The Neuroethics of Dreaming? Ethical & Psychological Implications of Lucid Dream 'Immorality'

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Neuroethics Network 2019 Meeting which was held at the Brain and Spine Institute in Paris, an internationally recognised neuroscience research foundation, located on the grounds of the world famous Salpêtrière hospital.

This was an intimate three day meeting that brought together early career researchers and established academics from around the world working in neurology, psychiatry, philosophy, ethics and neuroscience, to present and discuss the latest research findings in Neuroethics - the academic discipline concerned with the ethical, societal and legal implications raised by advances in neuroscience and neurotechnology.

Over the three days of the meeting, there were seven 'Athenaeum Seminars', which were essentially three to four themed talks grouped together in the programme, each covering a key topic in neuroethics. These ranged from highly pragmatic talks focused on ethical issues arising from treating complex psychiatric patients, in the 'Psychiatric Illness' seminar, all the way to the more esoteric and philosophical, but still fascinating talks, regarding machine consciousness and 'machine moral responsibility' in the 'Other Minds' seminar. Other seminars had a more interdisciplinary nature such as the seminar 'Forensic Psychiatry and Neurolaw' which explored how neuroscience may affect how we determine the legal culpability of offenders, and also, how neuroscience based interventions – such as so-called 'moral bioenhancement' may one day be used to prevent offenders from committing further crimes.

In addition to the talks included in the Athenaeum Seminars, there were also a number of e-poster presentations that were displayed throughout the meeting. I had the privilege of having an abstract for my research on the ethical and psychological implications of "immoral" lucid dream behaviour, accepted for an e-poster presentation at the meeting. I received some very helpful and interesting feedback from the delegates who had read my poster and had come to find me during breaks in the programme to discuss my work further. I am hoping to write up this research for submission to a medical ethics or neuroethics journal in the coming weeks, and I will most certainly be integrated some of the constructive feedback that I received throughout this meeting to improve the final manuscript.
Overall this was a very enjoyable and intellectually stimulating meeting, which introduced me to new areas of neuroethics and also increased my knowledge of areas that I had already been familiar with. Having this opportunity to present my work at an international conference at such an early stage in my career was a greatly informative experience, and has given me the confidence to submit my work to other international medical ethics or neuroethics conferences in the future.

I am very grateful to the IME for awarding me with a Postgraduate Conference Grant, which enabled me to attend and present my work at the Neuroethics Network Meeting, which I highly enjoyed, and which has also deepened my knowledge of the fascinating field of neuroethics.