



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Authenticity, Narrative and Neural Modification

Third-party funded project

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Organisation / Research unit

Departement Künste, Medien, Philosophie / Theoretische Philosophie (Wild)

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The development of ever more potent and specific methods for neural modification, for instance Deep Brain Stimulation or psychotropic drugs, poses a challenge for our self-image and requires a careful and responsible handling. On this note the influence of neural modifications on authenticity is seen as an important topic. In the current research the concept of authenticity is mainly discussed in the context of enhancement and psychotropic drugs, though often authenticity is only covered incidentally and with a simplified definition. In this doctoral thesis neural modifications with regard to authenticity are investigated thoroughly and based on a profound analysis of the concept of authenticity. In the first part a genealogy of authenticity will be compiled, to show how the concept developed and became a virtue as well as to illustrate the different functions and interpretations that have been ascribed to the concept. Moreover, authenticity will be differentiated from related concepts such as autonomy or identity via this historical exposition. Based on this investigation a narrativistic approach to authenticity will be developed, which does justice to its functions and to our intuitions on the concept. The second part will cover a discussion on neural modifications. Following an overview what neural modifications encompass and how the different methods influence a person and his/her brain they will be characterized along frame concepts such as naturalness, innovation or enhancement. The third part will combine the results of the first two parts to assess which modifications and which properties of these modifications support or threaten authenticity as understood in the narrativistic approach and why we consider some neural modifications as unproblematic whereas others are perceived as controversial.

Keywords neural modification; genealogy; authenticity; narrative; enhancement

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