



Emotional labour, identity, and burnout: a phenomenological perspective

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This presentation explores the impact that certain forms of work can have on our personal life and wellbeing in virtue of their ability to shape affective experience. More specifically, I suggest that “emotional labour” can threaten self-identity due to how it can influence a person’s evaluative outlook on the world, and I explore some of the consequences that this may have for mental health.

Drawing also on a phenomenological understanding of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood, I start by illustrating how self-identity is connected to what is of import to us, and how this is sustained by affective experience. I then move to argue that, by fostering the experience and display of certain patterns of emotions, a work environment can cement the centrality of specific values, cares, and commitments, and deplete the affective resources available to sustain one’s own evaluative outlook on the world. I conclude by providing an illustration and a further development of this account through the exploration of some aspects of the phenomenology of “burnout”.

Keywords: Affectivity; Emotion; Emotional labour; Self; Identity; Evaluative outlook.