



Journal of Neurotherapy: Investigations in Neuromodulation, Neurofeedback and Applied Neuroscience

Preface

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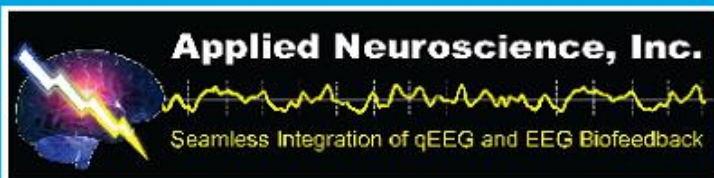
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Preface

OUR THIRD SPECIAL ISSUE

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. According to the U.S. Department of Justice we live in the worst of times. For 50 years between 1925 and 1975, the incarceration rate in this country hovered around one-tenth of a percent, with an occasional blip during wartime or economic strife. As recently as 1968 only 95 of every 100,000 citizens were in prison (Vogel, 2003). But our incarceration rate is currently five times higher, 486 per 100,000 adults, and when juvenile and other facilities are taken into account more than 2.25 million Americans are now behind bars (Harrison & Beck, 2004). The U.S. accounts for nearly a quarter of an estimated 9 million people in penal institutions throughout the world. Only the nations of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and the Russian Federation lock up their citizens as frequently as America does (Walmsley, 2003). Federal prisons are operating at 40% above capacity while other industrialized nations seem to live in the sleepy past, with incarceration rates matching ours of a half-century ago: 116 per 100,000 in Canada, 91 and 85 in Germany and France, and 53 in Japan. Some say Rome fell because taxes were too high. In future history book, will they write that America fell because its prisons were too full? Either our culture has become five to ten times more dangerous or coarse in the last quarter-century, or we are witnessing a crisis in law enforcement.

Change in the law is slow but constant. Law continually absorbs new technology and new models of human nature. Today behavioral and cognitive neuroscience are on the verge of retooling many of the concepts underlying criminal responsibility. Legal tests for mental incapac-

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ity, culpability, willfulness, and premeditation may be redrawn as advances in electroencephalography and neuroimaging techniques mount in the coming years. As our understanding of biophysical causes of human misbehavior increases, criminal rehabilitation will necessarily improve. Clinical neuroscience, of which neurotherapy plays an essential role, may help reverse the worst-of-times trend of the last quarter-century through assessment, prevention, and treatment of antisocial and violent tendencies, as well as addressing drug addiction. Between 1984 and 1996 California built 21 new prisons and only one new university (Ambrosio & Schiraldi, 1997). This is a trend which must be reversed if America is to survive as a free and independent nation deep into this century.

What follows is the third special issue of the *Journal of Neurotherapy* and the first issue which I have had the privilege to edit. Congratulations to Jim Evans, who developed the issue and guided every author's contribution, and to Editors Tim Tinius and David Trudeau and Managing Editor Darlene Nelson for their tremendous efforts in moving it all towards completion. Learning to behave is not as easy as parents would hope or ethics professors might make it out to be. For this reason we have law, an ancient and ongoing experiment in behavioral regulation between strangers or acquaintances based on centralized (governmental) conflict resolution and revenge. More importantly, it is grounded in our self-knowledge. As the human mind becomes transparent to science and gives up its secrets one by one, the law will surely benefit and we may see the best of times . . . or perhaps, again, the worst of times.

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