

4. FORM & END

Let's look again at the schema of the four causes—

		[Formal	-	causes by determining
		[or		
	[<i>Intrinsic</i>	[
	[and then	[
Causes are either :	[they are :	[Material	-	causes by being determined
	[
	[
	[or	[Efficient	-	causes by making
	[<i>Extrinsic</i> , and	[or		
	[then, either :	[
		[
		[Final	-	causes by being desired

—and let us recall the truth that all man's making starts in the mind. Even before I conceive of the form of the thing I want to make, I arrive at the proposal of the end. The father says to himself something like this : "I have to find some means so my family can eat their dinner other than on their laps or off the floor. I will make them a table !" He first considers the end ; then he looks to the means to achieve that end in the form. This is the case even if both end and the form seem to occur in the same instant. In the order of reality, the end comes first.

Both the end proposed and the form can exist in mind because they are immaterial. Note the differing characteristics of form when it is in mind, and when it is in the thing made.

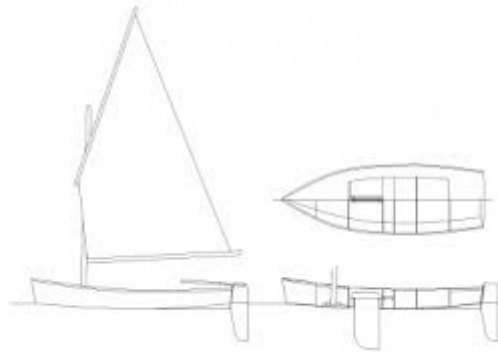
<i>In mind</i>	it is	immaterial	and universal
<i>In the thing</i>	it is	material	and particular (this)

A word about the word *universal*. It is a compound of three Latin words, *unus*, one; *versum*, considered; and *alia*, others, which we might translate as 'one taken with respect to many'. The Latin adjective, *universalis*, means 'general'.

In the mind form is unlimited, universal. Catie's dress, in mind, could be of any length (within reason !), or any size. Once she makes it, however, its dimensions and characteristics are fixed in matter and cannot be changed without major alterations. Some 15 years ago I built a small sailing boat and, before doing so, I weighed the advantages of fitting it with a swinging, or a sliding, centre-board. I chose a sliding board because it was more efficient. The board is fairly heavy, and now that I am getting older I wish that I had fitted a swinging board instead. It would have been easier to deal with when, after a day's sailing, the boat is approaching the shore. But I am stuck with the board I chose because the idea I had in mind for the boat was fixed by the materials once I had built it.

There is another sense, however, in which it is the *form* of a thing which is the principle of fixity in the compound, and in which *matter* is the principle of change. Our observation shows that

kangaroos never seem to change as the generations come and go. The same goes for dogs, horses, cows and the hens in the farmyard. They reproduce offspring which are identical in form to themselves. Despite the claims of the evolutionists that things are undergoing constant change, our senses tell us otherwise. And our senses are to be believed against the learned nostrums of the scientists. The reason that they are fixed is that their determining influence, their forms, *are not material*. It is matter that is changeable ; the immaterial by definition cannot change, cannot be corrupted, cannot undergo alteration.



Why do things wear out ? Why does the car your father bought some years ago now look somewhat jaded ? Why has the dress that your mother made for you when you were younger lost its freshness and now looks old and tired ? Why do animals get old and die ? Why will I die ? Why will you ? The reason is that we are composed of matter. Everything material, unless it be excessively enduring like diamond or gold or granite, is bound to corrupt. It is impossible for a living thing to be made, for instance, out of diamond because every living thing moves itself and so has to be emollient, soft enough in its tissues to allow for movement. You cannot walk or run if you have legs of rock ! Yet, whenever we live, and despite the efforts of matter, it is our *form* which keeps us what we are. Matter may make the animal grow old and gruff as Merry the dog is getting old and short tempered, but his form keeps him what he is as long as he lives.

Matter, Doctor Woodbury used to say, is slippery ; it's always wanting to be something else. It is the form which prevents it from doing so. So, we might say there is a constant battle going on in us between our matter, with its inclination to corruption, and our form which strives to keep us what we are. Every material thing lives in an uneasy truce.

The Order of Reality among the Causes

Now, next I want to revisit the example of John Pat chasing the soccer ball. Remember, the sun is behind him, so John Pat's shadow is in front of him. In the order of motion, the shadow is first ; in the order of time, John Pat and his shadow are together ; but in the order of reality, the ontological order, John Pat is first because he can exist without his shadow, but his shadow relies on John Pat for its existence. Now here is a task : I would like you to write down the ontological order in which the four causes operate. Here are the four of them —

- Form - formal cause
- Matter - material cause
- Maker - efficient cause
- End - final cause

Which comes first, second, third and fourth ? I have already given you some hints. Think to yourself : in what order would I move if I was thinking of making a table ?

The correct order is *first* the end, *second* the form, *third* the maker (me) and *fourth* the materials I select to do the job. Note that scientists and public commentators are given to assert that there is really only one cause, the material, and that all other influences can be reduced to accidental happenings. They choose the cause which is the least in the order of reality of all the four. But there is a trick to the business for the truth of the matter is that one of the causes occurs twice. Which ? The end, the *final* cause. It is first in intention and last in execution.

End	-	final cause
Form	-	formal cause
Maker	-	efficient cause
Matter	-	material cause
End	-	final cause achieved

The word *end* has a number of meanings. In the first usage it signifies purpose. Here, in the last, *end* signifies the end of the process (as in *The End* in a book).

There is a close connection between End and Form, between final cause and formal cause. The aphorism we use to signify this is *Formality follows Finality*. For instance, why did Almighty God not give Lucy the dog hands ? Why did He give her paws instead ? Why did he give *you* hands and not paws ? The reasons are similar. Lucy does not need hands, for she is not a maker ; she is a dog. She needs paws because the nature of a dog requires that it be able to run and to run very quickly, and paws are just the right means to that end. In contrast, God made you makers and makers need hands. Form (paws, hands) follows finality, the reason of be of the dog, of the man.

The objection that monkeys have hands but are not makers is easily met. A monkey's hands are for climbing trees. Simple actions like putting finger and thumb together are impossible for a monkey: it could never use a needle, or a pencil, as a man can. *Formality follows Finality*.

Another illustration may be seen in artificial things. My sailing boat has, as I mentioned earlier, a centre-board, because I wanted to be able to sail it to windward. Any boat will sail with the wind behind it, but to sail into the wind, up to 45° from the wind's direction, it must have a centre-board to provide the necessary lateral resistance to the boat's tendency to be blown away by the wind.

There are, then, two matters to note from what we have explored : 1. the absolute importance of the final cause, and 2. the close connection between final cause and formal cause.

Actions Also Have Four Causes

Now, not only things but actions have four causes. I was taught by the late John Ziegler at the Aquinas Academy in Sydney. To demonstrate this point he used use the illustration of the man with a swinging arm. Here it is.

Let's say you are walking down the road and you see in the field opposite you about 60 metres away a man swinging his arm around his head. What he is doing, the *matter* of the action, is the swinging arm. The actor, the efficient cause, is the man. What is the form ? What is the end ? Because of the close connection between formality and finality, an answer to the question Why ? solves both these questions. Let's take some guesses.

1. He is driving away a wasp that is annoying him.
2. He suffers from neuralgia in his shoulder and the action gives him relief.
3. He is signalling to his dog to round up some sheep.
4. He is signalling to his wife to put the kettle on (this being the agreed signal).
5. He is a simple fellow and he is doing an unconscious act.

In each case we have the end, and we can work out the form. Do you see that what matters with any act is not *what* is done, but *why* it is done. Let us take an instance or two. The mother contemplates preparing dinner for her family.

Action - <i>preparing dinner</i>	[Formal cause	— fitting preparation as a meal
	[
	[Material cause	— various ingredients
	[
	[Efficient cause	— mother of the family
	[
	[Final cause	— to feed the family

Here is another, Monica playing the piano for the pleasure of her grandmother.

Action <i>playing the piano</i>	[Formal cause	— playing accurately, and with feeling (!)
	[
	[Material cause	— the piano, the music
	[
	[Efficient cause	— Monica, (Principal), piano (Instrumental)
	[
	[Final cause	— to please her grandmother

It is interesting to note that Latin verb 'to make', *facere*, also means 'to do'. (It is the same in French with the verb *faire*.) All making is a certain doing, and all doing is a certain making. Let us lay out one last instance, extremely relevant to us Catholics, the action of ordaining a priest.

Action - <i>ordaining a priest</i>	[Formal cause	— pronouncing words of ordination laid down by the Church with the requisite intention
	[
	[Material cause	— a man
	[
	[Efficient cause	— a Catholic bishop
	[
	[Final cause	— to provide a pastor for the faithful

We should note that the issue of *the matter* of this sacrament, that it should be a man and not a woman, was held by the Church for twenty centuries. But it was with Pope St John Paul II's apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (22nd May, 1994) that the issue was resolved definitively that a woman could not be ordained a priest.