An ongoing discussion in the history of ethics and philosophy involves how the natural sciences, or, alternatively, naturalistic assumptions, might inform particular ethical issues and ethical theory in general. In this respect, two recent books — *The Ethical Brain: The Science of Our Moral Dilemmas* by Michael S. Gazzaniga, and *Moral Minds: The Nature of Right and Wrong* by Marc D. Hauser — belong to a seasoned tradition that attempts to reconcile these seemingly divergent forms of thinking. These books focus, in particular, on the emerging developments in neuroscience, evolutionary biology, cognitive psychology, and other related areas. Both authors believe these developments can offer substantive if not groundbreaking results for our understanding of particular ethical issues and general ethical theory, and both are written to a general audience and contain admirable — and, I believe, largely successful — attempts to convey technical ideas to the thoughtful reader. As a philosopher, my concern is with the degree to which these works — both of which are philosophically-informed and oriented towards philosophical questions — contribute to the philosophical tradition of ethical theorizing. This review will consider this perspective as well as that of the more general audience to which they are directed.

In *The Ethical Brain*, Gazzaniga considers primarily how neuroscience can and should inform ethical matters. The first eight chapters address particular ethical issues, most of which are clearly relevant to neuroscience, such as the possibility of brain and intelligence enhancement (Chapters 3, 4, and 5), the relationship between free will and the brain (Chapter 6), neurotechnology and the privacy of thought (Chapter 7), and the reliability of memory (Chapter 8). Only the first two chapters depart from this by taking a neuroscientifically informed stance on issues that are not obviously in the domain of neuroscience. Chapter 1 considers the status of the embryo, the beginning of life and personhood, including the issues of stem cell research and abortion. Chapter 2 considers the end of life and related matters such as euthanasia. The final two chapters of the book address the more theoretical topics of the nature of moral belief and the possibility of a “universal ethics” in light of recent findings in neuroscience and related sciences.

Among other concerns, Gazzaniga interrogates the intersection of religious belief with ethical matters. His aim here is to supplant or suppress the influence of religion in our ethical thinking. This aim motivates, in part, his concern over particular ethical issues, such as intelligence enhancement; for, emerging scientific and technological developments might lead some, especially some religious believers, to mistakenly oppose such developments on ethical grounds. More directly, this aim is revealed in the last two chapters where he discusses the nature of religious belief and the potential for a universal ethics. If the author thinks, as he appears to, that ordinary persons’ “ethical system” equates with or directly follows from, their sets of religious beliefs, then his arguments in these last chapters will not only address the philosopher’s concern for grounding our ethical beliefs (i.e., providing a “universal ethics”), but will also unify (and reform) diverse religious believers with regard to their stances on ethical matters.

*The Ethical Brain* is at its best in the first eight chapters where it explains neuroscientific findings in a clear and readable manner, and responds to “factual” concerns — concerns that rest on a misunderstanding of