

sense of self and others, and presents an evolutionary view that this ability to identify the you-me distinction emerged from our primal ancestors' reciprocal altruism. Given the antireductionist aim of the book, this view is ironically reductionist and is based on naturalist accounts of humans. The next chapter reviews person exchange theory, which emphasizes that we understand ourselves and others as a result of the different positions we play in different social exchanges. Thus our impressions of self and others are not mental acts, but social processes that are a result of our evolutionary past. This chapter seemed to overemphasize the directionality of cause, assuming that social position *causes* our perception of self and others; it does not take into account how our sense of self (and others) may also lead to taking a different position. The authors briefly attempt to address this at the very end of the chapter, noting how social structures that do not enable people for a full range of positioning are destructive (e.g., apartheid). But this seems a weak argument for the dignity and worth of humans based on the authors' preceding discussion. The final chapter reiterates some of the main points of a transformative activist stance of personhood. This emphasizes social interaction as the most important factor in our fluid sense of self, where people "collectively create their own lives and their own nature." This chapter neglects to consider the commonalities in humans found across cultures. The author makes it seem as though our identity is infinitely malleable.

The last section of the text follows and expands upon narrative theories of personhood. Its two chapters focus on how life stories and narratives create and re-create our sense of self and others.

I applaud the editors' efforts to look critically at psychology's reductionist stance of personhood and to consider alternate ways of studying humans besides the empiricist approach. They make clear that one's assumptions of personhood are not inconsequential. Yet, the book is often hard to follow due to complex wording and long sentences. This complexity obscures what sort of audience the editors have invited to participate in the conversation about personhood. For undergraduate personality classes, this would be too difficult a text. The text seems to offer no middle ground for psychologists who are empiricists and might be interested in studying personhood from a broader perspective. The intended audience seems to be those theorists who support a more postmodern, narrative approach to understanding the human condition, so the potential influence of this book is limited.

There also are no non-Western scholars represented in the text. This is of special note, given the more communal understandings of persons that such cultures tend to embrace.

One of the most glaring omissions in this text is a neglect of theological perspectives of personhood in any substantive way. While the editors claim to be antireductionists, their overwhelming focus on social-cultural determinants of personhood without considering possible spiritual factors is itself reductionistic. The authors never mention well-known Christian scholars who have developed robust models of personality based on enduring scriptural principles, many of which contradict psychology's reductionist views. This omission of theological perspectives also applies to the emerging Islamic psychology, which offers a substantive, nonreductionist view of persons.

The editors note that there is no unifying idea of personhood that emerges from their text. This much was clear and fair enough. Yet, this reader was not left with the impression that the text made any clear case for the dignity and worth of humans either, and it is the case for the dignity of persons that will be, in my humble opinion, the most compelling argument against psychology's reductionism.

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Letters

Types of Atheism

I read with interest the article by Eugene A. Curry on the topic, "Do the Polls Show That Science Leads to Atheism?" (*PSCF* 65, no. 2 [2013]: 75–8). I agree with his analysis that more often than not, atheistic scientists, "far from being pushed to atheism by science, generally arrive at their atheism for reasons unrelated to their science and then persist in their atheism despite their science."

In my experience with scientists who claim to be atheists, whether in the West or in the former Soviet Union countries, their claim is based on a prior commitment to materialism, as confessed by Richard Lewontin. In fact, Eugene Peterson in his book, *Where Your Treasure Is*, identifies several types of atheists.¹ Below I have adapted Peterson's classifica-

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tion to what I have learned in my own long association with atheist colleagues:

1. Atheists whose beliefs develop out of protest and who are angry with what is wrong with the world. Ivan Karamazov, from *The Brothers Karamazov*, is an example. “He carried around a notebook in which he copied down every instance of innocent suffering that he heard of ... The accumulated anecdotes served up an unanswerable indictment against the existence of God: because this is the way the world is, there cannot be a God.”
2. Atheists who struggle with intellectual honesty. It usually begins with an idea of God that is formed from bits of reading, misinformation, movies, talk shows, and perhaps professors with certain agendas. So an intellectually discriminating atheist can be accepted as an ally in skeptically rejecting all the popular, half-baked stupidities named “god” that abound in our time and invited into conversations that explore what the best minds thought, and think, about God. Failure of Christians to live out Jesus’s ideal, contribute greatly to his type of atheist.
3. Atheists who say in their hearts, there is no god. (Ps. 14:1: The fool says in his heart, “There is no god.”) These are people that may even appear religious, go to church occasionally, participate in ritual, and so forth. But they live their lives centered on self: independent, autonomous, lord of all reality, manipulating people to achieve their desires, power hungry. A subset of this category would be atheists who can be classified as people of *acedia*, those with spiritual apathy, who do not care if God exists.
4. Atheists who have chosen to deny God because of a moral issue. Often the issue is a secret habit, desire, sexual sin, or betrayal, and rather than acknowledge one’s sin and confess, it is easier to block the source of morality, the God who has given a universal moral standard by which to judge ourselves. Another reason for their atheism could be the absence of a good father in their formative years.² Often these people become militant, as if shouting and posturing will eliminate the conscience—which it often does. It is more appropriate to call such atheists, antitheists or god haters.

Notes

¹Eugene Peterson, *Where Your Treasure Is* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), chap. 8.

²Paul C. Vitz, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 2000).

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Clapping with One Hand

Articles and letters on methodological naturalism and uniformitarianism in the March and June 2013 issues of *PSCF* have been very helpful. I see clear consensus that a Christian can do science without adopting metaphysical or philosophical naturalism (nor materialism, agnosticism, or atheism), can believe in miracles that preclude scientific investigation, can believe that “natural laws” display God’s order, and can believe that all of the world’s things and events—regular or exceptional, designed or not—ultimately depend on the Creator.

Bruce Gordon (“In Defense of Uniformitarianism,” *PSCF* 65, no. 2 [2013]: 79–86) notes that quantitative science can help distinguish cases of design from nondesign, but I agree with Jordan Mallon and Kathryn Applegate (Letters, *PSCF* 65, no. 2 [2013]: 144) that this works only when the designer, though unidentified, is constrained by natural laws. Why? One cannot estimate the probability of something without assuming that it is subject to the natural laws of the universe. Therefore, the likelihood of explanations involving supernatural design cannot be compared quantitatively to alternative explanations. One is left trying to clap with one hand.

Well, can we clap our one hand against a wall? Gordon cites suggestions from intelligent design (ID) theory proponents that natural explanations can be compared instead to some minimum threshold probability. The suggestion is that if all nondesign explanations are currently deemed less probable than the lowest conceivable “universal probability bound” based on the number of particles and/or events in the universe, then we should scientifically conclude that intelligent design must have been involved.

There remains a problem with this proposal, however. Even if we grant that a universal probability bound can be estimated to some meaningful degree of accuracy, we cannot presume that we have already even imagined all natural (nondesign) explanations, let alone assessed their true probabilities. Highly tentative probability estimates for preliminary explanations are useful in science, but only when compared to estimates for competing explanations.