

Lesson 8: Genes and Human Behavior

One of the largest discoveries of the past century is genetics – apart from engineering a superhuman race (bioethics), genetics also impinges on morality in the area of behavior – example: is there an alcohol gene? Homosexual gene?

That is: Is human behavior due to physical/biological determinism? (Like a modern Manichaeism).
Nature or Nurture – or both?

Issues:

1. Humans sin due to “flesh”, which has some connection to our “body of sin” where the law of sin resides (see Romans 7-8)

Therefore, it is not inconceivable that sinful behavior would have a factor due to a physical element. The body can grow accustomed to sin to the point that sinning seems natural and necessary (scary slavery). Jesus is human and did not sin (“likeness of sinful flesh” – Rom. 8:3).

Christians experience a freedom from sin addictions.

Therefore, human nature is more than biology.

However, there may be physical dispositions that lead to temptations.

Epigenetics?

Erwin Lutzer, *Bad Habits* – beware of assuming beyond that sin! (cf. AA and alcoholics)

There may even be biological predispositions to certain sins (“temptations”) – example: hot-temperedness seems to be somewhat hereditary, overeating? Overdrinking? Lustful (rem: hormonal)?

The real question is two-fold: original (in the genes) determinism (absolutely necessary)?

2. With regard to homosexuality:

- (1) Cultural Confusion: Is it a private right to self-identify or a genetic necessity?

These are at odds with each other.

- (1) God says it is “unnatural” (Romans 1:26-27). Heterosexual lust is largely hormonal.

The outer mechanics do not imply genetic design to homosexuality.

- (2) “Passions” (Rom. 1:26-27) are strong desires that (by definition) overcome a person.

To the person involved, these feelings do not *feel* like a choice (e.g. college counselor).

Caution: Rom. 1 teaches judgment on a *culture*, so it may not be *their* choices that gave SSA.

- (3) Much evidence suggests homosexuality is sometimes conditioned – example: lacking a father or mother can be a contributing factor, as are molestation and gender-role confusion in parents.

Key “Einstein” Insight: Gender and Sexuality are two sides of same coin (Gen. 1-2; Mt. 19).

Note: Same-sex attraction is not necessarily a sin, but a temptation (often due to past events).

- (4) Don’t Use: Drugs need more and more, then worse and worse kinds.

(Not all homosexual behavior is like this—some have always known SSA after childhood.)

- (5) People do cease in this sinful behavior (see also: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) – if it were genetic (hard-wired) why are there ex-alcoholics?

Labels: In Christ, we receive a new identity (righteous, holy, clean).

Our culture’s habit of defining individuals by sexual orientation should be questioned.

Even secular therapies for those who want freedom from this behavior are 50% successful.

Counsel:

Given our confusion today, it is understandable for a teen to be confused.

If you are, please see me and let’s talk.

3. Overall, this emphasis on genetics seems like an accessible excuse for sin – how awful! It is as if we are locked into our sin by genetics, so we can never stop being _____, even if we (so-called) repress it.

However, locating sin in the fallen human “flesh” IS good news, for in Christ through regeneration I can become a new creation. Although the temptation may not go away, I do not need to practice this behavior. In a Christian, behavior is not determined by the flesh, but by the Spirit (Romans 8:12-14). Hallelujah!