

Editorial on Mental Illness

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The first practically twenty years of the twenty first century has seen a muted version of mental illness as a metaphor, as well as to the extreme of viewing mental illness as a nonexistent phenomenon.

I say muted because the experiential evidence both physiologically and experientially are overwhelming to say the least. Homelessness and incarceration are now phenomenon of a universal nature. It has reached the point that the debate as to the organicity of mental illness is pointless. If medicine has a moral calling it must now do something about the pressing occurrences of homelessness and penal incarceration. Endless debates as to the validity of disorders of the mind are pointless.

To view the most severe of mental illnesses let us take schizophrenia, as a metaphor, and that it is morally wrong to advocate the writing of articles about the biological etiology of mental illness, as both heresy, superstition and akin to shamanism flies in the face of reality. Allowing the mentally ill to wander and sleep on city streets is decidedly worse.

To conjure up Homer and archetypal images in the same breath when engaging in a discourse on mental illness is the epitome of poetic license gone mad, wild and irresponsible. I shudder to think how many patients may debate whether to continue taking their medication as a result of newsprint in the daily press and learned articles in clinical journals is an affront to humane decency. Ideas of this nature are professional regressions to phrenology, bloodletting and the like.

The scientific revolution which has occurred in medicine and psychiatry is with us. Witness the effect medications have had on the depopulation of mental hospitals in Canada and throughout the western world. Sure a caveat should be brought up that they are now in jails and on the streets of metropolitan and smaller centers. While it is recognized that environmental factors do play a part in mental illness, to downplay or negate empirical researched clinical observations is ethically wrong.

There is scientific evidence that mental illness is a neuro-biological-social disorder. To negate this does a grave injustice and disservice to the many people who benefit from medications as part of their treatment for severe or moderate mental illness. To view as an example as that schizophrenia is an alternative universal blueprint provided by society is ludicrous to the extreme.

The popularity and efficacy of psychotropic medication in alleviating symptoms and enhancing one's quality of life makes any attempt to dispute this erroneous claptrap.

It is time I reiterate to do something revolutionary regarding homelessness and incarceration and not engage in idle debate.

The civil liberties of those people afflicted with mental illness must be at the forefront and exercises to limit these human civil rights must be a qualifier in all respects. One's ability to refuse treatment must be painstakingly examined and researched and studied to the same extent as when we are dealing with a concrete facet of organic validity subject to the rigors of the scientific method.

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