

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005, pages 223, ISBN: 0-8308-2773-0.**

The present work examines the issue whether human sense of self is intelligible on the basis of soul. Dramatic developments in neuroscience seems to suggest that the human brain is the basis for various behaviour characteristics that are unique to the human beings, where 'soul' ceases to be an explanatory construct. Despite such confidence, the mind-body problem generates different alternative explanations due to the persistence of an explanatory gap regarding how physical correlates of a phenomenal state are related to our subjective feelings of that state. The debate, as presented here, tends to revolve around four alternative ways of conceptualizing the mind-body problem. The views presented are from four Christian philosophers, whose concerns also include the bearings that the complexity of these issues has on Christian thinking. An introductory chapter by Joel B. Green, introducing the critical issues at stake, and a final chapter from Stuart L. Palmer, attempting to relate the four positions championed by the contributors to selected Christian practices like hospitality and forgiveness, make up the present 223-page book.

In proposing his substance dualism, Stewart Goetz argues that humans have (or are) souls that are distinct from their physical body. The conclusion that humans have souls is based on an introspective awareness that he/she is a soul. He invokes soul's ability to causally interact with its body to explain human behaviour. Grounded in an awareness of making free choices, he upholds a libertarian free will that can make undetermined choices. Basing on the indivisibility of consciousness, William Hasker, similar to Goetz, postulates two substances to account for human nature. But, in Hasker's view, mind or soul is a new entity coming into being as a consequence of certain configuration and function of the brain. Therefore, this view is emergent dualism. Though mind or soul emerges from the brain, it becomes a substance different from the chemical stuff of which the brain is made. Using emergent dualism he goes beyond the causal closure of physical domain and explains the core requirements of the Christian understanding of the human person, including mind's ability to pursue truth and exercise free agency, and the continuance of the self after the death of the body.

The non-reductive physicalism of Nancy Murphy proposes that mental processes are determined on brain processes but they are non-reducible to brain processes as a number of characteristics of external world or culture co-determines it. Non-reductive physicalism also argues in favour of the causal autonomy of the mind and saves causal reductionism by the notion of downward causation. Wholes that exist at the higher levels exert a downward causal influence on the parts of which they are composed. Here human nature is accounted for in terms of one substance, but this position escapes the thesis of reductionism. In non-reductive physicalism, the human participation in the world of moral action is the result of their complex neurobiological equipment. The constitution view of persons by Kevin Corcoran upholds the opinion that human persons are constituted by their bodies without being identical with the bodies that constitute them. He argues that the constitution view can better defend the Christian doctrine of resurrection of the dead, as the idea of a body's being numerically the same is at the heart of the doctrine.

While engaging in a controversy regarding the mind-body problem, the contributors explore the composition and construction of the human person. How far have they succeeded? Stuart L. Palmer, in his final chapter remarks that the theories suggested by Goetz, Hasker, Murphy and Corcoran, when confronted with the anthropology embedded in the classical practices of hospitality and forgiveness, require further development along the lines defined by our essential relatedness as human creatures. This limitation seems to be more than a negligence of any particular dimensions of human existence. Historically, human nature has been understood and presented in mythical, philosophical, scientific and religious paradigms, of which the latter two are considered in this work. The contributors, in general, except Nancy Murphy, fail to view the scientific and religious paradigms in a proper perspective.

The limitation in their approach is the result of an assumption that mixing up the scientific and religious paradigms can generate a neat fitting theory. Scientific and religious explanations of human nature are essentially two approaches to human nature. Maybe, neither the scientific approach needs the religious approach, nor vice versa. But, to live life in its fullness, human beings need both the approaches. In holding together both the approaches, attempts like trying to explain the doctrine of resurrection of the dead in a literal sense would not take us very far. As Murphy remarks, in her response to Corcoran, "the language regularly falls short of giving adequate expression to theological realities, and the

realm of theology where our language is most inadequate is eschatology, the doctrine of the last things” (188).

Saving the above remark, for those interested in mind-body problem, the book will be an excellent help as it introduces and gives detailed reference to various issues in the field. The writers’ own additional publications and other materials cited by them enable the reader to follow the paths of their thinking. The book is presented in such a way that after a writer introduces his or her position, other contributors respond to the view and show how the view is different from theirs, making each position clearer in contrast to other positions. The book makes an honest attempt to engage the fundamental questions about human life provoked in the context of recent developments in neuroscience. It also acknowledges that theology needs to be reformulated by an account of scientific discovery. Such engagements are praiseworthy, as they would make theology and philosophy of religion more relevant for the present generation educated in the naturalized philosophy of the times.

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