

The Ordered Animal: Accountability, Teleology, and Human Nature

Jordan Steffaniak
University of Birmingham, UK

Abstract: *What does it mean to be human? Recently, a new proposal has suggested that the human is an accountable animal. In this essay, I contend that this account can be broadened and strengthened by arguing that the human is an ordered animal. By “ordered” I mean that humans are directed toward specific ends within a twofold hierarchical matrix. They are ordered to their creator and ordered to creation. While such a framework is not exhaustive it can serve to ground and organize speaking well about human persons. To demonstrate this, I first summarize the recent work of Brendan Case on the “accountable animal.” Second, I show how four separate resources, ranging from Reformed covenant theology to Aristotelian teleology, can serve to buttress and expand Case’s argument to what I call the ordered animal. With these resources, I seek to show how the ordered animal can provide a robust and flexible foundation for further theological formulation.*

Key Words: *accountability, Christology, covenant, human nature, teleology*

What does it mean to be human? Candidate definitions abound: The human is a rational animal, a political animal, a language animal, etc. Recently, a new proposal has suggested that the human is an *accountable* animal.¹ I contend that this account can be broadened and strengthened by arguing that the human is an *ordered* animal. By “ordered” I mean that humans are directed toward specific ends within a twofold hierarchical matrix. They are ordered to their creator and ordered to creation. While such a framework is not exhaustive it can serve to ground and organize speaking well about human persons. To prove this, I first summarize the recent work of Brendan Case on the “accountable animal.” Second, I show how four separate resources, ranging from Reformed covenant theology to Aristotelian teleology, can serve to buttress and expand Case’s argument to what I call the ordered animal. Each resource will strengthen various aspects of Case’s proposal and provide the portrait of the ordered

animal as a robust model for what it means to be human.

An initial precautionary word is in order about the scope of my thesis. While I certainly intend to argue for a robust model, it remains a model, nonetheless. Theological models are distinct from dogmatic or doctrinal declarations that would either be cardinal dogmas of the faith or confessional doctrines of the church. A model only *approximates* to the truth of the matter. It is not intended to capture every detail of a doctrine (in this case, anthropology). Models are “cut down” ways to selectively explain aspects of a doctrine for a specific purpose. Therefore, my model for the human person is intended to be taken *seriously* yet with the knowledge that it is *not* exhaustive. Even more, the resources used to elucidate the model are not essential. They are tools to “build up” the model as a more worthwhile research program. But one may find one—or even all—objectionable. This should not detract from the basic thesis that humans are ordered animals. After all, the human person is a mystery yet to be solved—and I am under no delusion to have discerned the fullness of the mystery.²

Brendan Case and the Accountable Animal

Brendan Case has recently argued that not only is accountability a virtue, but it is fundamental to the nature of human persons. Any Christian vision of anthropology should find the centrality of accountability quite natural given that Scripture beckons us to take exceedingly seriously the reality that we are accountable for our entire lives.³ Therefore, Case seeks to explain *how* we are accountable and *why* it is fundamental for humanity. To understand his overall argument and its relevance for my model, I will summarize how he understands the nature of accountability before considering how accountability and human nature function together to form the accountable animal.

Case argues that virtue is “a deliberate disposition for excellent action in a given domain” and that accountability is excellent action *in relation to* those with some authority over the agent.⁴ As a deliberate disposition for excellent action, accountability includes two aspects: duties and rights. *Duties* are obligations and commitments, and *rights* are legitimate claims and entitlements. Duties specify what others rightly expect from *me*, while my rights specify what I rightly expect from *others*. There are further aspects to both duties and rights, such as the distinction between a “permission” right and “claim” right, which is intended to explain the positive

² See Oliver D. Crisp, “A Parsimonious Model of Divine Simplicity,” *Modern Theology* 35.3 (2019): 559.

³ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 3.

⁴ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 2.

¹ Brendan Case, *The Accountable Animal: Justice, Justification, and Judgment* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

and negative scope of rights. Permission rights are rights to a negative good (e.g., a right to non-interference from someone, like the right to not be murdered) and claim rights are rights to a positive good that is actively supplied by another.⁵ There is a further distinction between social and natural rights.⁶ Some rights are socially mediated (e.g., politically legislated) while others are natural pre-political entitlements.⁷ But the basic outline is clear enough—accountability typically includes both duties and rights. Accountability as a trait or disposition is specifically a responsiveness or sensitivity to one’s own duties and others’ rights.

Case argues from this basic understanding of accountability that “we are rational or political or blushing animals, yes, but perhaps only because we are essentially accountable animals.”⁸ In other words, Case thinks that we are rational, political, and/or blushing animals *because* of an underlying metaphysical truth that we have and are nothing that we have not received.⁹ So, our rational, political, and/or blushing capacities are compatible *because* our lives are structured at a fundamental level by accountable norms. In fact, Case believes that accountability is an “ingredient in every distinctively human practice, since it lies at the root of our capacity for recognizing moral obligations, and by extension, of our capacity for language itself.”¹⁰

Resourcing the Accountable Animal

While I find Case’s basic argument persuasive, I think it can be buttressed, expanded, and slightly modified with the assistance of Reformed covenant theology, an Aristotelian account of teleology, Oliver Crisp’s Christological union account, and Herman Bavinck’s understanding of creation. These resources and my description of them are designed to be gateways to a further research program and not robust treatments in themselves. Therefore, the summary of each resource is intended to be relatively brief since the goal is to show how they can benefit a more robust model of the human person. Moreover, one can jettison any of these resources and not destroy the overall basic claim that humans are fundamentally ordered animals. Through examining these resources, I show that the terminology of “order” captures the core idea from Case while allowing for a more flexible and broader framework than accountability

⁵ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 14.

⁶ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 15.

⁷ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 19.

⁸ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 13.

⁹ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 125.

¹⁰ Case, *The Accountable Animal*, 8.

from which to understand the human person.

Reformed Covenant Theology

Reformed theologians have long made a habit of centering their theological convictions in covenant theology. As Michael Horton has mused, “*Reformed* theology is synonymous with *covenant* theology,”¹¹ which is precisely why Horton claims that “we were not just created and then *given* a covenant; we were created *as* covenantal creatures.”¹² For Reformed theologians, covenant is central to what it means to be human. The reason such a vision of covenants is especially useful to a theology of accountability is because of the nature of covenants—particularly those found in Holy Scripture.

Covenants are variously defined from theologian to theologian. But there is a common ground in that they are bonds or binding promises between parties.¹³ Distinct parties make an agreement of sorts. And each party has distinct duties and/or rights. For example, God makes a covenant with Noah and his offspring in Gen 8:20–9:17. God promises to never flood the earth again. God has the *duty* to prohibit a great flood, and Noah and his descendants have the *right* to life without the destruction of a flood. Such a way of thinking about covenants has direct implications for accountability as Case defines it. In modern terms, covenants are formally binding relationships of *accountability*.

Traditional Reformed covenant theology has said there are three broad covenantal structures or systems: the covenant of *redemption*, the covenant of *works*, and the covenant of *grace*. The covenant of redemption is not a historical covenant in time and space but an eternal and timeless one. It is an eternal pact between the persons of the Trinity in which the Father elects a people in the Son through the Spirit. The covenant of works is the original agreement made between God and Adam where God promises life to Adam upon the condition of his obedience to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The covenant of grace is the historical outworking of the covenant of redemption in which God promises salvation by the seed of the woman and brings forth the promise in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ the seed.

¹¹ Michael Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 11.

¹² Horton, *Introducing Covenant Theology*, 10.

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1985), 4; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 1–5.

The reason *Reformed* covenant theology is of special use for thinking about the human person as accountable is because of its systematization of the covenantal relationships as described above. For Reformed covenant theology *all* humans are related by covenant and ultimately accountable. They *all* have specific duties and rights. As Rom 5:12–21 explains, all humanity is related to either Adam or Christ by way of covenant—either under the covenant of works or of grace. Such a system of doctrine gives further grounding and texture to thinking about the human person as an accountable animal. It is not merely that we all have accountable communities but that we are accountable in covenant. And since God has structured the world to *always* be under some covenantal administration—whether of works or of grace—and has covenanted in eternity past, the idea that covenantal duties and rights form a foundation for what it means to be human makes enormous *theological* sense.

Aristotelian Teleology

An Aristotelian account of teleology is of great use for thinking about the human person as both accountable and ultimately *ordered*. The Aristotelian tradition has a long and storied heritage in Christian thinking, especially its causal framework. In the Aristotelian mode of thinking, every creature has distinct functions that spotlight distinct ends. These functions that work toward ends are what *teleology* is about—principles that *tend toward* certain types of outcomes.¹⁴ Aristotelian teleology casts a vision for irreducible and universal principles that govern temporally extended development.¹⁵

Therefore, for Aristotle, the proper end is *different* depending on the object. The end is one thing for medicine, one thing for craft, one thing for the heart, and so on.¹⁶ For example, the end of medicine is to procure health, but this is not the same end as the shoemaker whose goal is to create reliable footwear. In the same way, functions are biological facts—the heart, the eyes, the brain, they are all *supposed to do* something. The heart pumps blood. The eyes see. The brain thinks. These functions are hardwired into them, and they are only “good” insofar as they achieve their intended end. They are part of what Alvin Plantinga calls a “design plan.”¹⁷ Everything has certain metaphysical givens that cause them to

¹⁴ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 66.

¹⁵ Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 67, 92.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2019), 1097a15.

¹⁷ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14.

tend toward a given end. A purposeful and directed process is hardwired into creation—patterns that science can discern and represent.¹⁸

On Aristotle’s account, *sans* Christian theology (e.g., ignoring the Christian claim that these patterns, functions, and ordering exist *because* of God’s creative design), he surmises that the end of the human is the special function of the human. He thinks this special function is the activity of the soul in accord with virtuous *reason*.¹⁹ However, one need not agree with Aristotle’s conclusion about what counts as the proper end of human persons to use his teleological framework. The bare structure is eminently serviceable because it provides the footing for properly *ordered* relationships. It is not a bare layer of accountability that grounds what we are as humans (whether rational, political, and the like). It is a properly ordered function or end. Case claims that accountability and our sensitivity to others moral worth is the bedrock of our rational and political capacities, but I think this is too thin to make sense of humanity and its accountable relationships. What is needed is a further account of the function and goal of humanity. Further *Christian* accounts of these functions and ends can be found in both Oliver Crisp and Herman Bavinck, both to whom I now turn.

Christology and Union in Oliver Crisp

Anyone familiar with the work of Oliver Crisp will know his grand vision of Christological union. Crisp repeatedly argues that divine-human union is the *end* of creation.²⁰ Crisp thinks that God creates *this* world because he wants creatures to be united to himself—to participate in the divine life—and it is *this* world that is uniquely structured to achieve this end. Since union is the ultimate goal for humanity, God “hardwires” union into the metaphysics of creation and conceives of humans as creatures ideally suited for such participation in the divine life.²¹ The way in which God “hardwires” this union into the metaphysics of creation is a bit of reverse-engineering. As Crisp explains:

Like the prototype of an automobile and the production model that is based upon the blueprints of the prototype, Christ is the “prototypical” human. We are made in *his* image, as it were, so that we reflect God in some measure as we image Christ, the God-

¹⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1:208, 218.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a15.

²⁰ Oliver Crisp, *Analyzing Doctrine: Toward a Systematic Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 130.

²¹ Crisp, *Analyzing Doctrine*, 124, 130.

man.²²

So, we humans are fashioned specifically as embodied rational animals *because* only such a structure can be conformed to and be in personal union with God the Son.²³

Crisp's Christology and doctrine of union immediately resource the accountable animal, shaping it as an ordered animal. It is not only that we have duties and rights, but that the *end* of human persons is union with God. It is participation in the divine life that humans are fundamentally ordered toward. Therefore, we ought to think of humans as both metaphysically structured in such a way as to participate in this life and as teleologically ordered to God. All our duties ultimately tend *toward* this final goal. When we think about the underlying reason for our accountable relationships, we ought to always theorize with this end in mind.

Herman Bavinck on Nature, Duties, and Rights

Herman Bavinck was a towering Dutch intellect who is only continuing to gain relevance and popularity in English speaking circles due to the voluminous ongoing translation project of his works. But it is not a mere fad that Bavinck has gained such prominence in contemporary theology. Bavinck *is* a serious Christian thinker with numerous theological resources for contemporary theology. One such area of great use for the human person is his doctrine of creation.

Bavinck's maxim that "origin determines direction and purpose" is especially fruitful for thinking about the human person.²⁴ While Crisp gives clarity to the unique *end* of humans and reverse engineers metaphysical truths from this claim, Bavinck looks to the beginning—the origin of humans. As Bavinck says, "the essence of man corresponds to his origin."²⁵ If we are to understand what a human is about, we need to look at his original creation. Humans were originally created from the dust *and* the breath of God. Therefore, the human person is a sort of metaphysical hybrid or amphibian—part physical and part spiritual. They share traits

²² Oliver Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 52.

²³ Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed*, 63, 66. It is worthwhile to note that Case *does* have arguments that track along similar lines (though with varying emphases) in chapters four and five of the *Accountable Animal* in which the incarnation is presupposed to Edenic justification and the church is presupposed to ultimate human accountability to God.

²⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 1:35.

²⁵ Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Glen-side, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019), 180.

with both animals and angels.²⁶ Humans are spiritual beings, as God created us with a yearning for an eternal order.²⁷ But as humans are a *physical-spiritual* hybrid, God creates humans with the *double* task of culture making and obedience to divine commands. These twin duties and ends are intertwined throughout all of life: "Work and rest, rule and service, earthly and heavenly vocation, civilization and religion, culture and *cultus*."²⁸ Religion, like the soul for the body, is the *animating principle* for all of life.

Bavinck, therefore, provides further breadth for human teleology. For Bavinck, humans have a threefold set of relations: God, others, and nature.²⁹ Humans are not only ordered to *God* but to creation more broadly, hence the twin duties to both *cultus* and culture. These relations are naturally construed in terms of accountability and form the bedrock of the human person.

A further insight from Bavinck comes from his careful dispelling of any form of *natural* human rights. He explains at length:

A creature cannot bring along or possess any rights before God....
A creature as such owes its very existence, all that it is and has, to God; it cannot make any claims before God, and it cannot boast of anything; it has no rights and can make no demands of any kind.³⁰

So, for Bavinck, *before* and *after* the fall, humans as creatures have *no* rights before *God*. Note carefully what Bavinck does not say. He does *not* dispel natural human rights before other humans. But he *does* dispel any natural rights before God. Since God is the Creator, he has the right to do with his creation whatever he pleases. So, where do human rights before God come from? They come from Reformed covenant theology. As Bavinck explains, we have rights before God "solely because God in his condescending goodness gives rights to his creature. Every creaturely right is a given benefit, a gift of grace, underserved and nonobligatory."³¹ The upshot from Bavinck's account of rights is that while divine *duties* are natural, divine *rights* are supernatural. It is only by means of the covenant of redemption and covenant of grace that man has any rights before God.

²⁶ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 181.

²⁷ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 3.

²⁸ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 169.

²⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, 1:50.

³⁰ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:570.

³¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:570.

The Ordered Animal

A thick and robust model of the human person should be grounded in order. Order is a deeper level of reality than is accountability. God is a God of order and not confusion or disarray (see 1 Cor 14:33). Order is not a mystical naturalistic notion but one infused by God's own creative act of wisdom.³² God has both created and positively instituted elements of order for humans that structure their lives. While anthropological discussions can oftentimes focus on narrow aspects like the nature of the soul (or if there is one), the ethical demands for humans, and even the *imago Dei*, thinking about the human person in terms of an ordered animal can provide a solid foundation from which to explore all these areas of the human person and more. The ordered animal has enough thickness to its meaning that it can hold accountability as a central aspect of humanity alongside other elements like teleology.

As I have shown above, Case's definition of the human as an accountable animal is a crucial insight into the nature of the human person but lacks some of the texture available to it from the wealth of the Christian tradition. It is also slightly narrow in its conception of the human person. Thinking of humans as ordered allows for notions of teleology to form our thinking about humans from the start. Given these claims, I offer a formal definition of what the ordered animal is supposed to mean, followed by filling out the model from the resources I've examined in the above section, alongside several ways the model might be enhanced in future research. Finally, I conclude by showing how the ordered animal allows for a firmer foundation for various important anthropological doctrines.

The Ordered Animal Model =_{df} Human Persons are creatures that are fundamentally *ordered* to God and creation with certain duties and rights toward each.

Such a definition naturally leaves a significant amount of vagueness. What does it mean to be *fundamentally* ordered? What does the ordered relationship consist in? What sort of duties and rights do humans have to God and creation? How are their duties and rights unique compared to non-humans? And so on. I now address each in turn.

³² McGrath, *A Scientific Theology*, 1:155, 200; James K. Dew Jr. and Jordan L. Steffaniak, "Alister E. McGrath: Scientist and Theologian as Apologist," in *The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction*, ed. Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, and Alister E. McGrath (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 791.

Fundamentality and Order

The notion of fundamentality can become rather confusing rather quickly. Fundamentality can mean there is *nothing* more ultimate or it could mean that it is *relatively* important. I intend to take it in the former sense, wherein humans being ordered animals is the core claim about their existence. I think such a claim is viable because the ordered animal can sustain both the *imago Dei* and further claims, as I will show in a later section ("Christian Anthropology and Order").

Ordered to God

The vision of an ordered animal has special importance for humanity's relation to God. I argue, with the assistance of the aforementioned resources, that man is *ordered* to God as both origin and end with duties and rights through both creation and covenant. The distinctively *human* kind of order involves a responsiveness, not merely to outside stimuli or innate desires, but to *reasons* of various kinds.³³

As creatures created by God, humans are ordered to God as receivers of the breath of life. We are ordered to the duty of obedience to all that God has commanded. We are also indued with rights and privileges from God before creation because of our status as the image of God. Even more, as creatures of *covenant*, we are given further special rights of privilege before God himself. We are offered kinship with God, Christ being our elder brother. Without God's covenantal condescension, humanity would have no rights before God. As Reformed theologians are fond of saying, it would be all "Law" and no "Gospel." Moreover, as Crisp has argued, the human end is union with God—to be partakers of the divine life. Everything is ordered to this end. To properly understand humans, we must know our ultimate end (union with God), our duties to God, and our rights before God.

Ordered to Creation

The human person is also ordered to creation, which has a dual focus on other humans and the rest of creation. While we have a heavenly calling, we also have an earthly calling. The first ordered relation is to our fellow person, as the second table of the Ten Commandments elucidates. We are accountable to live as virtuous people, loving our neighbor as ourselves. But while there is a general sense in which humans are obligated to love *everyone*, there are distinct centers of locality that *increase* our duties. Global, national, and local communities all have differing senses of moral

³³ I am thankful to Brendan Case for this phrasing and suggested addition.

obligation, down to the individual family, which is the greatest moral center. Holy Scripture abounds with examples of this ordered taxonomy.

Consider 1 Tim 5:4: “But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” Later in the same chapter, Paul says in 1 Tim 5:8: “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” These claims from Saint Paul assume truths about the human person, which I suggest can be made sense of when thinking about humans as ordered animals. The *reason* various moral obligations differ in scope are because we are fundamentally ordered. We are created within a matrix of accountable relationships, both given and chosen. The most basic accountable relationship that is given is the biological family. It is appropriate and virtuous to prioritize the biological family given this naturally given accountable relationship. Humans are thus ordered to such partiality. And such partiality reaps greater virtue for the family, the individual, and the society at large.

But humanity’s relation to creation is not exhausted by an accountable relationship to fellow image bearers. It also extends to *every* created thing. The ordered relationship is captured well in the original creation mandate to take dominion and cultivate. There have been significant theological studies of these important themes throughout Scripture but they all rest on the intelligibility of humans as ordered animals.³⁴

Christian Anthropology and Order

The ordered animal model ought to be attractive because it tracks with the basic claims of Christian anthropology quite well. While there are numerous sub-fields in anthropology ranging from the *imago Dei* to metaphysics and the philosophy of mind to human origins, I suggest that the ordered animal can provide a helpful foundation for addressing all these topics because it is not married to any one specific view. It is ecumenical in its posture.

Take the *imago Dei* as the first example. It is impossible to canvas all the various views on the *imago Dei* throughout Christian history, but they are often categorized as substantial, functional, or relational accounts.³⁵ The benefit of the ordered animal model is that it is compatible with all

³⁴ See, e.g., Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 15 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

³⁵ Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 80.

three versions. Whether the image is meant to be some metaphysical capacity, like reason, some function like dominion, or a relationship, the human as an ordered animal grounds each of these accounts. The image is substantial *because* humans are ordered, functional *because* humans are ordered, or relational *because* humans are ordered. The concept is flexible enough to resource all three main views.

Consider metaphysics and the philosophy of mind next. Contemporary philosophy and theology have tended toward a more physicalist account of human persons, wherein we are biological organisms without a non-physical part, such as a soul, whereas much of the older tradition has affirmed a strong duality of the human person, both body and soul. But one need not choose between these conceptions for the ordered animal model to be of great assistance as an anthropological foundation. Humans can reduce to biological organisms or have robust non-physical souls and remain distinctively and fundamentally ordered. While the metaphysics of order likely differ—even widely—the basic point that we are ordered animals remains and serves as a springboard for further inquiry.

Finally, note issues of human origin. Again, in contemporary theology there has been a tendency to reject a young earth creationist view of human origins in favor of legion evolutionary friendly narratives. While one may have serious theological reasons to hold tightly to young earth creationism, the ordered animal has the flexibility to function in both models. In both views, God has designed the world with certain functions, goals, or ends. While it may be more difficult to make sense of some of these on a strongly evolutionary account, more modest accounts can continue to utilize the ordered animal as a framework for thinking about the human person.

Conclusion

I firmly believe that human nature will always remain shrouded in mystery. Humans are created in the image of God, and if God is incomprehensible, we are unlikely to understand his image in full. Therefore, I think fruitful ways of understanding the human person can be advanced through various flexible models that can ground further inquiry. I have offered one such account in the ordered animal. Thinking of the human person as fundamentally ordered has the benefit of prioritizing the most fundamental things about human persons—we are accountable to God and creation and are ordered to particular ends—most importantly union with God. But it also is flexible enough to serve as a foundation for numerous viewpoints in anthropology and can serve as a key desideratum when testing the validity and coherence of Christian doctrine. While the

ordered animal account herein is not exhaustive, I hope it serves as a modest gesture toward a more robust account of thinking well about human persons.³⁶

³⁶ My thanks to Brendan Case for reviewing an early draft of this paper and providing substantial feedback and criticisms. Any errors that remain are solely my own.