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Thursday, September 19th, 2024

12:00pm-1:00pm



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Joseph J. Fins, MD, D Hum Litt (hc), MACP, FRCP is The E. William Davis, Jr. M.D. Professor of Medical Ethics and Chief of the Division of Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medical College, where he also holds several other professorships, including in Psychiatry, Neurology, Rehabilitation Medicine, and Health Care Policy. He is the founding chair of the Ethics Committee at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell and serves as an Attending Physician and Director of Medical Ethics. Dr. Fins co-directs the Consortium for the Advanced Study of Brain Injury (CASBI) at Weill Cornell and Rockefeller University. He holds a visiting professorship at Yale Law School and chairs the Hastings Center Board of Trustees. Elected to the National Academy of Medicine, he is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and an Academico de Honor of the Royal National Academy of Medicine of Spain. His research focuses on brain injury, disorders of consciousness, palliative care, and neuroethics. Dr. Fins is a prolific author with over 500 publications, including "Rights Come to Mind: Brain Injury, Ethics, and The Struggle for Consciousness" and "A Palliative Ethic of Care." He is a past president of the International Neuroethics Society and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. Dr. Fins is a Fellow of The Royal College of Physicians (London) and has been recognized with numerous awards, including the Weill Cornell Medical College Alumni Association Award of Distinction (2024). He is currently working on a biography of physician-humanist Dr. Lewis Thomas.

JOSE MANUEL RODRIGUEZ DELGADO, WALTER FREEMAN, AND PSYCHOSURGERY: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

ABSTRACT

History has conflated the legacies of José Manuel Rodríguez Delgado and Walter Freeman, mid-century proponents of somatic therapies for neuropsychiatric conditions. Both gained notoriety: Delgado after he appeared on the front page of The New York Times having used his stimoceiver to stop a charging bull in Spain; Freeman as the proponent of lobotomy. Both were the object of critique by the anti-psychiatry movement and those who felt that their methods and objectives posed a threat to personal liberty. Using archival sources, we demonstrate that this conflation is a misrepresentation of the historical record and that their methods, objectives, ethics, and philosophical commitments differed widely. Accurate knowledge about historical antecedents is a predicate for ethical analysis and becomes especially relevant information as neuroscience develops circuit-based treatments to for conditions such as Parkinson's disease, depression, and brain injury. Part of that corrective is to counter the conflation of Delgado's and Freeman's life and work. Appreciating their distinctive legacies can help guide neuropsychiatric research done today that might yet haunt future generations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the historical evolution of psychosurgery, emphasizing key milestones and developments.
2. Analyze the distinctive contributions and legacies of José Delgado and Walter Freeman in the field of psychosurgery.
3. Evaluate the relevance of Delgado's and Freeman's work to contemporary neuromodulation approaches for neuropsychological conditions.

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REFERENCES

1. Fins, J. J., & Vernaglia, J. S. (2022). José Manuel Rodríguez Delgado, Walter Freeman, and Psychosurgery: A Study in Contrasts. *The Neuroscientist*, 29(5), 518-531. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10738584221086603>
2. Fins JJ, Wright MS, Shulman KS, Henderson JM, Schiff ND. Subject and Family Perspectives from the Central Thalamic Deep Brain Stimulation Trial for Traumatic Brain Injury: Part II. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. Published online 2023:1-24. [doi:10.1017/S0963180123000518](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180123000518)
3. Fins, J. J., Wright, M. S., Shulman, K. S., Henderson, J. M., & Schiff, N. D. (2023). Subject and Family Perspectives from the Central Thalamic Deep Brain Stimulation Trial for Traumatic Brain Injury: Part II. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0963180123000518>
4. Fins, J. J., Wright, M. S., Shulman, K. S., Henderson, J. M., & Schiff, N. D. (2023). Subject and Family Perspectives from the Central Thalamic Deep Brain Stimulation Trial for Traumatic Brain Injury: Part II. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0963180123000518>

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