The Hylomorphic Account of the Human Person against the Theory of Materialism

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Various psychological approaches have developed contrasting views of whether the mind, body, and soul are related or separate. Materialist psychologists argue that everything that exists is material and that nothing can exist apart from the material world. According to the psychologists, consciousness is a function of the human brain, and the soul is non-existent. The concept questions human rationality and argues that human beings are no more than complicated physiological organisms. Even when this is the case, arguments for and against the correlation between and the independence and power of human rationality over the body continue to develop and influence people’s understanding of the human person. This essay argues that the human rational powers transcend the bodily aspects of human existence, and thus human beings are bodies and rational souls.

Proponents of materialism disregard the existence of the human rational soul by arguing that the human person is nothing short of a body. The concept argues for the imminent and indistinguishable connection between the human rationality and the physicality of the body. Underlying the argument is the concept of notion that the person is explainable using the body and thus its demarcation as a body. Materialist psychologists argue against the existence of human rationality and its influence on human beings. According to the psychologists, nothing exists unless in the material world and, therefore, rationality, which cannot be explained using the concepts of physicality is non-existent. However, opponents of materialism argue that the rational powers of the human person are existent and transcend the bodily aspects and experiences of human existence and sometimes have greater power and influence over the human body (Reichmann, 1985).

The inability to the rational power of people using materialism should not discredit the existence of human beings as rational souls. The innermost core of the human person is significantly influenced by the human psyche and noetic core, whose existence is undeniable (Frankl, 2006). According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the soul stands apart as an independent substance, housed within the body but not united to the body (Aquinas & Davies, 2014). However, according to Percy (2011), most of the human experiences are defined by what originates from the psyche and soul, otherwise the human person. As such, the existence of human beings as both bodies (in line with the concept and ideas of materialism) and as rational souls is undeniable. The human rationality depicts the ability to perform independently and influence the bodily functions and human experiences. Frankl’s concepts of the freedom of/to will and the will to meaning show the human person as rational and critical for the transcendence of the bodily aspects of human existence. According to Frankl (2006) and Percy (2011), people are not subjects to conditions such as bodily aspects as materialism asserts but are free to make decisions and possess the ability to decide rationally on psychological and socio-biological conditions.

The possession of the freedom of will and the will to meaning shows the human person as independent and capable of transcending the human bodily aspects (Frankl, 2006). As such, human beings are not mere bodies but bodies with rational souls. Acting to fulfil bodily aspects fulfils the definition materialism offers concerning the body but the ability to shape one’s life within the context of available possibilities shows the rationality of the human body. Spirituality defines the human person as capable of acting rationally and shaping the human bodily aspects (Aquinas & Davies, 2014). Moreover, the will to meaning drives the human race and defines the existence of the human person. Therefore, the influence of the human rational powers on the bodily aspects and the ability to shape course of life depicts the human person as a body and a rational soul.

The will to meaning, without a doubt, shows human beings as bodies and rational souls. The will to meaning depicts the importance of freedom to humans and the essentiality of the freedom to the pursuance of something and the achievement of goals and life’s purposes. The lack of a will to meaning and purpose in life, cause the development of existential vacuum, where one’s life is filled with emptiness, apathy, boredom, and existential frustration. According to Victor Frankl, the issue may develop to noogenic neurosis and an individual may try to counter the feelings of hopelessness, meaninglessness, apathy, aggression, suicidality and emptiness among other devastating feelings with material things, pleasures, and drugs among other issues and the feelings would still remain (Frankl, 2006). These concerns depict human beings as bodies and rational beings as the human body goes beyond the body and even reveals a greater power over the body.

In conclusion, even when some concepts of materialism may prove accurate concerning human beings, hylomorphism stands. Human beings are undeniably bodies with rational souls. The human rationality depicts a greater influence on the body that materialists posit. For instance, the freed of will, the will to meaning, and the pursuit of achievement of meaning and living a meaningful life have a great influence and significance on the bodily aspects of human existence. Therefore, rationality defines the innermost core of the human person and transcends the human body.

References

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