

Anthropology Notes

for Thompson's Presentation, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Souls?"

May 28, 2026

If AI is just a tool, it's the most unique tool we've ever seen, because it is the only tool no one *treats* like a tool. Instead, we *converse* with AI, we *talk to* AI, we *ask* AI, we *chat with* AI. We describe AI as *thinking, understanding, deciding, responding, and saying*. We've never engaged with *anything* other than persons this way, let alone tools.¹ And this is not optional. To *use* AI is to treat a tool like it's not a tool, but a person.²

The incongruence of acting in a way that contradicts with one's beliefs can only go on for so long. Academics across the board, let alone theologians, know that how we *act* slowly shapes what we believe. On some intuitive level, many of us still know there is a qualitative difference between humans and AI. But, because the technology is designed to not let us *act* in a way that recognizes those differences, I worry we soon may not be able to articulate the differences. The goal of my time with you is to remind ourselves of the very real need for the pastor, principal, and Church leader to be able to articulate those differences.

Can you articulate clearly the difference between persons and AI, especially given that *AI activity* is quickly becoming indistinguishable from *human activity*? Although we may be tempted to believe that our feelings of unreadiness for the future are based on not being able to keep up with understanding the quickly evolving technologies of our time, I would argue (along with Russell Moore) that the, "root of our unreadiness is not that we don't adequately understand what a chatbot is. It's that we don't sufficiently understand what a human being is."³ It's to this task we turn first, and we begin by defining our terms. The following are notes and bibliographical references relevant to my presentation on Biblical anthropology. Note that this a draft, and I'm very open to revising any of it.

[Embodied souls.] You are an *embodied soul*. There are two aspects to *you*, a body and soul, and the two are intertwined in such a way that both are necessary for you to be fully you. In this regard, our dogmaticians have described us at times as having an *incomplete nature*, that is, you are not *just your soul*, but you are also your body.⁴ After death, when your soul is separated from your body, in a very real sense you are in an incomplete state, waiting for Christ to make you complete. God designed the human to exist in a state that includes both body and soul together.⁵ Our Christology rests on this view of the human: For

¹ One possible exception: children playing with dolls. But note that, if a child *believes* the dolls are talking back, we have the child checked out for mental illnesses.

² Sometimes we try to soften this contradiction by saying we ought to use AI like a *research assistant*, but obviously there are essential differences between research assistants and tools. To treat a research assistant as a tool is to act inhumanely. To treat a tool like it's a research assistant is, at best, willful self-deception.

³ Russell Moore, "An Image of God for an Era of AI," *Christianity Today*, July/August 2025, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/07/image-god-ai-era-artificial-intelligence-russell-moore/>.

⁴ Hoenecke: "Man is a rational being, thus a personal being; accurately defined, he is a personal being of soul and body. That is his specific position among the totality of creatures. He is not only a spiritual and personal being as an angel is—he is not a completed nature—he is an uncompleted nature. On the basis of Scripture, we distinguish in man only spirit and body, thus a dichotomy. Scripture throughout distinguishes spirit and body or soul and body (Ps 73:26; 84:2; Mt 6:25, life = *psyche*; 10:28; Ps 143:4; 1 Co 5:3,5; Ecc 12:7)." Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Richard A Krause and James Langebartels (Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 301.

⁵ As Allison, while meditating on what surprises us and what does not in the Genesis 18 account of theophany and angelophany, writes, "embodiment is the proper state of human existence. Whereas God's existence as

Christ to become fully human includes the human *embodiment* of the human soul. When the early Church rejected Docetism (the heresy that Jesus' incarnation was only illusory), they responded by affirming Christ as needing *both* a body and soul to have a fully human nature. For example, Irenaeus wrote, "For if He did not receive the substance of flesh from a human being, He neither was made man nor the Son of man; and if He was not made what we were, He did no great thing in what He suffered and endured."⁶

[The body.] Although humans can exist for a time in some meaningful personal way without bodies, the body is *not* incidental to being human. Gnosticism privileged the soul and minimized the body.⁷ Cartesian dualism teaches that you are most essentially your mind, *not* your body. Historic Christianity does not teach either of these views. To be human isn't simply to *have* a body, but to be identified with one's body. We can rightly say, "I am my body."⁸ And although we will be talking primarily about the activities of the soul, note that there is considerable room for discussing to what degree the body participates in some of these activities. Many scholars today, such as Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, remind us that activities essential to the human experience may have "an intrinsic and functional orientation to matter or the body."⁹

[The soul.] In the 21st century West, we have trouble imagining the soul as anything other than a ghost that "drives" or "controls" a physical body like the driver of a vehicle. When we picture the soul like this, we usually equate *soul* with *mind* or *ego* or *self*. But this isn't quite right. In Scripture, the soul is described in reference to at least three aspects of the human: (1) the animating force that gives life to the person (Heb. *Nephesh* and *ruach*, Lev. 17:11; Job 34:14-15; Gk. *πνεῦμα* Lk 8:55, James 2:26),¹⁰ (2) that aspect of you which can live on even after that animating force departs from your body (Gen 35:18, Rev 6:9—10), and (3) that which accounts for the power of self-aware intentional reasoning (Ps 42:5; 103:1;

embodied is strange, and whereas angels' existence as embodied is strange, human existence as embodied is natural and normal. Indeed, God has designed and creates human beings to be embodied." Gregg R. Allison, "A Theology of Human Embodiment," *Created in the Image of God: Applications and Implications for our Cultural Confusion* ed. David S Dockery (Forefront Books, 2023), 106.

⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.23, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), accessed via Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://ccel.org/ccel/irenaeus/against_heresies_iii/anf01.ix.iv.xxiii.html. XXII.1. Note that a correct biblical anthropology rests on Christology. How we understand the incarnation provides a framework for considering what it means to be human. See Marc Cortez, "The Madness in Our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point for Theological Anthropology," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua Farris (Routledge, 2015), 15-26.

⁷ See Brooke Holmes, "The Body of Western Embodiment: Classical Antiquity and the Early History of a Problem," in *Embodiment: A History*, ed. Justin E. H. Smith, Oxford Philosophical Concepts (Oxford University Press, 2017). 41—42.

⁸ See Gregg R. Allison, "A Theology of Human Embodiment," *Created in the Image of God: Applications and Implications for our Cultural Confusion* ed. David S Dockery (Forefront Books, 2023), 112—.

⁹ Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17. Consider, for example, the role of memory and emotion in the activities of the soul and how memory and emotion seem to be connected in a special way to the physical brain. This is not a problem for Christians who embrace the embodiment of the soul.

¹⁰ In this respect, the Church has a long track record of saying, along with Aristotle, *all living creatures* have souls. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 4, 415b13; also Ray Sherman Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010), 22. The *human* soul is different from other animal souls in regards to the second and third aspects.

both *nous* and *pneuma* Matt 22:37; *nous* Rom 12:2).¹¹ These aspects are usually discussed in dogmatics texts in the context of whether humans are a dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, soul, and spirit). Our dogmaticians favor dichotomy, arguing that both soul and spirit refer to the aspects we've identified. For example, Hoenecke quotes Luther writing that soul and spirit refer to the same thing with the same powers (especially notice his reference to reasoning):

“The first part, the spirit is the highest, deepest, and noblest part of man. By it he is enabled to lay hold on things incomprehensible, invisible, and eternal. It is, in brief, the dwelling place of faith and the Word of God... The second part, the soul, is this same spirit, so far as its nature is concerned, but viewed as performing a different function, namely, giving life to the body and working through the body... It is its nature to comprehend not incomprehensible things but such things as the reason can know and understand.”¹²

[Hylomorphism.] The historical name for this position we are describing, that the human is *both* body and soul intertwined into one human nature, and that the soul is more than just the mind, but entails other aspects, such as giving life to the body, is *anthropological hylomorphism*.¹³ Today Christian philosophers of mind more frequently refer to it as *Thomistic substance dualism*. J.P. Moreland:

¹¹ Hoenecke on Augustine: “Augustine explains, ‘There is nothing in man that belongs to his substance and nature except body and soul.’ According to Augustine, it is called soul (*anima*) insofar as it animates the body and makes it a living being; it is called spirit (*spiritus*) as the power of thinking and reasoning.” Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Richard A Krause and James Langebartels (Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 302. Hoenecke quoting Luther:

¹² Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Richard A Krause and James Langebartels (Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 302. Note that we want to be careful when we describe the spirit as the “highest” part of man. It is the highest in that man’s unique soul and its unique capacities make him able to have a special relationship with God that no other created beings (except perhaps angels) have, making him “a little lower than the...” But this does *not* mean the soul is inferior to the body. That belief was rejected by the early Church (cf. Gnosticism.).

¹³ Technically, the term draws especial attention to the notion that the soul *enforms* the body, an aspect stressed by Thomas Aquinas and still stressed by the Catholic Church: “The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the ‘form’ of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of ‘matter’ becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.” (CCC 365) Although often associated with Thomism, forms of hylomorphism were certainly present from the Patristic tradition on. See Nathan A. Jacobs, “Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form? A Defense of Pneumatic Hylomorphism,” *Philosophia Christi* 14:1 (2012): 79–108. To my knowledge, because a view of the soul compatible with hylomorphism is drawn on for the Early Church’s defense of Christ’s incarnation, the view was never in dispute by the Reformers and the dogmaticians of the Age of Orthodoxy, particularly the emphasis that to be human requires both body and soul. If a human soul departs from a human body, then we no longer call the body a *human*, but a *corpse*. Similarly, a body has *the potential* to be a human but only becomes human if it is infused with a human soul. In this sense, the soul gives a body its substantial form as a human. “A soul is a substantial form of a living being. A living being is what it is and has the essential powers it has in virtue of its substantial form. Correspondingly, a human soul is the substantial form of a human being. Human beings are alive and have their human-specific powers in virtue of their souls. Their souls were traditionally considered to be rational souls.” Bruno Niederbacher, “Anthropological Hylomorphism,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua Farris (Routledge, 2015), 114. Although Christian hylomorphism drew on Aristotle, they are not identical and should not be confused with a robust Aristotelian anthropology. If a Confessional Lutheran scholar is resistant to calling our position *hylomorphism* because of its Aristotelian or Scholastic undertones, then pick another word. But we *must* pick a word. We must clearly communicate that we are *not* mind/body dualists in the contemporary sense, that we believe the soul is more than mind, and that the soul in some sense gives the body its substantial form as a human.

“Thomistic substance dualism... takes the soul to be broader than the mind in containing not merely the capacities for consciousness, but also those which ground biological life and functioning. On this view, the (human) soul diffuses, informs (gives form to), unifies, animates, and makes human the body. The body is not a physical substance, but rather, an ensouled physical structure such that if it loses the soul, it is no longer a human body in a strict, philosophical sense. Instead, it becomes a corpse.”¹⁴

Especially in light of Christological controversies, this view of the soul appears to be the majority view of the historical Church,¹⁵ historical Confessional Lutherans included, as we’ll see below. Hylomorphism stresses that a human soul makes a body truly human, and so a soul is necessary for a body to be considered human, a point that will be incredibly important for this paper’s topic.

[*The rational mind.*] To say that humans have *rational minds* or *rational souls* is to draw attention to that aspect of the human embodied soul which accounts for, among other things, self-aware intentional reasoning.¹⁶ The Church confesses that the human soul is a *rational* soul: The Athanasian Creed describes Christ as fully human in the sense that he had a rational soul.¹⁷ Luther described reason/rationality as “the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.”¹⁸ The Lutheran

¹⁴ J.P. Moreland, *The Soul: How We Know It’s Real and Why It Matters* (Moody Publishers, 2014), 118.

¹⁵ “For centuries theologians and Christian philosophers have tried to develop metaphysical models with which they could take into account this dichotomy between the unity of the person of Jesus Christ and the duality of his divine and human natures. Hylomorphism is perhaps one of the most influential models for a rational reconstruction of this fundamental Christian dogma.” Josef Quitterer, “Hylomorphic Christology,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua Farris (Routledge, 2015), 345.

¹⁶ Since the soul appears to be able to have self-awareness to some extent apart from the body, we more closely associate the mind with soul. But remember: the mind is not *identical* with the soul. There’s more to the soul than simply these rational capacities.

¹⁷ The Athanasian Creed confirms hylomorphism. “*Perfectus Deus, perfectus homo: ex anima rationali et humana carne subsistens.*” “Perfect God, perfect man: subsisting from a rational soul and human flesh.” The Athanasian Creed was written in part to respond to Apollinarianism, the heresy of Apollinaris of Laodicea (c.310—390). In an attempt to defend Christ’s full divinity against Arianism, Apollinaris taught an impoverished view of Christ’s humanity: that Christ had a human body and a lower “animal” soul (which animated Christ’s body and gave him emotions), but the divine Logos replaced the human rational mind. This meant, though, that Christ was not *fully* human. The Creed, then, states that Christ is *fully* human in that both body *and* soul includes all the capacities that a human body and soul have, including and especially (in light of Apollinarianism) *rationality*. Regarding this controversy, Gregory of Nazianzus: “Let the people neither deceive nor be deceived into accepting that the lordly human being, as they say, is a mindless human being, instead of our Lord and God.” v 12, p. 390. “If anyone has placed hope in a mindless human being, it is actually he who is mindless and wholly unworthy of being saved. For what is not assumed is not healed, but what is united to God is saved. If half of Adam had fallen, then that’s the half that would have been assumed and saved. But if the whole [Adam], then he was united as a whole to the Begotten and wholly saved. Well then, let them not begrudge us complete salvation and let them not attribute only bones and sinews—a sketch of a human being—to the Savior... If... the human being was endowed with a soul but now with a mind, how would it even be human? For the human being is not a mindless animal... [If] the human being is endowed with a mind, and not mindless, let them stop being truly mindless.” V. 32-35, p. 392-393. The point: Gregory recognizes that a *rational mind* is somehow part of what it means to be human, that is, you cannot talk about a fully human soul without a rational mind. Gregory of Nazianzus, “Letter 101 to Cledonius,” *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, vol. 3, ed. Mark DelCogliano (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

¹⁸ Martin Luther, “The Disputation Concerning Man,” *Luther’s Works, Vol. 34: Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Fortress Press, 1999), 137.

Confessions make reference to the rational soul of man.¹⁹ Confessional Lutheran dogmaticians in the Age of Orthodoxy described Christ's human nature in a similar way.²⁰ Pieper and Hoenecke refer to the soul as rational.²¹ We ought to continue to refer to humans as rational beings.²² To distinguish the rational or intellectual capacity of the soul from the other capacities of the soul (such as its life-giving aspect), we speak of man having a rational *mind* (*nous*). But we cannot forget that our having *minds* is contingent on our having *souls*. As Irenaeus writes, "For the intellect of man — his mind, thought, mental intention, and such like — is nothing else than his soul; but the emotions and operations of the soul itself have no substance apart from the soul."²³ We define *rational* broadly, as that aspect of the soul that provides the potential for "rationality, sensibility, intelligence, and freedom of the will."²⁴ We'll more precisely define these potential activities of rational souls below, but for now the point can be made that *rational* means far more than the ability to do logic, and it is referring to an aspect or property or potentiality, *not* an activity. Further, for the Christian anthropologist, rationality can never be studied in some neutral way, devoid of its relationship to, corruption by, and influence from sin.²⁵ In fact, this unique aspect of humankind, his rationality, makes him particularly dangerous, with the potential to commit evil on a scale and to a degree found nowhere else in creation.

[*The image of God.*] Man "is created in the image of God; he is a likeness, a copy, a little God... a shadow of God's majesty and perfection... he is a moral, ethical creature; and he is that in essence."²⁶ Lutheran theologians have at times defined *the image of God* in both a wider and narrower sense. The narrower sense refers to man's having a holy disposition that made possible a right relationship with God, in which case this was lost in the Fall, and so now all humans are born *without* the image of God. This is the primary way *image* or *likeness* is referred to in the Lutheran Confessions,²⁷ and it is the primary way

¹⁹ Formula, Solid Declaration: Before and after conversion, man is a rational creature. II. Free Will or Human Powers, Par. 59. "It is true that a person before his conversion is still a rational creature, having an understanding and will." Readers Edition, 744.

And a person has the same rational soul before and after conversion. II. Free Will or Human Powers, Par. 81.

²⁰ Chemnitz: "Therefore, in order that we may finally bring this discussion to a close, the true teaching of Scripture concerning the human nature in Christ is this: that the Son of God in the fullness of time joined to Himself, in a perpetual union which shall not be dissolved for all eternity, a human nature, true, complete, entire, of the same substance as ours, possessing a body and a rational soul which contain within themselves all the conditions, desires, powers, and faculties proper to and characteristic of human nature." Two Natures? (60—61)

²¹ Pieper: "The fact that God breathed into man the breath of life indicates that man was given a life principle different from that of the animals, namely, a rational and immortal soul." Pieper, *Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 475. Hoenecke: "Man consists of a rational soul and an organic body and is a creation of God according to body and soul, created for the glory of God and his own happiness." Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Richard A Krause and James Langebartels (Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 301.

²² As the Confessional Lutheran scholar Detlev Schulz writes, "The definition [of man] *animal rationale* works best." Detlev Schulz, *Theological Anthropology and Sin* (The Luther Academy, 2023), 34.

²³ Irenaeus on the soul: II.29.3

²⁴ Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, ANF, 3:219.

²⁵ Detlev Schulz, *Theological Anthropology and Sin* (The Luther Academy, 2023), 53.

²⁶ August Pieper, "The Law is Not Made for a Righteous Man," *The Wauwatosa Theology* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), v2, 78.

²⁷ For example, in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "What else was this image and likeness other than that man was created with wisdom and righteousness so that he could apprehend God and reflect God? Mankind was given the gift of knowing God, fearing God, and being confident in God. (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article II (I). Original Sin, par. 18. Although we do not find the phrase *image of God* being used in

we refer to *the image of God* in many of our current statements of belief.²⁸ This may be the more natural way to understand the relevant terms in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 3:10. But Confessional Lutherans do at times use *the image of God* to refer to the combination of man's rational soul with a holy disposition,²⁹ in which case, the image of God is described as *damaged* by the Fall, but not totally lacking: the holy disposition has been lost and so the activity of the rational soul can only lead to evil.³⁰ This may be the more natural way to understand the relevant terms in Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7, and James 3:9.³¹ Ken Cherney reminds us that Genesis 1's original audience probably didn't have in mind either the narrow or the wider in exactly the way we do today, but something far more subtle and complex.³² Regardless of whether we define *the image of God* as "rational soul + holy disposition," just "holy disposition," or

the wider sense in the Confessions, the capacities associated with the image of God in this wider sense are certainly recognized. See footnote 11 above.

²⁸ For example, *This We Believe*: "We believe that God created Adam and Eve in his own image, that is, holy and righteous... We believe that Adam and Eve lost their divine image when they yielded to the temptation of Satan and disobeyed God's command." <https://wels.net/about-wels/what-we-believe/this-we-believe/creation/>, 2.3—2.5.

²⁹ In fact, the wider sense often includes far more than the rational soul, capacities and potentialities that we have nested within rationality. Detlev Schulz summarizes Johann Gerhard's assessment, drawn from and using quotes from his *Theological Commonplaces*: "In discussing what was lost of the *imago Deo* and what remains, however, Johann Gerhard is reluctant to dismiss certain attributes of the image after the fall: (1) The very essence of the human soul itself and its essential faculties, that is, mind, will, and memory, since they exist also in the unregenerate; (2) General similarities to divinity, such as incorporeity, spirituality, intelligence, and free will: 'All these belong to the soul even after the fall'; (3) Human dominion over other creatures... (4) Moral principles: 'We maintain that the image was not entirely lost. In fact, the work of the Law is still written in the hearts of men, even the unregenerate'; (5) The righteousness and holiness in which man was originally created: 'Then indeed it must be said that the image of God was lost indeed through the fall.'" Detlev Schulz, *Theological Anthropology and Sin* (The Luther Academy, 2023), 59, quoting Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces* 11.9.129 (8—11:322).

³⁰ Pieper describes our dogmatists as distinguishing, "between the image of God in a wider sense, according to which man, in distinction from the animals, is still a rational being even after the Fall, and the divine image in the proper sense, consisting in true knowledge and service of God, which was lost through the Fall." Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, electronic ed., vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 518–519. Hoenecke: "...our theologians justly distinguish between the image of God taken generally, or *late dicta*, and the image of God taken specifically, or *stricte dicta*. In the first sense, the likeness of God includes the whole spiritual-personal essence of man, free will, freedom of choice, self-consciousness, knowledge, even dominion over nature... In the narrower sense, the likeness includes certain perfections that are separable from the human essence and can be separated from it without putting an end to the essence of man... wisdom, righteousness, and holiness." Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. 3, trans. Richard A Krause and James Langebartels (Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 320.

Daniel Deutschlander: "Still in spite of the total destruction of the holiness and righteousness which were the heart and core of the image of God in Adam and Eve, the outward shell or traces of God's image are still to be found in our nature. We are still human, endowed with a soul that has a reasoning ability, a will, and emotions... This shell of God's image, our humanity, our ability to reason, our will and our emotions have been thoroughly corrupted by the Fall, though not entirely destroyed by it. Their corruption is so deep and so thorough that they are by nature incapable of any spiritual good, that is, good in the eyes of God." "The Will of God and the Will of Man: What do they have to do with one Another," July 2011, 1. Source: Seminary Essay File.

³¹ Note some of our theologians reject a wider interpretation of these verses, believing, "that they describe man as the noble creature who *once* possessed the image of God," and have value insofar as they have the potential to regain it. Lyle Lange, "Mankind," *God So Loved the World: a Study of Christian Doctrine* (NPH, 2005), 190).

³² Ken Cherney, "Distinctively Human: An Anthropology of Genesis 1 and 2," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 1 (Winter 2022), 16-23.

something else entirely, two things are certain: First, humanity loses its holy disposition in the Fall, and so also a right relationship with God. Second, humanity, both before and after the Fall, is distinguished from all other creatures at least in part by its having a rational soul equipping humanity for its continued stewardship of creation.³³

[The five states of the conscious mind and the four features of consciousness.] One important aspect of being a rational soul or mind is having the capacity for *consciousness*. Contemporary Christian philosophers of mind speak of the conscious mind as having five states and four features. The five states are : (1) sensations, (2) thoughts, (3) beliefs, (4) desires, and (5) acts of the will.³⁴ Other creatures surely have some of these capacities to some degree. Dogs, apes, and elephants may experience sensations and thoughts analogous to us. Beliefs, desires, and acts of the will appear less analogous. But of special note is how humans relate to these five states. Note four features of consciousness: (a) *Intentionality*, that is, our thoughts are always “about” something (such as the sensations we’re experiencing), or a desire “for” something. Because of this, we experience the world noumenally in terms of subject-object relationships. (b) The subjective experience involves what’s been called *qualia*, the first-person familiarity we have of mental experiences, the “what it is like” to feel a sensation or have a certain desire or hold and act on a certain belief. (c) *Private access*. Although you may have equal access to an external event, say, witnessing a car accident, no one has access to your personal private experience of that event, your personal experience of that car accident. That is, no one has access to your mental states. (d) The entailment of a single or simple *subject*, and experienced “I”. If we put these features together, there is a “what it is like to be you” that truly exists, but exists only for you, known only to you through self-aware reflection. To be conscious is to be able to orient your experiences of sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and acts of the will within this intentional, subjective, private act of being. To be a rational soul is to note the presence of these conscious experiences when you introspect. God has given humans access to these states and features to the degree that makes them suitable to carry out their special vocations of dominion over the rest of creation, as well as have a personal, conscious fellowship with God and each other.³⁵ These states and features of

³³ Martin Luther: “7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, “Have dominion” [Gen. 1:28]. 8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life. 9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it. “The Disputation Concerning Man,” *Luther’s Works, Vol. 34: Career of the Reformer IV*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Fortress Press, 1999), 137.

³⁴ Although not necessary for our current topic, note that the Confessional Lutheran teaching that, in regards to spiritual matters, man’s will is in some sense in bondage, but this does not contradict the truth that man still retains a will in other matters, such as acts of civil righteousness. “Our churches teach that a person’s will has some freedom to choose civil righteousness and to do things subject to reason. It has no power, without the Holy Spirit, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness.” The Augsburg Confessions then quote Augustine in his *Hypognosticon* favorably: “We grant that all people have a free will. It is free as far as it has the judgment of reason.” Augsburg Confession, Art. XVIII, Free Will, quoted from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*, Pocket Edition, ed Timothy McCain (Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 43. Note also that, after conversion, man’s

³⁵ “First, our relationship to nonhuman life is an asymmetrical one. Non-human life cannot relate with humans on equal terms or symmetrically, the way humans react to one another, as they lack faculties that are uniquely human, including the ability to use language and make choices. We could say that humans make this assertion for themselves while acknowledging excellent communicative skills among animal life. Second, unlike the rest of creation, humans praise God actively, not only by their mere existence... [humans are called] to participate in a fellowship and relationship with God and have Him work on them through His Word. This role elevates humans above the creatureliness they have in common with nonhuman life. Humans are special in the eyes of God and have been endowed with the communicative skills through which they praise the benevolent Creator of all creation.” Detlev Schulz, *Theological Anthropology and Sin* (The Luther Academy, 2023), 19-20.

consciousness (along with reasoning as outlined below) make it possible for humans to have the potential for language, art, ethics, etc.³⁶

[Personhood.] Although, “few words have as many layers of meaning as *person*,” the basic historical use involves identifying a “countable” member of the genus of beings with the potential for these rational capacities,³⁷ humans being countable because of a deeper being that lies behind the outward appearance, God being countable because each person of the Trinity is revealed as a separate *person* (that is, each separately requires his own personal designation, pronouns, attention, locus of agency, etc.).³⁸ Boethius: “A person is an individual substance with a rational nature.”³⁹ *Persons* is a recognizable genus within which all humans belong. But we use the term *persons* to refer to other beings who have analogous rational capacities, such as angels or God.⁴⁰

[Reasoning.] Reasoning (as distinct from the more broadly *rational*) calls to mind an operation that flows from our unique states and features of consciousness. Scripture teaches that humans engage in intentional and personal mental acts like thinking, judging, and knowing. Historically, Christian educators and logicians have differentiated between three reasoning activities (or three *acts of the mind*). Note that not all aspects of reasoning need to be unique to humans.⁴¹ But what *is* unique is that humans engage in these three acts *intentionally*, experiencing the exercise of these acts as subjects. Take, for example, the act of abstraction: For a human subject to abstract is to intentionally notice that something is *not* the human

³⁶ A note on having the *capacity* for these experiences. Christians do *not* hold that to be human means to have all the unique features of consciousness actualized all the time. If this were the case, then developing babies in the womb, infants, the mentally disabled, the senile, people sleeping, and people knocked unconscious would cease to be people or humans. This is clearly not the case. Rationality entails the *capacity* to actualize these states. There may be times that the states cannot be actualized, but we recognize that in those cases a potential has been hindered. This is why we call humans unable to actualize certain capacities *disabled*, but we do not call, say, dogs that cannot by nature have those capacities *disabled*.

³⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “On the Concept of Person,” *Communio* 13:1 (Spring 1986), 18—26.

³⁸ For a short history of the use of the term *person*, see J. Scott Horrell, “‘Persons’ Divine and Human: The Concept of Person in and beyond Nicaea for Today,” *Created in the Image of God: Applications and Implications for our Cultural Confusion* ed. David S Dockery (Forefront Books, 2023), 49—53.

³⁹ Boethius, *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*, 3. Quoted in, J.P. Moreland, Scott B. Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (InterVarsity Press, 2000), 25. Boethius’s definition runs into some problems if we’re defining *rationality* narrowly as an activity. Horrell critiques Boethius: “Are we more personal and more Godlike through greater exercise of reason? Are those lacking rational abilities (infants, those with dementia, or anyone during hours of sleep) disqualified as persons?” Horrell, “‘Persons’ Divine and Human,” 54. This critique is unwarranted if we consider rationality more broadly, as it has historically been understood, as a property that provides the *potential* for not only the activities we consider ‘rational’ (deduction, judgment, etc.), but provides the potential for *all* the unique activities, states, and features of self-aware conscious persons.

⁴⁰ Plantinga: “How should we think about human persons? What sorts of things, fundamentally, *are* they? What is it to be a human, what is it to be a *human* person, and how should we think about personhood?... The first point to note is that on the Christian scheme of things, *God* is the premier person, the first and chief exemplar of personhood... and the properties most important for understanding our personhood are properties we share with him.” Plantinga, “Advice to Christian Philosophers,” *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (July 1984): 264-65.

⁴¹ Peter Kreeft in his logic textbook recounts a (possibly apocryphal) story that “Aristotle, after one of his lectures, was disappointed that his students had no questions afterwards, so he said, ‘My lecture was about levels of intelligence in the universe, and I distinguished three such levels: gods, men, and brutes. Men are distinguished from both gods and brutes by questioning, for the gods know too much to ask questions and brutes know too little. So if you have no questions, shall I congratulate you for having risen to the level of the gods, or insult you for having sunk to the level of the brutes?’” *Socratic Logic*, ed. 3.1 (St. Augustine’s Press, 2004, 2014), 35.

subject, but an *other*, belonging to a very real category, beginning with things *other* than the thinking subject. (For example, when Juan meets someone for the first time, he—perhaps unconsciously—*abstracts* that individual from all other persons, including differentiating that person *from himself*. And so that person becomes an independent *object* of perception to Juan. This happens instantaneously and unconsciously.) The scholastics identified the activity of abstraction as the highest ability that makes all these special capacities of the soul possible.⁴² It is also the activity that makes our unique relationship with God possible, recognizing God as an object that deserves worship and oneself as a subject that ought to worship. It is also the activity that makes a moral life possible through abstracting neighbors, ethical principals, feelings of guilt and shame and responsibility, and so forth.

[*The relationship between body and soul.*] As such, Scripture teaches that humans engage in intentional and personal mental acts like thinking, judging, and knowing that are unique to creatures with immaterial spirits (and so perhaps angelic beings and even God himself have analogous capacities). Having a soul involves the capacity to do all these things, but we must not think of the soul as the necessary and sufficient source of these capacities, as if the ghost in the machine has these capacities separate from the machine itself. [Here we might talk briefly about how some mental capacities could certainly be related to the body, like memory and emotion, capacities we share more analogously with some animals. Yet, even in regards to these capacities, we would describe both body and soul as involved in the manifesting of these capacities, *not* that the body is somehow entirely responsible.]

⁴² Abstraction is the activity of identifying and classifying the things of the world around us according to the categories, forms, and ideas that they truly belong to, while simultaneously identifying individual things. For example, it takes a certain power to recognize humans as their own unique category of beings, yet also recognize each individual human as an individual human. Abstraction works across domains, such as then recognizing beings that belong to the class of humans not only in daily empirical experience, but over the phone, on a screen, in literature, in art (even abstract art), and so forth. Abstraction allows for self-awareness, that is, allows you to recognize yourself as an individual separate from other individuals (as well as things, concepts, properties, etc.) and yet an identical member of a class, like human.