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Some Thoughts About Clinical Neuroscience

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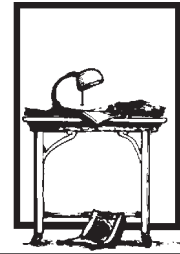
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EDITORIAL



Some Thoughts About Clinical Neuroscience

Most years the ISNR conference takes place early in September which means that we are often scurrying through airports on the day of September 11th, Patriot Day. I was in the air on the first anniversary of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks and I was in the air this anniversary and it gave me time to pause and reflect on the type of mind that could convince itself that an act of homicidal suicide could somehow benefit him and his family.

Suicidal terrorism is like taking your sister to the prom: Anyone can do it but what have you accomplished? Longer lines at airports while reducing financial and social opportunities for your children? Terrorism requires almost no investment by the organizing body—just a few older men convincing younger less invested men to act on beliefs which they themselves have never fully acted upon. I've heard it said that all fanatics are converts and perhaps disposing of one's life on an unverifiable promise takes a special narrowness of mind only acquired during conversion, but where in the brain do such thoughts of suicide lie? Where do they hide?

During the ISNR conference a few of us discussed the idea of spiritual neuroscience, a field of investigation into matters of connection to

the One and Infinite, and I asked one of my friends whether spirituality could ever be bad, ever be negative, as emotions possess positive and negative valence. We did not come up with a definitive answer but considering the spiritual justification of homicide throughout humankind's history, we should not traipse into this field of investigation naively or with a presumed positive outcome. Spirituality may be as dark as humankind. Even if its origins are outside of the brain—and that is the primary question for this emerging field—the brain is where its impetus are interpreted and acted upon and where all its imperfections will come to light.

The issue of suicide is where clinical neuroscience—neurotherapy and its like—and spiritual neuroscience must meet. Four centuries ago the Earl of Oxford (Shakespeare), in his most autobiographical of plays, thoroughly summed up the issues surrounding why the vast majority of people do not turn off the present light for a pledge of future brilliance.

“To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will

And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?"

To fly to others that we know not of? To
fly into a building.

I used to tell my students that if they wished
to save the world, figure out how to control nu-
clear fusion and provide humanity with endless
power. But I was young and naïve then and real-
ize now how endless power would only lead to
our annihilation until we can figure out the

meaning of life, or better put, why some find
meaning in life and some do not.

What follows is the second volume of the
Journal of Neurotherapy I have had the plea-
sure to edit. Clinical neuroscience may not re-
veal the undiscovered country, but it should
reduce the ills we bear and illuminate the mys-
teries of mental health.

David A. Kaiser, PhD
Editor