

Introduction to Philosophy
Aristotelean Conception of Causation

"We think we know something only when we find the reason why it is so."
[*Phys.* II, 3 (194b19)]

Discussion in Aristotle:

Physics II, 3 (194b17 – 195a4)

- see also: *Physics* II, 7 (198a14) – 8 (200b9)
Metaphysics I, 3 (983a24 – 988a15)
 - (see also: *Metaphysics* V, 2)
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The Four Causes – their definition (with the example of a bronze bowl):

- 1) **material cause** (substratum): that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists
e.g., the bronze out of which a bowl is made

- 2) **formal cause** (essence) the archetype, that is to say, the definition of the essence (what the thing *is*)
 - only theoretically separable from the object in question
e.g., the design of this sort of object as an object having the function of a bowl

- 3) **efficient cause** (proximate source of change): the primary source of the change or coming to rest
e.g., the producer or artisan creating the bowl

- 4) **final cause** (telos): end or 'that for the sake of which' a thing *is*
e.g., the finished product for which the work to produce the bowl was initiated in the first place