Integrity, Vulnerability, and Temporality

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This paper asks how to account for vulnerable integrity in the temporal dynamism of human lives without relying on a subtractive vision of integral human nature, borrowing from presumed past or future rationality and maturity, or depending on an external attribution of dignity. Illustrating the challenges with vignettes from the author's life, it argues inductively that human integrity includes morally inviolable vulnerability to others with whom we are in interdependent relationship and without whom we cannot develop or maintain our selves. Others reside at the core of our integrity, for better and for worse, and we reside at theirs. Augustine's accounts of memory, time, and the narrative self; Whiteheadian process thought's understanding of continuity through change; and feminist theories of narrative all provide theological and philosophical justifications for this vision of integrity. John Wall's and Johan Brännmark's non-foundational approaches to integrity and human rights lead us to the same conclusion without entailing theological anthropological claims, ensuring its relevance in a pluralist culture.

Introduction

Historically, Western thinkers have understood the relationship between human integrity and human vulnerability as analogous to the relationship between essence and accident: human integrity is immune to the forces that attack vulnerability, and vulnerability affects only those dimensions of humanity that are not crucial to personhood. For example, the principles of bioethics arising out of the Barcelona process closely relate integrity to dignity and identity and assert that integrity is a prerequisite of autonomy. In one version of this view, according to Jacob Rendtorff, human integrity is a wholeness or an untouchable core.[1]

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[1] Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, "Integrity, Concept of," in *Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics* (1 January 2015), (accessed 7 November 2022). Rendtorff includes character, virtue, and moral consistency; these too can be vulnerable, but they are contingent, not universal. He seems to acknowledge a fifth principle—identity—which he does not clearly distinguish from integrity. Although their relationship demands rigorous critical description, for the purposes of this paper, I take identity to include integrity. On the Barcelona principles,

As an apparent paradox, the notion that integrity itself can be vulnerable without ceasing to describe the morally inviolable core of human being poses theoretical challenges, particularly in a pluralist cultural context in which theologically robust claims must have convincing secular analogues. This paper is an initial, inductive exploration of just one of these challenges: how to account for integrity in the temporality and dynamism of individual human lives without relying on a subtractive vision of "compromised" integral human nature.[2] In particular, children, dementia patients, and traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients pose a problem for theological and philosophical anthropology: How can their integrity be described without either borrowing from their presumed future or past rationality and maturity, or depending on an arbitrary external attribution of dignity?

First, I will elaborate the problem by briefly outlining two common but inadequate responses to it. Second, beginning with individual experience, and inspired by both Augustine's discussion of time and memory and Whiteheadian process thought, I will explore interpersonal formation of memory as a fundamental element of personal integrity. Third and more briefly, I will approach the question from a non-foundational direction using childist John Wall and bioethicist Johan Brännmark to argue that human rights arguments lead us to similar conclusions about the connection between personal integrity and relationships. In other words, both personal and political approaches can resolve the challenge of describing children, persons with dementia, and TBI patients as full persons in part by insisting that the others with whom they are in relationship are elements of their integrity. Vignettes prompt and personalize (without resolving) some of the challenges I have posed.

The Problem

> Vignette 1: When my grandson was 10 days old, one of the family dogs dropped her ball beside him and waited. What established him in her perception as the sort of being who throws balls, even though he could not do so yet? What does this recognition have to do with his integrity?[3]

The two most accessible Western tropes of integrity do not provide fully satisfying answers to these questions. As described here, each is a caricature, but both operate unexamined in popular discourse. Enlightenment dualism rests integrity in the mind or spirit, particularly in

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see Jacob Dahl Rendtorff and Peter Kemp, eds. *Basic Ethical Principles in European Bioethics and Biolaw* 1 & 2 (Copenhagen and Barcelona: Centre for Ethics and Law and Institut Borja de Bioètica, 2000). The Barcelona principles—dignity, autonomy, integrity, and vulnerability—are not universally embraced in Europe; for instance, Matti Häyry sees dignity, precaution, and solidarity as central to European discussions. See Matti Häyry, "European Values in Bioethics: Why, What, and How to be Used?" *Theoretical Medicine* 24 (2003), pp. 199–214, DOI: 10.1023/A:1024814710487.

[2] For example, I have in mind both the Aristotelian-Thomistic developmental view and its liberal analogues, according to which children are not "*full* social citizens." See John Wall, "Human Rights in Light of Childhood," *International Journal of Human Rights* 16 (2008), pp. 526-27.

[3] For instance, see Judith Benz-Schwarzburg, Susana Monsó and Ludwig Huber, "How Dogs Perceive Humans and How Humans Should Treat Their Pet Dogs: Linking Cognition with Ethics," *Frontiers in Psychology* (16 December 2020), https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.584037. These authors argue that "why dogs attend so closely to the behavior of their caregivers can be explained by different reasons: they surely want to please them and are inclined to obey them. However, they might also understand themselves as partners in our social interactions and are part in our social game."

the independent reason, which rules over the temporal material body and is distinct from it.[4] In addition, this philosophy tends to see maturation as the gradual unfolding of a person's innate interior capacities and thus (with the possible exception of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who recognized that education and social relationships influence the shape that integrity takes in each person) evaluated the individual in relative isolation.[5] Thus, in the Enlightenment view, children, the elderly, and people with rational incapacities deserve dignified treatment in honor of the rationality and autonomous agency that they will have, that they once had, or that they would have had but for a misfortune; in other words, these groups lack inherent, *de facto* integrity and are granted it *de jure*.

The second approach is theological. It affirms either the divine infusion (within, through creation) or divine attribution (from without, through saving grace) of ontological connection with God or worthiness before God. It is not contingent on bodily health or rationality, is an essential element of the human who is in communion with God, is equally present in all phases of human life once granted (according to some, even before birth), and is a condition of integrity.[6] Because it is imputed externally, it is vulnerable only to the will of the one who imputes it—God grants it, or God withdraws it—this divinely bestowed quality has the advantages of being ineradicable by others (if perhaps susceptible to one's own sin), being independent of one's rational capacity, having a moral dimension, and persisting through time. But, like Enlightenment anthropologies it can be dualistic, locating integrity only in the soul or spirit.

Both Western approaches are admittedly more complex than these descriptions, and they overlap more than this contrast implies. The point is that neither approach passes the dog "sniff test" or satisfyingly relates vulnerable integrity to the temporality and variety of human life: one rests it on an ideal of rationality that may or may not be achieved, and can certainly be lost, and the other is essentially transcendent, nearly immune to time and change. Yet both ancient and recent Western thought honor integrity through change more promisingly. Two

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[4]For Locke, integrity seems to reside primarily in continuity of consciousness. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book II, Chapter XXVII, paragraph 10, https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/locke-the-works-vol-1-an-essay-concerning-human-understanding-part-1; and Anna Lännström, "Locke's Account of Personal Identity: Memory as Fallible Evidence," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24 no. 1 (January 2007), pp. 39-56.

[5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile,* tr. Barbara Foxley (London: J.M. Dent, 1993).

[6] I have in mind the Catholic affirmation of dignity as the ineradicable qualities of human creation in the image of God and "destined for eternal beatitude" and the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith through grace which draws on Gal. 2:16: "these three things, faith, Christ, and imputation of righteousness, are to be joined together." For a very basic introduction, see *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), paras. 1700-1706, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM; see for instance Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 2nd and rev. ed. (1920), qq. 93-10, at https://www.newadvent.org/summa/ and Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians,* tr. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949), https://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/gal/web/gal-inx.html#cts.

examples are Augustine's exploration of the self's experience of time and memory in his classic works *Confessions* and *The Trinity*[7] and Whiteheadian process theology.[8]

Memory, Dynamism, and Narrative Integrity

Augustine

> Vignette 2: My grandson arrived with his own memories that were both sensory, or embodied, and relational. He was calmed by both his parents' voices (but not mine or his grandfather's) and by his parents' favorite music. He never startled when the family dogs barked. He felt at home because he remembered.

If memory is so basic to personhood, to integrity, that it is central even to the life of a newborn child, it makes sense to turn to Augustine's account of time and memory as interior experiences.[9] In the most basic terms, the systematic theological problem that Augustine sought to solve in the *Confessions* and *The Trinity* was how to account for distinction-amid-ontological-unity in God on the one hand and in the human mind on the other.[10] The answer was that each incorporeal dimension of God can be fully God—and each incorporeal dimension of mind can be fully mind—inasmuch as it comprehends or implies the other two.[11] But if memory is mind, and mind is, or is essential to, the integrity of personhood, then memory (with its self-presence and self-reflexivity) is at least a necessary element of human integrity.[12]

Augustine was also distracted by two familiar experiential challenges: finding order and continuity within the chaos of "multifarious distractions" and amid the "confusion"

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[7] Saint Augustine, *The Confessions,* tr. Maria Boulding, OSB. (New York: New City Press, 2019 [1997]); idem, *The Trinity,* 2nd ed., tr. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2015 [1991]).

[8] Other options are also possible; see for instance Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, tr. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1988). I have chosen to explore Whiteheadian thought rather than Ricoeur because of Ricoeur's focus on linguistic narrative, which, while essential to my argument, is one degree removed from the immediacy of non-linguistic experience of narrative embodiment that process thought can (but does not always) integrate. Still, a Ricoeurian account of narrative integrity, which draws upon Augustine as well as upon Aristotle, illumines the problem of alternate histories, mentioned below.

[9] See John Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 64.

[10] See Julie B. Miller, "To Remember Self, to Remember God: Augustine on Sexuality, Relationality, and the Trinity," in *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine,* ed. Judith Chelius Stark (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007), pp. 243-279; and Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Diachronically Unified Consciousness in Augustine and Aquinas," *Vivarium* 50 (2012), pp. 354-381.

[11] See Cory, "Diachronically Unified Consciousness"; Miller, "To Remember Self"; Roland B. Teske, "Augustine's Philosophy of Memory," in *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 148-158; and Matthew G. Condon, "The Unnamed and the Defaced: The Limits of Rhetoric in Augustine's *Confessiones*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69:1 (2001), pp. 43-63.

[12] On self-reflexivity and self -presence, see Miller, "To Remember Self," 250. In other places Augustine calls memory "the mind's storehouse," which implies a distinction between mind and memory; see Todd Breyfogle, "Memory and Imagination in Augustine's *Confessions*." *New Blackfriars* 75:881 (1994), pp. 210-223.

wrought by the "flux of time" and constant change[13]--or, as Joseph Rivera puts it, "the self's temporal streaming in the world."[14] We can experience only the present instant, which vanishes and is replaced before we can reflect on it. In addition, we are aware of past and future only through distention of the present: we experience the remembered past in present recollection, and we anticipate the future in present expectation.[15]

We would be drowning in an onslaught of present events were it not for what Sarah Stewart-Kroeker dubs Augustine's "temporal imagination." For Augustine, a narrative ending—union with God—provides a sorting mechanism. We can "link expectation to memory" by intentionally focusing on particular ideas and goods that we want to realize in the future, on the way to this fulfillment.[16] This strategy brings some of the infinite temporal moments in our memories into the foreground, links them into a coherent narrative, and shoves others into the background.[17] In other words, we bring order to the chaos of infinite present moments by deciding what future to make of our past in light of our good end in God, and this moral and spiritual decision characterizes us.[18] Thus part of human integrity is the ability to organize the past and orchestrate the present by intentionally projecting both past and present into the future according to an aim.

We must revere, nurture, and protect this ability to infuse one's life with meaning and purpose. Yet this rich account of memory and temporal imagination is not adequate to theological anthropology's charge to account for the whole person in the world. It is highly individualistic. It addresses only the self's internal experiences, intentions, and spiritual progress. It implies adult rational capacities. Finally, it can also be interpreted in a highly dualistic way: self is mind. The body senses inputs, but once they enter the memory the mind is in charge, independent of the body and of human community.[19] Whiteheadian process thought has a more holistic account.

Whiteheadian Process Thought
Process thought comes closer to describing the continuity of an embodied, socially connected person through change over time. It puts vulnerability to change from without at the center of human nature. For process thinkers—concentrating on Whitehead and his commentators

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[13] Augustine, *Confessions* 11.29.39; see also Cory, "Diachronically Unified Consciousness"; and Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, " 'Scattered in Times': An Augustinian Meditation on Temporal Fragmentation, Imagination, and Climate Change," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 48:1 (2020), pp. 45-73.

[14] Joseph Rivera, "Figuring the Porous Self: St. Augustine and the Phenomenology of Temporality," *Modern Theology* 29:1 (2013), 88.

[15] Stewart-Kroeker, "Scattered in Times," 51; Augustine, *Confessions,*11.20.26.

[16] Stewart-Kroeker, "Scattered in Times," 48, 52. See also Suzanne Holland, "The Integrity Conundrum," in *Health and Human Flourishing: Religion, Medicine, and Moral Anthropology*, ed. Carol Taylor and Roberto Dell'Oro (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), pp.103-115; and Daniel P. Sulmasy, O.F.M., "Dignity and the Human as a Natural Kind," in Taylor and Dell'Oro, eds., *Health and Human Flourishing,* 77.

[17] See Stewart-Kroeker, "Scattered in Times," 56, 65. Notably, Stewart-Kroeker suggests that, for Augustine, the mind transcends memory because it operates on memory narratively.

[18] The alternative is choosing a life organized around a non-ultimate good; for Augustine, this would be an evil choice.

[19] See Miller, "To Remember Self," and Cory, "Diachronically Unified Consciousness."

primarily—a living, embodied person is a continuous string of "actual entities."[20] This is not merely a matter of the mind. Each momentarily existing actual entity is a concrescence of infinitely many social, physical, and other influences. Still, this does not imply randomness or incoherence, which are not compatible with integrity. Instead, the past, consisting of a bundle of those influences, has a profound impact on each successive concrescence, creating continuity amid novelty.

Like Augustine, Whiteheadian process thinkers emphasize the novelty of each moment: change happens to the person that one currently is, and then in an instant, change happens again to the already-changed person. And like Augustine, they also embrace our active self-construction. We are not entirely at the mercy of unchosen, random forces; we can make some decisions about which elements of our past to carry forward and which to deemphasize, toward what future aim. In addition, the forces our bodies encounter and the people with whom we interact become elements of our dynamic and integral being, rather than only conditions of our narration of experience.[21]

For process thinkers as for Augustine, one essential element of human integrity is the ability to freely select and deploy past and present influences toward a chosen telos, or goal.[22] Narrative tells the story of these choices, creating continuity through change. It employs memory and also intentional forgetting, leaving behind elements that do not belong to the story that the author wishes to craft.[23] It is vulnerable in the positive sense, in that experience

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[20] Robert E. Doud, "The Biblical Heart and Process Anthropology" *Horizons* 23:2 (1996), pp. 281-95; and Austin J. Roberts, "Pneumatterings: The New Materialism, Whitehead, and Theology," *Process Studies* 44.1 (2015), pp. 4-23.

[21] Where or in what integrity might reside remains a challenging question for process thought. For instance, people may be networks of traits whose relative influence shifts over time; see Scott L. Pratt, "Kathleen Wallace and the Network Self: Identity, Autonomy, and Responsibility," *Metaphilosophy* 51:5 (October 2020), pp. 657-663. They may be like ropes into which new fibers are twisted as old ones end. Their processes rather than their substance may perdure; see Daniel Robert Siakel, "The Dynamic Process of Being (a Person): Two

Process Ontological Theories of Personal Identity," *Process Studies*, 43:2 (Fall-Winter 2014), pp. 4-28. Whitehead's solution of "formless receptacles" seems magical (see Siakel, "Dynamic Process," 13-18). Or, actual entities may be so robust and so good at preserving a "core" of consistent, continuous elements that something like identity persists; see W. Welton, S.I., "The Human Being as Substance and as Actual Entity," Gregorianum 73:2 (1992), pp. 317-328. Alternatively, on identity and narrative, see Carse, "Vulnerability," and Margaret E. Mohrmann, "On Being True to Form," in *Health and Human Flourishing: Religion, Medicine, and Moral Anthropology*, edited by Carol Taylor, CFSN, and Roberto Dell'Oro (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), pp. 89-102.

[22] For Augustine the goal is already given, but we must still choose it.

[23] Powerful people often force others to forget their own valuable pasts, but they can also intentionally forget elements of their own past injustices. Post-colonial white feminists can purge themselves of colonial narratives that endorse their racial privilege, prematurely claiming egalitarian interdependence with women of color. See Susan Abraham, "Purifying Memory and Dispossessing the Self: Spiritual Strategies in the Postcolonial Classroom," *Spiritus* 13 (2013): pp. 56–75; and Constance FitzGerald, "From Impasse to Prophetic Hope: Crisis of Memory," *CTSA Proceedings* 64 (2009): pp. 21-42. Feminist scholars of color caution against this premature divestment of rights and responsibility. See M. Shawn Copeland, "A Response to Constance FitzGerald," *CTSA Proceedings* 64 (2009), pp. 43-46; for similar words from a white feminist, see Catherine Keller, "The Apophasis of Gender: A Fourfold Unsaying of Feminist Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76:4 (2008), pp. 905-933. Condon argues that in his *Confessions* Augustine creates a narrative of his position within the church hierarchy by intentionally eliding the names

presents new influences that we can choose to take up. It is vulnerable in the negative sense as well: violence, obstacles to choosing one's path, and being forced to forget one's personal or cultural history can limit or contort narrative, complicating one's always-continuous motion from past, through present, to future; I will return to this point later. Still, although many of the potential tributaries to the stream of our narrative are social and bodily, integrity itself again seems individualistic, not social, and mental, ultimately dependent on thought and intention to the exclusion of the body. Integrity as narrative is also primarily linguistic. These three—individualism, consciousness, and verbalization—seem to compromise conscious narrative integrity for infants, young children, adults with dementia, traumatic brain injury victims, and others.

Narrative in and beyond Language

> Vignette 3: A massive brain injury left my younger brother nearly unable to communicate. We cannot know what memories and stories he still makes and holds; we can share ours verbally with him, but we are unsure whether or how he can take them up.

The ability to formulate and express one's own narrative independently simply cannot be a condition of integrity or personhood.[24] Instead we must adjust our understanding of memory and narrative. First, as the second vignette suggested, many memories are bodily and nonverbal rather than mental. Through his senses, my grandson remembers voices, music, dogs, and his parents' scents. The fragrances of eucalyptus, boxwood, and lemon trees return me instantly to the place of my birth, of which I have no other memories. Processes are also memories: tying shoes or riding a bicycle involves bodily movement. People with memory loss tend to retain the ability to perform these operations even when they are unable to recall words, people, or narratives. The past also leaves wordless impressions on our bodies and psyches; for example, the body remembers trauma at many different levels[25]; triggers retraumatize by activating nonverbal narrative expectations. Most of these memories do not

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of many important persons in his past—like his concubine—and barely mentioning Monica and Patricius by name at all; instead, he liberally sprinkles in the names of leaders in the Latin church. See Condon, "The Unnamed."

See also Jean Dericotte-Murphy, "Rituals of Restorative Resistance: Healing Cultural Trauma and Cultural Amnesia through Cultural Anamnesis and Collective Memory," *Black Women and Religious Cultures* 2020, 1:1 (2020), pp. 18-37; and Philip Gerrans and Jeanette Kennett, "Mental Time Travel, Dynamic Evaluation, and Moral Agency," *Mind*,126:501 (January 2017), pp. 259-268.

Articulating and contesting corporate memories (and forgettings) is a crucial step in creating new narratives that can conduct society to a more just future. See Susan E. Babbitt, "Collective Memory or Knowledge of the Past: 'Covering Reality with Flowers," in Sue Campbell, Letitia Meynell, and Susan Sherwin, eds., *Embodiment and Agency* (University Park, PA: Penn State, 2009), pp. 234-249; and Sue Campbell, "Inside the Frame of the Past: Memory, Diversity, and Solidarity," in Campbell et al., eds., pp. 211-233.

[24] See Catriona Mackenzie, "Personal Identity, Narrative Integration, and Embodiment," in Campbell et al., eds., *Embodiment and Agency,* p. 119.

[25] For a recent update on research into the pathways by which personal or cultural trauma affects the body, see Amy Lehrner and Rachel Yehuda, "Cultural Trauma and Epigenetic Inheritance," *Development and Psychopathology* 30 (2018), pp. 1763–1777. doi:10.1017/S0954579418001153.

operate at the level of conscious, verbal self-narrative initially. Some never do.[26] Yet these memories are truly "part of us," and so they are part of the vulnerable integrity that characterizes us.

Second, we are not born knowing how to make narrative memories. We learn to do so through social interaction, wordlessly at first. Child development specialists, philosophers of memory, and feminist theorists insist that we build narratives gradually in relationship with others. Before children can speak, adults lay the groundwork for more sophisticated narrative memory by creating routines that they can remember, use to engage the present, and employ to predict the future. Later, children form autobiographical episodic memory in interchange with adults, who model how to frame events in sequential and causal narratives.[27] Thus, adults' memories, narratives, and construction techniques shape children's habits of memory and narrative. Adults and children also create funds of socially shared memory and narrative together. Thus, our memories and our narratives have co-authors.

If our memories and narratives—both verbal and nonverbal—are shared and interdependent, not solely private and introspective, many important conclusions follow, only some of which I will develop here.[28] First, others help us to create and maintain our own narrative "core," not just in childhood but throughout life. For instance, we suffer a brutal wound to integrity when we lose those who share our memories and with whom we have created our narratives. This happens to people who live to an advanced age, but it occurs in other cases too.

> Vignette 4: When my younger sister died, many of her potential contributions to our family's common narrative died with her. Together with my brother's injury, this loss has wounded my family's integrity by leaving those of us who remain reliant on our smaller circle of memory.

Claudia Welz gives the example of Jean Améry, a Jewish writer who survived Nazi concentration camps to pursue a journalism career in Belgium. Améry's integrity suffered two disabling blows: Not only were his family and friends, absent in death, unable to help him to carry the narrative of his prewar life, but his new neighbors were uninterested in acknowledging or discussing his traumatic concentration camp experiences. This double social rupture—which cut him off from both past and present communities of narrative formation— left him unable to do what Augustine, process thinkers, and narrative theorists insist we must:

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[26] John Swinton argues that about five percent of our knowledge of the world is at the level of cognitive awareness. See "Dementia and the Memory of the Body: Moving Beyond the Autobiographical Self," *St. Mark's Review* 232:2 (2015), p. 42.

[27] See Campbell, "Inside the Frame," and Christoph Hoerl, "Episodic Memory, Autobiographical Memory, Narrative: On Three Key Notions in Current Approaches to Memory Development," *Philosophical Psychology* 20:5 (2007), pp. 621–640.

[28] See footnote 23 above. As in Augustine, as in process thought, going forward entails accounting for the past, but this is a social, not merely individual, project. Of the many possible shared narratives, some will retain and "forget" different combinations of memories, yielding communal, systematic injustice. In these cases, in the interest of justice, we might need to critically revise both memories and narratives. Remaking even personal integrity-as-narrative involves revising memories and narratives shared with others, communally restoring willfully or forcibly forgotten memories, and contesting conflicting communal memories and narratives.

move through the present into the future in continuity with the past.[29] As Welz says, Améry "was a person who could no longer say 'we' and therefore said 'I' merely out of habit, but no longer with the sense of full self-possession."[30] He eventually committed suicide.

Not all losses are this extreme. Still, when someone close to us dies, or goes to prison, or loses their ability to communicate, the chorus that sustains the refrain of our memories diminishes, and our integrity suffers a wound.[31]

A further example of the commonly held rather than private character of memory is dementia. As Richard Holton points out, in milder forms of dementia people need others to cue their memories and self-narratives. He notes that "keeping a personality going in dementia, demanding as that is, is a job for us all," not just for the person with memory loss.[32] One person cannot maintain her memory, her narrative, or her "core" of integrity alone. Others help her bear them.[33]

Yet as Welz's account of Améry shows, it is not just children, dementia patients, and people who will never or can no longer steward their own narratives who rely on others to help carry their stories; everyone does. Granted, others play larger or smaller or different roles in this task as time passes. Still, if memory and narrative are part of my integrity or "inviolable core," other people reside in that core with me, producing special sorts of vulnerability. First, to protect the core of my integrity, society must protect not just me but my relationships with the others who help me to hold my narrative. This is well known; at times governments intentionally sever these relationships specifically to destroy memories and narratives, as the United States government did in collusion with Christian churches when it removed Native American children to mostly church-sponsored, English-speaking boarding schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[34] Yet divorce, death, migration, imprisonment, and a thousand other circumstances stretch or break such bonds routinely. Counting these wounds to integrity multiplies the losses that violence and injustice inflict on networks of integrity-sustaining relationship.

Second, many of the narratives that powerfully express the particularities of our integrity and identity are regional, cultural, religious, or national. These too demand

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[29] Claudia Welz, "The Future of the Past: Memory, Forgetting, and Personal Identity," in *Impossible Time: Past and Future in the Philosophy of Religion*, 191-212, edited by Marius Timmann Mjaaland, Ulrik Houlind Rasmussen, and Philipp Stoellger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). Even in "normal" cases, the longer one lives, the more of one's past one must typically carry alone.

[30] Welz, "The Future of the Past," 208.

[31] In his *Confessions*, Augustine describes his friend's death as self-loss (4.6.11-4.7.12), a matter of loving a person as one should love only God (Miller, " To Remember Self," 271).

[32] Richard Holton, "Memory, Persons and Dementia," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29:3 (2016): pp. 256-260.

[33] Harriet Harris adds that cognitive abilities and memories (and bodily memories as well) do not exhaust our identity and integrity. Chronicling her own experience of Alzheimer's disease, Christine Bryden, an Australian former civil servant, wrote that she experienced the disease as opening "up the treasures of what lies within [her] manifold personality" (Bryden in Harriet Harris, "Can I be Judged If I Don't Remember My Sins? Questioning What Is Significant about Life after Death," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29:3 (2016), p. 320). What other elements of our vulnerable integrity might have room to blossom when memory and cognition recede? Nurturing these characteristics too is surely a "job for us all." From this point of view, all dimensions of integrity, not just memory and narrative, are shared social projects rather than tasks of the isolated individual.

[34] See for instance the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition website, https://boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/.

maintenance by enormous choruses of voices, who must criticize and replace as well as preserve. For example, in the United States, scholars and public figures are attempting to eradicate the Lost Cause narrative, which argues that enslavement was largely humane and beneficial to enslaved persons, and that whites' right to enslave was not the central cause of southern states' secession from the Union.[35] Similarly, Nazi racist narratives endure in the US and Europe, despite the dominant, carefully maintained North American and European narratives of democratic justice.

Finally, the people closest to me, whom I trust to help me form and carry my memories and narrative, can wound me by betraying me through intentional forgetting, contradiction, or unjust interpretation. For example, adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse purify their own histories and protect themselves from discovery by shaping narratives for their victims of special conspiratorial favors, mutual love, or extraordinary maturity. These narratives doubly wound children's integrity, adding to physical harm and moral violation the injustice of severing their narratives from their normal, wider communities of narrative integrity.

Expanding upon Augustine and Whiteheadians, I have affirmed that the memories and narratives that are essential to integrity are both verbal and nonverbal. I have also argued that we depend upon others both to learn to form memories into narratives and to help us to carry those narratives. As a consequence, being severed from this network of interdependent support wounds our integrity; being severed unjustly yields an unjust wound to integrity even when the amputation is indirect. In addition, honoring others' vulnerable integrity means being constantly on the alert for narratives that wound the integrity of individuals and even huge groups by falsifying their stories or cutting them off from their networks of narrative and memory. In other words, our integrity is vulnerable to sin: both others' and—as Augustine would aver—our own.

In this theologically informed account of continuity through change, both integrity's continuity and its vulnerability arise primarily from a person's interdependence with others, at all stages of life, to form and maintain memory and narrative, an interdependence that does not depend on that person's ability to reason, use language, or reflect critically. Yet, this approach may not succeed in a pluralist society. Some contemporary rights theorists take another tack.

Rights and Recognition

> Vignette 5: My grandson's birth certificate confirms his citizenship. Without any act on his part, without any proof of his capacities, simply because his parents are human, it grants him legal recognition as a person with rights to civil protection, provision, and participation.

The argument above worked gradually outward from strong ontological claims about mind, memory, and the human end in God to argue that embodiment and relationships are essential to vulnerable integrity. Now I turn to the opposite strategy: beginning with a political claim about human rights that eschews discussion of transcendent ends and has no ontological basis

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[35] "Lost Cause Myth," *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook* (May 13, 2020), https://inclusivehistorian.com/lost-cause-myth/.

beyond genetics. Bioethicist Johan Brännmark and childist ethicist John Wall believe that this approach has the advantage of preserving a robust version of human rights without relying on singular, anti-pluralist foundational claims. They begin their ethical reflection not from the question, "what qualities of inherent human integrity must ethics honor?" but from the assumption that others have rights simply because they are members of the human species, full stop, without further specification.

Johan Brännmark
Struggling with the challenge of developing a robust framework for bioethics that truly respects global pluralism, Johan Brännmark worries that routing vulnerable integrity through memory and narrative is counterproductive. He agrees with Eva Feder Kittay that defining a "core" of personal integrity—like rational autonomy—inevitably moves some people to "the margins of personhood."[36] In contrast, human rights approaches are based "in an account of the moral and political personhood that people possess merely by being human beings."[37] Our "high and equal moral status" is simply a matter of our humanity, a claim that needs no "deeper grounding." [38] Our personhood is an empty basket waiting to be filled with a pluralistic variety of criteria based on local convictions and circumstances.[39]

Brännmark begins ethics with a political assertion of human rights for three pragmatic reasons. First, it allows him to base bioethics in universal *de facto* realities rather than hegemonically imposing his own moral framework on a pluralistic conversation. Second, "the characteristic of the human species that makes human rights relevant to us is precisely that we form societies"; thus "human rights are about how our societies and our institutions should be organized" in recognition of our common humanity.[40] If this is true, moral principles (like the four Barcelona principles of bioethics: integrity, vulnerability, dignity, and autonomy) must be understood not hierarchically, or as foundational premises from which further principles are deduced, or as ideas for which a justifying "deeper grounding" must constantly be sought.[41] They are simply values that guide care. This heuristic vision allows us to shift our energy from endless critical philosophical analysis of them to their practical institutional specification and realization. Further, because the principles are taxonomic, they are open-ended, leaving room for pluralistic variety in local and temporal fulfillment.

This implies that even integrity will be defined differently in disparate times and places. Brännmark accounts for childhood, dementia, and other conditions of human existence by also assuming that identical rights will be differently fulfilled for particular people. There is no need to worry about change over time, because whatever we are calling integrity is by definition stable during the whole life course. At minimum, Brännmark writes, integrity probably implies that human institutions must respect an "untouchable core" that has both

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[36] Johan Brännmark, "Patients as Rights Holders," *Hastings Center Report* 47:4 (2017), p. 38; idem, "Respect for Persons in Bioethics: Towards a Human Rights-Based Account," *Human Rights Review* 18 (2017), p. 181.
[37] Brännmark, "Patients," p. 35.
[38] Brännmark, "Respect," p. 172; Brännmark, "Patients," p. 37.
[39] A good example of this kind of argument is Jacob Rendtorff, "Update of European Bioethics: Basic Ethical Principles in European Bioethics and Biolaw," *Bioethics Update* 1 (2015), pp. 113-129.
[40] Brännmark, "Respect," p. 177.
[41] Brännmark, "Patient," 37.

mental and physical elements; is related to "one's sense of self and one's identity"; and also characterizes "human beings that are not capable of autonomous decision making."[42] Finally, not only are human beings relational, but we form structured societies. These are the characteristics of our vulnerable integrity that medicine must honor. Beyond them, he leaves "essences" to philosophers and theologians. Yet this anthropological agnosticism—in part designed to protect children, dementia patients, and victims of traumatic brain injury—paradoxically could leave them vulnerable to greater harm.

John Wall

Childist ethicist John Wall takes another step by insisting that because Enlightenment-inspired accounts of human rights like those underlying Brännmark's account of the European principles of bioethics "continue to be grounded in the experiences and perspectives of adults,"[43] we must "critically restructure historically engrained norms of adultism" in which they are based.[44] He argues that (thanks in part to Kant) we have a tradition of seeing children as only as objects of social respect, possessing the dignity that entitles them to protection and provision from society. Yet because in the Enlightenment tradition social rights have been based on adult rational autonomy—and children are not "rationally autonomous"—we have not consistently seen them as social subjects who have rights to participate in society.[45] Rewriting human rights from a childist perspective also means undoing the Enlightenment fiction that children are sequestered in the private sphere for their protection and on account of their rational incapacities. On the contrary, rationally autonomous or not, children have a right and a duty to participate in shaping public life and already do so as workers, consumers, students, translators, and even organizers.

Yet for Wall children's right to participate formally in shaping society is not based solely on this *de facto* engagement in the public realm. Rather, it has to do with universal human modes of relating.

> Each self is born into an already constructed circle of human relations…. Children, from this point of view, are fully members of the human moral circle….Children start out life constructed by vast networks of interpersonal, social, and historical relations which they are at once passively shaped by and actively begin to shape for themselves….Children are also increasingly responsible to the otherness of others around them, and from the day they are born.[46]

In Wall's view, even infants are engaged in "self-transforming responsibility to others" which "is the same from birth to death….a matter of degree rather than kind."[47] Barriers to social participation cut children off from this vocational responsibility to both their detriment and society's.

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[42] Brännmark, "Respect," p. 184.
[43] John Wall, "Human Rights in Light of Childhood," *International Journal of Human Rights* 16 (2008), p. 523.
[44] John Wall, "From Childhood Studies to Childism: Reconstructing the Scholarly and Social Imaginations," *Children's Geographies* 20:3 (2019), p. 4.
[45] Wall, "Human Rights," pp. 530, 532.
[46] Wall, "Human Rights," p. 538.
[47] Wall, "Human Rights," p. 538.

Thus, for Wall, children have political rights not just because they have human genes but because they are always already in social relations of interdependent responsiveness according to their capacity. Yet, because of their age, size, and time in the world, they lack the autonomy and power to express their different experiences publicly with effectiveness or to respond publicly to others.[48] If one of democracy's aims is "to expand the diversity and inclusiveness of human relations" it must respond to such differences of experience by developing structures that compensate for this inevitable and marginalizing power gradient. Only then can children truly "join with others in creating a more diversely constructed political whole" where we "live interdependently as plural others in common."[49]

For Wall, the person-with-integrity is the person-in-interdependent-responsive-relationship-with-empowering-others. This is true of children, of persons with dementia and other disabilities, but also of able adults. Everyone's integrity depends on the self-transformation that arises from vulnerable, interdependent, responsive relationship with others. Without others, there is no self. To be sure, as a theologian, Wall is not a non-foundationalist; he develops a Christian anthropology "in light of childhood."[50] However, his arguments for children's social rights do not rely on this grounding.

Whereas Brännmark is concerned to simply to leave room for pluralism among societies, Wall wishes society to honor the diversity of human subjects and experiences by developing structures of responsive interdependence that compensate for the unavoidable power differences among people in different social positions. Yet, for both, a robust vision of human rights leads eventually to an assertion that integrity is vulnerable because to be human is to be in interdependent, reciprocal networks of relationship. Once again, for better and for worse, others stand at the core of our being, and we stand at the core of theirs.

Conclusion

My aim was to approach a modest question inductively: what account of human integrity can survive childhood, dementia and other kinds of mental incapacitation, and other life changes? Inspired by puzzles from my own life, I have come at this thought experiment from two directions: philosophy and theology of time, memory, and narrative; and non-foundational human rights ethics. Both have led us to the same place: our integrity rests at least partly in our embodied, interdependent relations with others, which are vulnerable in both the positive and negative senses. Whatever else the core of our integrity includes, we do not reside there alone—a truth that, as it happens, even my daughter's dogs affirm.

This conclusion echoes Hille Haker's insistence that human integrity is embodied, social, and engaged in relations of power, vulnerable not just in the sense of being affectable or endangered but also and essentially unable to exist without other-relations at all. Ontological, moral, and structural vulnerabilities are essential elements of human being, not

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[48] See for example John Wall, "Can Democracy Represent Children? Toward a Politics of Difference," *Childhood* 19:1 (2011), pp. 94-95.

[49] Wall, "Can Democracy Represent Children?", p. 95; Wall, "Human Rights," p. 541.

[50] See Wall, *Ethics in Light of Childhood*, pp. 35-58; and John Wall, "Fallen Angels: A Contemporary Christian Ethical Ontology of Childhood," *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 8:2 (2004), pp. 160–184.

accidents.[51] In addition, at each stage of life each person expresses the formal, interdependent elements that comprise integrity in a unique, individual mode. Not just the abstract, interdependent elements, but all concrete manifestations of them in individuals, are *de facto* vulnerable and yet *de jure* morally inviolable.

Yet beyond this Haker, Brännmark, and Wall invite us to the kind of existential specification that Augustine and Whiteheadians inspire. At all stages of life, including infancy, dementia, and brain injury, we are dependent on and interdependent with the people who help us to form and carry the bodily as well as verbal stories and memories that are part of our inviolable core, and that no one may justly damage, alter, manipulate, destroy, mar, or violate.[52] People honor our personal integrity in part by honoring those others, who are part of our core self; people sustain our personal integrity in part by sustaining them and by creating just communities with whom to build and preserve the narratives of all.

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[51] Hille Haker's three-dimensional account of vulnerable agency—ontological, moral, and structural—has corresponding implications for integrity in each dimension. Ontological vulnerability has to do with our organic dependence on the physical conditions of flourishing. Moral vulnerability has to do with the risk our (necessary, good) openness and responsiveness to others entails for the balance between our social identity and belonging on the one hand, and our uniqueness or singularity on the other. Being chronically disrespected and mis-recognized has an effect upon us. See Hille Haker, "Vulnerable Agency: Human Dignity and Gendered Violence," in *Towards a Critical Political Ethics: Catholic Ethics and Social Challenges* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2020), pp. 135-167. See also Alisa L. Carse, "Vulnerability, Integrity, and Human Flourishing," in *Health and Human Flourishing: Religion, Medicine, and Moral Anthropology*, edited by Carol Taylor, CFSN, and Roberto Dell'Oro (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), pp. 33-52. Structural vulnerability systemically locates some persons in places or social positions that have less scope for safe action than others. It harms their agency through diminishing their trust that society is a safe place for them to act. See Haker, "Vulnerable Agency," pp. 159-164.

[52] This is Rendtorff's second tentative definition of integrity; see Rendtorff, "Integrity, Concept of."

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