

DANIEL C. DENNETT

Doctor of Humane Letters

Presented by Brownell Professor of Philosophy Dan Lloyd

“Our best current philosopher.” “One of the world’s most original and provocative thinkers.” “One of our most important living philosophers.” You, Daniel C. Dennett, have been described as all of these things. Now University Professor and Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy and co-director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University, you are well-known for your theories on the mind-body connection explaining that free will and human consciousness are based on physical processes in the brain. Dubbed one of the Four Horsemen of Atheism, you also are noted for your role in the New Atheist movement.

Born in Boston, you earned a B.A. in philosophy from Harvard University in 1963 and two years later completed a D.Phil. in philosophy at the University of Oxford under the supervision of British philosopher Gilbert Ryle. You taught at the University of California, Irvine, for six years before joining the faculty at Tufts, where you have remained, save for visiting stints at Harvard, the University of Pittsburgh, Oxford, the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the London School of Economics, and the American University of Beirut.

You have written more than 400 scholarly articles and authored, co-authored, or edited 19 books. In what may be the surest proof that you are indeed considered at the very top of your field, you have been the subject of almost as many books as you have penned yourself. *Content and Consciousness* (Routledge), your first title, was published in 1969, the result of your doctoral thesis on the nature of consciousness. Nearly five decades later, your most recent work, this year’s *From Bacteria to Bach and Back: The Evolution of Minds* (Norton and Penguin Books Limited), is said to be an “agenda-setting book for a new generation of philosophers and thinkers” that explores the “deep interactions of evolution, brains, and human culture.”

The list of your awards and honors is long and includes the 2012 Erasmus Prize, the Netherlands’s highest prize, an annual award given by the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation to individuals or institutions that have made exceptional contributions to culture, society, or social science in Europe and the rest of the world; the 2011 Mind and Brain Prize, granted by the Center for Cognitive Science of Turin in Torino, Italy, in recognition of outstanding achievement in advancing knowledge about mind and brain in the field of cognitive science; and the American Philosophical Association’s 2004 Barwise Prize, bestowed for significant and sustained contributions to areas relevant to philosophy and computing.

The honorary degree you receive today is your sixth from institutions around the globe. You also have been awarded two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Fulbright Fellowship, and a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and you were elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which gathers leaders from the academic, business, and government sectors to tackle the critical challenges of today.

You have assisted in the design of computer exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution and at Boston’s Museum of Science and Computer Museum. You also were the co-founder and co-director of Tufts’s Curricular Software Studio. You have given hundreds of lectures around the world and delivered several TED talks, sharing your thoughts on topics including Darwin, religion, and reason.

In recognition of your distinguished career as a philosopher and a cognitive scientist and of your enormous contributions to the world of thought, I have the honor of presenting you, Daniel C. Dennett, for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.