

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



# COGNITIVE LIBERTY & NEW TECHNOLOGY

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### **What is cognitive liberty and how does it relate to new technology?**

Cognitive liberty is a basic, fundamental right to independent thinking. This includes thinking enhanced by new technologies. Some of these enhancements may already exist (certain drugs have served as mental aids for millennia) or may soon be invented as advances in computer-related interfaces and interactive brain prostheses/implants and other modifications become more readily available.

### **Why does the CCLE focus on such technologies?**

At the CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LIBERTY & ETHICS we are interested in protecting access to new or existing technologies that have the potential for increasing or broadening human awareness, perception, understanding and appreciation. At the same time, some new technology, and the legislation that may be enacted to control it, has the potential to decrease cognitive liberty, and to infringe on cognitive privacy and autonomy.

### **Why is there an urgent need for concern now?**

Humans and new technologies have a long history of symbiotic relations, but only recently has the possibility for genetic alterations, integrated brain prostheses, and other technological interfaces, made the question of cognitive integrity and autonomy one of genuine consequence.

### **What kinds of technologies can affect cognitive liberty?**

Drugs, as mentioned above, are one example of a "technology" that can both augment or reduce one's cognitive liberty, depending on usage, dosage, etc.

Developments in nanotechnology, brain implants, psychopharmacology, brain-wave monitoring and entrainment, and subliminal messaging are new technologies providing promise as well as menace to mental freedom. As with drugs, much depends on how these advances are used by individuals, and how they are regulated or controlled by corporations, governments, or other social entities.

### **Do any of these emergent technologies infringe on cognitive liberty today?**

Yes, the recent invention of "Brain Fingerprinting" and its use in a discrete number of criminal cases has significant implications for cognitive liberty on an individual, as well as a larger social scale. While currently this technology is only applied voluntarily in certain criminal contexts, it is plausible that such an invasive tool might become widely used in any number of civil or governmental arenas.

### **What is "Brain Fingerprinting"?**

Brain Fingerprinting (BFP) is a computer-based memory detection technique. The technique is based on measurements of electronic impulses in the brain. BFP monitors EEG emissions to detect whether a person has knowledge of particular words or pictures. When a subject recognizes something as significant, the brain emits a specific, measurable response. If, for example, a record of a crime is stored in the subject's brain, this response will appear when the subject recognizes the correct, relevant items from the crime scene.

## What role should governments take with regard to new technologies ?

While the role of government in controlling mind-alteration is already a pressing issue in the War on Drugs, how the government regulates new technologies with an impact on cognitive autonomy becomes increasingly important as developments make computer-enhanced brain augmentation and similar cognitive alterations possible.

The CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LIBERTY & ETHICS takes the ethical and legal position that each person is sovereign over his or her mind and that no one should be made a criminal for augmenting his or her mind with new technology, nor should any person be compelled to do so.

## What can I do to protect my cognitive liberty in the face of such new technologies?

- **Reclaim** your fundamental right to **cognitive liberty** by employing this term when appropriate.
- **Watch** the press, trade and professional journals, your university, etc. for new technologies that will potentially impact cognitive liberty.
- **Sign-up** for "Top Cognitive Liberty News" (Send a blank e-mail to: [cognitiveliberty-subscribe@igc.topica.com](mailto:cognitiveliberty-subscribe@igc.topica.com)) for relevant announcements.
- **Prompt** government officials to attend to the constitutional protection of cognitive liberty when considering legislation that involves new technologies.
- **Write** Letters to the Editor on public debates regarding new technologies with an impact on cognitive liberty.
- **Educate** others regarding their right to cognitive liberty and its protection.
- **Photocopy** this information sheet and share it with friends and colleagues.
- **Visit the CCLE's Web site** to download this and other flyers that promote cognitive liberty. Blip to: [www.cognitiveliberty.org](http://www.cognitiveliberty.org).

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# Cognitive Liberty... keeping freedom in mind

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## What legal protections should ensure that such technology is not used against people without their consent?

THE CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LIBERTY & ETHICS is working to protect personal rights of the mind. By establishing an individual's right to cognitive liberty and autonomy, we can protect and assert the constitutional basis which will ensure that new technologies and the entities that control them not be allowed to unwittingly colonize mental freedom.

## What if I don't have time to devote to these issues or engage in activism, myself?

**Join the CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LIBERTY & ETHICS!** We are a professional nonprofit organization working around the clock to celebrate, foster and protect cognitive liberty. By joining us, you will support and contribute to the monitoring and analysis of new technologies and other important cognitive liberty issues.

Join us online at:  
[www.cognitiveliberty.org](http://www.cognitiveliberty.org)  
Or call toll free at:  
1-888-950-MIND (6463)

Center for Cognitive Liberty & Ethics  
Post Office Box 73481 • Davis/CA 95617-3481 • USA