

ta ethika

Introducing Neuroethics: (Cognitive) Neuroscience of Morality

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Neuroethics is a new and growing field of relevance for moral theory and practice, with two distinct and equally important branches of inquiry: the neuroscience of ethics (morality) and the ethics of neuroscience and technology. In this overview of developments in the first branch, the author argues that moral theories and empirical approaches are interconnected from the outset. New tools of neuroscience such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) are used in research protocols that define morality along the lines of most influential moral theories. Whether researchers that emphasize rationality of norms (e.g. Neo-Kohlbergians) or utility (e.g. Greene) are ultimately right, or those that insist on the role of emotions (e.g. Haidt) and/or intuitions (e.g. Hauser), new moral theories will have to take into account and accommodate their empirical findings and exciting new insights.

The speaker briefly gives an overview of some of the most important empirical studies of morality. As new developments could not be understood without the knowledge of previous debates, stages of moral development as defined in Kohlberg's moral psychology (and implications from this research in Habermas's discourse-theoretic philosophy of morality and legitimacy and Rawls's views on sense of justice) are shortly discussed.

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