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words

Biological psychiatry

Philip Cowen

Guze's famous essay on biological psychiatry – 'Is there any other kind?' – argued that humans are biologically evolved creatures, therefore biological processes must contribute importantly to psychiatric disorder. True enough, though perhaps it was inevitable that 'biological' psychiatry would be defined in opposition to other kinds of psychiatry like 'psychosocial', which would then return to depict it as mindless, blind to context and medically hegemonic. Pluralism is a great relief. Biological processes are always involved, and we can try to utilise them for understanding and treatment if it helps – but we don't have to. Biopsychosocial psychiatry – is there any other kind?

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