

The Domino Effect:  
The Myth of Dyadicity  
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One very helpful aspect of representational thinking is that it allows us to return to Biblical thought patterns by contrasting our worldly ways of thinking with God's. Triadic structure--so very evident in our language, in the structure of reality, and in the very nature of God Himself (see "Basics of Representational Thinking") --this 3-part structure is particularly noticeable when contrasted with the way that the Biblically-unlettered mind deals with what we think of as cause and effect.

In general, most people think of events in their lives as having a diadic, or two-part structure. In analyzing a situation, people will look at what immediately preceded--and, they conclude, probably caused a situation. Here is how that would show up in discourse about an automobile accident, for instance. A person might speak of how one person's inattention led to his running of a stop sign, after which another person was unable to avoid an accident. With such a view of events, we would tend to see events as preceded by, and caused by, a chain of events in the same way that a row of dominoes would fall when the first one is pushed against the second one. But actually, a chain of dominoes falling is a series of diadic, or two-part, actions. Domino one hits domino two. Then domino two hits domino three. Domino three hits four, and so on. Each interaction is composed of two elements: the falling of domino one, we see, does not cause the fall of three. It is the falling of two that causes three to fall.

While some connected events almost always happen a certain way such that we erroneously conclude that one caused the other, a Biblical thinker would not assume that "laws of nature"

or inherency caused the connection. Instead, a Biblical thinker would assume that certain determined relationships--determined by God, not by another other factor--were in play. A Biblical thinker would see each such situation as having three, not two parts. Instead of seeing cause that leads to diadic effect, those who know the involvement of God in the world would understand that each such action would consist of three parts: two events that are connected or indexed by God Himself.

We would resist such thinking for several reasons. One objection to triadic thinking would be that most minds do not take into account the involvement of God. Because they don't "see" it, they might conclude that it does not exist. This insistence on "synoptic experience" would require that your experience be seen just as I see mine, and if I haven't had the participation of God in my life, then you surely couldn't have either.

Another reason that a triadic view of events would seem foreign to modern thinkers is because of the influence of Enlightenment theorists and even the deistic founders of the United States who believed that God--or any divine element that could be identified with Him in the process of the creation of the world--not only made the world, but set into motion immutable "laws" of nature that would operate in a self-sustaining manner once began.

Thus, a person would believe that the rose bush outside her window is there because of a diadic process: someone planted it, and now it grows there. In addition, the very process of growth of that bush would be attributed to "laws of nature" which, once followed should produce growth: sunlight plus soil nutrients plus oxygen plus amenable temperatures lead to production of stems, leaves, flowers; each stage of development of a blossom from bud to

bloom is automatic if not interrupted by inclement conditions. In this case as all others in nature, the unbiblical mind would see a series of diadic actions.

How different from what the Bible teaches! The God who created the world portrays Himself in the Bible as being intimately involved in even the minutest aspects of nature. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. He is constantly aware of the number of hairs our combs remove from our heads each morning. He sets limits for each wave of the sea (Job 38:11), sends hail at specific times (38:23), causes grass to grow (38:27), provides food for birds (38:41). The idea of a created universe on autopilot is foreign to Biblical thinking.

The God we serve dwells in a timeless realm known as eternity, exercising infinite creativity that shows up as billions of actions each moment. Perhaps He does this for the delight of the innumerable hosts of angels He has created. In the words of Christian songwriter Rich Mullins, God creates individual acts for those with the childlike innocence of a toddler who never tires of his father throwing him into the air; for angels who at the sight of each new flower cry out, "Do it again, Daddy!"

In the book of Deuteronomy, God warned the people through Moses of the dangers of diadicity. He told them that the agricultural, architectural, and animal riches they would enjoy would be dependent not upon their own diadic efforts but upon a three-way relationship between their hearts, their possessions, and God. If they obeyed God, the material world of their possessions would be obliged to conform to the will of God: fertility, geopolitical safety, health, and wealth. If they disobeyed God or ignored their covenant relationship with Him, those herds and fields and moneybags would disappear. God warned them against the sin of diadicity--telling them to not to say in their hearts, "My power and the might of my hand have

gained me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17.) He showed them that in the same way He had overcome diadicity by providing food and water in a desert, He would in the same way bless them in every aspect of their lives as long as they continued to acknowledge Him--not "the forces of nature"-- as the source.

Nor was this relationship between man, God, and nature reserved just for Old Testament believers. Jesus countered the temptations of Satan to provide for His own physical hunger by affirming that man's life doesn't depend on just bread but on the words that come out of the mouth of God. And James 5:17-18 gives the example of Elijah--"a man just like us"--whose prayer relationship with God controlled the weather patterns of an entire country for three and one-half years.

Another reason why diadicity is so entrenched in the thinking of the world is that we want to believe that if we can identify causes to situations, we can control outcomes in the future by manipulating factors and circumstances. We try to "fix" situations by figuring out what we did wrong, and then resolving to do something different in the future. We look for what we might call an immediate precedent or "local causation" and then work accordingly to bring about a similarly local effect. And many times, such planning seems to "work." Those who depend upon what they see as "laws" of nature and "the law of cause and effect" can bring about what they see as desirable results. Unfortunately, they regard those things which occur in nature as absolutes (a pen falls every time you release it from your hand, for instance, so you conclude there is a "law" of gravity.) This is in sharp contrast to what the Bible portrays as statistical regularity in nature. This statistical regularity which we observe is instituted, controlled, and

sometimes even countermanded by its Creator. He rules statistical regularity, not the other way around.

A full or plenary view of reality (see lessons on 1 Peter), though, would reject the tyranny of local causation in favor of absolute causation: the moment-by-moment involvement of God with everything He has created. A rose bush doesn't flower inherently and solely because of the physical factors involved--it flowers because of the determined relationships established by God between the bush and its surroundings. At each stage of development, His hand is active. This means that some chains of events that we regard as inevitable--y will always follow w and x --are only so because God has determined in each individual instance that they will be so. Our lives are not sustained by proper nutrition and good genes--they are sustained by the will of God who has determined the exact number of days each of us will live. (Of course, proper stewardship of our earthly bodies can, with God's help, lead to healthier hours in those days. But He has determined the relationships between healthy actions and healthy outcomes--and can exercise His will at any point to sever those relationships for His own purposes.)

Paul saw adversity and opposition in this way. When he was in Asia, he tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he felt the "sentence of death" in his heart and despaired of life itself. But he knew that the local causations of this circumstance-- the "trouble" and "burden" of what he was undergoing--were subject to the Absolute Causation who had a purpose in mind: to get Paul to trust not in himself but in the God who raises the dead (--no local causation explanation there! --verse 10.)

A triadic thinker doesn't discount or ignore immediate or prior causes to situations. However, he would know that the meaning of such is unavailable to him without revelation--

the view of God of their relative importance and power. Instead of looking for God to "fill in the gaps" when the laws of nature are either inexplicable or adverse, he would look to and acknowledge the supremacy and wisdom of the Being who not only personally rules each detail of the created order, but who is pleased to also communicate with us about it.