

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

TOWARD A HOLISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL OF HUMAN BEING: A HEBRAIC-CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE HUMAN OBSERVER AND ITS BENEFICIAL IMPACT ON THE THEOLOGY-AND-SCIENCE DIALOGUE, SOCIETY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Problem

A challenge faced by the theology-and-science dialogue is how to effectively communicate across disciplinary lines. The community assumes that there is a methodology or cluster of methodologies that allows for interdisciplinary conversation to take place. However, the community is not in agreement about how this process should occur or the hermeneutical principles that should guide it. Is it possible to surmount the problem of methodological compatibility and to generate mutually beneficial and fruitful dialogue through seeking a point of commonality between all the disciplines of the theology-and-science dialogue?

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to discover a philosophical ground in a Hebraic-Christian concept of human being for building fruitful theology-and-science dialogue that is sensitive to the physical (natural sciences), moral (philosophy and social sciences), and spiritual (theology) attributes of human being.

Method

To aid me in the hermeneutical task, I turn to social scientist Roy Bhaskar, who proposes (1) that the flow of knowledge proceeds from ontology to epistemology, or from “manifest phenomena to the structures that generate them”; (2) that social constructs, due to their ability to influence human behavior, have ontological characteristics; and (3) that because reality is a unified stratification and that disciplines develop along these stratifications, it is possible to work across them along points of commonality for the purpose of interdisciplinary dialogue.

Conclusions

In this dissertation, I draw the following conclusions:

1. As relational beings, humans wield power to change the flow of history simply by their presence and observation of the world; thus it would appear that the definition that humans attribute to themselves is indicative of how they will approach and take care of their environment.

2. While a philosophically influenced natural science is a positive step toward resolving the problem of human being in relation to its environment, it is suggested that only when a spiritual dimension is added to the definition of human being that the problem may be addressed more completely.

3. Finally, I apply the definition of human being proposed by the Hebraic-Christian perspective to interdisciplinary discussions regarding the problems of economy and ecology, especially those that consist of hate crimes and other types of abuses against other humans. Thus human being serves as a fruitful common ground for the theology-and-science dialogue.