

BRAINS, MORALITY, AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

A great deal of excitement surrounds the development of the new field of neuro-education which tries to apply findings in neuroscience to issues of learning and education. While this paper takes a skeptical view of these developments, it combines neuroscience and education in a different way. It argues for incorporating neuroscience into the teaching (and even for the resolution) of ethical disputes. Three moral issues prove particularly amenable to neuroscientific data: abortion, animal experimentation and torture. The following three scientific claims help illuminate the respective ethical issues:

- 1 The fetus does not experience pain until late in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- 2 Animals, at a certain point on the evolutionary scale, feel pain.
- 3 The use of loud music on prisoners follows a similar neural pathway as the infliction of a painful physical stimulus.

It proves not only important, but even essential to include neuroscience in the teaching of ethical and legal issues. With this approach, students can learn science in the context of examining controversial moral issues.

Keywords: Abortion, Brain, Ethics, Experimentation & Torture

