

Relating Body and Soul: A Collision Between Theology, Science, and Good Intentions

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Common Assumptions about the Human Soul

➤ Present at the Moment of Fertilization
(Immediate Ensoulment)

➤ Immaterial and Pure (better than the material things)

➤ The Soul is the “Real Person”

- Five Models of Human Personhood
- Theological Insights – Biblical Anthropology
- Biological Insights
- A Pedagogical Model of Personhood - Developing Hominization
- Applications and Conclusions

Five Models of Human Personhood (1-3)

1. Neo-Platonism – Augustine (based on Plato)

- Body and Soul are two Distinct Substances
- the soul is spiritual and immortal, the soul uses the body

2. Compound Dualism – Aquinas (based on Aristotle)

- The Soul is equivalent to the “form” of the person
- 3 types of human souls: vegetative, sensitive, and rational
- Rational Soul is implanted at 40 days (men) or 90 days (women)
- The soul and body are integrally related

3. Substance Dualism – Descartes

- Body and Soul are two Distinct Substances
- Highly compatible with immediate ensoulment
- The soul is the “real” person (“Cogito, ergo sum”)

Five Models of Human Personhood (4-5)

4. Emergent Dualism – Example: Hasker

- The Mind/Soul is a spiritual element that emerges from the material body
- Emergence requires a complex configuration and function of the brain and central nervous system

5. Physicalist Monism - Examples: Murphy & O'Connor

- The human person is fully comprised of a material body
- Unique human attributes are defined as “higher human capacities...” that are in part “explainable as brain functions” (Murphy)
- OR non-physical but non-spiritual emergent properties (O'Connor)

	Origin	Status	Identity
Neo-Platonism	soul at the beginning?	both body & soul good, but... (Greek Associations)	the soul is the essence of the person
Compound Dualism	delayed ensoulment	both body and soul good & integrally related	Integral relationship – body and soul
Cartesian Dualism	soul at the beginning	human reason is extolled material world is obscure	the soul IS the person
Emergent Dualism	emergent soul	both body & soul are good soul depends on the body	the soul requires the body
Physicalist Monism	emergent capacities	No distinction is made between body and soul	Psycho-somatic unity

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Theology – Biblical Anthropology (based on J.W. Cooper)

Old Testament Terminology

- *Nephesh* – Soul, but also throat, neck, or stomach. Used for animals too. Seat of bodily desires, emotions and moral reasoning. Often refers to the person or self.
- *Ruach* – Spirit, - from wind, or breath. Used for animals too. A vital force or energy, not an immaterial substance.
- *Basar* – Flesh - not used to imply metaphysical distinction.
- *Qereb* – Inner Parts or Bowels – spiritual/ethical awareness.
- *Leb* – Heart – the hidden control center, conscious activity.

New Testament Changes

- *psychē* (soul) and *pneuma* (spirit) also come to be terms for the discarnate dead, meanings gained during the intertestamental period

Insights from Developmental Biology

**Embryo Twinning - the problem of Monozygotic Twins
and Immediate ensoulment**

A solution? ...colocation of Souls (Koch-Hershenov, 2006)

Insights from Developmental Biology

The Problem of Human Genetic Chimeras - Since the 1960's about 30 Human Chimeras have been detected

Immediate Ensoulment...
how many souls?

Possible "solutions":

- two souls remain
- two souls fuse
- one soul disappears to make room for the other

None of the above appear to make sense if - soul = person

Insights from Animal Biology and Neurobiology

Animal Consciousness

- **animals consciousness and brain structure/function suggest a direct connection with human consciousness**

Brain and Consciousness

- **correlations between brain and mind (consciousness) demonstrate a clear psycho-physical connection**

A Pedagogical Model of Personhood

– Developing Hominization

- **Humans are different from other animals - advanced consciousness, abilities to love, relate to others and to God, etc.**
- **The *Essence* that enable these attributes may be material or immaterial, physical or spiritual**
- **This *Essence* is not present in complete form at fertilization**
- **This *Essence* interacts intimately with the entire person, generating a condition of functional unity**
- **This *Essence* should not be considered somehow better or purer than the rest of the person, and should not be considered to constitute the “real person”**

Three Applications for Developing Hominization

1. Regarding Initiation of Personhood – Sanctity of Life
2. Regarding Status of the Material Body – Asceticism and the Marginalization of Women
3. Regarding the Identity of the Person – Evangelism and Social Responsibility

Sanctity of Life and the Beginning of Personhood

- Life begins at fertilization is a strong argument
- God's good intention should be an equally strong argument

Making Broader Connections for Sanctity of Life

An argument for God's good intention may actually carry more weight than the assertion of immediate ensoulment with other theists and even with agnostics and atheists

Asceticism and the Marginalization of Women

**And do you not know
that you are an Eve?...**

**You are the devil's
gateway...**

**You destroyed so easily
God's image, man.**

- Tertullian (c. 200)

**Asceticism and Anorexia – A
“fundamentalist” connection?**

Evangelism, Social Responsibility & the Concept of Personhood

“...we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.”

The reduction of the Christian mission to... a message of otherworldly salvation grows out of a misunderstanding of God's purpose and the nature of human beings.

In the final analysis, this is a reduction related to ideas taken from Greek philosophy, not from Scripture. - Rene Padilla

Final Considerations

- **The model presented here should not be considered dogmatic. Its purpose is to stimulate teaching, learning and deeper consideration of the nature of personhood**
- **The proposition that immediate ensoulment is incorrect could prove contentious if misused. Remember...**
- **"In Essentials, Unity; in Non-essentials, Liberty; in All Things, Charity" – Augustine**
- **The propositions that 1) both spirit and matter are good and 2) that the whole person needs salvation, may seem self-evident. But remember...**
- **history shows that "The heart of man is deceitful above all things" - Jer. 17:9, so let's keep working on it.**