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Kathleen Taylor, Neuroscientist, Says Religious Fundamentalism Could Be Treated As A Mental Illness

The Huffington Post | By Meredith Bennett-Smith Posted: 05/31/2013 12:21 pm EDT | Updated: 05/31/2013 12:59 pm EDT

An Oxford University researcher and author specializing in neuroscience has suggested that one day religious fundamentalism may be treated as a curable mental illness.

[Kathleen Taylor](#), who describes herself as a "science writer affiliated to the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics," made the suggestion [during a presentation on brain research at the Hay Literary Festival](#) in Wales on Wednesday.

In [response to a question about the future of neuroscience](#), Taylor said that "One of the surprises may be to see people with certain beliefs as people who can be treated," The Times of London notes.

"Someone who has for example become radicalised to a cult ideology -- we might stop seeing that as a personal choice that they have chosen as a result of pure free will and may start treating it as some kind of mental disturbance," Taylor said. "In many ways it could be a very positive thing because there are no doubt beliefs in our society that do a heck of a lot of damage."

The author went on to say she wasn't just referring to the ["obvious candidates like radical Islam"](#), but also meant such beliefs as the idea that beating children is acceptable.

Taylor was not immediately available for comment.

This is not the first time Taylor has explored the mind processes of a radical. In 2006, she wrote a book about mind control called [Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control](#), which explored the science behind the persuasive tactics of such groups as cults and al Qaeda.

"We all change our beliefs of course," [Taylor said in a YouTube video about the book](#). "We all persuade each other to do things; we all watch advertising; we all get educated and experience [religions.] Brainwashing, if you like, is the extreme end of that; it's the coercive, forceful, psychological torture type."

Taylor also noted that brainwashing, though extreme, is part of a the "much more widespread phenomenon" of persuasion. That is, "how we make people think things that might not be good for them, that they might not otherwise have chosen to think."

However, [Taylor has also been a voice of caution](#) in terms of the ethics of delving too deeply into the human brain's mysterious workings.

"Technologies which directly scan or manipulate brains cannot be neutral tools, as open to commercial exploitation as any new gadget," Taylor wrote in a blog post for The Huffington Post in 2012. "The brain supremacy offers chances to improve human dignity, but it also risks abuse."

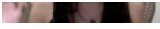
Watch the video below to hear Kathleen Taylor discuss her book Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control.

Kathleen Taylor -Brainwashing:The Science of Th...



by Taboola

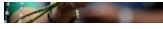




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