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The Ethical Consequences of Emerging Neurowarfare Technology.

The consequences of multiple, previously disparate, scientific fields is paving the way for the development of a host of powerful new technologies. Tied into many of these emergent technologies is a dual use dilemma, where technologies carry with them the possibility for great benefits to humans, but also for the potential of abuse on a grand scale. A recent paper in the Cornell International Law Journal outlined the potential impacts of “Neurowarfare,” the potential for controlling military vehicles remotely using thought alone. In it, White argues that such emergent technology will change the status of war crimes, based on the lack of definition between intention an action from the perspective of the reading of neural pathways. In this paper I propose that the dual-use aspects of this emerging technology have a range of potential consequences. Following a discussion of the moral aspects of the various uses of this technology, the problematic aspects of the technology require a deeper analysis. The military uses of such technology pose a serious moral problem: that the technology will change not only the justice of waging war, but also the way that the public is led to understand the moral consequence of waging war. I argue that the remote, mental control of armed vehicles in war could prove damaging not only as it promotes the practice of unjust war, but as it effects popular understanding the moral permissibility of violence and killing. In this case, neurowarfare becomes highly problematic, as it lowers the threshold which prevents institutions from going to war, and correspondingly makes the potential for waging of unjust war ever more likely.

Web Site

<http://www.cappe.edu.au/staff/research-students.htm>

On line papers

Stephen E. White

Brave New World: Neurowarfare and the Limits of International Humanitarian Law

<http://organizations.lawschool.cornell.edu/ilj/issues/41.1/CIN109.pdf>