

WITH ALL OUR SOUL, WE ALL SHOULD LOVE GOD

Mt 12:28-30; Mt 16:26

SOUL-SYMPTOMS—SIGNS OF SPIRITUALITY.

- Music and art, humor and games, whether “Soul gospel” or Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, Michelangelo’s *Pieta* or Chartres Cathedral, Shakespeare’s *King Lear* or NFL football—point to non-material we/me
- Historic Record: burial mounds, pyramids, rituals—universal intuition re soul; Inner essence, reality of person

I. UNIVERSAL COMMANDMENT: WE

A. Given the Nature of the Soul

1. Definition: life-giving form/substance (Gn 2:7)—*nephesh*; *bhs*; *psyche*; *anima*; *Seele*; *ame*; *sawol*; nearly universal intuition re essence, reality, substantiality of immaterial self/spirit/soul
2. Derivation options:
 - A. Creation (God miraculously instantiates—thereafter immortal; e.g. Aquinas; Catholic view)
 - B. Traducian (biologically transmitted, e.g. Tertullian; many Protestants (possibility, though not necessity, of extinction or “soul sleep” until final Resurrection)
 - C. Pre-existence/reincarnation (earlier created, taking flesh at conception; e.g. Origin; Hindu; New Age)
3. Explanation: form (i.e. blueprint) of being
 - a. Aristotle (Form & Matter; Act & Potency) & Aquinas; John Cooper (“holistic dualism”) & J.P. Moreland (“Thomistic Dualism”)
 - b. Boethius: defined Person as: “an individual substance [N.B. “sub”=under; “stance”=stands] of a rational nature”
 - b. Dallas Willard: “To understand spirit as ‘substance’ is of the utmost importance,” because, rightly understood, for both God and man, “spirit is something that exists in its own right” (*Divine Conspiracy*, p. 8).
 - c. Edmund Spenser: “For of the soule the bodie forme doth take: / For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make” (*Hymne Honour Beautie*, I, 132).

B. Of Which We Are Aware: Self-Consciousness

1. More than matter-in-motion, something “spiritual,” persisting identity through time; persistent reality/mystery re self-consciousness—cf. Thomas Nagel’s recent *Mind & Cosmos*
2. Something substantial will live forever—Coleridge: “Either we have an immortal soul, or we have not. If we have not, we are beasts; the first and wisest of beasts it may be; but still beasts. We only differ in degree, and not in kind; just as the elephant differs from the slug. But by the concession of the materialists, we are not of the same kind as beasts; and this also we say from our own consciousness. Therefore methinks, it must be the possession of a soul within us that makes the difference.”
3. David Hansen, *A Little Handbook on Having a Soul*—what about us survives death
4. Mieczylaw Krapiec: “If existence belongs immediately to the soul, and to the body only and exclusively through the soul, then the destruction of the body does not entail the destruction of the subsisting substance that is the human soul-ego.”

C. Regarding Which We Should Treasure—Pascal: “The immortality of the soul is of such vital importance to us, affecting us so deeply, that one must have lost all feeling not to care about knowing the facts of the Mater” (*Pensees*, #427).

D. So We Love God with All Our Soul by:

1. Assent: believe & confess; thus Windsor Eliot, *Vogue* model, testimony re text: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt 16:26).
2. Acts: martyrs, red & white + alms + works of charity
3. Appeal: “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.”

Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting

John W. Cooper, a professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, has written *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000). The book was written, he says, “to remind thoughtful Christians that some sort of ‘dualistic’ anthropology is entailed by the biblical teaching of the intermediate state, a doctrine that is affirmed by the vast majority in historic Christianity” (p. xv). Between death and resurrection, Cooper says, believers enter into an enduring state, fully present “with the Lord.” This position, Cooper says, is “holistic dualism.” This ancient stance as recently (1994) been reaffirmed in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body” (par. 997). Persons, created in the very image of God, blend together two realities: a physical body and a spiritual soul. “The unity of soul and body is so profound,” the Catechism continues, “that one has to consider the soul to be the ‘form’ of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature” (par. 365).

Against this traditional position, “a new generation of Christian philosophers,” advocates of a “materialistic monism” have waged an effective assault, so that influential now advance various “soul sleep” or extinction views. We’re nothing but material beings, but we behave a bit differently from the rest of the physical world simply because we interact with God differently. At death, there’s no organism to “relate” to anything. Cooper, however, rejects such “materialistic monism.” The Scripture, especially as understood within the eschatology of first century Judaism, plus the consensus of the Christian tradition, support Cooper’s position regarding an “intermediate state” enjoyed by souls following death. He is convinced that: “There is a way of making the body-soul distinction which is faithful to Scripture, upholds the traditional teaching of the church about the afterlife, and is perfectly consistent with the ‘assured results’ of contemporary science and philosophy. Making this case is the purpose of this study” (p. 4).

Many of the monistic arguments claim roots in the generally this-worldly Hebrew scriptures, which offer little evidence of hope for surviving the grave. Cooper, however, reminds us that Christians do not limit their theology to the Old Testament! Still, rightly read, the Hebrew texts have an authentically “dualistic implication.” This becomes more pronounced during the “inter-testamental period which shaped the Judaism of Jesus’ day, so that the Pharisees devoutly believed in the resurrection. “Hades” and “Paradise” were thought to be places where departed souls awaited the final judgment. Turning to the New Testament, Cooper finds data for the “holistic dualism” he upholds. Certainly a person is understood as a singular being, unlike the Platonic notion that one’s soul is imprisoned within his body. But there is a substance, a hard reality, to the “soul” or “spirit” as well. Between his death and resurrection, for example, Jesus “preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (I Peter 3:18-20). Other texts indicate that death involves “giving up the ghost” and strongly suggest that departed souls enter an intermediate state, awaiting the final resurrection.

Anticipating the work of Moreland and Rae in *Body & Soul* Cooper embraces the “Lublin Thomism” best evident in the writings of Pope John Paul II—an anthropology allowing for “the truth of both holism and dualism” (p. 224). Mieczyslaw Krapiec, the rector of Lublin University, has carefully crafted this position, validating our personal awareness of “ourselves as unified psychophysical totalities” combining two substantial realities. “Analysis of the entire bodily self or ego in terms of actuality and potentiality—the classic strategy of Aristotle and Thomas—leads to the conclusion that the soul is the form of the body” (p. 225). To Krapiec, the holistic dualism of Aquinas grants both “the existential unity of life and the possibility of disembodied existence.” For: “If existence belongs immediately to the soul, and to the body only and exclusively through the soul, then the destruction of the body does not entail the destruction of the subsisting substance that is the human soul-ego” (p. 225).

Deeply committed to this position, judging it demonstrable and conclusive, Cooper emphasizes that it should help shape our worldview. Pastors should stress it. Christian scholars—especially those philosophers and scientists who have sought to popularize a monistic materialism—should re-evaluate the implications of their position and realize that “there is no incompatibility between the anthropology of Scripture and faithful, effective participation in the modern world. Just the opposite. God’s Word is a light upon our path.”

“Body and Soul”

In *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, c. 2000), J.P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, two professors at the Talbot School of Theology, set forth a persuasive defense of a very traditional Christian anthropology, evident in Boethius’ classic definition of a *person* as “an individual substance with a rational nature.” This provides one a deeply metaphysical identity—one is who he is, a particular being of enduring worth.

Awash in our scientifically-shaped culture, steadily reducing “reality” to materiality, man’s nature has suffered serious debasement, diminished to an epiphenomenon of purely natural processes. “Evangelicals” like Karl Giberson have embraced science as “the most epistemologically secure perspective that we have.” But this leads, inexorably, to the reduction of human nature to empirically-evident biological data, a composite collection of biochemical parts, a “property-thing” (to use the currently popular philosophical designation) rather than an “individual substance. Thus we find numbers of such thinkers arguing that when we die we simply die—it’s dust to dust. In the final resurrection, hopefully, God will raise us as “resurrected bodies.” But there’s no “soul” *per se* that eludes the grave.

Au contraire, Moreland and Rae insist there’s a discrete, really *real* soul that gives the body its form. We need a restored awareness of our spiritual “substance,” a confidence that our deepest self is more than matter. In *The Divine Conspiracy*, USC’s Dallas Willard says: “To understand spirit as ‘substance’ is of the utmost importance,” because, rightly understood, for both God and man, “spirit is something that exists in its own right” (p. 8). The word substance fuses *sub* (which means under) with *stance* (which means stand); so *substance* means what stands under what appears to be—what really is. Aristotle discerned this clearly, writing: “That which is a whole and has a certain shape and form is one in a still higher degree; and especially if a thing is of this sort by nature, and not by force like the things which are unified by glue or nails or by being tied together, i.e., if it has in itself the cause of its continuity.”

So Moreland and Rae argue we are *both* body and soul. They reach back to the 13th century and refurbish a “*Thomistic dualism*.” Importantly, unlike rationalistic philosophers following Descartes, “Thomistic dualism focuses on the soul, not the mind. The mind is a faculty of the soul, but the latter goes beyond mental functioning and serves as the integrative ground and developer of the body it animates and makes alive” (p. 21). Like the artist moving his brush, the soul arranges the genes, drives the DNA, shapes the molecules, forms the frame. Thomistic dualism holds that the “soul contains capacities for biological as well as mental functioning. Thus the soul is related to the body more intimately and fully than by way of an external causal connection, as Cartesians would have it” (p. 21).

A critical component of this position concerns the freedom of the will. Cornell University’s William Provine, a naturalistic, atheistic biologist, understands the implications of his stance, stating: “Free will as it is traditionally conceived . . . simply does not exist. . . . There is no way that the evolutionary process as it is currently conceived can produce a being that is truly free to make choices” (p. 105). Only if one is a rational person, free to choose non-empirical goods, independent of material processes, can he transcend the flux of nature. Importantly, as John Finnis wisely says, “Everything in ethics depends on the distinction between the good as experienced and the good as intelligible” (*Fundamentals of Ethics*, 42), and only free moral agents, of course, can make intelligent distinctions and choose to do good or evil. So, as the subtitle indicates, Moreland and Rae deal extensively with ethics.

If a person is a discrete, ontological substance, there simply cannot be “degrees” of personhood. Age and physical condition do not add to or detract from one’s status as a person. “For the Thomist it is impossible for there to be a human nonperson” (p. 225). Facing today’s complex biomedical questions, when unborn babies are discarded as “fetuses” (i.e. not-quite-human), and elderly folks are “euthanized” (having forfeited their “personhood”), the Thomist insistence that we are essentially (not developmentally) human truly makes a difference. Moreland and Rae say: “Our view is that zygotes, embryos, fetuses, newborns, children and adults are all persons, though each is at a different stage of development and maturity. A clear continuity of personal identity is bound up with the human person’s being a substance in the Thomistic sense” (p. 270).

“*Body & Soul* is a quality piece of philosophical work,” says Stephen Evans. It is carefully argued, attuned to contemporary scholarship, and adroit in applying the insights St Thomas Aquinas to today’s questions. Though a bit technical at points, the book is generally accessible to folks outside the academy who understand the importance of its focus.

MIND AND COSMOS

Academic philosophers rarely grace the covers of newsmagazines, but the March 25 issue of *The Weekly Standard* featured Professor Thomas Nagel in an article titled “The Heretic—professor, philosopher apostate.” The reason for such attention was the recent publication of Nagel’s *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, c. 2012). A professor at New York University, he enjoys an eminent position within the elite galaxy of revered intellectuals. He admits that “for a long time I have found the materialist account [given “canonical exposition” in Richard Dawkins’ *The Blind Watchmaker*] of how we and our fellow organisms came to exist hard to believe, including the standard version of how the evolutionary process works. The more details we learn about the chemical basis of life and the intricacy of the genetic code, the more unbelievable the standard historical account becomes” (p. 5).

The more we understand about life and the cosmos the less adequately Neo-Darwinianism explains things. Nagel’s come to seriously consider the possibility that mind, rather than matter, shapes Reality. Consequently: “My guiding conviction is that mind is not just an afterthought or an accident or an add-on, but a basic aspect of nature” (p. 16). This is particularly evident when we turn our attention to what we know best—ourselves! “Something more is needed to explain how there can be conscious, thinking creatures whose bodies and brains are composed of those elements. If we want to try to understand the world as a whole, we must start with an adequate range of data, and those data must include the evident facts about ourselves” (p. 20).

The mysterious and absolutely indubitable reality of human consciousness highlights the inadequacy of evolutionary naturalism. “Organisms such as ourselves do not just happen to be conscious; therefore no explanation even of the physical character of those organisms can be adequate which is not also an explanation of their mental character. In other words, materialism is incomplete even is a theory of the physical world, since the physical world included conscious organisms among its most striking occupants” (p. 45). Scholars who reduce consciousness to material entities fail to properly distinguish between description and explanation; observing neurons firing in the brain does not begin to adequately explain the phenomenon of consciousness. Far better, Nagel says, is the ancient Aristotelian conception of “teleological laws” guiding natural processes. In addition to matter-in-motion, there may well be “something else, namely a cosmic predisposition to the formation of life, consciousness, and the value that is inseparable from them” (p. 123). Old Aristotle may well have erred at points, but he now appears wiser than his modern antagonists! As for theists, a creative God certainly provides a satisfactory explanation. No final explanation for consciousness fully persuades Nagel, but he knows that the Neo-Darwinian answer lacks cogency. What we must seek, he argues, is “a form of understanding that enables us to see ourselves and other conscious organisms as specific expressions simultaneously of the physical and mental character of the universe” (p. 69).

What’s true for consciousness is even truer for cognition—our incredible ability to reason. We are not only aware of ourselves as thinking beings but we can transcend our personal perspectives and objectively discover momentous realities such as the law of gravity. Evolutionary naturalism fails, abysmally, to explain the existence and unique mental powers of our species, so properly labeled *homo sapiens*. “Rationality, even more than consciousness, seems necessarily a feature of the functioning of the whole conscious subject, and cannot be conceived of, even speculatively, as composed of countless atoms of miniature rationality” (p. 87). Then add to cognition conscience! Add to speculative reason practical reason. We do, countless times a day, evaluate things, judging them good and evil, right and wrong. And such judgments range far beyond our individual feelings or interests. To Nagel, only the “moral realism” expounded by traditional thinkers such as Aristotle and C.S. Lewis enables us to craft ethical principles and render moral judgments; and “since moral realism is true, a Darwinian account of the motives underlying moral judgment must be false, in spite of the scientific consensus in its favor” (p. 105).

Inasmuch as consciousness, rationality and morality define us as human beings—and inasmuch as evolutionary naturalism cannot explain these fundamental realities—we must, Nagel says, open our minds to better ways of thinking and understanding the universe, taking “the appearance and evolution of life as something more than a history of the development of self-reproducing organisms, as it is in the Darwinian version” (p. 122). A better version is wanted! For, Nagel concludes: “I would be willing to bet that the present right-thinking consensus will come to seem laughable in a generation or two” (p. 128). No wonder “the present right-thinking” guardians of secular orthodoxy turned venomous when confronted with Nagel’s intellectual rigor and incisive logic!