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THE METHODS OF NEUROETHICS

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The Methods of Neuroethics

Elements in Bioethics and Neuroethics

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Abstract: This Element offers a framework for exploring the methodological challenges of neuroethics. The aim is to provide a road map for the methodological assumptions, and related pitfalls, involved in the interdisciplinary investigation of the ethical and legal implications of neuroscientific research and technology. These points are illustrated via the debate about the ethical and legal responsibility of psychopaths. Argument and the conceptual analysis of normative concepts such as ‘personhood’ or ‘human agency’ are central to neuroethics. The Element discusses different approaches to establishing norms and principles that can regulate the practices addressed by neuroethics, and that involve the use of such concepts. How to characterise the psychological features central to neuroethics, such as autonomy, consent, moral understanding, moral motivation, and control is a methodological challenge. In addition, there are epistemic challenges when determining the validity of neuroscientific evidence.

Keywords: neuroethics, argument, conceptual analysis, responsibility, psychopathy

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