

Persons, things and “neuroethics”

a presentation to the AEI

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Persons vs. things

- Persons have moral responsibility

It was wrong of him to quit the job.

*It was wrong of the car to break down.

Persons vs. things

- Persons have moral responsibility
 - Persons have rights, moral standing
- I don't like her, but I would not stand by and see her killed.
- *I don't like this car, but I would not stand by and see it demolished.

Persons vs. things

- Persons have moral responsibility
- Persons have rights, moral standing
- Personal effort is creditable

I'm proud of him for studying so hard and passing the test

*I'm proud of my car for revving so hard and getting up the hill

Persons vs. things

- Brains are things, and this is the source of a lot of the ethical problems in “neuroethics.”
 - Enhancement
 - Brain imaging
 - Responsibility

Enhancement

Americans are practicing brain enhancement of mood and attention, other brain functions soon to catch up

Enhancement

Problems:

Safety, fairness, freedom

Enhancement

Problems:

(Safety, fairness, freedom)

Enhancement

Problems:

(Safety, fairness, freedom)

Person-thing clash

Brain imaging

1980's – Cognitive processes

Posner's subtraction method, reading, attention, working memory, etc.

Brain imaging

1980's – Cognitive processes

1990's – Affective processes

Emotional states, theory of mind,
motivation, IAT, craving, etc.

Brain imaging

1980's – Cognitive processes

1990's – Affective processes

2000's – Individual differences

Intelligence, personality, genetics, etc.

Brain imaging

Problems

Brain privacy

Brain imaging

Problems

Brain privacy

Misleading

Brain imaging

Problems

Brain privacy

Misleading

Person-thing clash

Neuromorality

“My brain made me do it”

(and now I have the pictures to prove it)

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

- Imaging, psychopharm, lesion

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

- Imaging, psychopharm, lesion
- College students, children, ADHD, drug abusers, murderers, VMF pts

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

- Imaging, psychopharm, lesion
- College students, children, ADHD, drug abusers, murderers, VMF pts
- Not a lot of clarity

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

What we know:

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

What we know:

- Not a single entity

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

What we know:

- Not a single entity
- *Sumpin* about prefrontal cortex and its circuits

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

What we know:

- Not a single entity
- *Sumpin* about prefrontal cortex and its circuits

What we don't know:

Some relevant research

Impulse control/inhibitory processing/
future mindedness

What we know:

- Not a single entity
- *Sumpin* about prefrontal cortex and its circuits

What we don't know:

- includes the conceptual and empirical

Some relevant research

Social cognition

- Imaging, lesion
- College students, children, autism and other disorders, focal lesion pts
- A lot has been learned, much left

Some relevant research

Social cognition

What we know:

Some relevant research

Social cognition

What we know:

- We're wired up to see persons, attribute mental states, feel empathy

Some relevant research

Social cognition

What we know:

- We're wired up to see persons, attribute mental states, feel empathy
- Pathologies and indiv diffs exist

Some relevant research

Social cognition

What we know:

- We're wired up to see persons, attribute mental states, feel empathy
- Pathologies and indiv diffs exist
- Localizations

Some relevant research

Social cognition

What we know:

- We're wired up to see persons, attribute mental states, feel empathy
- Pathologies and indiv diffs exist
- Localizations

What we don't know:

- conceptual and empirical

Some relevant research

Gene-experience-brain-behavior relations

- behavioral genetics incorporating life experience
- behavioral genetics incorporating brain imaging
- life experience and brain function

neuroethics.upenn.edu

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