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Part 3--The Nature of Agency

The Editors

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The Nature of Agency

Obscure, unfeeling and unloving powers determine men's fate.

Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Weltanschauung*

Whether or not they state such views, psychologists often see humans as determined by genetic, familial, cultural, socio-economic, and other “powers” and therefore having little or no choice in determining their fate. This view is not only inconsistent with the purpose of counseling (if people ultimately have no choice, how can they initiate change) but also pessimistic about the outcome of counseling.

To address such issues, Daniel Judd uses a gospel-based understanding of what he calls moral agency, to identify potential misconceptions counselors may have in struggling with the question of human agency. Richard Williams proposes that our understanding of agency is a watershed issue that has implications for all theological and philosophical perspectives—not only for counselors but also for our culture in general. Both Judd and Williams work to overcome what they see as an artificial dichotomy between agency and determinism.