

Class Meeting 9

April 5

Theme: **The Science of Violence and Vice Versa?**

CLASS NOTES:

What is bilateral stereotaxic amygdalotomy? What is "episodic dyscontrol syndrome? How did the former come to be proposed and actually used as a "treatment" for the latter? We consider a socially, scientifically, technically, clinically, and legally complex medical malpractice case that illustrates some of the scientific/ethical issues involved in the use of brain stimulation and/or destruction as a means of controlling human thoughts, feelings and actions. The case in point centers on the diagnosis and neurosurgical (psychosurgical) treatment during the mid-1960s, of a 34 year-old man (the late Leonard Arthur Kille; aka "Thomas R.") who was allegedly otherwise incapable of controlling his outbursts of unprovoked rage, aggression and violence.

On the one hand, psychosurgery can be described as a perfectly rational form of "therapeutic intervention." On the other hand, it has been described by some as a socially expedient neuropsychological species of crude mechanistic reductionistic biological determinism (a/k/a pseudoscience).

Articles and books promoting the former view are commonplace and plentiful, Here we will concentrate on an examination of the scientific defensibility of a particular dissenting view (reading assignments 9-2, 9-3, and 9-4).