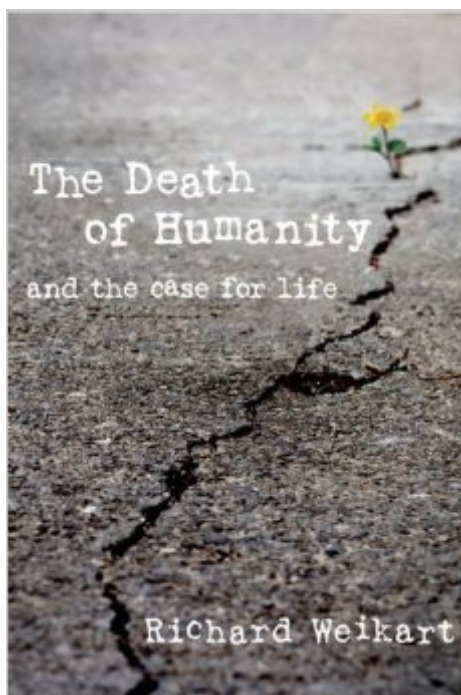


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The Death Of Humanity: And The Case For Life



Synopsis

Do you believe human life is inherently valuable? Unfortunately, in the secularized age of state-sanctioned euthanasia and abortion-on-demand, many are losing faith in the simple value of human life. To the disillusioned, human beings are a cosmic accident whose intrinsic value is worth no more than other animals. *The Death of Humanity* explores our culture's declining respect for the sanctity of human life, drawing on philosophy and history to reveal the dark road ahead for society if we lose our faith in human life.

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Customer Reviews

Ideas have consequences. What is born in the academy, accepted by the intellegensia, and cultivated in the press will make its way into the popular culture. Philosophies that reduce man* to a mere machine or to just another animal rob him of his dignity. Philosophies that claim people are a product of their genetics or up-bringing, rob him of his free will. Philosophies that claim man's motivations are nothing more than an insatiable pursuit of pleasure or power, rob him of any ultimate meaning in life. These philosophies, grounded in materialism, were born of radical Enlightenment notions that deny the existence of God and forgo the Judeo-Christian view that man has intrinsic moral worth because he is made in God's image. The result, if followed to its logical end, is a culture that is both paranoid of and obsessed with death. Richard Weikart's book *Death of Humanity* (2016, Regnery Publishing) traces how various Enlightenment philosophies have found their way into popular culture and bred the culture of death that we see today. However, his book

does not just make a negative case for secular philosophies. He also makes a positive case for the Judeo-Christian view of man, which Weikart says best aligns with what we know about the human condition (20). In the first chapter, he discusses materialism and positivism. These views relegate man to a mere machine guided by chemical reactions or environmental cues. He is placed under the microscope. Everything about him is the subject of empirical study and explained using physical phenomena. Since knowledge can only come from the scientific method, then abstract concepts like morality are relegated to place of opinion or feelings. The second chapter considers man as an animal, which includes Darwin's influence.

Historian Richard Weikart's new book, *The Death of Humanity: And the Case for Life*, is an important study of the erosion of the most basic values in the Judeo-Christian tradition of the West. Many things are striking about Weikart's powerful treatment of his subject, but I noted, in particular, his discussion of some statements from atheist biologist Richard Dawkins. These statements have a curious, persistent, and revealing inconsistency to them. Here is Weikart, for example, on a 2007 interview with Dawkins: [C]onsider how Richard Dawkins responded when Larry Taunton asked in an interview if his rejection of external moral standards meant that Islamic extremists might not be wrong. Dawkins replied, "What's to prevent us from saying Hitler wasn't right? I mean, that is a genuinely difficult question." Taunton admitted that he was stupefied by Dawkins's answer -- as he should have been. Anyone who thinks that making a moral judgment about Hitler is difficult has lost their moral compass completely and has no business pontificating about any moral issue (or proclaiming that he has discovered the "root of all evil" -- which is what he called religion, of course). (p. 80 in Weikart's book) So Dawkins thinks we can't rationally criticize Hitler's actions. Compare that with his Afterword to a 2007 book, *What Is Your Dangerous Idea?* Dawkins wrote there: "Nobody wants to be caught agreeing with that monster, even in a single particular." The moral monster Dawkins referred to was Adolf Hitler. So which is it? On the one hand Dawkins (like all the rational and informed people I know) considers Hitler a moral monster. On the other hand, he proclaims that we can't rationally criticize Hitler's genocidal racism. There's more.

The Death of Humanity spotlights false and pernicious ideas that reduce human life to mere machines, brute beasts, or slavish tools of our environment. Professor Richard Weikart looks back to the emergence of dehumanizing ideologies that have undermined the intrinsic and equal worth of human life. He also tracks the bloody trails of human wreckage that those ideologies continue to blaze. A specialist in modern European intellectual thought, Weikart focuses on how modern secular

ideologies such as Marxism, fascism, materialism, and positivism devalue human life. Weikart brings impressive breadth of learning to the topic. The book ranges from thinkers such as La Mettrie, Bentham, Galton, Haeckel, and Nietzsche on down to on down to Skinner, Fletcher, Sanger, and Singer. Weikart also shows the close connection in theory and in practice that comes from rejecting the inherent dignity of human life. Human atrocities waged by the likes of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao were practical applications of anti-human premises. At least two aspects to Weikart's critique of dehumanizing ideologies are particularly worthy of recognition. Right out of the blocks, Weikart calls out self-refuting claims. Why, for instance, should we take seriously the claims of a college prof who says all our thoughts and actions are determined by our environment? Aren't the prof's own thoughts and writings merely determined by his environment? Also, Weikart doesn't let elite thinkers get away with telling warm fuzzy stories that are intended to dodge the dreadful implications of their ideologies. Take, for example, a utilitarian bioethicist who claims life has no inherent meaning because humankind is the product of blind and purposeless material processes.

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