

The SHORELINE



Walking together on the shoreline of an infinite sea of mystery...

Vol. XIV No. 2

Frank Villa, Editor

Winter, 2006

SCIENCE and RELIGION at the BTI

WHAT IS HUMAN NATURE?

BTI Launches Program to Unite Common Interests

Science and religion come together in our certificate programs as we explore spirituality and medicine. The role of the interaction of faith and science will be used to study topics as diverse as biomedical ethics, whole body healing, and issues at the end of life.

The Human Research Project: Religion, Medical Science, and Human Being will explore age-old questions of what it means to be human in light of challenges resulting from advances in modern medical and biological science. We will explore the ethical issues raised by this new technology and the contribution of spiri-

tuality to human nature using science.

Interest in this topic extends beyond the confines of the BTI to include the wealth of medical and research institutions in the Boston area. This results of this study will be of value to a broad audience in academia and the community at large. It will impact

the hospital floor, the pulpit, and culture at large as these questions become more prominent.

**TAKE PART IN
THIS PROJECT!
Please Contact:
villa@bostontheological.org
AND WE'LL ADD YOU TO OUR LIST.**

HUMAN NATURE PROJECT

Questions For Exploration

- 1) What does it mean to be human in light of new technology in medical and biological science?*
- 2) What role do faith and spirituality play in human nature? How do discoveries in neurobiology and genetics inform our understanding of spirituality?*
- 3) What ethical issues are raised by advances in medical and biological technology? How can these issues be informed by faith?*
- 4) How do spirituality, prayer, and faith affect human healing?*

The Human Nature Project Symposium

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

At Episcopal Divinity School

KAREN LEBACQZ ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

Karen Lebacqz is the Robert Gordon Sproul Professor of Theologic Ethics (Emeritus) at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA. Dr. Lebacqz is a member and former chair, Geron Ethics Advisory Board; Co-editor of *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate* (MIT Press); Former Commissioner, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research; and Bioethicist-in-Residence for 2005–2006, Yale University. She is a member of QUASAR, the UCC Task Force on Science and Religion.

4 pm: Lecture

6 pm: Dinner (Certificate Students free, all others \$10)

For further information or to RSVP, please contact
villa@bostontheological.org

The Human Nature Project Symposium

SATURDAY, MARCH 4

At North Community Church

Marshfield, MA

THE COMPASSIONATE VISIT

Organized by certificate student Iris Brough, this program will have 2 goals: 1) to initiate visits to the sick, dying or shut-ins and their families or to make existing visits more productive and 2) to initiate dialogue between health care professionals and the spiritual leaders of our communities. Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Hindelang, Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor and Staff Chaplain at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and Dr. John R. Siberski S.J., M.D., board certified in internal medicine, psychiatry and geriatric psychiatry with primary interests in dementias and end-of-life issues, will be presenting information drawn from their years of education and experience with the hope of making each of us better informed, better visitors.

The Compassionate Visit Session will be held on March 4, 2006, at the North Community Church, Old Main Street, Marshfield Hills, MA from 10:00a.m to 12:00. If you would like additional information, or if you have specific questions/issues you would like to have addressed by either Dr. Hindelang or Dr. Siberski, please feel free to contact Iris by e-mail at brough@trysb.net or by telephone at 781-837-3612.

On Being Human...

THE HUMAN NATURE PROJECT

by Frank Villa, Editor

What does it mean to be human?

Are we humans simply the result of the interconnection of billions of neurons and trillions of synapses that construct the human nervous system? Are our minds – and our souls – simply the product of a biological structure capable of developing its own complex interactive cultural systems like politics, religion, and family? Has the process of evolution working alone created humankind, the new and perhaps unique dimension in the universe that can seek to understand itself through rational thought? Or is there more to being human? Does Psalm 139 point to human being as not only woven into the physical fabric of the universe, but into a spiritual tapestry as well? Few would question that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”, but is there a cosmic or heavenly “book [in

which] were written all the days that were formed for me”?

Answers to these questions are not obvious. Evidence can be offered to support either viewpoint, and spirited debate can and should result. Modern neuroscience has given a profound appreciation for the complexities and adaptability of the human brain, and it explains much. But at the heart of our human quest for “faith seeking un-

and social constructs based on the need to survive as a species, as the sociobiologists would contend?

To explore these questions the BTI Science and Religion program is launching a new initiative - *The Human Nature Project*. We hope to act as a resource for networking among the many minds –scientific and theological – in the rich academic environment of the Boston area that can weigh in on these questions, with an eye towards understanding the human and practical results of the dialogue.

We will study these questions in the spirit of open and respectful discourse, not from any one set of preconceived notions. We invite all to participate and be heard. Human culture has been studying these questions since the dawn of rational awareness. So, we cannot expect answers that are easy or glib. But the quest itself will offer a deeper understanding of the human condition. Working together, across disciplines, we can bring abstract ideas into the public square for practical application.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

Psalm 139

derstanding”, many would suggest that there is much more to the human experience. These answers profoundly affect the quest for resolution to ethical issues and our search for proper human interaction - with each other and the world around us. Is there a rational moral order built into the structure of creation as Immanuel Kant and C.S. Lewis would propose? Or, do we evolve morality

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BTI CERTIFICATE IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The local church at the beginning of the twenty-first century remains a place of solace and sanctuary for the devoted parishioners who fill the pews. At the same time, it is becoming a place where modern issues can be discussed in a safe and supportive environment.

Pastoral education requires a new literacy in science and technology to fill this need. The Certificate Program in Science and Religion fills this need by supplementing pastoral education with directed study towards one of four tracks of Scientific expertise.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT**

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WESTON JESUIT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
PRESENTS
THE JESUIT ANNIVERSARY LECTURES:
TEILHARD DE CHARDIN
Missionary to the Modern World

Thomas King, SJ

Thomas King, SJ teaches theology at Georgetown University, specializing in Teilhard, Merton, and Jung. His most recent academic book is *Teilhard's Mass*

Thursday, March 23, 2006 at 7:30 pm

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