

Religious Studies 35



Chapter 2: You are what you do



You are what you do

- Freedom: The amazing capacity to act
 - Humans have the capacity to act
 - We possess the power to act that sets us apart from animals.
 - Not automatic or predictable, but spontaneous and creative.
 - Not slaves to our instinct, we choose our actions, in spite of our genetic code.
 - An agent is a person who acts freely and knowingly, who chooses to do or not do something; a person who is accountable for his or her actions or omissions

You are what you do

■ Paul Ricoeur



- A philosophy teacher who fought in WWII, but spent most of the war in a prison camp
- Became a pacifist writing about many justice issues.
- After having garbage dumped on him by Marxist-Leninists who were losing a debate, he left Paris.
- In 2003, received the Pope Paul VI International Prize from Pope John Paul II for the defense of human and Christian values.
- Developed the Conceptual Framework of Action



You are what you do

■ Conceptual Framework of Action

- Developed by Ricoeur to better understand human action
- We can explore the human capacity to make things happen by asking:
 - Who?
 - What?
 - Why?
 - How?
 - With whom or against whom?
 - Under what circumstances?
 - With what outcome?



You are what you do

■ Human freedom

■ What does it mean to be free?

- Freedom characterizes properly human acts. It makes the human being responsible for acts of which he or she is the voluntary agent.
- Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in acts when directed towards God, the sovereign Good.

You are what you do

■ Naturalism

- 18th century philosopher David Hume
- Understands the material universe as a unified system. In it, everything is shaped completely by physical, biological, psychological, social, and environmental processes.
- As a part of the evolutionary process, humans, this theory holds, are no more than a part of the material universe.



Dilbert

By Scott Adams



DO YOU THINK
THE CHEMISTRY
OF THE BRAIN
CONTROLS WHAT
PEOPLE DO?

OF
COURSE.



THEN HOW CAN WE
BLAME PEOPLE FOR
THEIR ACTIONS?



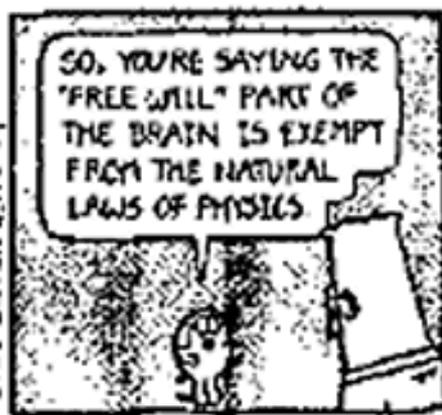
BECAUSE PEOPLE
HAVE FREE WILL
TO DO AS THEY
CHOOSE.



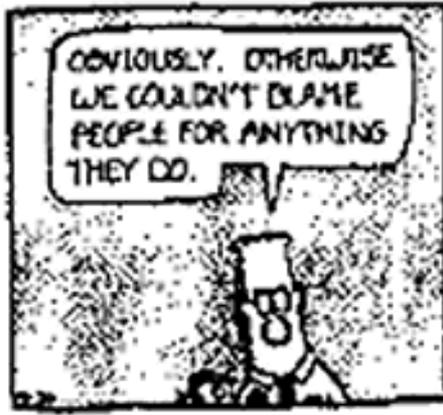
ARE YOU SAYING
THAT "FREE WILL"
IS NOT PART OF
THE BRAIN?



OF COURSE IT IS. BUT
IT'S THE PART OF THE
BRAIN THAT'S OUT
THERE JUST BEING
KIND OF
FREE.



SO, YOU'RE SAYING THE
"FREE WILL" PART OF
THE BRAIN IS EXEMPT
FROM THE NATURAL
LAWS OF PHYSICS.



OBVIOUSLY. OTHERWISE
WE COULDN'T BLAME
PEOPLE FOR ANYTHING
THEY DO.



DO YOU THINK
THE "FREE WILL"
PART OF THE
BRAIN IS
ATTACHED OR
DOES IT JUST
FLOAT NEARBY?

SHUT
UP



You are what you do

- The theory of naturalism makes a direct assault on human freedom.
 - If DNA defines who you are, then your genes rule supreme. Your genes determine who you are and what you can be.
 - Your promises and commitments then do not come from motives or intentions, but from a genetic predisposition.
 - Freedom is a delusion.





You are what you do

- Naturalism denies the possibility of ethics and morality.
 - How can you be responsible for your actions if what you do is a natural physical process over which you have no control and if control is just another facet of your neural organization?



"YOU KNOW, PREDESTINATION WOULD
SPEED THINGS UP A LITTLE ON
JUDGEMENT DAY."

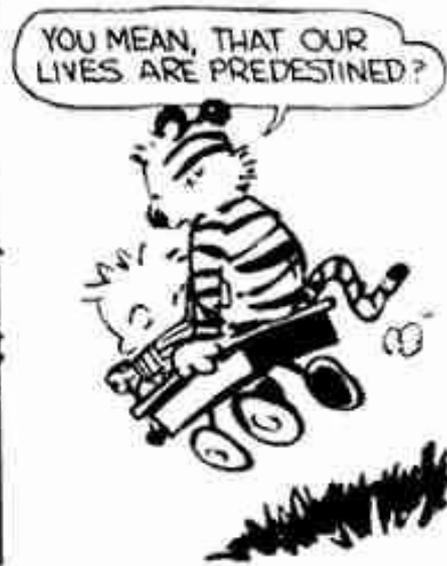
You are what you do

■ Religious determinism

- Some churches have denied human freedom. They have done so based on a belief in God whose knowledge and will have predetermined not only the course of the world and its history, but also each action and deed of every individual.
- According to John Calvin, freedom and ethics have no place in the doctrine of predestination.
- The Catholic position disagrees with Calvin. Catholic teaching maintains that human freedom and God's providence do not conflict.
- The Puritans are religious determinists.



You are what you do







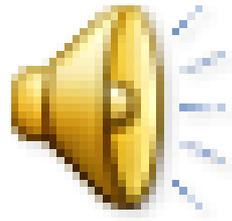
You are what you do

■ Social determinism

- Suggests that your behaviour is determined not so much by your physical state but by the influences of other upon you: your parents or your culture; your psychological state
- To a social determinist, the past, your past, determines who you are. Your behaviour is explained by social factors, not by your decisions.
 - Ex. I did this because I was abused as a child.
- If your actions are determined entirely by your past, how can you be responsible for them?

You are what you do

- Viktor Frankl speaking on Sigmund Freud



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- Viktor Frankl contrasting his ideas with the Social Determinist - Sigmund Freud.

