

Philosophical Counseling and Moral Injury:

An Inquiry into the Prospects of Treating War Veterans Diagnosed with Moral Injury and PTSD

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Introduction

Philosophical counseling facilitates the self-direction of someone's life through the aid of philosophical insight and critical reasoning. The counseling professions do not force change in lives, or even prescribe change, rather they describe or guide the individual through making that change.

The thesis of my research is that philosophy is the means by which we establish our worldview. As a result our emotions and actions result from premises that we establish as we seek to understand our world. After the trauma of war combat soldiers find their philosophical view of the world and moral systems have been challenged in ways that tend to threaten the foundations of their personal philosophy. The recovery from and the development of an understanding of the moral ambiguities and the assaults on personal morality caused by war can be facilitated with the help of a philosophical guide to assist the veteran in logically evaluating the premises behind the conclusions that s/he has now established as a result of the combat service.

Moral Injury

“Moral Injury is the result of reflection on the memories of war or other extreme traumatic conditions. It comes from having transgressed one's basic moral identity and violated core beliefs” (Brock-Lettini *xiv*). It seems to me that it can also come from a perceived violation of core moral beliefs and not only an actual violation. As the veteran reflects upon their combat service and the role they played in the war, killing of enemy combatants or civilians during the conflict. It also seems as though this type of moral injury is more prone to occur with unpopular wars or conflicts that a nation's society has in large part deemed as being immoral, i.e. the War in Iraq and the Vietnam War.



Philosophical Counseling

The idea of philosophical counseling, i.e. the use of philosophical inquiry to assist others in developing fully rational worldviews can it seems be traced back to Ancient Greece. Socrates reportedly described himself as a mid-wife to help people give birth to rational thought. The basic concepts are seen in Platonic, Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. And seem to be present in other modern philosophical systems. Philosophy attempts to discover answers to the perplexing fundamental questions of life and it seems clear that having guidance on this front for those traumatized by war will prove helpful.

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