

## Bioethics and the Brain

*By Walter Glannon*


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### **Bioethics and the Brain** By Walter Glannon

Our ability to map and intervene in the structure of the human brain is proceeding at a very quick rate. Advances in psychiatry, neurology, and neurosurgery have given us fresh insights into the neurobiological basis of human thought and behavior. Technologies like MRI and PET scans can detect early signs of psychiatric disorders before they manifest symptoms. Electrical and magnetic stimulation of the brain can non-invasively relieve symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and other conditions resistant to treatment, while implanting neuro-electrodes can help patients with Parkinsons and other motor control-related diseases. New drugs can help regenerate neuronal connections otherwise disrupted by schizophrenia and similar diseases.

All these procedures and drugs alter the neural correlates of our mind and raise fascinating and important ethical questions about their benefits and harms. They are, in a sense, among the most profound bioethical questions we face, since these techniques can touch on the deepest aspects of the human mind: free will; personal identity; the self; and the soul. This is the first single-author book on what has come to be known as neuroethics. Walter Glannon uses a philosophical framework that is fully informed by cutting edge neuroscience as well as contemporary legal cases such as Terri Schiavo, to offer readers an introduction to this fascinating topic. He starts by describing the state of the art in neuroscientific research and treatment, and gives the reader an up-to-date picture of the brain. Glannon then looks at the ethical implications of various kinds of treatments, such as: whether or not brain imaging will end up changing our views on free will and moral responsibility; whether patients should always be told that they are at future risk for neurological diseases; if erasing unconscious emotional memories implicated in depression can go too far; if forcing behavior-modifying drugs or surgery on violent offenders can ever be justified; the implications of drugs that enhance cognitive abilities; and how to define brain death and the criteria for the withdrawal of life-support. While not exhaustive, Glannons work addresses a wide range of fascinating issues and his pathbreaking work should appeal to philosophers, psychiatrists, neurologists, neurosurgeons, radiologists, psychologists, and bioethicists.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"This is a fascinating book which seems to be aimed at an area in which a large number of misconceptions abound and which therefore requires careful discussion. I found it informative and provocative."--*Grant Gillett, Neurosurgeon and Professor of Medical Ethics, University of Otago Medical School, New Zealand*

"This offers the reader an integrated, insightful, and marvelously clear introduction to the wide range of ethical issues that emerge in the context of advances in neuroscience."--*Erik Parens, The Hastings Center*

"This book explores the ethical issues arising from new advances in neuroscience and associated techniques such as brain imaging, psychosurgery, neurostimulation, and psychotropic medications. It is a fascinating book written by someone who is both knowledgeable about the science of the brain and also a mature and sophisticated philosopher. This is a valuable and exciting investigation at the cutting edge of the science of the brain."--*John Martin Fischer, University of California, Riverside*

"This book is an important contribution to the burgeoning field of neuroethics...it provides an excellent and clearly written overview of topics pertaining to its title *Bioethics and the Brain*."--*Doody's*

"*Bioethics and the Brain* should be required reading for anyone interested in the ethical implications of neuroscience. Although the new field of neuroethics has spawned a number of books, some of which are excellent, this book is unsurpassed in its philosophical sophistication and integrated treatment of clinical neuroscience and philosophical ethics. The coverage is comprehensive, the writing is clear and the subject matter is fascinating!"--*Martha J. Farah, Director, Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Pennsylvania*

"Walter Glannon recognizes the power and importance of the ongoing revolution in our understanding of the human brain, and this recognition is what makes *Bioethics and the Brain* especially welcome as one of the first efforts to systematically examine the metaphysical, existential, ethical, and legal consequences of this revolution...Glannon has given us a useful, and in many ways comforting, guide to the ethical implications arising from emerging knowledge of the human brain."--*New England Journal of Medicine*

"Glannon's work addresses a wide range of fascinating issues of modern medicine and related ethical issues, which should be of great interest for both neuroscientists and practicing neurologists, psychiatrists and reserachers interested and engaged in bioethics, a problem widely neglected until today. *Bioethics and the*

*Brain* is one of the most fascinating books about the problems and relations between neurosciences, practical medicine and bioethics."--*European Journal of Neurology*

#### About the Author

Walter Glannon is Canada Research Chair in Medical Bioethics and Ethical Theory, University of Calgary.

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