

Efficient Causality



Overview of Today



**The Need for
Efficient
Causality**



**Definition and
Characteristics
of Efficient
Causes**



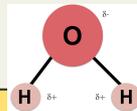
**Types of efficient
cause:**

- Total vs Partial
- Universal vs Particular
- Univocal vs Analogical
- Principal vs Instrumental
- Necessary vs Contingent
- Determined vs Free

If the material and formal causes explain the composition of things, why do we need any other causality?

Substantial form and prime matter not sufficient to explain how things come about; we need of an external cause to make them “come together.” Matter and form cannot exert their mutual influence on one another without the prior influence of the efficient cause.

- Substantial and accidental changes are possible, but they have to be made to happen: right circumstances, conditions, etc. They require an extrinsic principle to act upon the matter. E.g. $2\text{H} + \text{O}$ coming together to make water.



What is efficient causality?

“that primary principle or origin of any act which makes a thing to be, or to be in a certain way.”

- The “cause” always refers to the agent that exercises the causality, not what the agent does. The Agent is the principle (origin) of the act (or action) by which the effect is produced (in something else)
- efficient cause always acts by altering some (secondary) matter so as to educe a form from it (*moving cause- act is imparted to a potency*)



Characteristics of Efficient Causes:

- a principle that is extrinsic to the effect – the act of being of the cause is always different from that of the effect
- already have the actuality that they impart to other beings – *efficient cause is an exemplary cause*
- effect always pre-exists in its cause somehow, to an equal or eminent degree. The agent produces something like itself.
 - Can be natural (for example, reproduction) or intellectual (a painting)
 - Agents leave 'clues' about their own form through their effects (e.g. Sherlock Holmes figuring out the bad guy)
- thus, the form of the agent is the principle of the effect

Types of Efficient Causality

- Per se and Per accidens – we looked at this already
- First and Secondary causality – very important but will feature later



Total vs partial

from the angle of the cause



TOTAL

the complete cause of the effect
in any given order or from any
perspective (*could be interesting
in many legal cases*)

PARTIAL

produce a portion or part of the
effect





Universal vs Particular

angle of the effect

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- Consideration: the degree or extent of influence that a cause has with respect to all the specifically distinct effects within a given sphere
 - E.g. Founding CEO of a company vs Sales Manager; an architect vs sub-contractor
 - an effect can have several causes at work in producing it; some will be more universal than others
 - E.g. man and woman who have a child – who is really the cause of the child's body?
 - the more actuality a being has, the more universal its causality
 - E.g. the operative power of a lion is greater than a plant which is greater than a rock
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Univocal VS analogical cause

angle of likeness between effect and cause

Univocal cause

produces an effect of the same species as itself

E.g. fire produces fire



Analogical cause

produces an effect of a different and lower species than itself but there is always some likeness

E.g. My thesis





Principal vs Instrumental

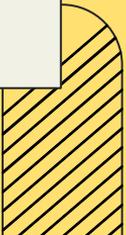
the angle of action which leads to the effect

Principal cause = acts by its own power

Instrumental cause = produces an effect not by virtue of its own form, but on account of the motion or movement conferred on it by a principle agent (e.g. paintbrush, scalpel)

The effect of the instrumental cause can be distinguished into:

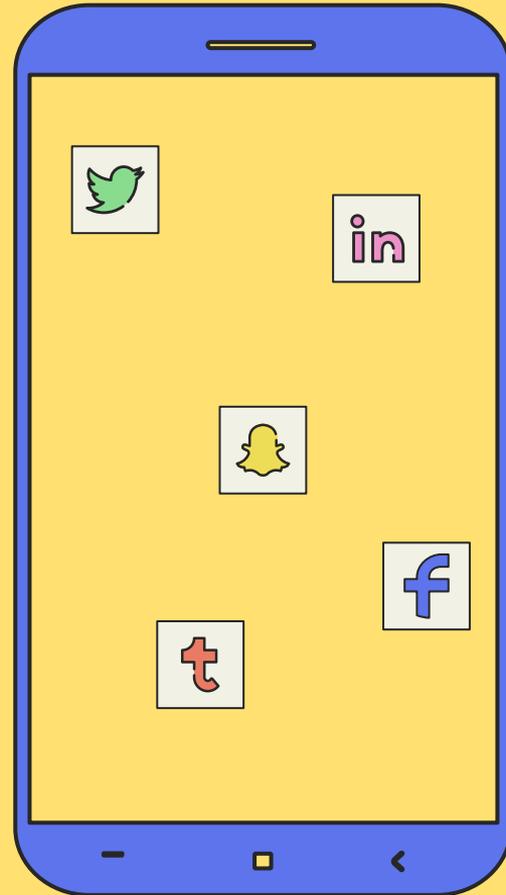
- **Proper effect:** that which stems from the form of the instrument (e.g. division of flesh, transfer of paint)
- **Instrumental effect:** arises from the influence of the principal agent (e.g. removal of cancer, portrait of the king)





Instrumental causality is ubiquitous in our lives

- Interesting conjunction of causality: it is the combination of principal agent and instrument that make the higher effect possible: not one without the other, but both.
 - Think of all our technology!
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Necessary vs Contingent

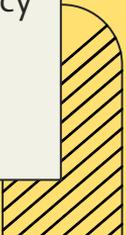
the manner in which the efficient cause produces the effect



Necessary cause = necessary causality; always and unfailingly produces its proper effect (this is not about freedom- we are talking about perfectability)



Contingent cause = does not always produce its proper effect

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- universally true for material beings: to exercise efficient causality requires a number of things working together at the same time, right conditions etc (*e.g. watch*)
 - matter of a thing may so weaken the actuality of the form that its causal effectiveness can become deficient (*e.g. dementia patient*)
 - matter can also weaken the passive potency of a subject, to the point that it cannot receive the influence of the agent (*e.g. lactose and dairy intolerance*)
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Determined and Free

causality from the angle of activity of agent

Determined

(sometimes called necessary) - cannot but act in a certain way in virtue of its nature; it has no freedom "not to"

E.g. a plant or a lion



Free cause

produces its effects with mastery over its operations. It can decide whether to cause or not.

