

Metaphysics II

First Causality

The Uncaused Cause






Overview



01

**Insufficiency of
created causality
to explain the
'being' of effects**



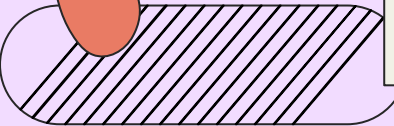
02

**Creatures as
'particular'
causes**



03

**The need for a first
cause and its
defining features**

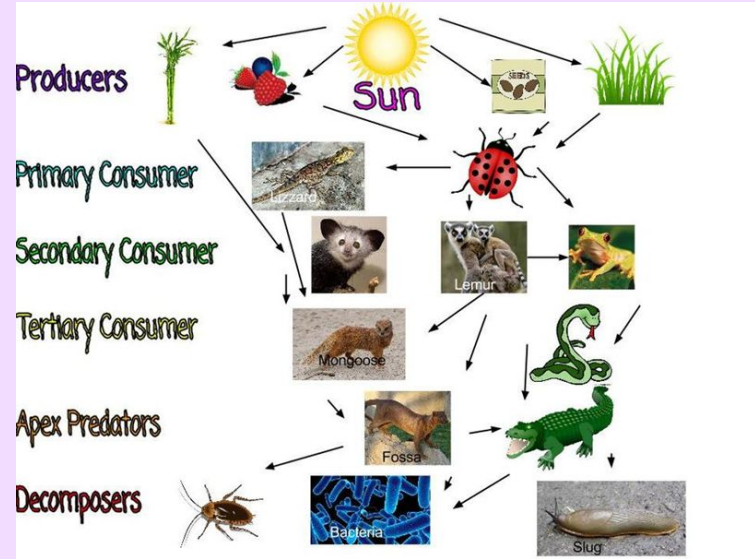
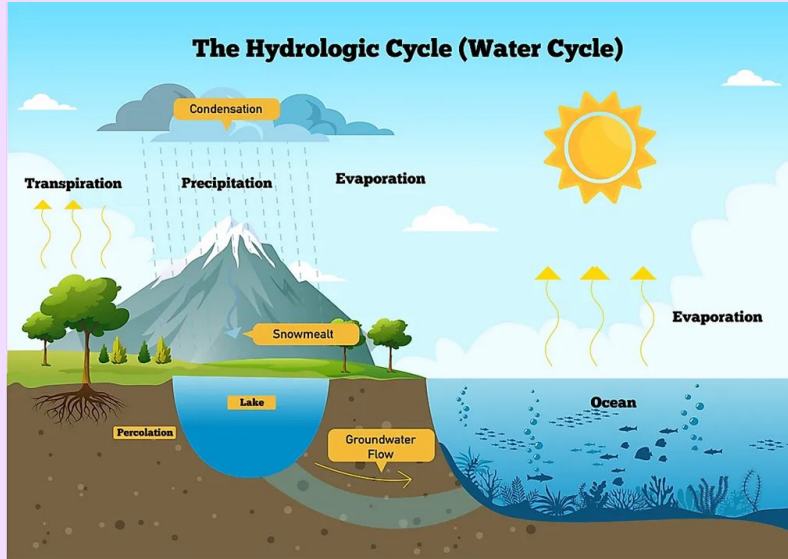


04

**Characteristics of first
causality and the
relationship between
first and second
causality**



Causal dependence is a fact of all nature



We see it everywhere. Inferior agents depend upon superior ones: instruments depends upon the principal causes.... But everything that is has an even more radical dependence upon God who is the First Cause, and the principal efficient cause of all being and all activity

Insufficiency of created causality to explain the 'being' of effects

- The activity of a created agent = the cause of the coming into being (*becoming*) of the effect. But the creature cannot produce the *being* of the effect.
- The builders are not responsible for the act of being of the wood, rocks, etc that have made this house.
- Also, long after the builder is gone, the home preserves its being in virtue of principles that are completely outside the control of the builder.
- We can say therefore, that the causality of the builder is limited/particular



- Created causality is still really causality though - the effect would not exist if the created efficient cause was suppressed

Insufficiency of created causality to explain the 'being' of effects

- Their ability to cause effects (both accidental or substantial) presupposes some existing entity. Even the most amazing 'creations' demand a primary material.
- The efficient causality of an agent is limited by its own active capacity
 - One cannot produce something that is more perfect than oneself
 - Cannot produce being from non-being;
- The causal influence of creatures always ends in the form - they make an effect not insofar as it is 'being' but only insofar as it is a *particular kind* of being
 - Educate/ "draw out" a substantial or accidental form from secondary matter
 - cannot create the forms themselves, nor can we decide for ourselves in manner to educate them

Hence, Created Causality demands a First Cause

- We can see that contingent agents exercise genuine efficient causality, though only as particular cause
- This causal ability presupposes an act of being. However, this cannot be derived from the essence/nature of the contingent agent.
- There is the need for a Subsistent Act of Being, capable of causing the limited acts of beings we find in creatures/secondary causes. We call this God.
- God is thus First and Universal Cause (as opposed to secondary and particular)



God as First Cause

To give the act of being to creatures is the proper object of God's causality:

- Demands Pure Being with Omnipotent power – abyss between being and non-being
- This act is given at the moment of creation and sustains creatures at all moments—creation and conservation are one act
- The act of being is the most “universal” of all effects because it embraces all perfections possible to creatures. God is thus the universal cause.



Summary so far

First Cause (God)

- Cause of Being
- Universal
- Transcendent: being is not a particular category

Second Cause (Creatures)

- Cause of becoming
- Particular
- Predicamental: determinate modes of being

Characteristics of First Causality...*as opposed to secondary causality*



- It is the cause of species and substantial forms...but creatures can successively transmit or change forms
 - E.g. An individual person is not the cause of human nature but can transmit it. A bird can build a nest but it is not the origin of the forms 'bird' or 'nest'
- Cause of prime matter itself
- The first cause is a cause by essence (*only Pure act can cause being*) whereas creatures are causes by participation (*to the degree they possess esse*)


Relationship between First and Secondary Causes

- Subordination, not parallel concurrence
- Remember, principal versus instrumental efficient causality
 - Not two partial causes united extrinsically to make a united effect because any secondary cause/creature, would be devoid of being and operative powers without its dependence on God as first cause
- Three consequences:
 1. First cause has a greater influence on the reality of the effect
 2. Both First and Secondary causes are total causes of the effect in their own respective order
 3. Subordination of secondary causes to God does not diminish the causal efficacy of creatures- it is actually the basis for activity



A note on Providence

As applied to God, **Providence is God Himself** considered in that act by which, in His wisdom, **He so orders all events** within the universe, that **the end for which it was created may be realized**. That end is that all creatures should manifest the glory of God, and in particular that man should glorify Him, recognizing in nature the work of His hand, serving Him in obedience and love, and thereby **attaining to the full development of his nature** and to eternal happiness in God. The universe is a system of real beings created by God and **directed by Him** to this supreme end, the **concurrence of God being necessary for all natural operations**, whether of things animate or inanimate, and still more so for operations of the supernatural order. God **preserves the universe in being; He acts in and with every creature in each and all its activities**. In spite of sin, which is due to the wilful perversion of human liberty, **acting with the concurrence, but contrary to the purpose and intention of God** and in spite of evil which is the consequence of sin, He **directs all, even evil and sin itself, to the final end** for which the universe was created. All these operations on God's part, with the exception of creation, are attributed in Catholic theology to Divine Providence.

A woman with voluminous, dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black sleeveless top and a silver bracelet. She has her eyes closed and is clapping her hands together in a celebratory or emphatic gesture. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The entire scene is framed by a light purple border with various cartoonish decorative elements: a green circle in the top left, a yellow circle with a black center in the top right, a pink circle in the bottom right, and a white speech bubble with an orange tail on the left side.

***That's the end.
That's THE end!***