

The Final Cause

a. Aristotle was a philosopher; he worked with Plato and considered him to be a genius. However Aristotle was independent and had his own theories. One of Aristotle's theories was that there are causes. The causes are Aristotle's explanations as to why things exist. Plato said that all things of one species are similar because there is an ideal form, Aristotle disagreed with this and believed that the reason for why one species are similar is because they have the same causes, causes are like characteristics. In all there are 4 causes. The first cause is the *material cause* and is basically what it suggests, this answers the question what it is made of. For example a statue may be made of bronze, or a goblet could be made of silver. The second cause, the *efficient cause* describes the way in which the 'thing' or object got there (was made). In the case of a statue the *efficient cause* would be the chiselling, and the act of chiselling. The third cause, the *formal cause*, this is the characteristics that make the object fit into the category to which it belongs. The *formal cause* of the statue is simply that it is a statue. The finally there is the fourth cause, this is the one I will concentrate on. Aristotle considered the final cause or Telos of a substance to be one of his most important beliefs. Aristotle believed that everything had to have an ultimate reason for existing not just a case of being matter. He said that the final cause was the best explanation of an object.

Aristotle thought that when a being had achieved its final cause it has reached goodness. For example a chicken's potential is to lay an egg, when it lays an egg it has reached achieved its reason for existence and therefore reached goodness. The chicken's egg doesn't have the potential to become an elephant's egg because it doesn't have the same final cause as an elephant. The final cause of a house would be to provide shelter for human beings. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

On the surface it may seem pretty obvious that everything has a purpose, but Aristotle thought that everything revolves around this purpose. Using the example of the statue as previously mentioned, the reason for the Statue is not simply because the sculptor wants to make a statue but the reason for why he wants to make it. If he wants it to be a memorial statue for a famous person then the statue is only for filling its potential, final cause, if it reminds people of this person.

The theory behind the final cause may on the surface seem complex but it really is a very basic, everything has a final cause and that is its purpose. The final cause helps to distinguish what something is, its identity, in the same way that Plato suggests the ideal form of a 'thing' tells you what it is. None of the other causes would exist if it weren't for the final cause. Why would something be made if it doesn't have a

purpose? Would a car be made if it weren't designed for moving things in? Aristotle believed that without the final cause nothing would exist.

b. I don't feel that Aristotle was wrong to say that everything must have a purpose. If something doesn't have a purpose then why would it exist? Some people would simply answer this question by saying it exists because it does, but really you need to look deeper than that. Some people say there is no meaning of human life, we are here because we have been born and there is no purpose for us. Would people who say that start playing with clay, make random shapes and then stick them to the ceiling? Of course they wouldn't because there is no purpose for the clay objects. I don't think that life was just created; it has to have a purpose and so does everything.

Would I sit here now and write this if I didn't want to study Philosophy? I can't think of anything that doesn't have a purpose. Look around where you are; can you see something that you can honestly say has no meaning? I can't see why some people say there are things without meaning. I think the thing which makes people say this is the fact that don't consider the little things that make everything else work. You could ask, "what's the meaning of a leaf?" but a leaf comes from tree and helps a tree to change carbon dioxide into oxygen for use to breath. I therefore consider Aristotle's theory that everything has a purpose to be true; something's may appear on the surface to have no purpose but if you take a minute to think about what it does it will always serve a purpose.