Constitution View and the Ontological Uniqueness of Persons

Abstract

According to Lynne Rudder Baker's constitution view of personhood, human persons are ontologically unique beings that are constituted by human organisms. What makes human persons unique is their first-person perspective of the world; having this perspective allows human persons to stand in moral, interpretive, and ontologically productive relations to the world. But which human organisms constitute persons? On Baker's view, the answer appears to

[redacted]

x constitutes a human person at t if and only if x is a human organism

[illegible]

fusion, and others). Here I wish to add to the list the cases of feral children: cases of children who have been subjected to extreme deprivation of normal social interaction, and who have physically survived such isolation.

Now, contemporary philosophers have paid virtually no attention to the cases of feral children. Part of this can be accounted for the fact that many (though not all) cases of alleged feral children have been nothing but legends and hoaxes. The more prevalent explanation (by which the stories of wild children have been explained away) is a reductive one: the feral

children are regarded as undiagnosed or unrecognized cases of some psychopathology or other; counterfactually, had the diagnosticians of these children been availed with DSM-IV-TR, the label 'feral child' might have been put to rest.

Despite that the prevalent explanation accounts for *most* cases of alleged feral children, it life.' Hunched in an oversized crib, Danielle curled in on herself like a potato bug,

[illegible]

seemed somehow missing. Armstrong called the girl's condition ‘environmental autism.’ Danielle had been deprived of interaction [illegible]

counts as a person, but those who belong to a different kind, do not. But, as I argue above, this seems to place the threshold too low.[9]

To my mind, there is a better alternative for resisting the regress argument, which is to place the threshold condition higher. To see this, we turn to an objection raised by William Hasker [2004]. Hasker argues that the person-favorable circumstances in Baker [2000] are left unarticulated: when the entailments from Baker's definition for a first person perspective are

followed through, they lead to significant problems. On Hasker's interpretation, the requirement responded to Hasker's concerns, her formulation on the thesis (HP) can be viewed as such a this paper; here I am content with just setting up a sign-post. Once we get past the initial

DeGregory, Lane. 2008. The Girl in a Window, *St. Petersburg Times*, URL = [illegible]

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[7] DSM-IV-TR identifies five distinct pervasive developmental disorders (PDD): autism, Asperger syndrome