A Review of the Book

Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics

By J. Paul Moreland & Scott B. Rao

Russell Dillow, M.A., Ph.D. (candidate), Philosophy Department, Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH)

Body & Soul provides an account of the reality of the nature of the human soul and then relates this account to several pressing political issues that have become part of the cultural debate. Along the way, readers are treated to strikingly clear arguments about what constitutes a proper Christian methodology for integrating scientific, theological, and philosophical knowledge.

In the first book, Moreland and Rae argue that human nature consists of both body and soul; yet the soul is more fundamental, and can exist quite independently from the body. They articulate this view on both biblical and philosophical grounds and defend it against various biblical and philosophical objections. In the second half of the book, they argue that this view of human nature is central to a proper understanding of what makes us human and how we should treat human beings at the very early and final stages of life. They apply their view of human nature to genetic technology, cloning, abortion, factual suicide, reproductive technologies, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia.

Moreland and Rae deliberately wrote the book at which they consider to be "a fairly high academic level" because of their conviction that this view of human nature must be defended at such a level to gain a hearing in both Christian and secular circles. Yet the book is lucid, engaging, and clearly written in a way that makes it accessible to those who have little or no background in philosophy or biology.

Among the book's many virtues, at least two have special relevance for Christians who seek to have a voice in the policy debates of our time. First, the text explores and exhibits the sort of methodological structure necessary (yet so often neglected) in modern discussions of what makes us human. Careful biblical exegesis is the first step in developing an account of the nature of human beings, and careful philosophical distinctions are the first step in clarifying how to relate this theological knowledge to the knowledge we gain from, say, developmental biology or neuroscience. As Moreland and Rae demonstrate throughout the book, seemingly minor choices in methodology often lead to different conceptions of human nature.

Second, the book masterfully combines an unapologetic commitment to the reality of an immortal soul with an unflinching explanation of how that soul relates to our material body. It is hard to overestimate the importance of both of these tasks for present-day bioethics. The former task is often rejected as unintelligible or (unbiblical, or both), with the result that Christian approaches embody the materialistic assumptions of the surrounding scientific culture. The latter task is all too often found difficult and left unattempted, with the result that Christians remain puzzled as to how they can relate their beliefs in the soul's reality to the fascinating and ever-emerging cellular and genetic discoveries about the human body. Moreland and Rae show how both these tasks can be combined in a way that does justice to the things we know to be true from Scripture and from experience. The result is a view of human beings as organisms rather than mechanisms (or "substances") rather than "property things") who retain their personhood during every moment of their bodily (and non-bodily) existence.

Keynote Speakers

A013, C913 A Code of Ethics for Non-Scientists Offers an important perspective on bioethics from the perspective of serious disability, utilizing the beauty of the arts in this context.

C090, A908 A Crucial Role for Non-Scientists Joni Eareckson Tada and B906 Scott Rao, Ph.D.

A020, C918 Bioethical and Religious Questions Related to the Use of Technology to Enhance Human Performance in Sports and Military Applications in Humans Arnaud, F., AAU, M.D.

A104, C924 Bioethical Considerations Related to the Use of Technology to Enhance Human Performance in Sports and Military Applications in Humans Arnaud, F., AAU, M.D.

Papers

A007, C907 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A008, C908 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A009, C909 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A010, C910 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A011, C911 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A012, C912 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A013, C913 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A014, C914 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A015, C915 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A016, C916 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.

A017, C917 A Neglected Solution to the Problem of the Metaphysical Status of the Human/Animal Chimera Russell Dillow, M.D.