Intellect, Personhood, and the Coherence of Cure

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People tend to associate intelligence with personhood, and likewise, there is a tendency to tacitly deny personhood to those with intellectual disabilities. However, I argue that this denial of personhood is not automatic, and I will draw from recent work in the social psychology of autism to explain the role of empathy in ascriptions of personhood. I will argue that the tendency to deny personhood to people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities is the result of a lack of reciprocal empathy. I will then describe how this is illustrative of key differences between how physical disabilities and cognitive/intellectual disabilities impact one's identity and explain how these differences should inform our understanding of whether the idea of curing cognitive/intellectual disabilities is coherent.

In his book *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*, Eli Clare criticizes the longstanding association between intelligence and personhood. According to Clare, it is a mistake for intelligent disabled people to assert their personhood on the basis of their intelligence, as this perpetuates the marginalization of and denial of personhood to the intellectually disabled. I find Clare's argument partially convincing; while I think Clare is right in his observation that the intellectually disabled as not treated as people of the same status as the nondisabled, and while I agree with his larger point that using intelligence to justify personhood is deeply problematic, I consider Clare's description of how people are dehumanized for their lack of intelligence to be an oversimplified account of how intellectually disabled individuals are actually denied equal personhood. I do not think society treats lack of intelligence as itself grounds for dehumanization, but rather, that the difficulty for non-intellectually disabled people to grasp what it is like to be intellectually disabled leads to a broad failure to understand that intellectually disabled people, and others with neurodevelopmental conditions, are people in the same way that the nondisabled are. Understanding the reasons behind this will reveal an important difference in the modalities of intellectual/neurodevelopmental disabilities and physical disabilities. I argue that this distinction has broad ramifications, and should particularly inform our politics of cure.

The link between intellect, specifically rational intellect, and personhood is deeply ingrained, both in philosophical and popular discourse. In the philosophical literature, this idea can be traced back at least as far as Boethius, who defined a person as "an individual substance of a rational nature."[1] Similar accounts can be found in the works of Descartes, Locke, and Hume, all of whom took the ability to formulate rational plans of action to be a core element of personhood.[2] However, the idea that rationality as a necessary condition for personhood was perhaps most influentially articulated by Kant:

> . . . every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. . . Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature have, nevertheless, if they are not rational beings, only a relative value as means and are therefore called things. On the other hand, rational beings are called persons inasmuch as their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves. . .[3]

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[1] Joseph W. Koterski, "Boethius and the Theological Origins of the Concept of Person," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2004): 203–24, `https://doi.org/10.5840/acpq200478212`.

[2] Charles Taylor, *The Concept of a Person* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 97-114

[3] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, [1785] 1998), 4:428. Quoted in Lori Gruen, "The Moral Status of Animals," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, June 23, 2021, `https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-animal/`.

Kant's definition of personhood is particularly important because it directly ties rationality, and therefore personhood, with moral value. To Kant, a person is defined as something that is an end in itself, i.e. deserving of moral consideration for one's own sake,[4] and in order to be an end in oneself, one must possess a rational intellect.

This concept of personhood seems to have made its way into social ascriptions of personhood. Although it is not one of the central topics discussed in *Brilliant Imperfection*, Clare makes a point to set aside a brief section in which to discuss the relationship between intelligence and ascriptions of personhood. Clare's thesis here is that because "intelligence is used repeatedly to determine worthiness, value, and personhood,"[5] disabled people who are not intellectually disabled are often compelled to justify their personhood by asserting their intelligence. According to Clare, disabled people, along with racial minorities and queer people, are stereotyped as being "defective" or "intellectually inferior," and are often forced to use their intelligence to fight against these perceptions. Clare, who is physically disabled, cites examples of this phenomenon from his everyday life: "I think about the ways I defend myself when the bullies call *retard* and grocery store clerks, doctors, teachers, or strangers on the street talk to me loudly and slowly as if I can't understand. My most immediate response is to declare myself smart, not intellectually disabled… I've repeatedly used intelligence as the marker of my worth and personhood."[6]

This social reality reveals a straightforward tension in any definition of personhood, either as a metaphysical status or as a social role, in which a person is defined by their intelligence: Inasmuch as a person is a being capable of rational intellect, an intellectually disabled individual cannot be a person. Although providing a philosophical account of personhood in general is far beyond the scope of this paper, I do want to take two statements about personhood as given. Firstly, I want to take it for granted that one quality closely associated with personhood is consciousness, or, as Thomas Nagel would put it, that there is "something that it is like to *be*" a person.[7] While I am not prepared to claim categorically that consciousness is a necessary condition for personhood, I think it is fairly uncontroversial to suppose that whether an entity possesses a conscious experience plays a substantial role in whether we give them the moral consideration of a person. Secondly, I want to take it for granted that any viable account of personhood cannot exclude the intellectually disabled. This is perhaps a slightly more controversial point,[8] though few would deny that it is an intuitive one, and it is certainly one that Clare accepts.

As such, Clare notes that when people assert their intelligence to signal that they are worthy of personhood, they tacitly suggest that lack of intelligence is grounds for denial of personhood, contributing to the marginalization and mistreatment of those who are intellectually disabled. "Every time we defend our intelligence," Clare argues, "we come close to disowning intellectually disabled people. We imply that it might be okay to exclude, devalue, and institutionalize people who actually live with body-mind conditions that impact the ways they think, understand, and process information."[9] As such, Clare sees it as imperative that we "resist using intelligence as a measure of worth and personhood"[10] so as to fight against these horrific attitudes toward the intellectually disabled.

Clare makes two claims in this argument: one descriptive and one prescriptive. The descriptive claim is that society uses intelligence as a marker of personhood, and that this denies personhood to the intellectually disabled. The prescriptive claim is that we must resist this tendency so as to defend intellectually disabled people. I want to address the prescriptive claim first, because regardless of the truth of the descriptive claim, the moral imperative Clare outlines seems impossible to deny.

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[4] Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:428

[5] Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 156

[6] Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 157

[7] Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 435, `https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914`.

[8] Some characterizations of Peter Singer's views of personhood and moral status maintain that he excludes the intellectually disabled from either or both. However, it is unclear to me if such readings of Singer accurately reflect his position, and I fear that some of these are made in bad faith.

[9] Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 158

[10] Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 158

Intellectually disabled people deserve to be ascribed the same personhood as any other human being, and any ideology that denies them that personhood is would that we must certainly resist. So, even if we are inclined (which I am, to some degree) to dispute Clare's descriptive claim that lack of intelligence is itself actually taken as grounds for dehumanization, that does not change the fact that we cannot use intelligence as a justification of personhood without casting doubt on the status of the intellectually disabled as people. As such, I agree wholeheartedly with the broader point of Clare's argument that it is exclusionary for anyone to use intelligence to justify their own personhood, even if it may seem necessary or expedient to do so in our social environment.

It is Clare's descriptive claim that I would like to analyze more closely. Clare seems to treat lack of intelligence as itself the basis for dehumanizing treatment, but he does not go into detail about the mechanism by which this dehumanization happens. Rather, per my reading of Clare's text, he would seem to take this dehumanization to be automatic: in keeping with Kantian-style accounts of personhood, society recognizes lack of intelligence and then interprets it as lack of personhood and moral value. Regardless of whether or not this reading is what Clare intends, I want to react against the notion that lack of intelligence is alone and automatically the root of intellectually disabled people being denied their social personhood. It seems to me that this denial is a more complicated process, and that there are steps between recognizing intellectual disability (or neurodevelopmental disability, for that matter) and dehumanization. To explain this process, I want to move slightly away from discussing intellectual disability, and shift my focus to autism, because there is relevant literature dealing with autism specifically, and the case of autism lends itself to fruitful practical examples. While autism and intellectual disability are frequently comorbid, many autistic people are not intellectually disabled, and discussing some of the ways in which non-intellectually disabled autistic people are viewed by society can be helpful in understanding the social status of intellectually/neurodevelopmentally disabled people in general.

I want to begin by explaining the double empathy problem, which was first formalized by social psychologist Damian Milton, who is himself autistic. The double empathy problem was presented as an argument against the conventional view that autistic people lack a theory of mind, and that difficulty socializing is therefore inherent to autism. Rather, Milton takes the social challenges characteristic of autism to be the result of a lack of reciprocity of empathy between autistic and allistic (that is to say, non-autistic) interlocutors. According to Milton, because allistic people cannot identify with the lived experiences of autistic people, allistic people are not able to "assume understandings of the mental states and motives" of their autistic peers with the same reliability with which they are able to understand their allistic peers.[11] Meanwhile, because autistic people typically experience difficulty interpreting other people in general, and thus have a similar difficulty understanding their allistic peers. In both cases, some factor gets in the way of cognitive empathy, and this mutual lack of understanding, or failure of double empathy, explains why autistic people often find social interaction (with allistic people in particular) to be so perplexing.[12]

While the double empathy problem is intended to be an explanation for why autistic people typically struggle socially, I think it also illustrates why and how autistic people, as well as others with intellectual/neurodevelopmental disabilities, are so often denied personhood. Because allistic people cannot reliably understand the inner lives autistic people to the same degree that they can understand the inner lives of other allistic people, it seems plausible that it is easy for many allistic people (absent proper reflection) to lose sight of the fact that autistic people have inner lives at all. When the existence of something is not readily apparent, it is natural to disregard its existence altogether; it is natural for an allistic person to proceed as though there is not "something that it is like to *be*" an autistic person. And because autistic people typically struggle to understand their allistic peers in the same way that their allistic peers struggle to understand them, autistic people often find themselves unable to display that they have inner lives in a way that is perceptible to

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[11] Damian E. M. Milton, "On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem,' " *Disability & Society* 27, no. 6 (2012) 883-887, accessed October 30, 2023 `https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2012.710008`.

[12] Milton, "On the ontological status of autism"

allistic people. The point here is easy for an allistic person to proceed as though autistic people lack the conscious experience that is so closely tied to personhood.

Of course, at least in the case of most allistic people, the assumption that autistic people lack inner lives is not a conscious one; surely, on an intellectual level, most allistic people do recognize that autistic people do have conscious inner lives. But this recognition, no matter how genuine, often fails to penetrate the popular discourse surrounding autism. For one thing, many of the ways in which autism is pathologized seem to deny that there is conscious experience behind the actions of autistic people. For an example of this, see the page of the Autism Speaks website titled "What are the Symptoms of Autism?" This page describes various traits common among autistic people; most illuminating is the section in which it describes "Restricted and repetitive behaviors" where it states that autistic people, among other things, tend to have "repetitive body motions (e.g. rocking, flapping, spinning, running back and forth," tend to display "repetitive motions with objects (e.g. spinning wheels, stacking sticks, flipping levers" and tend to engage in "ritualistic behaviors (e.g. lining up objects, repeatedly touching objects in a set order)."[13]

What is absent from these descriptions, though, is any acknowledgment that these repetitive or ritualistic actions have a conscious experience associated with them. There is no acknowledgment that repetitive motions, what neurodivergent people like to call "stimming," helps relieve anxiety and bring calm in the face of overwhelming sensory experience. Nor is there acknowledgment that ritualistic behaviors bring a sense of structure and security, and that dispensing with them can be incredibly disturbing. When autism is pathologized in this way, typical autistic traits are treated as the automatic actions of a robot running some sort of autism program. There is no recognition of the conscious lived experiences that actually define who an autistic person is. The actions of an autistic person are not treated as the actions of a person, but as actions of autism.

For another thing, there is a tendency to reduce autistic people's successes to a function of autism itself, not to individual skill or perseverance. The ubiquitous slogans of, "Autism is not a disability, it is a different ability!" and "Autism is your superpower!" are just symptoms of the widespread attitude that when autistic people are successful, it is because they are autistic. Personally, I have lost count of the number of times I have been praised for my intelligence, and then told that I must be intelligent simply because I am autistic, since "autistic people have bigger brains." Successful autistic people are quickly labeled autistic savants, and media representations of autism tend to highlight the "mildly autistic super-detective,"[14] or the autistic doctor or computer hacker who can instantly understand and visualize complex systems simply by activating their magic autism powers.[15] Once again, the human experience of what it is like to be autistic is ignored; autistic people are only seen as valuable when they perform function.

And, finally, it is so very rare to see public discourse about autism in which autistic people are actually involved. So much of this space is occupied by caregivers of autistic people,[16] and oftentimes, the opinions being expressed do not accurately represent those found among the autistic community. Usually the excuse for this is that autistic people lack the competence or communication skills necessary to effectively self-advocate, and so their caregivers need to advocate for them.[17] While it may be true that some autistic people, particularly those with accompanying intellectual disabilities, may not be able to self-advocate, this is certainly not true of all autistic people, as evidenced by the existence of organizations like the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network. And yet, it is still mostly allistic people who manage to break into the conversation. It seems to me that the relative absence of autistic people from this public discourse stems from the idea that the legitimate people worth hearing from must not be autistic, and that autistic people are not

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[13] "What Are the Symptoms of Autism?" Autism Speaks, accessed October 30, 2023 `https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-are-symptoms-autism`.

[14] A term borrowed from the television series *Community* (NBC, 2009-2015), which satirizes this trope.

[15] For a good example of this, see the television series *The Good Doctor* (ABC, 2017-present). Watch at your own risk.

[16] Often, such individuals who enter the public discourse are referred to as "autism moms." I prefer not to use this term, as I do not want to make unfair generalizations about the mothers of autistic people (my mother, for instance, is absolutely wonderful), but this is the phenomenon I am referring to.

[17] This is the ideology on which Autism Speaks is built.

legitimately people in the same way. I think all three of these examples show the same things: a) many allistic people are not able to empathize with autistic people, which leads to b) these allistic people failing to recognize or internalize that autistic people's conscious experience is separate from their symptoms, which means that c) these allistic people do not recognize that autistic people are people in the same way that they are.

I take this phenomenon to extend beyond autism; I think it is true with regards to the social perception of just about any intellectual or neurodevelopmental disability. The key similarity is that every sort of intellectual/neurodevelopmental disability has its own double empathy problem. Those who are nondisabled, in general, are not able to identify with the conscious experience of what it is like to be intellectually or neurodevelopmentally disabled. Can a person of typical intelligence really understand what it is like to be intellectually disabled? Can a neurotypical person really understand what it is like to be autistic, to have ADHD, OCD, or Tourette's? I doubt it. Meanwhile, can an intellectually disabled person really understand what it is like to have typical intelligence? Can a neurodivergent person really understand what it is like to be neurotypical? I doubt that, too. When people's minds work in fundamentally different ways, it is exceedingly difficult for mutual empathy and identification. It feels impossible to conceive of one's mind working in a way other than it actually does. Otherwise, it feels as though one is not thinking of one's own mind at all. So, while Clare seems right when he claims that people with intellectual disabilities are denied personhood, it is not quite that they are denied personhood because of their lack of intelligence. Rather, their lack of intelligence (or in the case of neurodevelopmental conditions, their different ways of thinking) provides the circumstances that allow them to be denied of their personhood through failures in double empathy.

I want to briefly revisit the discussion of autism to show this sort of non-identification in action. To do so, I will return to Clare's book, *Brilliant Imperfection*, which includes a particularly illustrative example. In one of his arguments about proposed cures to disability, Clare, who is opposed to cure (as will be explored in further detail later), describes how organizations use fear of disability to fundraise for cures. Clare cites two examples of television ads that attempt to do this: one from the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and another from Autism Speaks. The Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation ad capitalizes on the audience's fear of potentially developing symptoms of cystic fibrosis. It uses second person language like, "Cystic fibrosis fills your lungs with fluid, makes every breath a struggle. It's like drowning from the inside."[18] The language asks the audience to imagine what it is like to have cystic fibrosis, and to be terrified of over experiencing those symptoms.

The Autism Speaks ad also uses second person language, but in a very different way. In this ad, a narrator who is meant to serve as a personification of autism, says, "I will rob you and your children of your dreams. I will make sure that every day you wake up, you will cry, 'Who will take care of my child after I die?' And the truth is, I am still winning, and you are scared. And you should be."[19] This ad, called "I am Autism," has become infamous within the autistic community; the Autistic Self Advocacy Network even went as far as to call it "horrifying" for its blatant ableism.[20] But what I want to focus on is who this ad is addressing. While the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's ad addresses people who understand that they might one day experience the symptoms of cystic fibrosis, the Autism Speaks ad does not address people who might one day experience the symptoms of autism (as I will discuss later, to do so would be incoherent). Rather, the Autism Speaks ad addresses people who have or might one day have an autistic child or otherwise care for an autistic person, and it asks that audience to be terrified of this eventuality. While the CCFF ad says, in essence, "Wouldn't it be horrible to have cystic fibrosis?" the Speaks ad says, "Wouldn't it be horrible for you to have to deal with an autistic person? Wouldn't it be such a disruption to your life if an autistic person were, unfortunately, to exist?" Both ads are in favor of

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[18] Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 89

[19] Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 89

[20] "Horrific Autism Speaks 'I Am Autism' Ad Transcript," Autistic Self Advocacy Network, accessed October 30, 2023 `https://autisticadvocacy.org/2009/09/horrific-autism-speaks-i-am-autism-ad-transcript/`.

creating a world in which the disability they discuss does not exist, but the ways they address the human element are very different: CCFF advocates for a world in which there is no cystic fibrosis, Speaks advocates for a world in which there are no autistic *people*.

The Speaks ad is troubling on a number of levels, not least of all because it represents an organization that purports to speak for autistic people actively advertising for the eradication of autistic people from the face of the earth. But it, when taken alongside the CCFF ad, is a useful case study. The first thing the Speaks ad shows is how easy, and maybe even natural, it is to treat those with intellectual/neurodevelopmental disabilities as worthless and valueless in the way Clare describes. When organizations like Autism Speaks argue that a world without autistic people in it is a better world than one with autistic people in it, they prove Clare right. But in doing so, they also help reveal a second thing, which is the mechanism by which this process works. The CCFF ad is able to ask its audience to imagine having cystic fibrosis because this is an altogether coherent concept to its presumably nondisabled intended audience. Even though symptoms of cystic fibrosis usually begin in infancy or early childhood, presumably making it difficult for most people with cystic fibrosis to imagine a life without it, it is perfectly coherent to separate a person with cystic fibrosis from their cystic fibrosis. One can conceive of someone with cystic fibrosis suddenly no longer having its symptoms, or someone without cystic fibrosis suddenly developing symptoms.[21] This shows that a nondisabled person is able to imagine themself having cystic fibrosis, meaning that on some level, a nondisabled person can understand that there is something that it is like to be a person who has cystic fibrosis.

The same can be said of other physical disabilities. In some cases, it is not only conceivable, but plausible for someone to imagine developing a physical disability. A person can imagine breaking their spine and becoming paralyzed, or losing the ability to walk due to a condition like multiple sclerosis or Lou Gherig's disease. Indeed, most of us probably know someone who has experienced what it is like to become disabled, and many of us have experienced it firsthand. If it is so easy for a nondisabled person to imagine that they could be a physically disabled person, even if the experience of physical disability that they imagine is wholly inaccurate, then they must understand that there is something that it is like to be a physically disabled person. The point here is that while there seems to be a double-empathy problem preventing nondisabled people to understand that there is something that it is like to be an intellectually or neurodevelopmentally disabled person, such an epistemic problem does not seem to exist for physical disabilities, or at least does not exist to the same extent.

This facet of disability has an important practical implication with regards to our politics of cure. While becoming disabled certainly represents a significant change in one's identity, it does not represent the cessation of identity, or the replacement of identity with another identity, as evidenced by the fact that nondisabled people can imagine that *they themselves* could be disabled. A person who becomes paralyzed, though they have changed in a significant way, is still the same person. Because of this, it is also perfectly conceivable to envision a cure for a physical disability that does not destroy identity. If identity can be preserved between physical embodiments, then surely, it can survive the loss of disability just as it can survive the acquisition of disability. I do not think this is true of intellectual/neurodevelopmental disabilities like autism, though, as evidenced by allistic and otherwise nondisabled people being unable to imagine that *they themselves* could be intellectually or neurodevelopmentally disabled. For example, although the conscious experience of being autistic is separable from autism symptoms (even though the symptoms are results of the conscious experience), that experience of being autistic is not separable from identity. We can imagine someone who displays many of the traits most associated with autism (society isolation, hyperfixations, sensory overstimulation, etc.), but who is not autistic. These traits could be the result of other neurodevelopmental conditions, they could be psychologically acquired as a result of something like trauma, or maybe this person just happens to have this sort of personality. Similarly, we can imagine an autistic person who, though years of practice and possibly through applied

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[21] This is perhaps an implausible scenario, but it is a conceivable, and therefore, a coherent one.

behavior analysis (ABA) therapy,[22] has learned to mask their symptoms to the point that they are no longer recognizably autistic. However, such a person has not ceased to be autistic. While physical disability is ultimately defined by symptoms, which are deeply connected to identity, but ultimately separable from it, intellectual/neurodevelopmental disability is defined not by symptoms, but by identity itself.

This, I think, is the most salient difference between physical disabilities and intellectual or neurodevelopmental disabilities, and I consider this difference essential to how we should approach the politics of cure. I want to partially react against strong anti-cure narratives like those presented by Eli Clare with regards to physical disabilities, although there is much in these narratives that I find compelling. I agree with Clare that cure is not essential for those who live with physical disabilities. It seems undeniable that many physically disabled people find identity, solace, and joy in their disabilities, and that living with a physical disability does not mean that one must have a lessened quality of life. I also agree with Clare cure should not be the priority for the disability rights movement. I think Clare is quite correct that what disabled people need most is not cure, but civil rights. So, I agree with Clare that it is perfectly legitimate, and even admirable, for physically disabled people not to desire a cure for their conditions, and to fight against resources being allocated for the creation of one at the expense of civil rights. However, what I want to argue against is the notion that when a physically disabled person desires a cure, that it represents some sort of internalized ableism that is the product of social injustices. Just as I think it is perfectly legitimate for a physically disabled person to reject a cure, I think it is perfectly legitimate for a physically disabled person to desire one. In principle, I do not think there is anything wrong with a world in which cures for physical disabilities exist, there is only something wrong with a world in which they are required.

However, I do think there is something wrong with a world in which cures for intellectual/neurodevelopmental disabilities exist because such a word makes it possible to eradicate the identities of people with such disabilities. When we propose that we cure someone of a condition like intellectual disability or autism, we are proposing something incoherent because that person's identity cannot survive cure in the way that a physically disabled person's identity can. Curing someone's intellectual/neurodevelopmental disability is akin to destroying that person's identity and replacing it with a new one. One may just as well kill an intellectually/neurodevelopmentally disabled person and replace them with a new nondisabled person. As such, I do think that when an intellectually/neurodevelopmentally disabled person desires a cure, as many do, it is the result of internalized ableism. It is an instance of internalizing the social perception of oneself as lacking value or worth. I see it as a type of suicidality; it is the idea that one might as well destroy oneself because one was never a person to begin with. As such, we should in our politics reject cure for intellectual and neurodevelopmental disability. We must not allow these identities to be eradicated.

I bring up the politics of cure for two reasons. Primarily, it seems to me that the position on cure that arises from my analysis of social ascriptions of personhood is of intrinsic interest. But, secondarily, and perhaps more relevantly, I think it shows how integral an account of personhood can be to this position. As such, my response to Clare's politics of cure represents more than a minor variation. Though I mostly agree with Clare's view on the generals of social personhood, and I completely agree with his view of who we must include, the differences in the mechanisms of personhood that I illustrate in my account result in a view of cure that deviates substantially from Clare's. So, I want to conclude on the note that the discussion of personhood cannot be confined to the margins of our discourse on disability. Personhood, with its complexities, is an issue of central importance.

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[22] For the record, I do not support ABA; autistic people subjected to ABA have described it as "compliance training," and a "Pavlovian torture method that attempts/succeeds in removing an autistic's brain functions and replaces their normal functions with those of the dominant culture." See Therese M Cumming et al., " 'I Was Taught That My Being Was Inherently Wrong': Is Applied Behavioural Analysis a Socially Valid Practice?," *International Journal of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Studies* 5, no. 12 (December 2020).

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