

Book Reviews

with the use of EBM that I mentioned at the beginning of this review.

The “Note to Teachers” at the beginning of the book indicates that the main intended audience is college and medical school students. I think that the book could be an excellent supplemental text in college and medical school classes. In fact, the author lists his websites with sample syllabi for such courses. The readings listed at the end of each chapter are included (with links) in the syllabi; they are also the ones referenced in the chapters. Each chapter begins with a useful summary of the coming discussions and ends with discussion questions that tend simply to ask what the reader thinks about the arguments summarized. Anyone interested in the debates of the methodologies and effectiveness of contemporary medicine will find this clear and concise survey of the issues very useful.

Stegenga’s “analytic naturalism” does not entail “metaphysical naturalism,” which is the denial of any reality beyond the natural phenomena that science studies (though it can affirm that nature may well contain realities that are beyond what current science studies or can even imagine). But his approach does entail “methodological naturalism,” which denies appeal to any supernatural realities. Many Christians in science accept the latter as intrinsic to doing science, and they will feel at home with Stegenga’s approach. But even those who believe, say, in the supernatural power of petitionary prayer and see it as a legitimate part of medicine, can learn a lot from this well-informed study of the difficulties and limits of current medical practice and research.

Reviewed by Edward Langerak, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057.



ORIGINS

JESUS, BEGINNINGS, AND SCIENCE: A Guide for Group Conversation by David A. Vosburg and Kate Vosburg. Farmville, VA: Pier Press, 2017. 101 pages. Paperback; \$12.95. ISBN: 9780996991513.

David A. Vosburg, a chemist, and Kate Vosburg, an InterVarsity Christian Fellowship campus minister, wrote this small book for groups that want to have healthy, respectful conversations about faith and science. Their book is organized into three sections with four chapters per section—perfect for a twelve-week adult Sunday school class or small group study. Each chapter is only 5–7 pages long, so the book will accommodate busy participants who would not take the time required to read lengthy assignments in

preparation for a discussion. The three sections focus on science in the context of creation/origins. Part one is entitled “What does the Bible say about creation?” Part two shifts the creation focus to humans in “What does the Bible say about human origins?” The last part pulls the focus outward to science and faith broadly in “What does the Bible say about science?”

This book is a call to reflect on biblical texts that can inform our understanding of the relationship between science and the Christian faith. It is a gentle, faithful, easily accessible, thoughtful starting point for a respectful dialogue.

This book is not a resource in which you can find scientific evidence for or against evolutionary theory or an old earth. It is not a place to find deep, complex theological or hermeneutical arguments, although it includes an extensive list of excellent additional resources if a leader, small-group participant, or reader wanted to dig deeper. It does make the argument that science and faith are not in conflict, but it does not argue for a particular point of view on origins. It does not explore other points of integration between science and faith such as creation care, medical ethics, or genetic technologies.

People considering using this book to lead a small-group study do not necessarily need extensive scientific or theological knowledge, but some background in one or both would be helpful, depending on how deeply participants might want to delve into foundational information and/or evidence. If, however, participants are generally open to a discussion of what scripture says about science, anyone could use this book to lead a group.

Jesus, Beginnings, and Science has many strengths. The authors bring expertise in both science and faith to each chapter of this book. They both have experience working with young people who are struggling to put science and faith together faithfully. Vosburg and Vosburg use Genesis but do not limit themselves to Genesis. They include Old Testament texts from Psalms, Job, and Isaiah as well as passages from the Gospels, Paul’s letters, and Revelation. I appreciated that their use of the whole of the Bible naturally broadens any discussion of origins/creation out from a singular focus on the creation narratives of the first chapters of Genesis. The open-ended and thought-provoking questions they include for reflection and discussion are excellent. Each chapter incorporates scripture, prayer, and worship, which I imagine help keep a group focused on the unifying tenets of their faith, even if they are discussing something about which they might strongly disagree.

I have taught a number of adult discipleship classes at my home church, some on issues that involve science. Bringing science into the church and helping people talk about science and faith is important to me. I consider helping Christians who are non-scientists to integrate science and faith faithfully, a responsibility of scientists who are people of faith. I am glad that I found and read this book, and I will be adding it to the list of potential topics for a future adult discipleship class at our church. It is a class I'd be eager to teach, in large part because this is such an excellent resource. I hope more scientists pick up this helpful book and use it to facilitate discussion on *Jesus, Beginnings, and Science* in many contexts.

Reviewed by Sara Sybesma Tolsma, Professor of Biology, Department of Biology, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA 51041.

Φ PHILOSOPHY

ON HUMAN NATURE by Roger Scruton. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. 151 pages. Hardcover; \$22.95. ISBN: 9780691168753.

The distinguished writer and philosopher Roger Scruton has written an admirable and clear account of what we might call the human difference in his book *On Human Nature*. It is, in some respects, a scaled-down version of *The Soul of the World* (Princeton University Press, 2014). As in his earlier work, Scruton takes aim at reductionist accounts of human beings, whether from evolutionary psychology, biology, or neuroscience. This is, probably, the strongest part of the book and of most interest to readers of *PSCF*, so that is where I will be concentrating my energies in this review. Though he draws upon other philosophic traditions, Scruton's main influence is Immanuel Kant; throughout his book, Scruton demonstrates the continuing relevance and contribution of the Kantian tradition to an account of personhood.

While Scruton accepts that we are biological beings governed by biological impulses and demands, he rejects the notion that reductionist views of human beings could ever capture, without remainder, our humanity. We are middling beings with one foot in biology and the other in culture. We have emerged from our biological past into personhood, and that means not just consciousness, but also self-consciousness, freedom, and moral awareness. Scruton uses an analogy to talk about the nature of personhood as an emergent reality. A portrait painter may work with lines and blobs of paint, and, looking at the painting, we may see mere lines and blobs, but assuming that the painter is skilled, eventually we shall also see a human face emerge from the canvas.

At some point, never mind when exactly, the number of lines and blobs "conspire" to become a face. There is, Scruton says, quoting Hegel, "a transition from quantity to quality" (p. 38). On the one hand, the face can be viewed as a property of the canvas distinct from the blobs of paint "for you can observe the blobs and not see the face, and vice versa" (p. 31). On the other hand, it can be argued that the face is *not* "an additional property of the canvas, over and above the lines and blobs." This is true because, as soon as we see the lines and blobs, we see the face. Scruton suggests that this is the way we should view our personhood: rooted in the life and behavior of the body, but not reducible to it. Put another way, Scruton believes that reality is multilayered, that some new and unprecedented whole can spring from the parts.

As persons, we come to exist in a new order of things with new potentialities. One of these potentialities is that we are free beings. The emergence of freedom opens a new relation with ourselves as a conscious center of self and a new kind of relation to others, as we realize that they, too, are self-conscious beings. We come to recognize that we not only have desires but that we can also evaluate those desires, asking ourselves whether those particular desires are worthy of being desired. This process of recognition and evaluation is the emergence of the ethical in us. For Scruton, the emergence of these things makes human beings qualitatively different from our closest living ancestors, the chimpanzee and bonobo.

Related to these points, but with a little different emphasis, is Scruton's discussion of "the intentional stance." The intentional stance means that we experience ourselves from the first-person perspective and can know and welcome others as sharing in our life when we address them as "you." Scruton takes issue with the "eliminative materialism" of Paul and Patricia Churchland, since they seek to dissolve the human self and agency in a welter of neurological soup. The first-person compartment so essential to Scruton's worldview is lost to a third-person account of synapses and the neurochemistry of the brain. No place for personhood here, let alone such things as intentionality or moral responsibility. Scruton is wary of the Churchlands' project since what is eliminated in their materialist account of the person is *the person*. For Scruton, the first-person stance peculiar to human beings is the essential ground of our ability to experience and appreciate "the second-person standpoint" (p. 50). The second-person perspective (in conjunction with the first-person stance) serves as the basis of our sense of moral responsibility to the other.