

# Teleology

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**Teleology** is the study of ends, purposes, and goals (*telos* means "end" or "purpose"). In cultures which have an teleological world view, the ends of things are seen as providing the meaning for all that has happened or that occurs. If you think about history as a timeline with a beginning and end, in a teleological view of the world and of history, the meaning and value of all historical events derives from their ends or purposes, that is, all events in history are *future-directed*. Aristotle's thought is manifestly teleological; of the four "reasons" or "causes" (*aitia*) for things, the most important reason is the "purpose" or "end" for which that thing was made or done. The Christian world view is fundamentally teleological; all of history is directed towards the completion of history at the end of time. When history ends, then the meaning and value of human historical experience will be fulfilled. Modern European culture is overwhelmingly teleological in its experience of history, that is, we see history and experience as entirely future-directed. This, in part, is responsible for the proliferation of alternatives, for in a teleological world view, history has potentially an infinite number of options and alternatives, and this proliferation of alternatives is primarily responsible for the crisis of modernity.