I.

Discussion of Aristotle’s teleology has, for many years, focused on final cause as explanation. A recurring question within these discussions is whether Aristotle thinks final cause is a real cause as well as an explanatory account. A real cause is one which is necessary in order actually to produce some effect. Here the question becomes whether material and efficient causes are sufficient by themselves to produce an effect for which final cause is also an explanation. If final cause is a real cause, it must explain (in the sense of ‘produce’ or ‘bring about’) some aspect of the effect which material and efficient causes do not explain.1 When final cause is taken as a real cause, it is usually treated in its role as a nature or potentiality belonging to a thing. As a resident nature, it is closely allied with efficient cause.2

In what follows, I will present an interpretation of Physics II.2 and 8 in which final cause is a real cause: Aristotle believes there is some effect that would not exist without it. I will not, however, be treating final cause as either a nature or potentiality, because the reasoning in Physics II precedes his delineation of final cause in both these respects. This reasoning is one basis on which he concludes that form is a principle residing in the


2. See, for instance, Gotthelf 1987, sections IV and VIII.
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changing thing. The focus of contemporary scholarship on explanation has obscured the fact that Aristotle reasons, in *Physics* II, from natural effects to an *entity* as cause.\(^3\) This entity is the form present at the end of change. It is striking that Aristotle does not, in the *Physics*, give what we would call a physical explanation of how this entity acts. This omission should be explained by any account of Aristotle's reasoning in *Physics* II. The explanation I will give in the case I consider is that Aristotle's purpose is to identify a natural sign of the cause of generation and initially to define the cause in terms of what constitutes the sign as a sign.

The effect to cause reasoning on which I will focus takes continuity in motion as its starting point. Aristotle believes the continuity present in movements in accordance with nature is an effect signifying a cause. His reasoning to the type of cause at work in continuous motion relies on a distinction among ways of referring to the end of a movement: as mere termination (*ἐσχατον*), natural culmination (*τέλος*), or final cause (*τὸ ὁ̄ ἐνέκα*). In *Physics* II.2, Aristotle distinguishes these terms as a function of their relation to continuity in motion. Later, in II.8, 199a8ff, he bases an argument for form as final cause on the relation of *τέλος* and *τὸ ὁ̄ ἐνέκα* to the structure of continuous motion. This structure is indicated by the terms *τὸ πρῶτερον* and *τὸ ἔφεξης*. I will first address the meaning of the three terms for end (section II) before presenting the argument for final cause that begins at 199a8 (Section III) and the structure of motion represented by the terms *τὸ πρῶτερον καὶ τὸ ἔφεξης* and *τὸ πρῶτερον καὶ ὄστερον* (section IV). Finally, I will consider the nature of his reasoning to final cause presented in II.8, 199a8ff (Section IV).

II.

Let me begin by examining Aristotle's appeal to commonplace

3. On the significance of the distinction between explanation and entity as cause, see Frede 1987, 129. There is a distinction in antiquity between *αἵτια*, used to refer to an entity, and *αἰτία* used to refer to an explanation. Frede points out that "Aristotle does not preserve the terminological distinction." Nevertheless, as he says, the distinction may still be relevant to Aristotle's thinking.