

Authentically human essay sample



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In today's world technology began to play a major role in people's lives in many ways. Technologies such as computers, cell phones, iPads, etc. give people an opportunity to get away from the real world. Other technologies, especially medical technologies have advanced so much that people are able to get DBS, deep brain stimulation, which is a surgery that implants a medical device, to improve their brain and to help them live a better life. But after the surgery does the person become more or less authentic? In Lauren Slater's essay "Who Holds the Clicker?", Slater studies the symptoms and experience of thirty-six years old Mario Della Grotta, who is diagnosed with obsessive - compulsive disorder, or OCD. He suffers from a live of looped-loop in which he repeats actions fearing incompleteness. In Sherry Turkle's essay, "Alone Together," Turkle explores the idea of authenticity and how in the future robots could offer humans better relationships as well as a better life.

We ask how much technological control is too much control and whether these growing advancements in technology shape our ethical choices and issues. Society is vulnerable to technology; technology meets our human needs and because of that technology has complete control of us today. One can argue that after DBS surgery people become more authentic because they are new and improved. But in actuality, chemical and surgical "improvements," especially of the brain, make people less authentic, but are justified if the improvements are medically necessary. If "improvements" are made to the brain they are not who they really are; they become less authentic. After Mario had brain surgery he was taking different medications to help his bad case of obsession-compulsive disorder. Slater says, "Mario,

who'd tried some 40 different combinations of medications, knows this all too well. He wanted a shot at the ordinary, a lawn he might mow just once a week. The ability to endure the mess and touch of children.

He decided the implants were well worth the risk" (Slater 238). Mario wanted the opportunity to live a regular life. Mario had implants and was on many different medications to try to live a better and normal life. Sherry Turkle would argue that surgical "improvements" to the brain would make someone less authentic because they are not their real selves. Turkle says, "The advertising for Second Life, a virtual world where you get to build an avatar, a house, a family, and a social life, basically says, 'Finally, a place to love your body, love your friends, and love your life'" (Turkle 263). Turkle is explaining how technology, such as chemical and surgical "improvements," offers another opportunity to live another life and create a social life with others. In Mario's case he wanted something that was not who he was. He wanted to be able to be around others, have a family, and do everyday things such as mow the lawn once a week. Although Mario got implants and became unauthentic, it is okay because he had obsession-compulsive disorder and he was not able to live a regular life.

Making enhancements to the brain not only makes people less authentic, but also makes their relationships less authentic. Turkle gives her insight and her definition of authenticity. She says, "Authenticity, for me, follows from the ability to put oneself in the place of another, to relate to the other because of a shared store of human experiences: we are born, have families, and know loss and the reality of death. A robot, however sophisticated, is patently out of this loop" (Turkle 267-8). Turkle is saying that human minds are

developed by the memories we make and personalities are created through this same process; however, robots are created as a machine to serve people. Nobody as of today has an intermediate relationship with robots.

They do not have memories of past experiences; they are simply brought into the world. Turkle is also implying that relationships with robots or people who have had brain implants are unauthentic relationships. Slater shows how Mario's relationship experience with his daughter was unauthentic but in his case was permitted because he had medical needs. Slater says, " So close to his daughter, Mario can hear her breathe: He is not afraid to hold her hand. Some might say Mario, with his implants, has agreed to strange sort of bondage, but Mario doesn't think so. He would say he's been freed" (Slater 243). Technology, such as chemical and surgical " improvements," offers another opportunity to live another life and create a social life with others. After Mario received his implants he was able to touch, love, be around, and have a relationship with his daughter. These are things that he was not able to do before.

Many think that Mario has a strange relationship with his daughter, but he thinks that he is now able to enjoy the ordinary things in life, such as, having relationship with his daughter. Mario's relationship may seem inauthentic but since his enhancements to the brain were medically necessary, it is acceptable for him. People, who do not have medical or health issues, make improvements to their DBS because they want to live a better life, but this leads to people becoming and living inauthentic lives. In Mario's case it was fine for him to better his brain because he medically inclined to do so. Slater says, " Mario's anxiety was so profound...that six years ago his psychiatrists

at Butler Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, suggested psychosurgery” (Slater 234).

Mario had medical issues that needed to be attended to so he would be able to better and continue his life. Turkle on the other hand shows that turning to robots for comfort makes people less real. Turkle says, “ She (Anne) was looking for a ‘ no-risk relationship’ that would stave off loneliness. A responsive robot, even one just exhibiting scripted behavior, seemed better to her than a demanding boyfriend. I asked her, gently, if she was joking” (Turkle 270). Turkle is explaining how Anne would have a robot that would comfort and listen to her without any real emotions, rather than have a real boyfriend who show his emotions and have real personality. Turkle then asks her if she was joking, implying that the idea of having a robot companion is fake. People, who do not psychologically or medically need brain surgery, who want robots or brain surgery to improve their lives are less authentic and are living less of a real life.

The idea of robots taking the place of another human to better relationships is an idea of disappointment, but DBS, to a patient who medically needs the help to improve their life and relationships, is appropriate. In Turkle’s essay, David Levy, a British-born entrepreneur and computer scientist, poses a question about marriage to robots. He asks, “ Does being with a robot make you feel better?” (Turkle 267). Turkle responds by saying, “ I was not shy about my lack enthusiasm for Levy’s ideas and suggested that the very fact we were discussing marriage to robots at all was a comment on human disappointments—that in matters of love and sex, we must be failing each other” (Turkle 268-9). Turkle is saying that the concept of marriage for

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robots was a topic of dismay. The comment of failing each other indicates that robots cannot have marriage because in marriage there are mistakes.

Robots are made perfectly, to follow orders. Humans lack perfection and that lets us love one another, and have an authentic relationship. Turkle does not like the idea of brain improvements, or the idea of robots taking the place of a real person. Unlike Turkle, Slater shows how deep brain stimulation has helped Mario. Slater says, " But for Mario, it is simple. ' I've had a hard life,' he says. ' My parents got divorced. My father died. I broke my foot. I have OCD.' He pauses. ' But,' he says ' I have been helped.'" (Slater 243). Slater is explaining Mario had a difficult life and how his OCD has not helped the cause either. She continues to explain that the implants have helped Mario to live a better life. Implants or deep brain stimulation is justified to those who medically need it, not to those who want it for individual reasons.

After analyzing Lauren Slater's essay " Who Holds the Clicker?" and Sherry Turkle's essay, " Alone Together," it is obvious that improvements to the brain makes people inauthentic, unless the improvements are for medical purposes. Turkle deals with the concept of authenticity and how robots have inauthentic relationships with humans, which leads to people living less authentic lives. Slater explores the case of Mario, who had obsessive-compulsive disorder and got deep brain stimulation to help his situation. After he was implanted he was able to have a relationship with his daughter, create a social life with the outside world, do everyday things such as mow the lawn, and live a regular life. The ideas of robots replacing humans and people making brain improvements to better their relationships are ones that should be classified as unreal, because they make people inauthentic.

Although Mario's life was less authentic with the implants, it was justifiable for Mario to get deep brain stimulation because he medically needed it.