

Introduction

THIS FIRST ISSUE OF 2025 COMPRISES four articles that loosely deal with issues pertaining to the so-called “mind/body problem.” The problem pertains to the relationship between *minds*—consciousness, thoughts, mental states and causation—and *bodies*—the biological, physiological and neurophysiological, and so forth. Pertinent to the problem are questions as to the nature of mind, its relationship to the body—are they separate or somehow identical?—the capacity of the mental to act freely and to bring about physical changes, and the nature of consciousness and its emergence from, and relationship to, the physical. The problem is relevant to the issue of life because we generally tend to value human agency and action (agent-act causation) as different from, and higher than, the event-event causation of the physical. We see ourselves as free, and with this freedom comes moral responsibility and *dignity*.

Dennis Bielfeldt’s article, “What Life has Mind in a Physical Universe,” explores agent freedom and its assumed compatibility with contemporary positions in the philosophy of mind, that is, reductive physicalism, non-reductive physicalism, and functionalism. After surveying the promise of supervenience and downward causation for protecting freedom and mental causality, it argues the Kantian view that the issue of freedom and determinism pertains to the adoption of a *standpoint*, and that, accordingly, the unity of the person, both free and determined is not a synthesis of content issuing into a unity, but rather a statement of unity in the articulation of differing standpoints. Interestingly, this unity can be connected better to classical Christology, with its identity of person in a difference in natures, than can either reductive or non-reductive physicalist views.

Dan Liroy’s “Embodied Souls: Exploring Human Personhood in an Age of AI,” deals with the issue of artificial intelligence and personhood. Within the philosophy of mind, functionalism downplays the intrinsicity of mental experience and emphasizes the functionality of mind and its capacity to output appropriately to functional states and behaviors from inputs from functional states and sensations. Daniel Liroy’s article argues that the holistic nature of human existence, the promise of resurrection, and the notion that humans are made in the image of God point to a notion of personhood that cannot be understood functionally. Therefore, AI cannot be a person or replace persons, but it can only be an instrumental tool that human persons might employ in their service to God and neighbor.

Peter Beckman's article, "Made to Be in God's Presence," discusses how Adam and Eve, in their embodiment and humanity, both abide in the presence of God and protect His sanctuaries. God's purpose is for created human beings to dwell in the world and tend to God's presence within it. The divine intends for human beings to be truly human and in relationship with Him. Despite the disobedience of sin, God, through Jesus Christ, restores all that was lost and, accordingly, human dwelling in the world becomes human dwelling with God.

In "The Resurrection of the Flesh," Nicholas Hopman notes that the mind/body problem, as understood in the West, has theological roots. Unfortunately, while the ancient church sought to confront the denigration of material reality by confessing "the resurrection of the flesh," a problematic dualism between the incorporeality of the "higher" spirit and the corporeality of the "lowly" flesh remained. It fell to Martin Luther to reorient Christian vocation away from the abnegation of the flesh and the biological family toward discerning divine calling within the fleshly state of marriage itself. Hopman concludes by indicating that Luther's doctrine of the sacraments clearly rejects any inherent contradiction between the spirit and the flesh.

Seven book reviews, including one book review essay, offer readers insights into books that delve into significant life issues, many of which tackle the mind/body or soul/body debates.

We hope you find enjoyment, benefit, and challenge in the content of this issue of *Verba Vitae*.

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