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Human Nature, Personhood, and Ethical Naturalism[1]

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Abstract
John McDowell has argued that for human needs to matter in practical deliberation, we must have already acquired the full range of character traits that are imparted by an ethical upbringing. Since our upbringings can diverge considerably, his argument makes trouble for any Aristotelian ethical naturalism that wants to support a single set of moral virtues. I argue here that there is a story to be told about the normal course of human life according to which it is no coincidence that there is agreement on the virtues. Because we are creatures who arrive at personhood only by learning from others in a relation of dependency, we cannot help but see ourselves as creatures for whom non-instrumental rationality is the norm. Those who train others in personhood must view the trainee's interests as having a value independent of their interests and must imbue the trainee with a sense of that value. Extending and preserving the sense of self-worth that we must acquire if we are to acquire personhood requires we see ourselves as creatures who need something like the virtues.

I. Introduction

Contemporary Aristotelian ethical naturalism[2] has set for itself the project of vindicating the moral virtues as grounded on human needs. The goodness of the moral virtues, on this view, lies in the fact that they allow us to meet human needs. The ethical naturalist claims that each human agent should develop the virtues because humans generally need them and this fact makes these dispositions, and their possessors, good.

[1] I would like to thank Cherilyn Keall for her editorial assistance with this paper, and Alice Crary, Erin Flynn, and John Russon for stimulating discussion of these issues.

[2] Hereafter I will use 'ethical naturalism' as shorthand for 'Aristotelian ethical naturalism' and 'ethical naturalist' as shorthand for 'Aristotelian ethical naturalist,' without denying that there are of course many other varieties of ethical naturalism. Indeed, the differences between Aristotelian ethical naturalism and other strains of naturalism are so pronounced that the term itself seems to be generating confusion. On this, see my 'What is Natural about Foot's Ethical Naturalism?' forthcoming in *Ratio*.

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John McDowell has objected here that the naturalist's 'should' is, by itself, too weak for bare rational agents to find in it a justification for a requirement to develop the virtues. A wolf, for example, may be defective *qua* wolf if it is a free rider in the hunt; the characteristic lupine hunting style is, after all, cooperative. But a rational wolf would realize that he cannot conclude from the facts that wolves need x and that he is a wolf, that *he* needs x. In order for the needs of wolves to weigh in a rational wolf's practical deliberation, according to McDowell, he must have an ethical upbringing of a certain sort. That upbringing shapes the wolf's 'motivational and evaluational propensities' and thereby introduces the wolf to a distinctive way of evaluating actions.[3] The ethical wolf cares about lupine needs because he has been introduced, McDowell maintains, to distinctive canons of ethical reasoning that render him sensitive to considerations of what benefits wolves and that likewise allow those considerations to reinforce his conception of the virtues. In short, from an ethical wolf's point of view, it is a good thing to get wolves what they need and this reinforces his view that loyal cooperation in the hunt is a good thing. Likewise for humans, only those of us who have been through an ethical upbringing will find rational support for the praiseworthiness of a self-sacrificing act in the premise that such acts are required by traits that enable humans generally to meet their needs.[4]

[3] John McDowell, 'Two Sorts of Naturalism' in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 185.

[4] *Mind, Value, and Reality*, 191. We must bear in mind that the ethical naturalist is not suggesting that the appeal to what humans generally need provides the motivation for any particular acts of virtue. As Rosalind Hursthouse points out, there are various reasons for which a virtuous agent may be moved to act that are characteristic of one who possesses that virtue (see Hursthouse in Robert Heinaman ed., *Aristotle and Moral Realism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 25). For example, a generous man may give a gift to his friend because she would enjoy the gift so very much, but not because she might then consider his offer on her house in a more favorable light. The ethical naturalist's appeal to what humans need is rarely if ever such a characteristic reason; after all, it rings quite hollow to suggest that one did a deed of courage because humans need courage. Still, naturalistic arguments do figure in the moral education of children. It is perfectly ordinary to emphasize to children the importance of the virtues in human life, as when we point out that honesty 'helps us to rely on each other, trust each other and form intimate relationships' (see Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 168).

Ethical naturalists posit a connection, then, between the dispositions that render people sensitive to the needs and interests of others, on the one hand, and our rational receptivity to the justificatory force of the fact that the virtues generally make a contribution to meeting human needs, on the other. In McDowell's terms, we acquire both in the process of habituation whereby we acquire a 'second nature.' A parent's explicit teachings that honesty is important to human life are part of what brings a child to feel the force of such a claim as a reason. And yet McDowell also argues, 'Any second nature of the relevant kind, not just virtue, will seem to its possessor to open his eyes to reasons for acting.'[5] Given this admission, it comes to seem like quite a coincidence that there is substantive agreement over basic moral virtues, as there generally seems to be. Naturally, different moral upbringings could open one's eyes to starkly different conceptions of what would be regarded as 'virtues.' One might expect to find considerable disagreement about what humans need and the extent to which these needs must matter to the rational agent.[6] After all, there is both a difficulty of working out how it is that human needs come to have ethical significance for me and the difficulty of working out what precisely it is that humans need.

Further, at least some of the needs that figure in the claim that humans need the virtues are not specifiable independently of our self-interpretation. Take, for example, our need for respect; this need seems to depend largely on a susceptibility to humiliation that is highly sensitive to how we interpret ourselves and others' behaviour toward us. We only regard respectfulness as something that a good human must exhibit, I believe, insofar as we regard some instances of humiliation as perfectly normal. The claim of the ethical naturalist is that on the correct interpretation of human beings, we reason properly only insofar as we realize that we need respect. This ties the question 'why do we need the virtues?' to the question 'what vindicates the interpretation of ourselves according to which it is the virtues that we need?' What is it, we might legitimately wonder, that should lead us to reject alternative interpretations according to which we do not need the virtues?

I think that filling out an answer to that question is a central and as yet incomplete task of the renascent ethical naturalism of virtue ethics. Because human self-interpretation plays a central role in the task of

[5] *Mind, Value, and Reality*, 189.

[6] I am not suggesting that we do not find any disagreement about such matters, but it does not generally seem to extend to rejecting the basic claims of the ethical naturalist, e.g. about the importance of honesty to human life.

justifying the virtues, it is evident that a strictly biological account of human beings will not be sufficient to fulfill this task. Consider again the case of humiliation: seeing some instances of feeling humiliated as normal in the way that matters to ethical naturalism requires seeing humiliation as normal in more than a statistical sense. It requires that we see humiliation as something that we have no reason to suppress. For it is evident that we could adopt a (more or less successful) regime of attempting to suppress our tendency to be humiliated by disrespectful acts. But we do not do so because we embrace our tendency to be humiliated by some acts; that is, we view it as a constitutive element of our human identity. Hence, the view of human nature that the ethical naturalist aims at is a normatively-laden interpretation of human nature that is not identical with a biological account of the species *Homo sapiens*. For some, this will make the task seem doomed *ab initio*, because such interpretive matters seem to be inherently murky affairs.

I hope partly to dispel such despair by arguing that there is an invariant core to our various self-interpretations. Taken together with some basic facts about human natural history, this core supports the ethical naturalist's claim that we need the virtues. Specifically, personhood is at the core of our self-interpretation; whatever else we might think about ourselves, we regard ourselves as self-conscious agents, capable of acting on the basis of reasons that are responsive at the very least to our own interests. Although we could abandon this interpretation, say, by choosing to see ourselves as physical entities among others, entirely determined by causal relations, doing so would come at a great cost. When we take our personhood together with the fact of our natural history that we can only get to personhood via being cared for by others through a period of dependency, we get an interesting result for ethical naturalism. I will argue here that this basic feature of human natural history, that we care for our children enough to impart personhood, shapes our self-interpretation in such a way that we cannot adopt what I will here call a 'Calliclean' self-interpretation, that is, an interpretation according to which it is normal for humans to reason instrumentally. What counts as practically rational for us is shaped by the basic fact that we must acquire what Annette Baier has termed 'the arts of personhood' from another person through a period of dependency. That humans normally care for their children enough to impart the arts of personhood holds a central, constitutive role in our identity as humans, and I will show that under this self-interpretation, it is clear that we are not Calliclean, and further, that we need something like the virtues.

My argument will run as follows. First, I will make some methodological remarks about the approach I am taking to philosophical

anthropology. My approach borrows from the naturalism pioneered by Michael Thompson and Philippa Foot. According to this view, as practically reasoning creatures we cannot avoid adopting some interpretation of our own form of life and how we interpret ourselves determines how we evaluate ourselves, including how we evaluate our practical reasoning. I then move on to argue that we are committed to a certain normatively-laden conception of human nature shaped by our view of ourselves as persons plus the fact that we are dependent on adults in the attainment of personhood. I conclude by drawing the conceptual connections between this view of human nature and our need for the virtues.

II. Describing Human Nature

With Michael Thompson and Philippa Foot, I share the view that describing living things (humans included) brings into play a distinctive logical form which commits us to normative judgments.[7] This can be seen by noting that our knowledge of individual living organisms and our knowledge of life forms stand in a reciprocal dependence. According to Michael Thompson, identifying something as an organism situates it within a 'wider context' which is its species. As he puts it, 'If a thing is alive, if it is an *organism*, then some particular vital operations and processes must go on in it from time to time – eating, budding out, breathing, walking, growing, thinking, photosynthesizing.'[8] But nothing can fall under these descriptions by being examined as a concrete particular in isolation. To see this, note that when we talk about something as drinking, it is always a matter of saying that '*for it* or *in it*, the events before us add up to drinking,' and that is a matter of situating these events against the background of what happens in that species.[9] To take another example, one and the same process, cell division, counts as reproduction for bacteria, but constitutes growth or maintenance in a multicellular organism.[10] So if we realize that a young emperor penguin can identify the call of

[7] For further exegesis and defense of this position, see my 'What is Natural about Foot's Ethical Naturalism?' forthcoming in *Ratio*.

[8] 'The Representation of Life' in Hursthouse et al. *Virtues and Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 275.

[9] 'The Representation of Life,' 276.

[10] 'Three Degrees of Natural Goodness' appeared in Italian in *Iride*, April 2003, original English text at http://www.pitt.edu/%7emthompso/three.pdf (last accessed March 25, 2008).

its parents, we learn something about the life form: the adult emperor penguin uses calls to identify itself to its young. That is an important type of claim that Thompson calls a 'natural-historical judgment.' On Thompson's account, the category of a species or life-form is the subject of this logically distinct kind of judgment.[11] These judgments have a distinctive form ('the S is F') and distinctive logical properties. For example, 'the house cat has four legs' is a judgment of this kind, and it is not overthrown by the existence of three-legged cats. The judgment is neither about a particular cat nor is it a universal judgment attempting to collect all individual cats and make a judgment about them. It is about the life form 'domestic house cat.'

Identifying an organism also involves taking a normative stance on what is going on in the organism. In situating the organism within the wider context of its form of life, we are situating the individual organism against a view of how creatures of that sort normally function. Hence, we are situating it against a set of norms. Even in morphological matters, we must settle what belongs to the organism as a normal part of its body and what does not. This involves arriving at an interpretation of the organism as functionally organized. Not every variation in an individual from what is characteristic of its species will count as a defect, of course. As Foot points out, a blue tit can lack the patch of blue on its head without being impeded in living its life; this lack is not, then, a defect.[12] So, we distinguish which components are crucial to carrying out an organism's characteristic life. Of course, in our identification of an organism we can be quite mistaken about these matters, but the notions are necessarily at play whenever we identify an organism. Philippa Foot uses the term 'natural normativity' to refer to the norms that are at play in our identification of living things.[13]

As living organisms, our own self-understanding takes the form of natural-historical judgments and hence essentially involves taking a normative stance on what is going on in us. When we understand vital operations of individual humans, including ourselves, we understand those actions by situating what is happening against the background of norms for human beings. Yet there are two crucial differences between making judgments in our own case and in that of other organisms. First, we are the creatures in question, so some of what we might judge about ourselves does not come from observation. To have so much as the thought 'I am thinking' requires situating

[11] 'The Representation of Life,' 267.
[12] *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30.
[13] *Natural Goodness*, 33.

ourselves against our own life form, but having that thought that one is thinking is not a matter of observation.[14] Likewise, being aware that one is hungry or in pain does not require observation, yet these too are vital phenomena and require us to situate ourselves against the background of our own life form. In both instances, we learn something, non-observationally, about being human through learning about particular vital operations of humans from our own case.

Second, we are practically reasoning creatures. This has two implications for our self-understanding. First, the fact that we are practically reasoning beings means that practical reasoning is a feature of human beings that stands to be evaluated. Lacking the capacity for practical reasoning altogether is a defect in human beings, but failing to reason well or to act well on our reasoning is a different sort of defect that we label a 'moral failing'. Second, to the extent that we set the course of our lives, our actions influence what form of life we are. Of course, this is not to say that it is up to us individually or collectively what sort of life form we are. Some actions typify us as individuals; others actions typify us as members of groups of cultures. Still other actions typify us as the form of life we are. In other words, it is not simply our possession of a capacity for practical reason that we share as human beings. There are actions that we view as essential to our humanity and that do not appear to be culturally variable. For example, humans take care of their children for many years after infancy. This fact involves our will; we could individually choose not to do so. Yet, those who make such choices are defective in this regard; indeed, they are often deplorable, and we would deem societies that failed to take care of their children unjust if not outright inhuman. Such actions form a background against which humans are evaluated that cannot be changed by any one of us individually, nor even by any ordinary collective action.[15] These actions are characteristic of human beings in general.

On this approach to naturalism, natural-historical judgments about any sort of creature are interpretive, and hence, they are not straightforwardly empirical. After all, the reciprocal dependence of judgments about individuals and life form means that how we interpret the life form impacts what we can say about the individual. Both of

[14] Thompson therefore argues that the concept 'human' is a pure a priori concept, 'devoid of even the least empirical accretion' (see 'Apprehending Human Form' in O'Hear, ed. *Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69).

[15] Some sorts of collective action clearly could have the effect of changing our form of life as a long-term consequence.

the features of natural historical judgments involving humans that I have just enumerated suggest that constructing a normative picture of human nature is even further removed from empirical study than constructing a picture of other life forms. While an empirical account can track statistical norms in our behaviour and reasoning, we do not acknowledge as a norm of practical reasoning that we must adhere to what is statistically normal for humans. Our standards of practical reasoning are a crucial component of our account of human nature, especially for the purposes of linking such an account to ethics, and they are not yielded by an empirical naturalism that tracks statistical norms for humans. We inevitably acknowledge norms of practical reasoning in constructing an interpretive account of the human life form, and we must construct some interpretation to achieve any sort of self-understanding. Our business here is to try to unearth the basis for a common human self-understanding according to which we need the virtues.

Before moving on to discuss that basis, it will be useful to distinguish two kinds of natural historical judgment applicable to humans on the basis of the preceding discussion. The first sort of judgment states a fact that does not change depending on how humans act. We know, for example, that human infants simply cannot get on without being cared for. As psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott puts the point, 'wherever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant.'[16] This describes a certain raw, material necessity of human life and nothing we can foreseeably do will alter that fact. Some of these judgments can be easily arrived at with cursory observations. Others, such as 'humans need vitamin B-12 for a well-functioning nervous system,' require sophisticated empirical investigations.

A second class of claims describes humans in action and has a less direct connection to empirical investigation than judgments of the first sort possess. These claims identify features of the human life form that clearly stem from how we act. This class includes claims like 'humans care for their children' as well as 'humans need respect. Claims of both the first and second sort have a normative, self-interpretive element on the view I am drawing from Thompson and Foot. Unlike claims of the first sort, however, claims of the second sort involve a background of human action. In other words, we could not affirm the truth of them without our commitment to being that sort of being, and we may continue to affirm the truth of them even

[16] *Through paediatrics to psycho-analysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), xxvii.

if in practice, statistically speaking, it turns out that our care for our children is quite shoddy or that we regularly insult one another. Although claims of the first sort limit what sort of creature we are, claims of the second sort are also an important part of our self-knowledge and an essential part of the picture of the human form of life against which we understand and evaluate ourselves. In what follows, I will try to situate the claim that humans need the virtues within judgments of this second sort. The standards of practical reason that are important to evaluating humans as practically reasoning creatures must be conveyed in judgments of those sorts, for they are not flat empirical facts about humans.[17] To say that we need the virtues is to evaluate someone who lacks them as a defective *qua* human being. But the standards we apply to ourselves as practical reasoners depend on the background of a typically human mode of life. Hence, I am suggesting that our need for the virtues does depend on our acknowledging the background of action against which we evaluate ourselves as human beings. We rightly regard these features as objective facts about human beings even though they are, in some sense, tied to choices that we make. They are part of a deep background of actions that gives shape to the form of life that we are; we experience these actions as unavoidable by us and as essential to being a good human.

III. Imparting Calliclean Personhood

On the view I am taking, there are specifically human standards of practical reason, and I believe that what we ordinarily understand

[17] Peter Geach famously wrote, 'Humans need the virtues as bees need stings,' in *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 17). Geach could easily be misread as making a judgment of the first sort as described above. That is, he might be read as arguing that for bees possessing a sting is a material necessity without which bees will perish, and that likewise our possession of the virtues is a material necessity without which humans will perish. But of course, individual bees do not simply perish without stings, as individual humans do not perish without the virtues. Indeed, both stinging and the virtues may be fatal to the respective parties. The suggested analogy, I take it, is that without stings, bees generally would not be able to live out their characteristic life; likewise, humans would not be able to live out their characteristic life without the possession of the virtues. Since we are practically reasoning beings, our characteristic life is shaped by actions that we take. Hence, 'humans need the virtues' is a claim of the second sort, for it is a natural historical judgment that is responsive to the choices we make as practically rational creatures.

as the virtues are included in those standards. Since we regard ourselves as self-conscious agents, personhood is central to our self-conception. On the position I am advocating here, we could say that there is a specifically human form of personhood based on the norms of practical reason that define our form of life. But let us start with a less robust conception of personhood that involves only acting on the basis of reasons responsive to our own interests. I will call these 'Calliclean persons.' What I aim to show is that we cannot be such persons. To show this, I will draw on a feature of personhood pointed out by Annette Baier. According to Baier, 'Persons essentially are *second* persons, who grow up with other persons.'[18] Baier's claim is intriguing because it challenges any highly abstract conception of personhood according to which any conceivable rational entity is a person. On her view, however, the self-consciousness characteristic of persons depends on our responding to earlier phases of our life, which in turn implies that our life has stages. Ungenerated beings, however rational we imagine them to be, simply could not develop the reflective life history that is characteristic of a person. Baier's claim holds true even of persons in the restrictive sense I want to start with, that is, it holds of Calliclean persons.

According to Baier we must acquire what she calls the 'arts of personhood' from another person. I shall take it here that by 'arts of personhood,' Baier means to pick out the capacities required to achieve competency in our exercise of practical reason, whatever these turn out to be for our form of life. Any person, human or not, must attain these arts from another person, but humans do so in a particular manner. In the normal human life, one or more adults is charged with imparting these arts to a dependent child. I shall call an upbringing sufficient to impart the arts of personhood a 'minimally decent upbringing.' I want to argue that these facts about human beings, that we acquire the arts of personhood via a minimally decent upbringing and that it is normal for adult humans to provide a minimally decent upbringing to their children, place limits on our possible self-interpretation; in other words, we can know that a being who must acquire the arts of personhood roughly in this way *must* as a result see herself in a certain light. Specifically, I want to argue that these facts about human beings rules out interpreting ourselves as Calliclean persons. I am arguing that while there could be creatures

[18] Annette Baier, *Postures of the Mind* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 84.

who conceive of themselves as Calliclean persons, we cannot so conceive ourselves because of the facts of our natural history.

To make this argument, we must look at what I have called a 'minimally decent upbringing' to see what it comprises. First, it seems obvious that a competent human agent will have to be responsive to his own needs and interests, and, therefore, will have to acquire some basic understanding of herself as an independent self with needs and interests of her own and of how to go about meeting them. The basic competency acquired here can be captured under the label 'prudence.' Prudence is an essential art of personhood, since we must at least have the ability to act independently on our own interests to be a competent practical agent.

Those who acquire personhood by learning from adults through a period of dependency on them require a non-instrumental investment from their teachers.[19] It could of course be the case that there is a contractual expectation of return from the trainee for the training in personhood. Indeed, some have suggested some form of contractual basis for these relationships,[20] and on this basis one could argue that the investment of adults in children might be instrumentally rational. But it would seem to be a contract that in fact regularly comes out one-sided, with vast expenditures that regularly do not get reciprocated. Further, it seems that prudence could not genuinely be taught within such a framework. It is difficult to see what motivations a Calliclean person would have to inculcate a sense of independent selfhood in another. A child could, after all, be trained to see herself as nothing more than an extension of the adult. But such training does not result in practical competency as an independent agent. The teacher of prudence must be able to identify the interests of another independently of their relation to his own interests and candidly communicate those interests to the other, regardless of the impact of doing so on his own interests. Since a shrewd strategist must no doubt be good at assessing the interests of others independently of their relation to her own interests, a Calliclean person could certainly fulfill the first condition, but surely the second

[19] This has nothing to do with the sentimental attachment we normally experience as adults toward our children; I am trying to argue that a non-instrumental attachment is a necessary condition for the transmission of personhood in creatures with our natural history.

[20] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Peru, Il.: Open Court Press, 2001). It is clear, however, that for MacIntyre the contract does not have an instrumental foundation. In other words, it is not a Hobbesian instrumental contract.

condition could only be fulfilled on the chance that there were rarely any conflicts between the interests of the trainee and those of the trainer. Such a trainer would be unreliable and therefore clearly defective. Further, even a Calliclean person would have to attain and maintain a sufficient sense of competency as an agent.[21] That sense of competency must be learned from another through having one's competency recognized. To recognize that competency in another, one must recognize as competent actions by which another pursues legitimate interests even when they run contrary to one's own interests. Imparting a sense of competency would require not only recognizing, but also expressing that recognition to the trainee, and it seems that a Calliclean person would have only highly contingent reasons for doing either. Finally, the trainee must come to view her interests as worth advancing. That requires not only a sense that she is able to advance her interests, but also a sense that there is positive value in doing so. Again, the sense that advancing at least some of her interests has value would have to be learned, and to learn that her interests have value independently of the interests of those of her trainer would require a trainer who takes a committed non-instrumental interest in her interests. So, acquiring a sense of competency and self-worth would require non-instrumental treatment from another. Given these considerations, it seems evident that a Calliclean human person would require the care of a non-Calliclean person. So, while carrying out a minimally decent upbringing does not seem to require complete virtue, it does require a non-instrumental approach to reasoning about at least this relationship; and that in turn means prudence cannot be the only source of reasons to which humans are responsive. I am arguing, then, that for creatures who become persons and who are therefore essentially second persons to pass on the virtue of prudence in something like the way we do would require more than prudence; in other words, we must be some sort of non-Calliclean persons.[22]

[21] See Paul Benson, 'Free Agency and Self Worth,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 91, No. 12. (Dec., 1994), 650–668.

[22] One might wonder at this point whether there could be Calliclean persons at all. It does seem like a remote possibility, given Baier's point. Yet, it is imaginable that there could be persons who have instinctual systems that get them through early years in isolation and who learn purely by a sort of observation of adult members of their species. What is nevertheless difficult to see is how the Calliclean person could acquire the sense of self-worth that is required for agency.

What emerges is a picture that should be familiar to us. Human adults care for children in their charge non-instrumentally, with a view to imparting to them the arts of personhood. Good humans must have all of the characteristics that would enable them to do this well. That is not to say, of course, that all humans must undertake to raise children in order to be good, but given that raising children is a central aspect of human life and that any of us may, by unforeseen circumstances, end up with a charge, these characteristics must be possessed by all of us. These include characteristics analogous to the virtues of courage and temperance, since a caretaker must be ready to take risks to preserve an endangered child and must have the wherewithal to restrain himself from acting on pressing desires when fulfilling them would conflict with responsibilities for the child. To be a competent human agent, then, one must have these characteristics. But it is still possible that the dispositions in question would differ from the analogous dispositions discussed by virtue ethicists in that they would be significantly limited in scope. That is, it is possible that an agent could count as courageous only when defending a child in his charge, and temperate only when this is done for the sake of a child in his charge. Outside of that scope, it could be that we count as good human action the unrestrained pursuit of one's interests. We could be what I would call 'semi-Calliclean persons,' that is, persons who acknowledge limits to instrumental rationality only in the case of dependent children. In the next section I will try to show why we cannot be semi-Calliclean persons, but rather must be human persons who exhibit something like the traditional set of virtues.

IV. From Semi-Calliclean Persons to Human Virtues

What I hope to have done in the previous section is to show that the norms of human practical reason have a fundamentally non-instrumental nature. Still, even if we are non-Calliclean persons, it is not obvious why we would need the virtues as we ordinarily conceive of them. It is obvious that our conception of the moral virtues places demands on us for non-instrumental actions that extend far beyond the context of parent-child relationships and nothing I have yet argued would require us to adopt a self-interpretation embracing such demands. In this section I will argue, however, for broader limits on our self-interpretation on the basis of these same facts about human nature; within these limits it is evident that we do need something like the virtues.

In the previous section, I pointed out that imparting even Calliclean personhood necessarily involves inculcating a sense of self-worth. I believe this sense of self-worth is important for seeing why humans need the virtues. One might say that what we perforce acquire in our upbringing is what Lawrence Thomas nicely calls the 'emotional imprimatur of self-valuing.'[23] Thomas argues that there is a very direct connection between parental care and the acquisition of the sense of personal dignity that lies behind the demand for respect and just treatment from others more generally. As he puts it:

> . . .as the object of its parents' love, precisely what the child learns is that there are morally appropriate and morally inappropriate ways that others may behave toward it; and that this applies with equal force even to those who care mightily for its well-being.[24]

One might object here that the notion of the minimally decent upbringing I have introduced falls short of parental love, and it is love, not non-minimal care, that is needed to develop this deeper sense of self-worth. But I do not think that it falls short of what is necessary to draw a connection between being cared-for and acquiring a sense of dignity. Surely there are more or less effective ways of instilling a sense of dignity in a child that could be studied empirically. Even if not every form of non-minimal care would coincide with the most effective pathway to instil a sense of dignity, non-minimal care would nevertheless share with more effective forms of parental love a direct concern with what the child needs, and this seems to be the crucial element for drawing a connection with self-worth.

Self-worth is, it seems, largely a matter of realizing that needs and interests should make some claim on others. Since personhood requires self-worth and we acquire personhood from another in a relation of dependency, another human person must take sufficient interest in us to cultivate a sense of self-worth. The only self-interpretation consistent with embracing the normalcy of such a relationship is one under which humans are beings who care about some others' needs and that some others care about one's own needs; hence, this must be part of the background against which human practical reasoning is to be evaluated. Furthermore, I believe that the only self-interpretation consistent with upholding the sense of self-worth acquired in that upbringing is the self-interpretation embraced by ethical naturalists.

[23] *The Family and the Political Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39.
[24] *The Family and the Political Self*, 41.

Hursthouse claims that we need honesty because it helps us to be able to trust each other and to form intimate relationships; Foot claims that 'at some basic level' humans need mutual respect.[25] One who has been through a minimally decent upbringing has acquired a sense of competency and self-worth. To maintain and preserve that sense of competency and self-worth, humans need treatment from others similar to that received from their caretakers; that is, we need non-instrumental regard for the self-worth that is first cultivated in one's initial condition of dependency. Creatures who interpret themselves as possessing non-instrumental worth are susceptible to humiliation via treatment that denies that worth, and, hence, such creatures need respect. Likewise, since we are imbued with the sense of value in our legitimate interests in such things as basic well-being, self-improvement, and rearing children, we need justice to protect the means of fulfilling those interests. Hence, we need honesty, respect, justice, and much else. Further, a self-interpretation which rejected the normalcy of the moral virtues as part of a normatively-laden picture of human nature would have to face the burden of squaring the semi-Calliclean picture of human nature with the fact that it is obviously normal for humans to *form* intimate relationships and through them undertake burdensome projects like rearing children. It seems implausible that human beings could maintain their sense of self-worth or form new, trusting intimate relationships if they adopted the dispositions the semi-Calliclean advocates as normal. Hence, this seems an untenable self-interpretation.

I hope my argument could support the claim that because of the way humans characteristically live as persons who emerge from relations of dependency that promote a sense of self-worth, we need the virtues. At the very least, I am confident that I have supported the claim that we are neither Calliclean nor semi-Calliclean creatures, and that to be good *qua* humans, we need something like the virtues. To demonstrate that we must exhibit all the characteristics that match with a very specific conception of the virtues would take me far beyond the confines of this paper. Nothing I have argued yet shows that our form of life is incompatible with, say, a utilitarian conception of the virtues, though I do not think that we can be a utilitarian form of life. Nevertheless by my argument we must be creatures who engage in a significant amount of non-instrumental reasoning. We could avoid being such creatures, but it would require willful change of such basic facts about our natural history that the result would be a fundamentally different form of life.

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[25] *On Virtue Ethics*, 168; *Natural Goodness*, 48.