

Aristotle's Metaphysics

Theory of Causation

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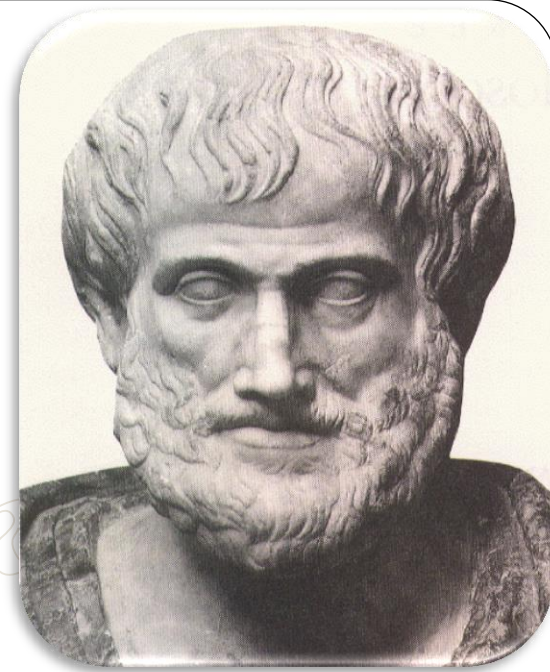
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Aristotle

384-322 BCE

- Son of a physician
- Born in Macedonia
- Attended the Academy of Plato
- Became Plato's foremost student
- Left the Academy when Plato died
- Founded the Lyceum in Athens
- Scientific thought



Theory of Causation

- **Knowledge of the thing is knowing its cause**
- **Four Causal Questions**
 - Material Question (What is it made of?)
 - Efficient Question (What caused it?)
 - Formal Question (What is its Form or essence?)
 - Final Question (What is its final end or purpose?)

Four causes

1. **Material Cause** - material component
2. **Efficient Cause** - that which makes the thing (external agent)
3. **Formal Cause** - that which makes a thing what it is (essence of the thing)
4. **Final cause** - purpose for which the thing is made

Example: A pot

- Material: Clay
- Efficient: Potter, wheel
- Formal: shape, size of the pot
- Final: to keep the water etc.

Concept of causation is not scientific in modern sense. Scientific causation refers to the succession of events and a cause is said to be an invariable **antecedent** of the effect.

According to Aristotle, all the causes are simultaneously present together

Material cause

❑ Raw material of a thing out of which the thing is composed

❑ Crude undifferentiated stuff

❑ Undifferentiated or pure matter before it is given any form by the maker. Even if it has any form it is very crude . Anything can be carved out of it

e.g: Pot- clay, statue-marble, wood-chair

Efficient cause

- ❑ **Cause of motion (any kind of change).**
- ❑ Energy or moving force that is required to bring a change
- ❑ **Statue:** the sculptor, his energy, skill, all his instruments
- ❑ In the modern context the force of energy i.e. electricity or magnetic energy or solar energy that is used to bring about change in the world are efficient causes.

Formal cause

- ❑ The substance and essence of a thing
- ❑ **Pattern** or the **essence** which is existent in a thing when it is fully realized

E.g: **Statue**- Idea or the concept in the mind of the sculptor

- ❑ Not mere imagination or idea in mind but the complete plan
- ❑ It is this plan according to which the sculptor brings changes in the marble
- ❑ Formal cause gives the direction to the efficient cause.

Final cause

- ❑ End or the purpose or the goal towards which all process of change are directed
- ❑ Aristotle's metaphysics presupposes Teleology
- ❑ E.g: when the statue is completed it is fully realized or completed in state of a its form– final cause
- ❑ God-final cause of the world

- Example: **chair**

1. **Material Cause** - wood

2. **Efficient Cause** – energy, skill, instruments, carpenter, the power

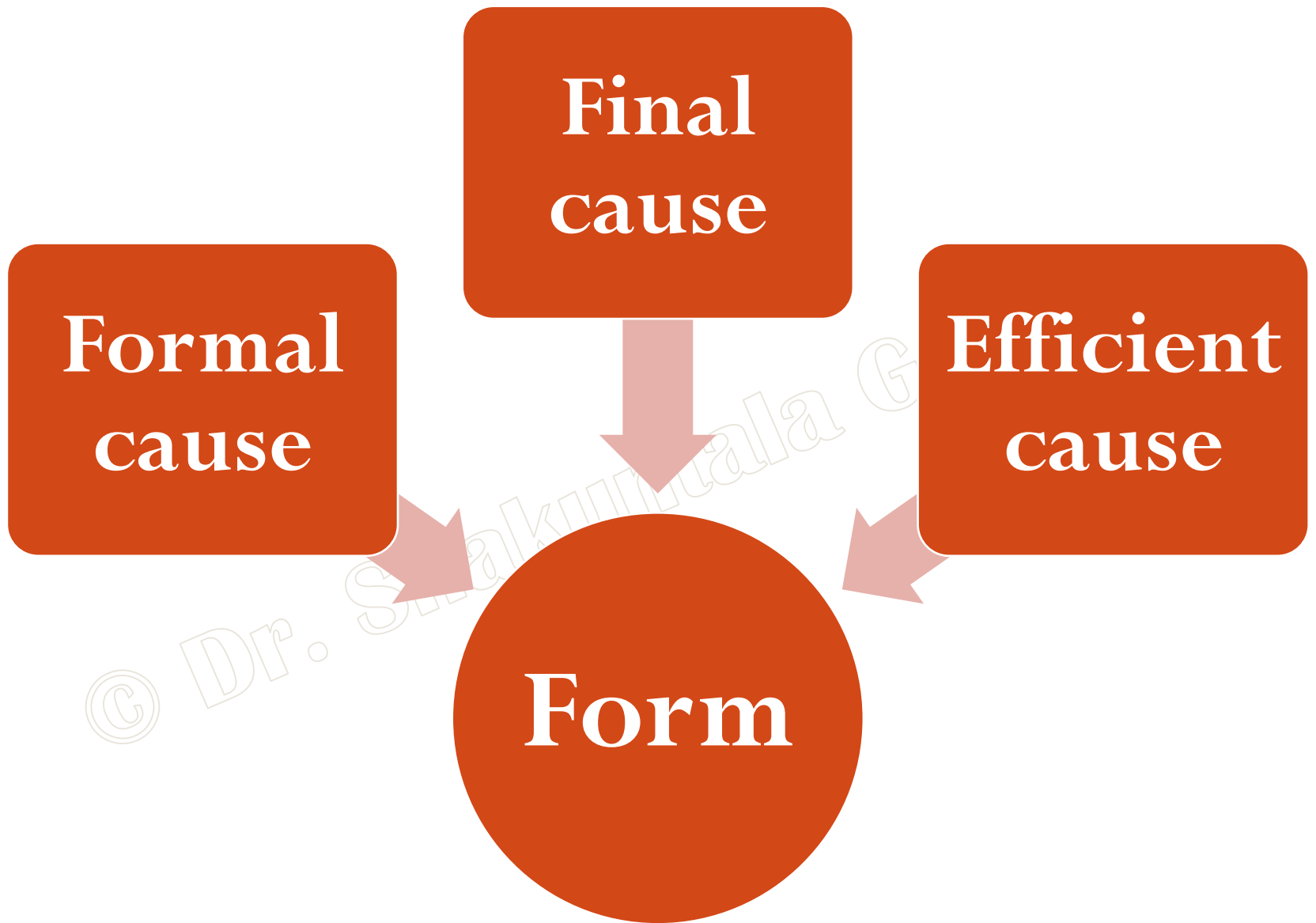
3. **Formal Cause** – shape, design and the kind of chair

4. **Final Cause** - its purpose- office chair, dinner chair etc.

- In modern thought the efficient cause is generally considered the central explanation of a thing, but for Aristotle the final cause had primacy.

Theory of form & matter

- ❑ Aristotle was a **dualist**. According to him form and matter are two realities
- ❑ **Form**= Efficient+ Formal+ Final
- ❑ But **Material cause** cannot be reduced to any kind of cause
- ❑ So ultimately there are two things- **Form and Matter but both cannot exist independently**



Formal cause = Final cause

□ **Formal cause** means what a thing is in its essence, it is what it is.

□ **Final cause** is the knowing of what it is, or the end of what it is after the thing has been actualized or realized.

□ e.g: what a dining chair is in its essence is the formal cause of the dining chair & when it has been actually made, then this was the very end towards which the wood was being shaped.

Efficient cause = Final cause

Efficient cause is becoming by the skill and energy put into it. But why the wood is cut & formed into particular shape? Because the **final end** of the dining table has to be realized. Hence, it is the final cause or end which guides and regulates the efficient cause.

❑ Final cause is the **real cause** of becoming and movement in the world.

❑ Final cause is which towards efficient and formal causes are drawn.

❑ **Matter** - generally mean physical matter like iron, gold, clay, bronze etc. Acc. to Aristotle, Matter which has no shape, no quality. It appears to be nothing. But it cannot be non-being.

Plato- Only ideas (form) exists and matter is unreal

Aristotle – dualism of form and matter

Form – Universal
Matter-Particular

The ideas or the forms or the universals are essence of things and they must exist in things.

- ❑ “ Universals are the absolute reality but it is that universal which exist only in the particular.”
- ❑ Aristotle did not maintain separate reality of universals. Forms or Ideas exist only in things in combination with matter. Form apart from matter is mere appearance.
- ❑ Reality in every case is expressed in matter. Neither form exists without matter nor matter exists without form. They are inseparably connected with each other

❑ True reality belongs neither to matter nor to form but to the form existing in matter

❑ Matter and form are related and the same thing may be **form** from one point of view and **matter** from another point of view.

❑ No such thing as pure **Formless matter**. At a later stage he included God as a Pure form without matter.

Nyaya being Realistic school also considers this world to be real and categorizes it in seven divisions

Sapta padarthas

1. Drvaya
2. Guna
3. Karma
4. Samanya (Form)
5. Vishesh (Matter)
6. Samavaya
7. Abhava