

Chapter 2

From Philosophical Queries to Greater Dilemmas of Neuroethics

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ABSTRACT

This chapter elucidates the origins and changes in understanding of neuroethics. An accent is then put on the role neuroethics should play. As a consequence, limitations in research are identified, especially in connection with ethical questions that had been proposed by philosophers in previous centuries. The urgency of their remarks has intensified due to the expansion of neuroscience. This theoretical part is subsequently enriched by practical aspects and ethical codes of which prescripts are key and neuromarketing practitioners are expected to obey them. Despite a growth of interest in neuroethics, the author presumes that the field still represents a ceaseless combat from within, and he claims that it may even remain invincible as a vicious circle. In conclusion, new trajectories are brought and considered together with recommendations and suggestions of new research possibilities as in case of political neuromarketing. This branch, however, perfectly illustrates the complexities associated with neuroethics.

INTRODUCTION

A fascination with human beings and their behavior has been persistent among philosophers and theorists for centuries. Pioneering concepts classifying human behavior and its aspects gradually appeared in ancient times (e.g., Aristotle, 1998). Anon, initial findings and considerations were proposed with regard to the role of physiological attributes in behavioral traits. These attempts could not succeed, however, due to the intensifying and the rising power of the Church across Europe in the Middle Ages. Despite accurate motions on humanity, which can be summarized by Aristotle's "zoon politikon" (Kullmann, 1991), following deliberations, on the other hand, highlighted dissimilar facets being responsible for human behavior. And they were other than the biological ones (e.g., René Descartes and his work).

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Although natural sciences have been considerably appealing since the 18th century (Farah, 2010), significant discoveries of human behavior and biological formulas emerged in the 20th century. However, many crucial studies were burdened by its connection to the Nazi regime in Germany, of which any ethical components had been vacuous and regarded as irrelevant (Schreiber, 2017). And thus, in the name of the science, experiments on humans as subjects were frequent back then. By today's perception, it would be ethically and socially unacceptable.¹ Properly, it is necessary to take into account that even other forms of research, including diverse experiments, have been conducted with bias, howbeit in a more human manner. Biased attitudes had been in use especially against disabled and mentally ill persons, in particular, since phrenology as a scientific discipline had been influential in studying human behavior and its connection to physiological traits until the beginnings of the 20th century (Illes & Bird, 2006). If the 20th century may be understood as the period of genetics, then the contemporary century, as a "neurocentury" (Farah, 2011), is most definitely the century of neuroscience (Moreno, 2003; Conrad & De Vries, 2011). And inasmuch as modern technologies have been significantly on the upgrade in the first decade of this century, scholars of ethics and bioethics were given new materials, data and eventualities to examine (Leefmann, Levallois, & Hildt, 2016). Bioethicists, however, still do find neuroethics a priori superfluous and worthless (Conrad & De Vries, 2011).

Therefore, this chapter summarizes the most striking approaches and attitudes regarding neuromarketing and its corresponding cardinal neuroethical queries that are frequently discussed. Bearing in mind the complexity of neuroethics as a field of research, the text deals with marketing and neuromarketing as two analogous stances and then ethics and neuroethics is analyzed accordingly while using particular instances in order to ask corresponding (neuro)ethical questions. Whereas the introductory sections examine necessary components specifically indispensable for neuroscientific practice, the following part focuses on respective philosophical reasoning on ethical matters in marketing, medical environment, and neuromarketing as such. Afterward, there are neuroethical issues to be addressed. The chapter encapsulates sundry approaches to neuroethics, and in the aftermath, possibilities of further research will be stated. However, marketing, in its elemental theoretical concepts, as formed by economists, is to be excluded from this chapter to avoid repetitive inferences without any satisfactory foci on neuroethical aspects. Since neuromarketing, having certainly problematic relations with (neuro)ethical questions by definition, has been comprehended as ambiguous, the text addresses both the stances, be it affirmative or negative with respect to the applicability, functionality, and the *raison d'être* of neuromarketing and neuroethics.

Overall, as concluded, there are key issues to be studied at first, and only further improvements in neuroscience may affect the future directions of neuroethics. Owing to the instant questioning of elemental definitions (Roskies, 2006), practice procedures, and the mission itself, it is understandable that neuroethics struggles with clarifying in which trajectory it should lead; meaning that it has not been entrenched in the system of academic disciplines. Given the critical appraisals and observations scholars have offered, this chapter's objective is to advert to the route neuroethics shall set out for. Furthermore, the aim is to identify the roles neuroethics should play in order to be finally acknowledged after years of being lost in the fog of void and empty definitions. Finally, the code of ethics, as issued especially but not only by the Neuromarketing Science & Business Association (NMSBA), will be recalled and complemented by additional recommendations and suggestions for neuromarketing practitioners so that their future research projects will be suitable and correct on the ethical level, and thus, widely acceptable by all the involved parties.

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