of Australia, in remote areas. I've always had an interest in the philosophy of psychiatry, and one of the important things about the field is that it doesn't have a clear model of mental disorder. People are often astounded when they hear that—but it doesn't. So I actually wrote one, called the Biocognitive Model, and I thought I'd test it in a completely separate field to see how generally it applies. And I just thought, well, you know, politics—why not? That's a good field. And I think it applies very well.

But out of that came the book I titled **Narciso-Fascism**, because it's about the psychopathology of right-wing extremism—which I have sitting here on my desk. That's the one. And that's a 1930s Italian fascist poster we used—very elegant art deco—and it fits very well. So, taking the psychological point of view allows us to see political turmoil in a different light, because the biocognitive model says that humans are very competitive animals. It starts very basic and builds up. We've got the basic drives to stay alive—eating, drinking, breathing, shelter, that sort of thing. Once those are out of the way, we have four essentially optional drives. We're social animals. We can turn these drives on and off. We're social, we're very territorial, and we're xenophobic.

We fear strangers, and we form dominance hierarchies. So once you've got those four drives in place, that's the recipe for tribalism. Once they're operating, tribes will emerge—that's how we get tribes. I've put a lot of emphasis on this question of dominance: that humans, especially males, like to dominate. And there's a very powerful biological reason for this. The reason is that being dominant stimulates testosterone production. Testosterone, as you probably know, is a feel-good hormone—it feels great. People love it. So we do all sorts of things that stimulate a surge of testosterone, and 95 to 98 percent of them have nothing to do with sexuality at all. It's all about dominance. That's why people go to football matches and scream and shout and, you know, wave noisy things and wear silly hats—because it gives them a surge.

And after the match, one side wins and one side loses. The side that wins gets a further surge. It's not just the players—it's the audience. That's why they go. Then they'll go out and party that night and have a good time. Somewhere along the line, they might pick up a sexual partner, if they're lucky. But most of them don't care. The side that loses, their testosterone levels plummet. They go home and hide. They don't party. And this is across the board. This testosterone economy is the basis of human competitiveness. It doesn't matter which area of human life you look at—we're competitive. Look at schools.

It starts in kindergartens. Schools are very competitive. Sport—I mean, that's what sport is. Academia is incredibly competitive. Business, the military—oh my God, you know. And so we like to form hierarchies, and the higher we go up the hierarchy, the better we feel, and the more we feel we're entitled to what we get. We have this expanding sense of privilege and entitlement. It's a bit like Parkinson's rule—you know, the amount of work will expand to fill the available time. Well, there'

s a similar law, which I haven't given a name yet: the higher you are up the hierarchy, your sense of entitlement and privilege will expand until it reaches a limit, until it hits a firm limit. And this is universal. As people go up the hierarchy, they fight to get up it, and as they go up, their sense of entitlement and privilege expands.

And there's no better example of this than Mr. Trump. His sense of entitlement now is global. He believes he can do what he likes, anywhere, to anybody, for any reason, without recrimination. That's the position we've reached. And he's only one—there are lots. All politicians are the same. So this is incredibly important, and it tells us what's going on in the world. If you look at international relations—and I'd really rather not have to—but again, they're looking at us. We try to make sense of what goes on between nations. You have different schools of thought, and one of the most prominent at the moment is the school called Offensive Realism, whose main exponent, I suppose, is John Mearsheimer. I think he's in Chicago, isn't he? Yeah, somewhere around there. And he says his basic principle is that international relations are anarchic.

It's chaotic. Therefore, nations must struggle to exert hegemony—local hegemony—to protect their interests. Now, the biocognitive model says that's actually back to front. The biocognitive model says international relations are anarchic and chaotic because nations are struggling to gain dominance. Why do nations struggle to gain dominance when common sense says, "Be satisfied with what you've got"? Because humans want to be dominant. All humans like to be dominant—it feels better. And this is a different way of looking at international relations: it's the constant struggle to gain dominance that's creating anarchy. Therefore, if we can rein in this brawl—this constant, almost universal brawl to gain dominance—somehow rein it in, we may be able to live reasonably peacefully.

#Pascal

May I just add one thing? Because I believe there's one point about Mearsheimer. I don't think he says states must strive for dominance—I think he says they will, as in, that's just what they do. So if that's what they do, then everyone else adjusts to that, and the logical thing to do is X. So I don't think there's an inherent incompatibility between what you're saying and Mearsheimer. But we can go there, I mean—please. Yeah, yeah.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, much of a muchness. But I'm saying that this is the drive. Now, he doesn't offer an explanation as to why international relations are chaotic. I say it's chaotic because of the human drive for dominance. And you could say, well, that's okay, we just let somebody be dominant and we'll live in peace. No, because the other side of the dominance drive is our abhorrence of being oppressed. So that's the paradox—what I call the paradox of hierarchy. We have two drives built into us: one is the drive to be dominant, and the other is the drive to avoid being oppressed and subjugated. And this just produces chaos.

So wherever you look in the world today, you don't look at it from the point of view of which country is in the right, which country's got history on its side, which country's got God on its side, or—I don't know—rock and roll on its side, anything like that. You look at which group of people is trying to dominate another group. And it always becomes clear. This is what goes on all the time: one group decides, "We're going to dominate those people there," and they just keep at it until one of them wins and the other loses. We can see this happening all around the world. So Trump says, "I want Greenland. I just want it." Why do you want it?

Well, I think we should have it. It looks better. I don't want that silly European flag. This is part of the Western Hemisphere—you should have an American flag on it. That's the only thing; it's got nothing else. He knows—well, he probably doesn't know—but his military know perfectly well they don't need Greenland. They've got bases there; they just put another one there. They've closed eighteen bases since the end of the Cold War, and they used to have about twenty-seven, I think, something like that. So he just says, "I think we'll have Panama. We'll have the Panama Canal, thanks very much. Just hand it over. And what about Cuba? Yeah, we'll have Cuba and Venezuela."

Don't worry. Give us that. He's just walking around with a grab bag saying, "I want that, I want that, I want that." And the people on the other side don't say no—"No, you can't. You can't do that because we don't like it, and we will fight you." And that's what goes on all the time. At the moment, we've got chaos in Ukraine, and we've got chaos in the Middle East. In each case, it's one group saying, "We are going to force you to do as we tell you," and the other group saying, "No, no, thank you. We're not going to do it. We will fight you to the death, because being alive and oppressed is not worth it. It's not worth living." So—sorry.

#Pascal

This is a very old question in international relations: is the chaos—or the drive toward chaos—embedded in human nature, or is it embedded in the systems that humans build? On the one hand, this is an old one, right? Thomas Hobbes talks about the Leviathan and about violence in the streets. And then we come up—we clever apes—with ideas about how to structure society in order to manage that, right? At the local level, we've managed to do that. We invented really great ideas like the separation of powers, the balance between creating systems that check each other, and the concentration of power within the state so that not everybody can exercise it. So this is very refined, and we've managed to curb these kinds of violent tendencies on the local and national levels. But on the international level, it all breaks down. We don't have those mechanisms. Yet you would still look for it—not in the system—but in the inherent psychology of the individual.

#Niall McLaren

Yes, because we've grown up—now we've got nations. We've moved from families to tribes, to little nations, and now to big nations and alliances. And people just want to think, "Nobody can tell me what to do." In particular, there's one nation on Earth that says, "We are in charge. You do as we

say because we're perfect." And the rest of the world is saying, "No, thank you." That's all. And they're right to say that 3% of the world's population can't tell the other 97% what to do. But this is now built into the American psyche: "We are number one. We are the most powerful, the most perfect, the most democratic."

We're the shining light on the hill, God's gift to humanity—blah, blah, blah. And they believe this. They really do. Now, if you come here—I can't show you outside the window—but I think we've got a pretty good place here. And honestly, I'd rather nobody else knew about it. The best thing would be if the world just stayed away from our corner, because we've got a pretty good setup. But Americans don't think like that. They think they can go anywhere, anytime, and do whatever they like—and everybody must bow and scrape and touch their forehead and say, "Yes, master." It's built into them.

#Pascal

And, I mean, I would defend the Americans and say that a large part of them actually just like being at home and having their own backyard to themselves. I mean, they even say so. The MAGA base are actually the ones who say, "We just don't want all of these pesky points," right? But why is it then that this psychology—or psychopathy—of some of these leaders starts to produce exactly the stuff that a large part of the population wouldn't want? I mean, it's the same in Europe, right? Going and helping to bomb countries in West Asia, and then all these migrants come to Europe, and you go, like, who can blame them?

#Niall McLaren

Well, if you bomb their houses, they'll probably move, right?

#Pascal

But can you talk about that a little bit?

#Niall McLaren

I think there are a whole lot of factors, and you'd need to do a very extensive sociological survey of the U.S. But point number one is that the average American—there are 330 million of them—the great majority know nothing about the rest of the world. And they don't care. They think, "We've got a great country here, this is fantastic, we've got the best education and health system in the world," blah, blah, blah. They don't know anything, and they're quite happy like that. So a lot of them—a huge number—are completely fooled by the propaganda.

They just believe it. They stand there every morning and do their pledge of allegiance, or whatever it is. Australians would die of embarrassment if we had to do that. You go to the U.S. and see flags

everywhere. What are these stupid flags? How ridiculous. What do you want a flag for? It's just built into them, and that's it. Glenn Greenwald said we get this from the moment we're born—that we're the best, we're the greatest, everybody else owes us in the world, blah, blah, blah. We don't have any of that, and we're quite comfortable. But anyway, there's that factor.

And they don't know what's going on overseas, and they don't care, because it doesn't impinge on their lives. They really don't care what the government gets up to abroad, as long as it doesn't affect them. Well, of course, now it is affecting them, and there's going to be a lot of trouble. Mr. Trump will find out. So I think there's that factor built into it. The British had the same attitude. And the French—well, all the Europeans had this attitude: "We can do what we like because we're so superior, we're so fantastic. And you—you know, you natives, you wogs, all of you colonial junk—you just do as we tell you."

#Pascal

That's the approach, and that's the colonial mindset of the last 500 years, and it's absolutely horrendous. But what then happens, like on a psychological level, when that hits a wall—a brick wall—and maybe now the brick wall is here? We can see how it didn't work with Ukraine and Russia, and it seems to be failing with Iran. And what happens then? I mean, because this is the first time in 500 years that these white European colonizers, genociders, and exterminators are not able to do that anymore. What then happens?

#Niall McLaren

Well, it's going to... I think the US is heading for trouble—serious trouble. I mean, Britain's in decline. Western Europe is already in decline. Britain's collapsing, which is long overdue. And the US will find out that the only reason they've gotten away with this in the past is because everybody else was so broken they couldn't respond. But the way to deal with any behavior—starting with children, small children—you set limits on that child and you enforce them. So you say, "Do not pull the cat's tail, or she will scratch you." And then the child comes and says, "Look at my hand, the cat scratched me." Well, you know—tough luck.

And this is what the Americans have gotten away with. Well, not just Americans—Western Europeans have gotten away with this, as you say, for hundreds and hundreds of years. The other thing is that most Europeans don't know how dreadful their history is. They have no idea what Belgium got up to during the Congo era. They have no idea. Very few Western Europeans have even heard of the 1943 Bengal famine, for example, which was engineered by the British and caused three and a half million deaths. Nobody knows that. And there are hundreds, thousands of these examples. So now, particularly with Russia—well, the USSR, but now Russia and China and other nations—they've lifted themselves up.

China has lifted itself up. And they're not swaggering around bashing people—they're just saying, "No, you're not going to." That's what they're saying, and that's perfectly legitimate. But the Americans can't handle this; it just drives them completely insane. So this is all because their national psyche is now tied in with feeling good. Every time they see their flag, they get flutters in the heart and something else—they get a surge of testosterone. And they're so used to this that they can't conceive of life without it. And when you listen to people like Stephen Miller and all those dreadful, dreadful people, that's all they think of: crushing everybody else.

#Pascal

Now, you wrote this book on narcissofascism. In what way does this narcissistic—and, you know, ultimately this impulse to dominate and get a rush of testosterone out of it—where does that then lead into entire societal structures that build such systems?

#Niall McLaren

Because the political structures we have—and that includes the economic ones—are designed to attract people who like power. The whole system, the political system, the business world, academia—they're all the same. Anywhere there's a hierarchy, it attracts people who want to climb it. Right? And the more unscrupulous they are, the faster and further they go. So what we've got is a political culture that attracts narcissists and power-hungry, unscrupulous people. That's it.

#Pascal

That's the question, though. It seems to me that the system itself is inherently dangerous to these narcissists, right? Because if you fail and another one of these people takes you out, you lose. And overall, the system perpetuates itself, but it's actually quite dangerous for the types who are in there. You'll always have one at the top, but the ones vying for power have to take each other out, right?

#Niall McLaren

Yes, and that's exactly what goes on. There's this constant competition, and decent people get squeezed out. You know, I mean, you've probably been involved in local politics too—you have to sit through these boring meetings, and you're just sitting there thinking, I could be doing something else, like playing with a dog. Yeah. But there are people there who love it. They're so excited by it—"I'm here, this is the power, oh boy, oh boy!"—and they just love it. And they win.

#Pascal

That's the thing—there was a series about this called *Parks and Recreation*. These people sit on these tiny little committees deciding what kind of bench color should be put in the park. And some of them get a real kick out of their power. Then there's the power struggle between them. So that kind of thing isn't ridiculous—that's just how psychology actually works.

#Niall McLaren

That is pure psychology. So, you know, if you really want to see the struggle for dominance at its most naked and bloodthirsty, you go to local sports clubs—like bowling clubs. I mean, I don't know if you have lawn bowls in Germany. They were notorious for that. You'd have one group who wanted to, you know, as you say, paint the park benches green, and another who wanted them blue—and they'd be at each other's throats. It was notorious. So the whole political process is an apprenticeship in culling out decent people and leaving the dross. And as you see in the political process anywhere in the world today, we have the worst people. It's called kakistocracy—I think you've heard that before—and that's exactly what's going on. The scum rises to the top. Sorry, but that's...

#Pascal

But I mean, you know, at the end of the day, we do see moments when large civilizations create prolonged periods of prosperity for a relatively large group. So, are there instances in your mind where civilizations managed to figure out mechanisms to curb these instincts? Because if I understand you correctly, you're saying this is universal—for the eight billion people on this planet. It's not just the Americans. The Chinese have these instincts, the Russians, the Indians. So this is universal, right? Then why are some of them more violent than others?

#Niall McLaren

Good question. I really can't answer that. But when you look at the scope of history, there hasn't been a day of peace in the world, ever. And 90% of the world seems to be on fire at any one time. There have been brief periods when things seemed to go well. The 1950s and '60s in the USA were a good example—that was a golden age for workers. But then the people at the top got greedy. You'll be aware of the Powell Memo from 1970, I think, when they decided, "We don't like the way things are. We think there are too many—well, we think we should get more. This hierarchy is too flat for us."

The workers have rights—they've got their houses, their education, their health benefits. But we think we should have more. We wealthy people need more. And so they started this program, which led to neoliberal capitalism. As a result, we've had increasing inequality around the world. You know

the figures perfectly well—how the take-home pay of CEOs in America has gone up hundreds of times compared with workers, hundreds and hundreds of times. And so people get greedy. As I said earlier, the sense of privilege and entitlement grows until it hits limits.

#Pascal

Yeah, because the system—and the way we think about it too—I mean, the CEOs don't compare their salaries with the workers'. They compare their salaries with the other guy's. You compare horizontally, but you work vertically, right?

#Niall McLaren

That's exactly what goes on.

#Pascal

How do you treat that? You, as a psychologist—if you practice—have you ever had a moment when you had a patient in front of you who was clearly suffering from narcissism, clearly driven by this need to dominate everyone else? How do you approach that as a doctor?

#Niall McLaren

Well, that's slightly different, because they come for a reason. Narcissists, and people who like dominating others, don't come for help until they're in trouble. So then you can use that to gain entry into their lives. Because if you just go down the street and say, "You look like a narcissist—why don't you come in and we'll talk it out?" you're not going to get very far. Set up shop, you know, with a sign saying "Narcissists welcome," and they'll just walk past. They don't think there's anything wrong.

#Pascal

But it can happen. I mean, did it happen to you in your practice that somebody came in and said, "Look, I'm in huge trouble, please help"? Yeah. Because, I mean, in a sense, I do believe that the Western Empire—the Europeans and the Americans—they're marching into humongous trouble. And if we can make them understand that it has to do with this narcissism, then maybe we can treat them. So what would be the next step if, say, tomorrow Lady Europe and Uncle Sam sat in your practice? How would you go about it? Well, the first thing is to tell them to stop blaming other people. They just automatically attribute blame outside themselves.

#Niall McLaren

That's automatic. So America just sits there and says, "Chinese aggression." There's no Chinese aggression—zero aggression. But they keep doing this: "There's a threat from China." We hear it all the time here. A recent survey said 50% of Australians think they're going to be attacked by a foreign country within five years. This is all bullshit—pure, unadulterated bullshit. It's propaganda manufactured by the people at the top for their own benefit, and hang the cost to the country. They don't care. Their sense of entitlement says, "I don't care what happens to the poor people." They're the ones who'll go into the army, do their duty, and shut up. You see how this is pathology?

#Pascal

They'll usually fight back, right? Narcissists will say, "No, no, no, actually, I understand I'm not perfect, but the other one is much worse." That's right. How do you break through that?

#Niall McLaren

Well, you'd have to wait until they come asking for help. They're in serious trouble. They won't come until they're in serious trouble. So, you know, take, for example, the country you're familiar with—Germany. They were totally invested in the idea that they were going to dominate the entirety of Eurasia. And Hitler set this out very clearly in **Mein Kampf**: the goal of what would become the Second World War was to invade and conquer the USSR, because the Germans were a superior people and the Slavs were inferior. And the inferior people had all this land—they weren't going to do anything with it, they'd never amount to anything. And the Germans didn't have enough land, so they were therefore entitled by the law of nature. And he actually says that. I can't say it in German, but he says that.

It's the law of nature that gives us the entitlement to go there. We will take their land. We will cull half the population—get rid of them. They'll be killed. And the other half will become our serfs. They will work our farms, and they will work in our factories and mines. And we will become a great nation, and we will have a thousand-year Reich. That is all set out. I was just looking at that—it's all there. This is the English version, the original one from 1939. It's a facsimile. Chapter 14, Volume 2 says Germany's policy in Eastern Europe is going to be: we will take possession of this land, and we will build a glorious ethnic empire that will last a thousand years. And if we don't, we will collapse forever, and the world will go into a dark age. He says it all. It's all set out.

#Pascal

I mean, it's an utterly insane mindset—and that one managed to win over and govern the entire country, right? So that's like the ultimate proof that this kind of absolute, narcissistic insanity can flush you not down the toilet, but up the toilet—to the top, right?

#Niall McLaren

Yeah. And, you know, because Germany was in a bad position—they'd been crushed. They wanted extra land, they wanted an empire, and they'd lost the war. And Hitler was quite convinced, and a lot of people were convinced, that this was because of the Marxists and the Jews stabbing them in the back, particularly with the strikes in the munitions factories in March 1918. And he then said, well, we're not going to make that mistake this time. We'll get rid of all these Bolsheviks, and we'll push the Jews out. Originally, they were just going to expel them, but that didn't work. So he went to the people, and he appealed to their need to feel good again. And he said, do this and you will be good, you will be powerful. And that gave them the surge, the rush, that they wanted.

#Pascal

That's why he put them in all those beautiful uniforms—it helps get your testosterone up, right?

#Niall McLaren

Absolutely. And have them marching up and down, the bands thumping, the torchlight parades and everything. The sense of power was magic—the sense of power from the Nuremberg rallies. They'd be on a high for weeks after that. You know, 150,000 men and women, completely off their heads with the lust for power. And he just appealed to it.

#Pascal

Yeah, and you can see those psychological mechanisms working, right? The large rallies that Hitler had—people were ecstatic. And you can see it with Donald Trump, you can see it with the Democrats, right? Whenever they do these large—well, they literally call them rallies, right? Yeah. You rally and ratchet people up, and then that catapults you into this position of dominance over them, which is so funny. Because the people who get rallied up kind of accept that they're going to be dominated, right?

#Niall McLaren

Well, they feel like they're part of the power structure.

#Pascal

Right, right.

#Niall McLaren

You see, they're getting their jollies from being part of the power structure. It's like a football team. You know, there are only eleven players—or whatever it is, eighteen players—out on the field, but there are tens of thousands of people around them getting a thrill, a surrogate thrill, from being part

of the excitement. And they get wound up and say, "Our team's winning! This is the best! We're winning! I'm winning! I'm part of the power structure." And this is humanity's fatal flaw: we love power. But for every powerful person, there are twenty who are crushed. And eventually they get sick of it, and they rebel and overthrow the person who's trying to dominate. I mean, look what happened—the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Chinese Revolution, the French Revolution, even the American Revolution was about throwing off people who were crushing them.

#Pascal

So how do we fix it? How do we fix that?

#Niall McLaren

I think the first thing is, people have got to know what's going on and stop falling for the propaganda. You know, this is—it's not...

#Pascal

Can knowledge do something about it? And can understanding the testosterone surge during football matches help people avoid seeking that same surge at football matches?

#Niall McLaren

Yes, it can, because you realize this is ridiculous. This political rally—all this shouting and carrying on, marching up and down—it's ridiculous. They can realize that getting dressed up in their uniforms is silly. Why would you do that? Oh, it's just to give myself a thrill. That's what people have got to know. But you've got to learn that right from the beginning. Instead, what we're doing is teaching children that competition is everything, winning is everything. You've got to be number one. You can't let anybody lord it over you. You've got to be number one.

And as I said, this is what goes on—not so much here; we don't get it as much. But when you tie this sense that we are superior, that we're better than everybody else, then there's real trouble. You see this in the Middle East: a country saying, "We are entitled to your land from the Nile to the Euphrates. We are entitled to it." And this is the ultimate dominance hierarchy—because God said we can have it, right? That's the ultimate. So automatically, when you say, "We are superior, we are chosen, we are the leaders or the policemen of the world," you automatically put everybody else down, and they don't like it. So attitude counts.

#Pascal

Attitude counts. But in a sense, you could say that the attempt to create large enough tribes—on the scale of nation-states—that can push back and prevent complete domination, that this is a

countering strategy, right? It's meant to balance things on a global scale. You could argue that the idea of having international law is also a countering strategy, to make sure we somehow deal with this need to dominate. But none of them work well enough, because enough force always overcomes these constraints. Can you think of other mechanisms we try to build internationally to prevent these excesses of testosterone?

#Niall McLaren

Well, I think the problem with the world we've inherited is that it's dominated by one country. The idea that one country's currency should be the international reserve currency—that's ridiculous. So we've got to get rid of that, for a start. But the idea that everybody has to fall in line and do as they're told—that's got to go too. Every time one person in a group starts to act up, the others have to know when to stop him. The same goes for countries: everybody pushes back. So Spain said to the U.S., "No, you cannot use our country for your war." Initially, Trump was furious, but he's forgotten that—because they said no. And China said no. People have got to learn to say no, because the sense of privilege expands until it hits a limit. It just keeps expanding. And that's critical.

#Pascal

I just had this discussion an hour ago, you know, with a Georgian colleague. He told me once, "You know, Pascal, the main problem between Georgia and the United States is that the United States doesn't take 'yes' as an answer. It's never enough. You always have to do the next thing. And if you stop doing that, you're not a good boy anymore—it's not going to be the carrot, it's going to be the stick." So that's this kind of expanding entitlement that always leads to "never enough, never enough."

#Niall McLaren

It's never enough. But I think a lot of people around the world were saying, before Trump was elected, "Oh no, not Trump." And I was saying, well, you know, it's not going to be all bad. He'll probably wreck NATO. He'll probably wreck this AUKUS thing—these nuclear submarines for Australia—which I really want to see him wreck. That's the worst thing we've done in 80 years. And, you know, with a bit of luck, he'll wreck most things. Then the U.S. will wake up to itself and say, actually, we can do okay. They've got to look at Japan. Japan wanted this Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and they started wars and, you know, slaughtered millions. And then they lost. But after the war, they suddenly realized, hey, we're doing okay. We don't need this co-prosperity sphere—we're fine. Maybe the Americans can realize that too, but they're going to have to hurt first.

#Pascal

Yeah, you know, retrospectively, history has this tendency to produce these huge ironies. And for the Japanese, one of them is that in the 1930s, all the top-notch thinkers and politicians would have

told you, without the slightest doubt, that what Japan needed was Lebensraum, right? “We need room to expand because we’re a tiny little nation—60 million people. It’s going to be absolutely horrible. We’re all going to starve. We need a place to live, so we have no other choice.” Well, guess what? Thirty years later, you learn you don’t need the land. You can trade. That’s great.

Use your brains, not your... Today, the same island hosts 125 million people, and the biggest problem they have is that their population is declining. You know, we get things so terribly wrong—on such fundamental levels—that the question you raise is a great one. It’s about how to get the U. S. and Europe, A, to realize that the problem is within and not without, and B, how to achieve that kind of turnaround without, you know, two atomic bombs dropped on you—or worse, much more. So how can we get them to sit down with you in your office and start working on themselves?

#Niall McLaren

You have to start with the idea that we can’t be happy unless we’re number one. Hmm. That number two is no good—number two is humiliating. We’ve just got to start with that. So, you know, Australia is quite a good example in the sense that we don’t actually think we’re the most powerful or whatever else, because we like our place. It’s quite a good place. I don’t know if you’ve been here, but, you know, we’ve got very good beaches, good food, it’s safe, we’ve got a good health system. So be satisfied with that. But there are a lot of people in this country saying, “No, no, no, we’ve got to push those Chinese back and tell those Indians to behave themselves.” And, I mean, for God’s sake, there are 1.4 billion people.

#Pascal

Yeah, but how do you fight that? Because, again, most people like the place where they live. I mean, I’d argue that if the world were a perfect place and everybody could live wherever they wanted, maybe 10% would go somewhere else—because they’re bored, or adventurous, or whatever—but about 90% would probably stay at home, right? Yeah, they would, because they like where they are. What he described about Australia is how I’d describe Switzerland, just without the beaches. But, you know, it’s nice. And I’m pretty sure most Iranians would describe Iran that way, and Americans would describe America that way. So the question is, how do we get rid of this constant tendency? You said, yeah, the recognition that it’s enough. I mean, it’s not only enough—it’s good the way it is. We don’t need to be number one.

#Niall McLaren

Because the politicians have got this process going where they keep feeding people the idea that you need to be number one. It’s like—Hitler’s a perfect example. He said, “Germany has got its face in the dirt. We must stand up. We’ve got to show the people that we are fantastic.” And he just fed them this, and they wanted to hear it. People want to be told—the world wants to be deceived. They want to be told that you can’t be satisfied as number two. Yes, you can. You can be fine. That’s fine.

#Pascal

You know, I wonder about this so much in our—especially in these very Western societies. If you look at the popular TV shows that come out of the US or Europe, they're all competitions. It's always about who's the best singer, the best dancer, the best drag queen, the best whatever. It's really ridiculous. And it's always about competing with each other, and only one can win. But at the same time, they'll say, "It's about community, it's us being together." No, it's not.

#Niall McLaren

It's not. It's not at all. It's training people to think in competitive terms, and that starts almost the moment you're born. It never stops. And if a person believes they're superior, their sense of entitlement and privilege is huge. That's going to bump into other people's privilege, and there'll be friction. People are told this from birth—that we're entitled to this, that we're the best. No, you're not. You're average. We're all average.

#Pascal

Yeah, but is there value in telling people, even if they're average, "You're great. You're not the best, but you're great." So let's work on being as great as we can without trying to be better than others. It's like, you know, you don't need to strive for that—you just need to strive to be good. Is there value in that? Because if we tell them they're average—I mean, nobody wants to be average, right?

#Niall McLaren

You just do the best you can and be satisfied with that. But our whole society is built around this idea that you have to be number one, and that nothing else is acceptable. If you're not number one, you're nobody. There are a lot of things that could be done, but the entire socioeconomic system is geared toward funneling power into a very steep hierarchy—and funneling money, money and power, you know, pretty much the same thing—into an ever more steep hierarchy. So more and more money is being funneled to fewer and fewer people.

#Pascal

What is the role of peers within that model? Because, you know, I realized that about myself—I'm a little bit jealous of Glenn Diesen because his channel is bigger than mine. But I'm not at all jealous of Tucker Carlson, because his channel is huge, huge, huge. I mean, I can't even compare it, right? So where is that coming from? I'm glad Glenn is doing such a fantastic job, but I can feel it in myself. It's like, ah, ah. Is there something about hierarchy—how we compare ourselves and then try to compete within these hierarchies?

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, because thinking, "Oh, I'm a bit better, I've got a few more—ha ha," it automatically feels better. It automatically feels better. That's biological. People have to know this and stop thinking that our religion is better than yours, for example. You've just got to get away from this idea that there's a hierarchy of humans. No, there's not. We're all equal. And you do your best—you do the best you can. Like, I'm not a singer, and it's one thing I've always, always wanted—to be able to sing—but I couldn't. So I just do something else. Whatever it is.

#Pascal

So, in terms of trying to approach a healing process, would you start by trying to teach sufficiency? Or, like, trying to teach—well, you just wonder, how do we approach it? I mean, if the issue is human nature, then how do we approach that in order to curb these massive violent events that we produce?

#Niall McLaren

I think they would have to be stopped. But the important thing is that the political process, as I say, selects for the wrong people. And there are different ways of going around that. So instead of having elections where people go out and start spreading lies—saying, "You've got to vote for me because, because, because..."

#Pascal

I'm the best. I'm the best. I'm the best. Yeah.

#Niall McLaren

Yeah. And those people over there are dreadful. Maybe half of the people in parliament should be appointed by a random process, like jurors—just a lottery.

#Pascal

Just a lottery.

#Niall McLaren

A lottery. Yeah. Jurors are chosen—it's just random. So you don't know who you're going to get, but you actually get quite a good process out of that. And so half of the people in parliament, for example, could just be chosen by lottery, and they'd have to do six months—maybe something like that. That would moderate a lot of it. But the whole political process appeals to the worst instincts in

humans, and that needs to be more widely known. There's no such thing as, you know, "my religion is better than yours," or whatever else. We need to get away from the notion that our political process is perfect and everything else is second best. No, it's not.

#Pascal

So this is a very good point. I think one of the arguments people make about the Chinese model is that it's not the most democratic system, but it's a meritocratic one. It tries to choose and select the people who deliver, and then those deliverers choose the next deliverer, right? Whether that's true or not is another question. But in terms of how the society is structured, that would be—or is it—a kind of counterbalance to this choosing of the loudest and noisiest, right?

#Niall McLaren

You just have to accept that the Chinese system is delivering.

#Pascal

It is. No question. I mean, so is the Russian system, and so is the Iranian system, to a good extent. It's like, okay, it's under strain for various reasons, but they are delivering.

#Niall McLaren

They do. They deliver, and they've moved away from the notion that they have to do as we say. The American system is terrible. I've been there, I've seen their hospitals—I've been in their hospitals—and they're truly awful. And yet they just say, "Well, this is how it is. But we're the land of the brave and the land of the free, so that's better than that." We put up with it as long as we can walk around thinking we're the strongest and toughest. So the propaganda, and people like Murdoch filling the world with trash—that has to stop. All of that has got to stop.

#Pascal

We've got to find a way to do that. This is fascinating to me. Is there something we haven't talked about yet that you'd like to address?

#Niall McLaren

Yes, lots. I think, you know, the trouble going on in the Middle East—it's so crystal clear that one small group says, "We want two million square miles, square kilometres, currently occupied by about a hundred million people, and they can all go, and we'll have that because God said so." That is going to cause trouble. And the world has to say no. The entire world has to say no. The Zionist project is only causing trouble. It has to be reined in and stopped. And they know that damn well.

The Zionists know that perfectly well. That's why, if you say anything against them, they attack you. They never say why you should support Israel; all they say is, if you don't, you're anti-Semitic, you're guilty of a crime. And that's just an ad hominem attack. That's not an argument. It's like an incantation—"Hocus pocus, you're anti-Semitic." That silences you. That's it. So the world has to say, "Israel, that's enough. Stop. No more."

#Pascal

Yeah, it's just, you know, the interesting thing is, of course, that a large part of the world actually isn't in favor of this and is saying it should stop. But the power structures are such that the violence can continue—and it does. And the people who get a kick out of this, they're the ones sitting on the button. You can actually see it in Israeli society, how they even glorify this mass violence and mass slaughter of Palestinians, because it gives their group a kick. So it's like a football match on a genocidal scale.

#Niall McLaren

That's correct. They're just kicking heads. They're not kicking footballs—they're kicking heads around, kicking dead babies. And 90% or something like that of Americans, they don't want to be involved. They don't care. It's only a small proportion of them—or maybe 80% don't want to be involved, I'm not quite sure—but they don't want to be involved. They just say, you know, we've got to look after ourselves. Why are we sending \$200 billion there when we should be spending that on our hospitals and our schools? And they're right. But the wrong people have got control of the country. Totally. In the case of the Trump administration, they are the absolute worst people. They're like the Nazis. Yes. In fact, you know, it's the same in Israel. The program for Greater Israel is, in political terms, precisely the same as Hitler's program for the Soviet Union: invade, conquer, eliminate half the population, use the rest as serfs to build an eternal empire. That's exactly the same program. And nobody knows this.

#Pascal

A lot of people feel it—intuitively, they feel it—but we have trouble putting it into words. So thank you very much for actually finding the right words and the right mental models to put that into perspective. It's very important that we connect this. Good. Neil, we need to continue this discussion, and at some point we need to figure out a way to treat this stuff. Hopefully we don't have to drug eight billion people to stop it. You know, there's a novel—or actually a short story—by Stephen King about achieving world peace. And it ends with people poisoning the wells, and then everyone becomes lethargic. That achieves world peace because it takes away the aggression—but then people start dying because nobody produces anything anymore.

#Niall McLaren

Exactly. So it's not a matter of putting drugs into the water supply—that's an old idea. It's about starting to change the narrative and taking it back from the power-hungry clique, and telling people, for example—and we'll use Israel because that's a good example—they are totally controlling the narrative. And you just say no. It is not anti-Semitic to say that Gaza has been destroyed in a genocidal lust. That is not anti-Semitic. That's all there is to it. And we're not going to fall for that nonsense anymore. We've had enough.

#Pascal

Yep, yep, yep. Learn and repeat—learn and repeat what we've learned, not the bad things. Neil McLaren, for people who want to find your work, they should look for your books. They're available on Amazon; they just need to Google your name. I'll try to put a couple of them in the description box below. Is there any other place where people can follow you?

#Niall McLaren

Yeah, I've got a Substack. It's just Neil McLaren on Substack, I think. And I've got two sections: the Critical Psychiatry section and the Narcissofascism section. Yeah, that's it.

#Pascal

That's a very good place to find you. Everybody, go check out his books and his Substack. Neil McLaren, thank you for your time today.

#Niall McLaren

My pleasure.