



# Overview of the rest of Metaphysics II

- We have studied the internal structure of being and its transcendental aspects – static being. Now we study how things influence the being of other things: **causality**.
  - This is **dynamic being**, or the dynamism of the act of being, which is the ultimate source of all causality.
  - **Material, formal, efficient and final causes**. All these are present in the order of the universe. They give it an internal unity or cohesiveness.
  - By following the various chains of causality we are led to God, who is the ultimate Cause of all causes.
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# The Experience of Causality

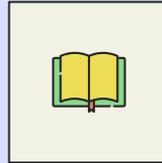


# Today's Outline

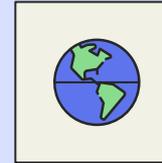


## Common Experience of Causality

Self-evident, necessary foundation for knowledge and action



## Various Formulations of the Principle of Causality



## Scope of the Principle of Causality



# Our Common Experience of Causality

At a basic level, the reality of causality is an evident one to every human being:

- Our practical behaviour and scientific activity depend upon it; think about parenting a child, investigating gene therapies, crossing the road etc.
- We naturally seek causes for inexplicable effects. (*If I could make you smell apple pie through this screen, you would ask how*)



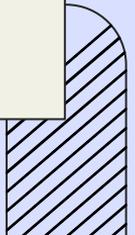
We also have an inner awareness of our own causal capacity:

- I can **affect myself** upon will: I cause my hands to move, my will over other feelings, recalling past memories, etc.
- I can **affect other things** upon will: I can influence other people, I drive a car, etc
- We experience within ourselves different kinds of causality
  - A motive for every action: **final** causality
  - An idea becomes reality when I construct it: **formal** causality



# Can you prove causality?

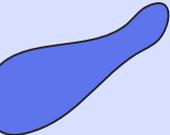
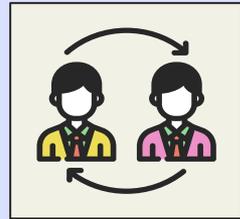
- Causality is grounded in Esse (the act of being) which is dynamic. Esse is not something static, “dead,” but actual and operative.
- Can you prove Being, or is it self-evident?
  - If causality is evident, then, strictly speaking, like Being, it cannot be proven to be true
- There are philosophers who have denied that we can have knowledge of causality. E.g. David Hume
- Ultimately, this leads to a dead end. We may not have an exhaustive knowledge of causality but that doesn't mean we don't know anything!





# General notions within each of the formulations of the Principle of Causality

**CAUSE + EFFECT** - each implies the other



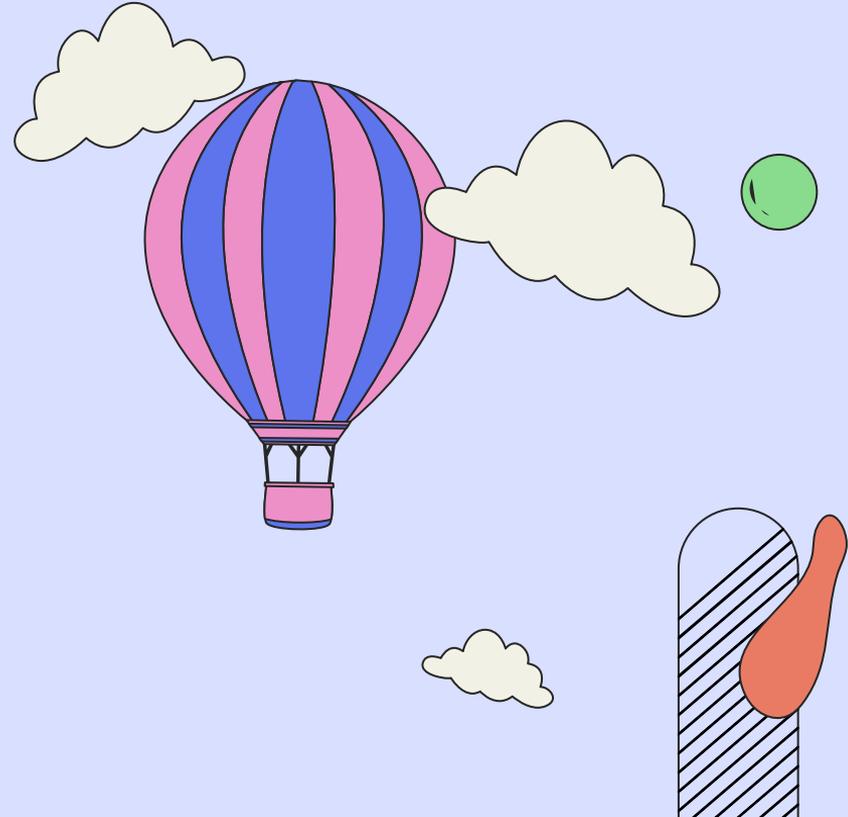
**DEPENDENCE** - every effect needs a causal basis

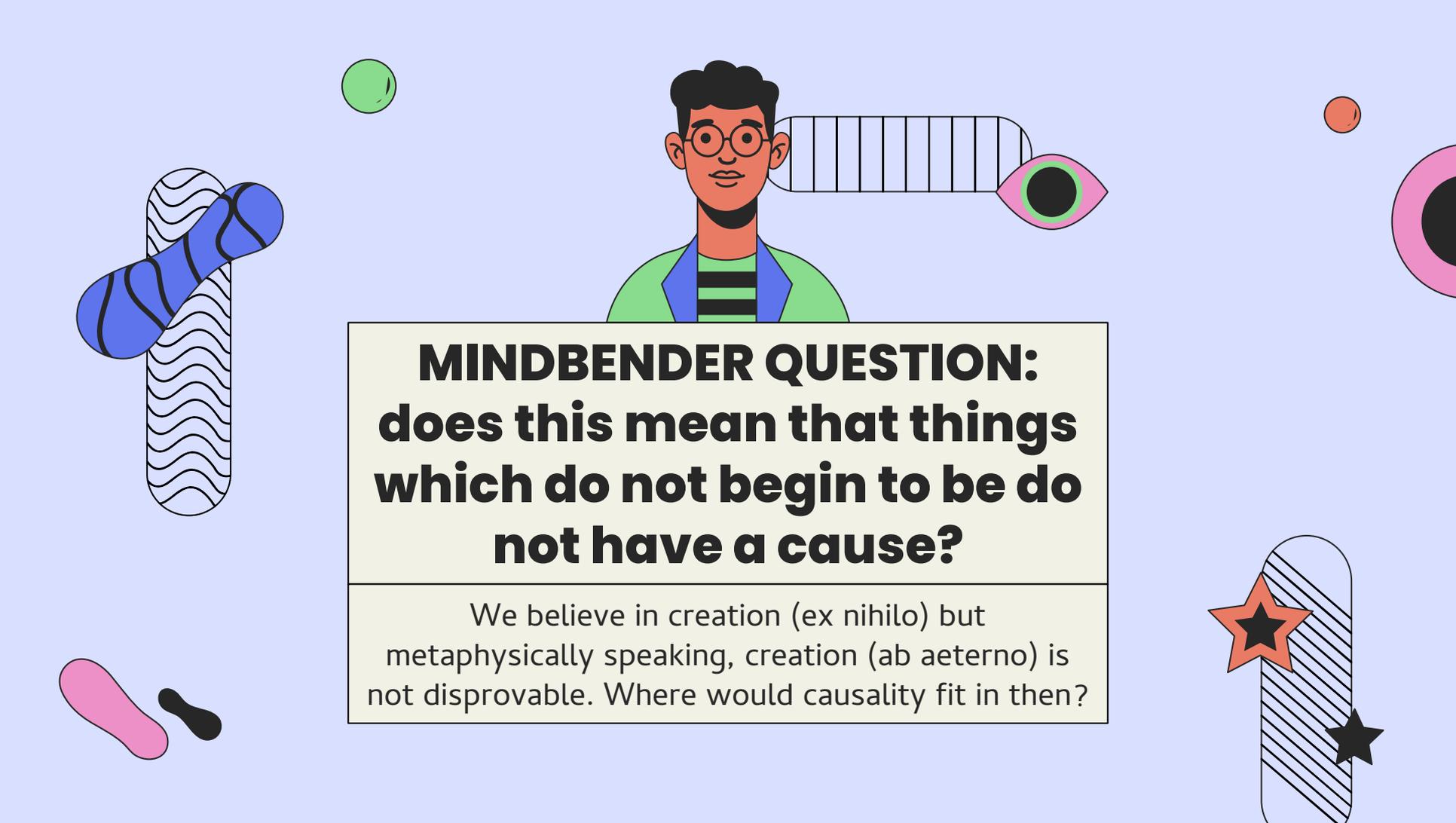




# Formulation 1: “Everything which begins to be has a cause”

- This formulation implies the notions of TIME and non-being
- There was a time when a certain perfection was not, and at some moment began to be
- If something is lacking a perfection (a specific act), then it cannot confer that act upon itself but must receive it through something which does have that act





**MINDBENDER QUESTION:**  
**does this mean that things  
which do not begin to be do  
not have a cause?**

We believe in creation (ex nihilo) but metaphysically speaking, creation (ab aeterno) is not disprovable. Where would causality fit in then?



## Formulation 2: “Anything that is moved is moved by something else.”

- Who was the first guy to formulate this principle?? 😊
- This formulation led to the proposition of the First Mover which is Pure Act, one of the arguments taken up by St Thomas in his 5 proofs for the existence of God

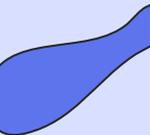




# Formulation 3: “Everything contingent requires a cause”

- Contingent = “occurring or existing only if (certain circumstances) are the case; dependent on”
- This formulation is talking about contingency with respect to being, and applies to anything which has the potentiality for ceasing to be
- Essentially: If anything can either be or not be, but right now is, then there must be a cause of its actual being
  - Anything contingent also had a beginning in time
  - Existentially, it is good to ponder this 😊
  - Contingency affects it both at beginning and end of its existence
- This formulation is behind STA’s third way – the only way out of the ‘contingency’ trap is to have a necessary being.

[Bishop Barron on St. Thomas Aquinas](#) (← click me!) From 3:57 to 6:08





4th Formulation...and the best: **“If something possesses a perfection which is not derived from its essence, that perfection must come from an external cause”**

- All perfections can be divided into those that are sufficiently explained by the **kind of essence** we have, and those not.
- Esse (act of being) is a perfection that is not essential to any contingent beings

### Essential Properties

e.g. properties of human nature: rationality, creativity, self-movement

### Non-Essential Properties

Are obviously congruous with essence/nature but require an explanation  
e.g. *a nice tan, manicured garden, knowledge*



# Some Corollaries of the Principle of Causality

Nothing can be the cause of itself (its own esse)....not even God! He is not **causa sui** but the uncaused cause.

- *(It would be a contradiction that an entity possesses the ability to cause its own act of being whilst having act of being - principle of non-contradiction)*
- All things that are limited are caused by a principle which transcends them

Nothing can produce an effect superior to itself

- Just as there is a hierarchy of participation in being, there is also a hierarchy of causes. Things can confer certain perfections upon themselves, but not any perfection. *E.g. Rocks can 'cause' new rocks but they can't think.*



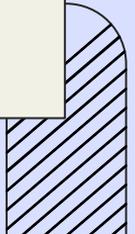
# The Scope of the Principle of Causality

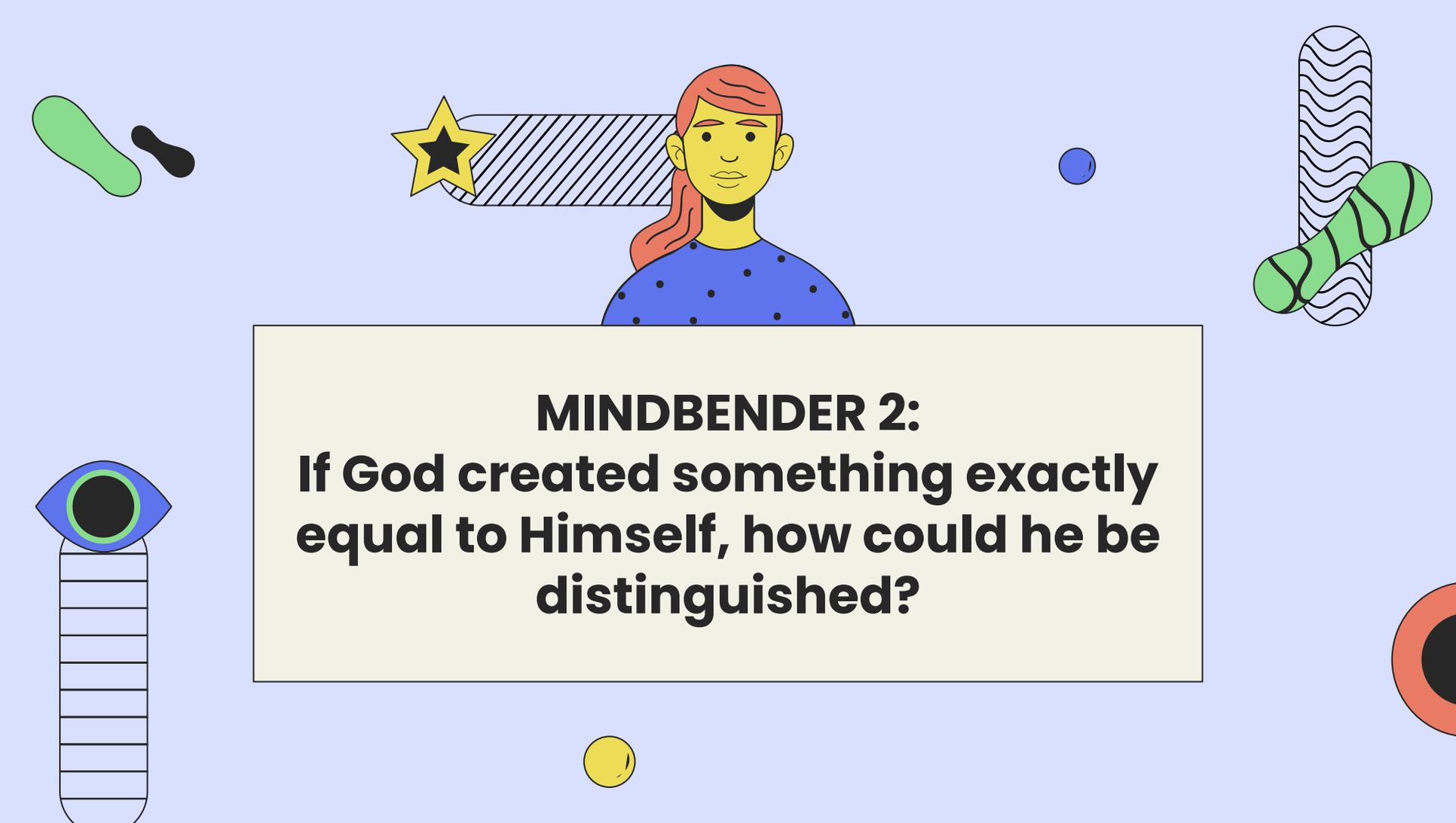
**Universal in scope, like the principle of non-contradiction (except with regard to pure Esse itself)**

- The notion of Being does not necessarily entail causing or being caused (Creation would be necessary otherwise and God would not be God because he would require a cause)

**All creatures are effects – finite being implies causality**

- Not because they are, but because they are in a limited, finite way
- Any creature/effect is limited even if the cause itself is unlimited. Why? Because any essence/substance is limited in that it is, by definition, not another.





**MINDBENDER 2:**  
**If God created something exactly equal to Himself, how could he be distinguished?**

# In conclusion then...

- Being does not imply being caused, but being a finite being does
- The principle of causality cannot be deduced from our notion of being
  - It is something gained through our experience of being.
  - Discovered inductively

