

Deliver us from evil? The temptation, realities, and neuroethico-legal issues of employing assessment neurotechnologies in public safety initiatives

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Abstract

In light of the recent events of terrorism and publicized cases of mass slayings and serial killings, there have been calls from the public and policy-makers alike for neuroscience and neurotechnology (neuroS/T) to be employed to intervene in ways that define and assess, if not prevent, such wanton acts of aggression and violence. Ongoing advancements in assessment neuroS/T have enabled heretofore unparalleled capabilities to evaluate the structure and function of the brain, yet each and all are constrained by certain technical and practical limitations. In this paper, we present an overview of the capabilities and constraints of current assessment neuroS/T, address neuro-ethical and legal issues fostered by the use and potential misuse of these approaches, and discuss how neuroethics may inform science and the law to guide right and sound applications of neuroS/T to “deliver us from evil” while not being led into temptations of ampliative claims and inapt use.