

TRANSCENDENT ASPECTS OF LIVING THINGS

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1. FREE-WILL

EVERY EVENT HAS A CAUSE

Every event that takes place , occurs at a particular time because it was triggered at that time by a prior event . It does not simply pop out of nowhere without a prior cause.

AN INFINITE REGRESSION

However the trigger itself must also have a prior cause, so we have an infinite regression of triggers.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF AN INFINITE REGRESSION

Time moves in one direction from cause to effect. If an effect requires an infinite number of prior causes, then it will never happen, since an infinite number of steps must be taken before it can happen. So any effect that does happen must have only a finite number of prior causes.

A FIRST CAUSE

If there are only a finite number of prior causes, then each chain of events must begin with a first cause.

TWO TYPES OF CAUSES

In our everyday life we are aware of two types of causes - causes that require prior causes, and causes that are first causes.

WHAT IS A FIRST CAUSE

A first cause is something that is self-caused. It is something with autonomy. We are familiar with first causes in our everyday life because any act of free will is a first cause. We are not compelled to act by any prior triggers, but choose to act - we make a choice between alternatives. The nature of a first cause is free will or self- causation .

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY IMPLIES A FIRST CAUSE

We can only be held responsible for our actions if we chose those actions, rather than being compelled by prior causes. Responsibility implies freedom to choose - freedom from causal determinism.

THREE LAWS

1. **Law of causation** - every event must have a cause unless it is an act of free will - in which case it is self-caused. In our everyday experience , self caused events are acts of volition or free will.

2. **Law of Entropy.** An event is less than its cause since useful energy is always lost.

3. **Law of Conservation .** When the energy of a cause is transformed into an event the total energy is conserved.

FIRST CAUSES ARE TRANSCENDENT

Self-caused events occur in time but are not determined by anything prior which means that they are free from any form of determinism, including physical causes. This means that self-causation is transcendent. In everyday language we would call it "spiritual". Every act of self-causation is a minor miracle.

WHICH SPECIES HAVE FREEWILL ?

Many animals exhibit free will. The extent to which they can express that freewill is determined by their cognitive capacity, communication capacity and their motor capacity. A creature that has high cognitive capacity, is able to communicate their intention, and has high control over fine movements is able to demonstrate free will more clearly.

If this is the case, then the expression of freewill is limited by our bodies, so a person with brain damage, or suffering from complete paralysis will have diminished expression of freewill.

2. INFORMATION

There is another aspect of our lives that is transcendent besides free will. I refer to information.

NOT REDUCIBLE TO A PHYSICAL MEDIUM

Information is not reducible to the properties of the medium that holds it - just as the writing in a book cannot be reduced to the chemical properties of the pages upon which it is written.

So information stands out distinct from any physical medium - as if it was added on / written on to that medium. There is no causal relationship between a medium and the information it holds.

Consider DNA. It contains information necessary for the construction of life, yet the order of the bases A, C, T and G is completely independent of the chemical properties of the DNA. The order does not arise from the medium. Rather the medium has been organised by some outside influence in order to convey the information.

INFINITE VARIABILITY

And the information that DNA can hold is infinitely variable, so the influence producing it must be infinitely free to vary - matter simply lacks this ability to vary infinitely, since its states are constrained by causation. The only thing we know with infinite freedom to vary is freewill.

Consider a book. It does not simply consist of a single repeating letter or word, but can be non-repetitive and non-random, and vary infinitely from sentence to sentence, from page to page, from chapter to chapter.

SPEECH

A spoken word is a pattern of physical vibrations in space, but vibrating atoms need not form THOSE words - they could be formed into any word. The words are produced by a living body, but there is nothing in the physical structure of that body that necessitates those particular words.

We experience our words as spoken out of choice or free will - so our everyday experience shows us that each word is an act of volition acting upon a physical medium. An act of free will. We are the authors of our words - not some blind biological reaction.

SYMBOLS

Words, writing, and DNA embody information that are not about themselves. Information is about something other than itself. If information were biologically determined, then it would only tell us about its biological cause - and tell us nothing about the subject of the information. Information is symbolic - so it refers to something other than itself and other than the biological process that produces it.

TRUE OR FALSE

For this reason, information can be true or false. If information were merely the expression of a biological process then such processes would produce random or biologically fixed information that was independent of truth or falsity. It can only be true or false if it is about something other than itself.

PURPOSEFUL

Information is purposeful. DNA is instructions for arriving at a defined end. It organizes matter to form life. Words are organization of sound waves to form a meaningful speech. This is different from physical objects which are driven by prior causes. In contrast, information is shaped by purpose - which is a cause "in the future".

INFORMATION IS NON-PHYSICAL

Information is non-physical and has no dimensions. It is written onto physical media but not a property of that media. It can be translated to a different code or a different media, and is unaffected by time, mass or anything physical.

"Information is not a physical dimension. Information describes the knowledge or data conveyed through various means, but it does not have a physical manifestation or occupy physical space. Physical dimensions, such as length, width, height, and time, are measurable properties of the physical world, whereas information is a non-physical property that can be encoded, stored, and transmitted through physical media, but it is not itself a physical dimension."

ENTROPY AND INFORMATION DEGRADATION

Rather than creating information, natural processes tend to degrade it. All information on physical media is subject to degradation, or noise in the signal. Genetic information stored in DNA is subject to random noise (point mutations) that scramble letters of the code causing disease and cancer. The greater the time, the greater the amount of noise or damage, leading to eventual extinction. Life is not evolving, it is going extinct.

ONLY MINDS CAN CREATE CODES

Only an intelligent mind can create codes (like natural language or DNA code) and the original purposeful information stored upon it. Those who deny a spiritual reality blind themselves to this fact of life.

SUMMARY

BEHAVIOURAL TRANSCENDENCE

In our every day lives we initiate myriad actions that exhibit free will. Such freewill is a transcendent quality because it operates independent of any prior biological cause.

PHYSICAL TRANSCENDENCE

Our bodies are constructed from information encoded in DNA - information that is independent of the properties of the medium upon which it is written and cannot be explained from the chemical properties of that medium.

So there are many facets of life that are transcendent - both physical and behavioural.