

## **The Neurobiology of Virtue and the Challenge to Moral Development**

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An increasing number of studies (Weng 2013; Younis 2015) show that virtue learning affects brain structure and regulate emotions (Carron, 2014; Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Stark, 2001). This may reverse some neuroethical perspectives suggesting that our neural-network activity determines the acquisition and permanence of the virtues (P.M. Churchland 1998; 2010). My purpose is to show that the neural correlates of virtues – also gathered from experience, genes, education, and social values – do not undermine the crucial role of willpower in virtuous actions. This implies restoring the notions of veto and consent (Navarini 2014) as universal practical options which follow the subject's exposure to – and development of – moral virtues. To explore this thesis, I would like to focus on four points: 1) Virtues modify the perception of basic emotions. 2) Virtues cause (non-permanent) changes in the mind. 3) Virtues determine the likeliness of actions, generating Hypotheses of Action (HAs). 4) The HAs are submitted to one's Consent and Veto Power (CVP). The capability of denying or giving our consent to the hypotheses of action (HAs) given by virtuous/vicious habits may be necessary and sufficient to practice freedom. Education may induce positive answers to HAs and, since the stability of virtuous habits is one of the most intuitive sources of HAs, our CVP typically applies to dispositions towards goods. We are consequently inclined to persist in our virtues as long as we continue to give our consent to the specific actions induced by the virtues themselves.

### **References**

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