

Saturday 9.30am, Room 1

Dr IAIN McGILCHRIST
UK

Iain McGilchrist is a former Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and former Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at the Bethlem Royal & Maudsley Hospital, London.

He has been a Research Fellow in neuroimaging at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore. He has published original articles and research papers in a wide range of publications on topics in literature, philosophy, medicine and psychiatry.

He lives on the Isle of Skye.

Selected Publications

Against Criticism (Faber 1982)

The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World (Yale 2009)

The Divided Brain and the Search for Meaning: Why Are We So Unhappy? (e-book short)

(in progress) *When The Porcupine is a Monkey*, to be published by Penguin Press.

A pervasive model in medicine is that of the machine. It has got us a long way. It doesn't mean that doctors are inhuman or treat their patients as anything less than human. But it has its serious limitations. In particular, like all models, it does not permit us to see what the model itself rules out.

The model is not just a way some doctors seem to view the world. It is also implicit in much of the way management culture now alters medical practice, even if some theories of management are more sophisticated than that would imply. This is interesting because until recently medicine actually avoided mechanical systems in practice, even if its avowed model was that of a machine. In other words, the advent of management culture has doubled the dose of simplification applied to what are avowedly complex systems: doctors, patients, hospitals and communities.

This could be seen as part of a way of looking at the world which is rapidly becoming pervasive, and which can be traced to the rising dominance of a thinking style associated with the left hemisphere of the brain, a hypothesis advanced in my book *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. This hypothesis has little or nothing in common with the popular understanding of hemisphere difference. In this lecture I will refer to it briefly and then look at how it illuminates changes in the field of medicine which, though widely regarded as damaging and retrogressive, seem to gain ever greater traction.