

Conversations That Matter

The Crossroads of Science and Human Dignity

A Discussion on Human Anthropology

Discussion Questions

1. From a scientific perspective, what is used to define an organism as a member of the species *Homo sapiens*?
2. Are there characteristics that *Homo sapiens* exhibit that differentiate them from other animals? Are these characteristics differences in kind or degree?
3. What are the limitations of using the fossil and archaeological record for determining when the first members of our species arose?
4. What does it mean to say that human beings are a unity of body and soul, and why is this important?
5. What does it mean to say that human beings are rational animals? What are our distinctively rational capacities and how do they set human beings apart from other animals?
6. How do we know that all humans possess a rational nature, even humans who cannot manifest their rationality, like unborn humans or humans with severe cognitive disabilities?
7. Why might it be important for a Christian to recognize that humans are not only rational, but animal?
8. John Paul II says that creation is a gift because human beings appear in it. How does this correspond to Genesis 1, where God only calls all he has made "very good" only after the creation of humanity? Why does this not detract from the goodness of the rest of creation?
9. If one considers the soul as a thing created separately from the body, how might this affect one's understanding of sexuality as essential to the human person?

Conversations That Matter

The Crossroads of Science and Human Dignity

A Discussion on Human Anthropology

Resources

1. Article: "[*Life: Defining the Beginning by the End*](#)," by Maureen Condic, First Things
2. Book: [*The Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from Other Animals*](#), by Thomas Suddendorf
3. Article: "[*The Soul: Not Dead Yet*](#)," by Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, Public Discourse
4. Article: "[*Marco Rubio Is Right: The Life of a New Human Being Begins at Conception*](#)," by Patrick Lee, Christopher O. Tollefsen, and Robert P. George, Public Discourse
5. Website: [Question 4: Doesn't the Book of Genesis contradict the Big Bang and Evolution?](#) Society of Catholic Scientists, "Common Questions"
6. Website: [Question 5: If humans evolved from other animals, how can we be special, have "spiritual souls" or be made "in the image of God"?](#) Society of Catholic Scientists, "Common Questions"
7. Website: [Question 6: How do "Adam and Eve" fit in with evolution and the science of human origins?](#) Society of Catholic Scientists, "Common Questions"
8. Book Chapter: [*Creation: A Catholic's Guide to God and the Universe*](#): Chapter 4: "A Couple in a Cave Eve and the Origins of Humanity" by Chris Baglow