

The Evolution of Evolution¹

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1A Introduction

1B The thesis of the two presentations

The concept of evolution as seen in science today, is not a modern idea, but one that can be traced back to at least the early mythologies of the ancient world. From the early post-Flood civilizations rebellious, sinful mankind has rejected the Creator-creature distinction and substituted various origin stories which all presuppose the same idea of the continuity of being. To understand the history of this idea and its impact enables us to see its consequences in modern educational, legal, ethical, social, and religious trends.

2B. There are only two basic creation stories: The Biblical One and the HVP invention. Some may say that there are 50, 100, 200 Creation stories there are only two.

Since the Fall of man, man has sought to suppress the knowledge of the Creator, and in carnality has sought to redefine the nature of reality and this begins with origins.

3B Purpose of the Presentation:

1. To trace the development of these various origin theories in the ancient world and then into the medieval world.
2. To outline the similarities or commonalities in the various HVP theories of origins
3. We will be introduced to something called the Chain of Being. This predominated with the ancient Greek philosophers and then went underground in the early Christian era, but due to the influence of Greek thought in both the early church and the medieval church these ideas were just below the surface, ready to spring up again in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Also important to note that it is not always easy to trace this out, very complicated, but has tremendous ramification in the area of apologetics and the debate between evidentialists and presuppositionalists.

¹ This outline was originally presented at the 2004 meeting of The Conservative Theological Society in Dallas, TX. The outline has a few sections and statements that are not as complete as I would wish, but in the interest of making this available, I am posting it on my website.

4B Structure of the Presentation

- 1 Introduction to the Concept
2. The Mythological Manifestation of the Concept: Egypt, Mesopotamian, Greek
3. The Philosophical Manifestation: Pre-Socratics; Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicureans, then in Part 2, an examination of Neo Platonism and Gnosticism,
4. Influence of Platonism in Medieval Thought and transference to the Renaissance and Enlightenment as a precursor setting the stage for Darwinian and other forms of Naturalistic Evolution.
5. Conclusion: Significance and Impact.
 - a. If all comes within the same Being then meaning, purpose and definition and authority all derive within that being.

Impact of this on

Values

Law

Ethics

Government authority and Tyranny

5B What IS the Chain of Being

- 1C Other names: Continuity of Being, *Scalae naturae* (The term *scala naturae* was introduced, I think, by Charles Bonnet around 1769, in the *Contemplation de la Nature*); *echelle de etres*, or the chain of being.
- 2C Make a distinction between Continuity of Being and Chain of Being. Emphasize the static aspect of “kind” here.

3C Definition of the Chain of Being

1. A hierarchy of static unchanging forms, with God (Being, Unmoved Mover, etc) at the top, then angels, humans, animals, plants, down to inanimate objects. Each had its place. The movement is from the top down and the forms are unchanging.

Rushdoony

“Apart from biblically governed thought, the prevailing concept of being has been that being is one and continuous. God, or the gods, man, and the universe are all aspects of one continuous being; degrees of being may exist, so that a hierarchy of gods as well as a hierarchy of men can be described, but all consist of one, undivided and continuous being. The creation of any new aspect of being is thus not a creation out of nothing, but a creation out of being. . . .” Rushdoony

Both gods and men developed or evolved. . .out of the original chaos of being. . .Chaos or darkness generates life; it is both the source of life and the enemy of life. . .Chaos and life are thus in a necessary tension.” Rousas John Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (Philadelphia: Craig Press, 1971), 36-37

Lovejoy:

"The essential and unbreakable links in the chain include the Divine Creator, the angelic heavenly, the human, the animal, the world of plants and vegetation, and the planet Earth itself with its minerals and waters. In themselves, and in their union together, they proclaim the glory of God (Psalm 104) and the inherent dignity of all things. This image became the basis for calling anything and everything "sacred." Lovejoy

One modern textbook (Biology Today, Text Supplement) with a clear PM agenda notes Among humans different races were classified above others, men above women slaves above men then goes on to self-righteously assert:

One textbook notes “The scale of being was thus an important social concept that was used to justify many types of social inequality.”

Of course it is ignored that the subtitle of *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection* was *The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*.

Darwin in *The Descent of Man*:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and

replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes. . will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro, or Australian, and the gorilla.

The idea of a hierarchy of races with the Caucasians at the top and Negroes at the bottom was foundational in the thought of Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and other early evolutionists.

2. This idea was fundamental to the thinking of every educated person in the ancient, and medieval world, even Christian thinkers, up to the time of the Reformation.

Lovejoy writes:

****The result was the conception of the plan and structure of the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century, many philosophers, most men of science, and, indeed, most educated men, were to accept without question---the conception of the universe as a “Great Chain of Being,” composed of an immense or by the strict but seldom rigorously applied logic of the principle of continuity—of an infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the meagerest kind of existents, which barely escapes nonexistence, through every possible grade up to the *ens perfectissimum*. i.e., the Absolute Being, Lovejoy, 59.**

Regarding the *ens perfectissimum*, Lovelace notes:

What the Schoolmen called the *ens perfectissimum*, the summit of the hierarchy of being, the ultimate and only completely satisfying object of contemplation and adoration, there can be little doubt that the Idea of the Good was the God of Plato; and there can be none that it became the God of Aristotle, and one of the elements or aspects of the God of most of the philosophic theologies of the Middle Ages, and of nearly all the modern Platonizing poets and philosophers.

3. Alexander Pope in *Essay on Man*

Vast chain of being, which from God began,
Natures aetherial, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
No glass [magnifying] can reach! from Infinite to thee,
Free thee to Nothing!—On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on our:
Or in the full creation leave a void,
where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
From Nature's chain, whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

4. Image of the Great Chain

The continuity of being is foundational to the thinking of all westerners as well as eastern mysticism. All Eastern philosophers thought of creation in evolutionary terms. They all held to a inherent continuity of all creation and a merging of one species into another.

6B Rom 1:18-23

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:18 Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων,

suppress, κατεχόντων κατέχω *katecho* participle present active genitive masculine plural;

1. to prevent the doing of someth. or cause to be ineffective, prevent, hinder, restrain; old down, suppress τὶ someth.
2. to adhere firmly to traditions, convictions, or beliefs, hold to, hold fast
3. to keep in one's possession, possess
4. to keep within limits in a confining manner, confine

When you take this verb in light of its explanation in v. 23 it carries more of the idea of holding in unrighteousness, or reshaping.

In v. 23 the truth of a creator is redefined in terms of a blurring of the Creator-creature distinction. Rom 1:19-25

1B Egyptian Cosmology

Summary of Description by E. Wallis Budge (from LWAG, 242-243)

1. Document is called *The Book of Knowing the Evolutions [kheperu] of Ra, and of Overthrowing Apepi*.

Budge states: “The word here rendered by Evolutions” is *kheperu*, being derived from the root *kheper*, which means “to make, o fashion, to produce, to form, to become,” and in a derived sense “to roll” In the text, the words are placed in the mouth of the God Neber-tcher, the lord of the universe and a form of the Sun-god Ra, who says,

“I am he who came into being in the form of the god *Khepera*, and I was the creator of that which came into being. . .

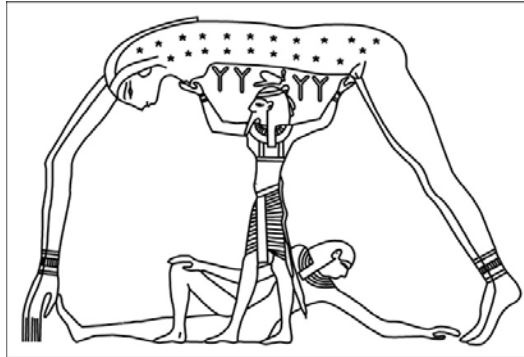
Regarding his origin this god states:

“I came into being from primordial matter, and I appeared under the form of multitudes of things from the beginning. Nothing existed at that time, and it was I who made whatsoever was made. I made all the forms under which I appeared by means of the god-soul which I raised up out of Nu (the primeval inactive abyss of water.”

Another, earlier Egyptian creation account has the world beginning as a formless watery void, entombed in darkness. When this primeval water subsides, the first mound of earth appears. On this first island the creator god Atum brought into being all other creatures and things. How he did this varies. but in one account he masturbates and brings the lesser male and female deities into existence. In another version Atum names his own body parts and from his own body separates out other beings.

In the Memphis origins account, Ptah is the patron god of Memphis. Ptah is the heart and tongue, which is mind and language. In this version Ptah conceives the idea of the universe, and called it into being with a command. Because Ptah is prior to Atum, you have word and language being used to bring forth creation. This is very similar to Genesis 1.

1. Note he both claims to have created himself, and was also created from the primal watery chaos.
2. Here Shu, the god of the air, uphold Nut, the sky-goddess, while Geb, the earth-god, reclines under Nut.



2B Babylonian Mythological Cosmology

Enuma Elish

“When above [Enuma Elish] the heaven had not (yet) been named,
(And) below the earth had not (yet) been called by a name,
(When) Apsu primeval, their begetter,
Mummu, (and) Tiamat, she who gave birth to them all,
(Still) mingled their waters together,
And no pasture land had been formed (and) not (even) a reed marsh was to be seen;
When none of the (other) gods had been brought into being,
(When) they had not (yet) been called by (their) name(s),
and their) destinies had not yet been fixed,
(At that time) were the gods created within them. . . .

Similarities:

Heaven isn't named, the earth isn't named. You have the presence of water, the term Tiamat, three deities: Apsu, Mummu and Tiamat, the use of heaven and earth. Formlessness, chaos of water.

They lived many days, adding years (to days). . . .

The divine brothers gathered together.
They disturbed Tiamat and assaulted(?) their keeper,
Yea, they disturbed the inner parts of Tiamat,
Moving (and) running about in the divine abode(?). . . .

[Marduk] took from [Kingu] the tablet of destinies, which
was not his rightful possession. . . .

After he had vanquished (and) subdued his enemies. . . .

Strengthened his hold upon the captive gods;
And then he returned to Tiamat, whom he had subdued.
The lord trod upon the hinder part of Tiamat,
And with his unsparing club he split her skull.
He cut the arteries of her blood,
And caused the north wind to carry (it) to out-of-the-way
places.

[Marduk] split [Tiamat] open like a mussel into two
(parts);
Half of her he set in place and formed the sky (therewith)
as a roof.
He fixed the crossbar (and) posted guards,
He commanded them not to let her waters escape.

Notice the sequence of actions, heavens and earth are a watery mass, the sky is formed first, then the earth.

And a great structure, its counterpart, he established,
(namely) Esharra [earth], . . .

He created stations for the great gods;
The stars their likeness(es), the signs of the zodiac, he
set up.
He determined the year, defined the divisions. . . .

Stars aren't set up until half way through. Their function is for signs and calendar.

Punishment they inflicted upon [Kingu] by cutting (the
arteries of) his blood.
With his blood they created mankind;
[Ea] imposed the services of the gods (upon them) and set

the gods free.

1. Three gods, Apsu, Mummu, and Tiamat. If asked, how would you describe these gods if you were an artist and you had to draw them? Notice, they are amorphous, they still mingle their waters together. Notice, these gods and goddesses are material, there is no distinction between these gods and anything else. They have a material nature, they are water gods.

Later they disturb the inner parts of Tiamat. What does this tell you about how they conceived of Tiamat? A volume, she is space and within her the other gods run around doing their thing.

2. The Lord trod upon the hind part of Tiamat. The Lord = Marduk, a justification of Babylonian ascendancy. Notice how this shows the way they killed in the ancient world. Similar to God's gathering of the waters and separation. One of the key differences is that in all of paganism from Enuma Elish to Star Wars you have the same ideas, the gods are part and parcel with the universe, with the creation. The universe itself is divine. Yet in the Bible God is distinct from all else. This is the fundamental distinction between all of paganism and Christianity. The Creator creature distinction. The elements of creation are not to be worshipped. The Bible is clearly anti-pagan, it is not influenced at all by paganism.
3. In this case the young god Marduk conquers God. A second major distinction, that personal sovereignty is absent.

Specifically, *Enuma Elish* assumes that all things have evolved out of water. This description presents the earliest stage of the universe as one of watery chaos. the chaos consisted of three intermingled elements: Apsu, who represents the sweet water; Ti'amat, who represents the sea; and Mummu, who cannot as yet be identified with certainty but may represent cloud banks and mist. These three types of water were mingled in a large undefined mass. . . . Then, in the midst of this watery chaos, two gods came into existence—Lahau and Lahamu. (Thorkild Jacobsen, "Enuma Elish—the Babylonian Genesis," in Munitz, *Theories of the Universe*, 9).

3B Greek Mythical Cosmology

Orpheus,

TIME existed first, no actual beginning, TIME generated CHAOS, an enormous space containing NIGHT, MIST, and the upper regions of the air or AETHER. TIME commanded and the MIST spun around with such speed that the mass congealed and solidified into the shape of a huge egg which broke in two halves which became heaven and earth. Isn't this Time plus random chance generates matter from which everything is generated.

Homer

Saw the earth flood with Oceanus a god who personified the Ocean, a vast sea that surrounded the earth.

Hesiod

Thomas Cahill, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea, Why the Greeks Matter* summarizes one Greek origin story this way:

“The Titans had been formed by Father Heaven (Ouranos) and Mother Earth (Gaia), which had existed before any of the gods, having emerged from the primordial Chaos, whose children,

Darkness and Death, had given birth to Light and Love (for Night is the mother of Day), which made possible the appearance of Heaven and Earth.” 17.

First you have Chaos,

Chaos begat Darkness and Death, then Light and Love,
then Heaven and Earth, then the Titans, the elder gods

The Titans were overthrown by their children, Zeus, Hera,
and the other 10 Olympian gods.

Like Orpheus explained the existence of CHAOS first, a vast undefined infinite, immeasurable space. From Chaos came Darkness (Erebus) and his sisters Nyx (Night) and Gaea (earth). Erebus and Nyx have a daughter, day and a son, Aether or Air. And Gaea the earth goddess gave birth to a son Uranus, the heavens.

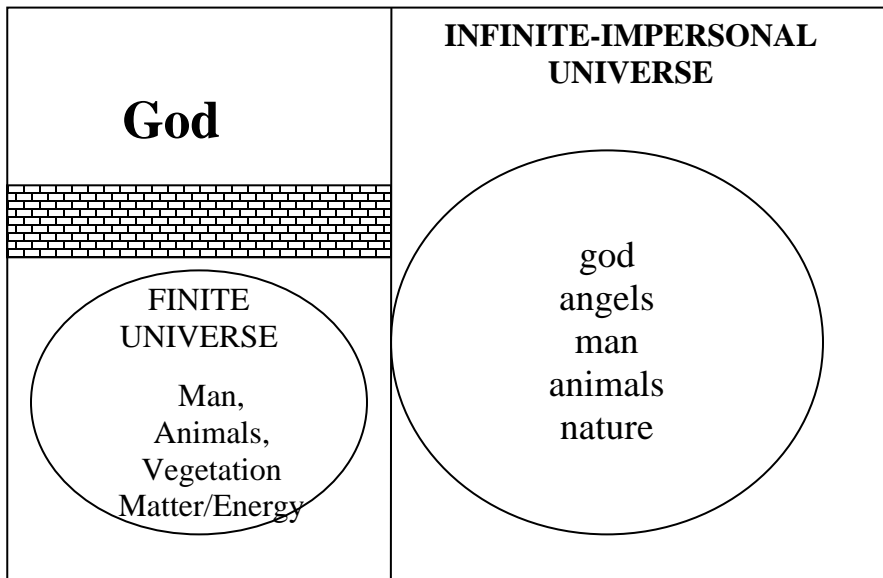
NB The powers of the cosmos and the matter of the cosmos are personified. Matter comes first from which these other things generate.

You have the same pattern CHAOS, then MATTER, then Everything else.

Conclusion

1. All pagan myths begin with the existence of some sort of matter or the gods themselves. Thus, all matter/energy is self existent, so that the ultimate reality in the universe is the universe of matter and energy, not a Person, not Reason, not the Logos.
2. The mechanics of creation involve some sort of procreation, which is a natural process of creating one thing from something else.
3. All of these ancient cosmologies tell stories where already existing material is transformed into something else, one part of the universe causes or self generates another part of the universe.
4. This shows a basic continuity between all existing things.
5. This ends up with man being one with the universe, a pantheistic idea.
6. Satan makes this same claim when he suggests that Eve can be like god, just elevate herself up this chain of being.

7. So we must begin with a clear and consistent distinction between the Creator and the creation.



2A Philosophical Cosmogonies

Quotes from Morris, LWAG

“When I began the search for anticipations of the evolutionary theory. . . I was led back to the Greek natural philosophers and I was astonished to find how many of the pronounced and basic features of the Darwinian theory were anticipated even as far back as the seventh century B.C.”
Henry Fairfield Osborn (former director of the American Museum of Natural History, *From the Greeks to Darwin*. p. xi

The following Munitz quote is prob too long. Break it down and teach it in 5 points.

“The type of thinking initiated by the Milesian school of pre-Socratic thinkers—Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes—in the sixth century BC was carried forward in many directions. One of the most remarkable outcomes of such speculations, representing a culmination of their materialistic thought, was to be found in the Atomist school. Originally worked out in its main features by Leucippus and Democritus in the fifth century B.C., the teachings of atomism were later adopted as a basis for the primarily ethical philosophy of Epicureanism. It elaborates the conception of a universe whose order arises out of a blind interplay of atoms rather than as a product of deliberate design; of a universe boundless in spatial extent, infinite in its duration and containing

innumerable worlds in various stages of development or decay. It was this concept of an infinite and, at bottom, irrational universe against which Plato, Aristotle, and the whole tradition of theologically oriented thought in Western culture set themselves in sharp and fundamental opposition. It was the same conception, however, which once more came into the foreground of attention at the dawn of modern thought and has remained up to the present time an inspiration for those modes of scientific thinking that renounce any appeal to teleology in the interpretation of physical phenomena. (Milton K Munitz, prof of philosophy of science at NYU, *Theories of the Universe*, p. 6.

L. T. More, *Dogma*, 48

“If Evolutionists must find a cornerstone in Greek philosophy for their doctrine, they should give this honor to Democritus. His doctrine of mechanical and atomistic monism in which all phenomena are reduced to material particles moving according to natural law, is, in the real sense of the word, modern science.”

1B **Pre Socratics: These were all monistic pantheists**

Monism: The view that all reality is of one kind, neutral monism, material monism, pantheistic monism.

Pantheism: The belief that god and the creation are identical.

In Pantheistic monism which is often associated with Vedantic Hinduism, the whole of reality is identical with the One Absolute which is God. (c. C. Stephan Evans, Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion).

**Also, From this point to Pasteur, there is a belief in spontaneous generation that undergirds all belief in the Chain of Being.

1C **Thales** (650–580 BC) regarded water as the cause, beginning, and end of all things. His ideas were probably the beginning of the controversy among the Greek philosophers regarding the importance of water vs. air vs. fire as the “primordial substance.”

For Thales that ultimate, eternal substance of the universe was water. Water thus becomes later equated with divinity.

2C **Anaximander** (611–546 BC) is credited with the first written work on natural science, a classical poem entitled *On Nature*. In this poem, he presented what may be the first written theory of **evolution**. He wrote that animals arose from slime which had been evaporated by the sun. He thought that the first animals lived in the sea and had prickly, scaly coverings. As these fish-like creatures

evolved, they moved onto land, shed their scaly coverings, and became humans.

In Anaximander you have the warring elements of hot-cold and wet-dry. Everything is in a cyclical process.

Original matter is an undifferentiated mass of infinite matter that is in constant motion. Then it produces a seed or germ of the earth. Then the interaction of hot-cold and wet-dry led to a condensation out of the earth. Under the influence of heat, the earth dries out then out of this primordial slime, life spontaneously develops.

He also used the fossilized shells found then to support his theory that all had once been wet, and then dried out.

3C **Anaximenes (d. ca. 528 BC)**

Ultimate reality is aer. This Air is also the basic stuff of life and is equated to the soul.

[Air] differs in essence in accordance with its rarity or density. When it is thinned it becomes fire, while when it is condensed it becomes wind, then cloud, when still more condensed it becomes water, then earth, then stones. Everything else comes from these.

Commenting on a student of Anaximenes, W. K. C. Guthrie:

“This man also expressed the same thing by saying that man’s soul is a small part of the gods, the god being the Universe...” W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers*, 80.

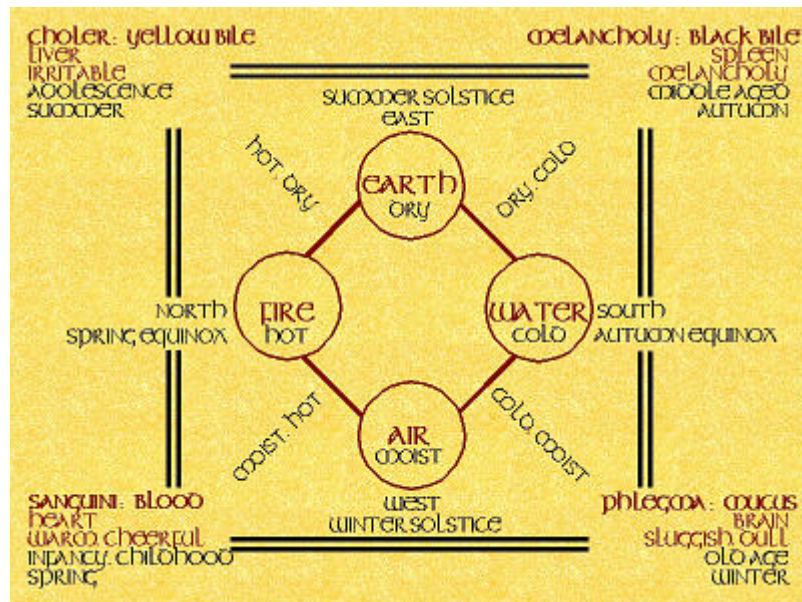
“Thus we find that all of them applied the name God or ‘the divine’ to their primary substance.” Guthrie, 82

4C **Heraclitus** (around the same time) felt that the universe is continually changing, thus it is senseless to ask for its origins in the manner of a myth. He taught that there is no beginning or end, only existence.

This world-order, the same of all, no god nor man did create, but it ever was and is and will be: ever-living fire, kindling in measures and being quenched in measures.

To souls it is death to become water, to water death to become earth, but from earth water is born, and from water soul.

- 5C **Xenophanes** (b. 570 BC) also observed **fossils** in rock layers. Interestingly, he recognized that the rock in which the fossils were found had at one time been submerged mud. He explained the existence of fossils by saying that the world evolved from a mixture of earth and water, and that the Earth will gradually be re-dissolved. He believed that the Earth has gone through this cycle several times leading up to the visible fossils.
- 6C **Empedocles** (490–440 BC) tried to solve the water-earth-fire debate by saying that there were not one nor two, but four original elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. He thought that everything else came about through their combination and/or separation by the two opposite principles of Love and Strife. All living beings came together through the purely random, chance combination of these elements.



Among the many things for which **Plato** (427–343 BC) is remembered is his idea that there were two worlds. He said the world which we see is just an illusion, evil, an imperfect copy of the real world, transitory, and will decay. The real world which we cannot see because it's invisible, is good, perfect, eternal, and static or unchanging. In the real world, there is obviously no variation or change, nor need for any, because all the organisms there are perfect. The variation we see among organisms here is because they are imperfect copies of the real “types” in the real world. This “pagan” idea was borrowed and incorporated into Christian beliefs, and in sharp contrast to the Jewish belief that we are caretakers of the Earth, has been used to justify our wanton trashing of the planet (“Who cares, since it’s evil and temporary, anyway”).

2B **Plato** (427?–347 BC)

- 1C Ultimate reality is not in everyday existence, but in a higher realm, called the realm of ideas, also the world of forms.

The world we experience in constant flux, people grow, change, are born, die, everything is in a state of movement and is contingent. No stability or certainty.

- 2C This higher realm is the location of true existence or Being Itself. The experiential realm is the realm of Becoming.

Imbedded in this is a idea that we can't know this higher reality, but only a shadow of it. Ultimately reason or experience cannot know this reality. This internal inconsistency eventually breaks down into irrationalism and mysticism.

This doctrine has been held to various degrees and shades of application for 2500 years.

A. N. Whitehead: the safest generalization about European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato.

**In many ways this is very similar to the metaphysics of Hinduism or Buddhism—though in some forms of Buddhism it comes close to the worship of non-entity or nonbeing rather than Being.

- 3C The world of our experience is but a shadow or pale facsimile of the world of Ideas.

- 4C This world of Ideas is also known as the Idea of Ideas, the complete Other, Being, the *Sumum Bonum*, the Good, The Absolute Good or Absolute Being, in terms of Absolute Existence.

It is the essence of Good, Perfection, Unchanging Stability; in contrast to the changing and finite existences which make up the sensible and temporal world around us.

*This Good is identified with God and is later identified with the Christian God.

“What the Schoolmen called the *ens perfectissimum*, the summit of the hierarchy of being, the ultimate and only completely satisfying object of contemplation and adoration, there can be little doubt that the Idea of the Good was the God of Plato; and there can be none that it became

the God of Aristotle, and one of the elements or aspects of the God of most of the philosophic theologies of the Middle Ages, and of nearly all the modern Platonizing poets and philosophers.” Lovejoy [This is also quoted later and in the notes related to the beginning of the Middle Ages.]

- 5C This Form of the Good becomes the natural object of desire for all souls, the chief purpose of its creatures is to contemplate the good. So this moves up.

Note the progression is up at this point. Then Plato, having arrived at the top turns and heads down, from Absolute Being or Good to beings.

In this H makes this abstract Good the essence of all reality.

- 6C In his next move, Plato forges from this transcendent and absolute perfection, this Idea of Ideas, the ultimate Existent, then becomes the ground of all existences, the *necessary and logical* existence of this world and universe.

The Good = God = the source of all things.

This leads to a number of questions, 2 for our purposes,

Q: Why is there in existence of universe of change, flux or becoming?

Q: What principle determines the number of beings that make up the sensible, temporal world.

In the course of answering this an internal contradiction or tension develops.

On the one hand the Good by definition must be self sufficient, but by virtue of what it is, in its fullness, it of necessity spins off these other, derivative beings.

- 7C What Lovejoy call the Principle of Plenitude. That this Being necessarily and logically develops all other beings.

This leads to a couple of other key ideas in the history of philosophy, the eternity and infinity of the universe,

And that all possible things necessarily exist.

**This latter is the basis for the classification of all things, which then pops up in Aristotle as the *scalae naturae*.

**Be careful here when we think of Being we think of a Person, but this is raw existence not necessarily a Person.

Plato (427?–347 BC): **Theory of Forms** (Theory of Ideas)

Two worlds: 1) perfect world of Forms and 2) imperfect world. *Eidos* is the eternal, perfect, heavenly embodiment of things. *Variation* in living and non-living things are imperfect manifestations of perfect world of Forms, and as such are *not important*.

“In Plato this ultimate was the idea of the Good, which was also the idea of the Good in Aristotle This is their Absolute, which is manifest in nearly all the Greek schools of moral philosophy which descended from Socrates: in the Cynic such as Diogenes who needed and wanted nothing that any other man could give him,, in the ataraxy of the Epicureans, in the apathy of the Stoics.” Lovejoy

3B **Aristotle** (384–322 BC) - "**Father of Biology**"

Five books on zoology ("Generation of Animals")

Biological structures have purpose: Efficient *versus* Final Causes

Aristotle (), one of Plato's most famous pupils, said

1C that species are fixed in a hierarchy from simplest to most complex, like rungs on a ladder (the *Scala naturae*) with no vacancies, no mobility, and no change/evolution possible since all the spots were full. Later, these thoughts were incorporated into Christian views, along with the Hebrew idea that life is created. This view has dominated Western thought for about 2000 years.

2C He classified animals in a "Scala Naturae" or "Chain of Being" which consisted of God, man, mammals, oviparous with perfect eggs (e.g., birds), oviparous with non-perfect eggs (e.g., fish), insects, plants, and non-living matter.

Chart

He considered each link in the chain as a "species." He also made extensive taxonomic studies of more than 500 animal species, dissecting many of them. The observations he published in *Generation of Animals* and *Historia Animalum* (*Investigation of Animals*) were meticulous, and his classification scheme conspicuously modern, departing from the prior Greek practices of using categories such as with feet/footless and winged/wingless. Aristotle achieved such a feat in biology by making use of the

same principles of logic (whose systematic study he was the founder of) that he applied in his physical investigations. He did not, however, make a real classification system for plants. (<http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/biography/Aristotle.html>)

3C He held to an eternal matter and was a philosophical materialist. He held to an uncreated cosmos and spontaneous generation.

4C **Theory of Types**, application of Plato's Theory of Forms to biology.

Species reflect existence of unchanging, ideal form, the "*universal*" or "*type*", and *variation represents an imperfect manifestation of underlying type*. Hence, variation was *not all that important*--just "noise".

"The universe resembles a large and well-regulated family, in which all the officers and servants, and even the domestic animals, are subservient to each other in a proper subordination; each enjoys the privileges and prerequisites peculiar to his place, and at the same time contributes, by that just subordination, to the magnificence and happiness of the whole. "

4B **Epicurus (342–270 BC)**

1. He was a follower of Aristotle who had died when Epicurus was young.
2. He denied any purpose in nature, all was therefore the product of chance.
3. He believed in an infinite number of worlds, no gods. So the universe is eternal. And everything on earth evolved directly from the matter of earth itself.
4. Epicureans linked with the preSocratic philosophers and were atheistic materialists. This gets confusing because the preSocratics are clearly pantheistic monists, or materialist monists, but the Stoics are also materialistic monist, but " of a less thoroughgoing type.) (Louis Trenchard More, *The Dogma of Evolution* 67, as cited in Morris, LWAG, 211.
5. **Lucretius Carus**, a Roman, was one of the most significant Epicureans, he produced a six-volume work, *De Rerum Natura*.

Certainly the atoms did not post themselves purposefully in due order by an act of intelligence, nor did they stipulate what movements each should perform. As they have been rushing

everlastingly throughout all space in their myriads, undergoing myriad changes under the disturbing impact of collisions, they have experienced every variety of movement and conjunction till they have fallen into the particular pattern by which this world of ours is constituted. This world has persisted many a long year, having once been set going in the appropriate motions From these everything else follows. (Lucritius, *The Nature of the Universe* trans. R. E. Latham,

He also said,

Nature is free and uncontrolled by proud masters and runs the universe by herself without the aid of gods. Lucritius

And

I have taught you that things cannot be created out of nothing nor, once born, be summoned back to nothing. Lucritius

5B Stoics

The Stoics were also pantheist monists, the primary heirs of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

1. Emphasized the simple life and submission to circumstances. They believed that the order of the world was an evidence of a creator, but the creator was purely pantheistic.

One historian describes this period of history

In antiquity there was a broad spectrum of attitudes toward the material world. At one end of the spectrum was pagan cosmic religion, constructed from a mixture of Pythagorean, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic doctrines. This cosmic religion saw the material cosmos, or at least its upper heavenly part, as a perfect expression of divine creativity and providence, “the supreme manifestation of divinity,” and indeed itself a divine being.”

Pantheism, the creative energy is in the matter of the universe itself. The universe is god, not distinct from God.

N.B. Ancient pagan thought had aeons of time built into their cosmogony. There was chaos or random chance, plus untold changes which produced changes or evolution.

The ancient philosophers and ancient mythologies were doing the same thing modern science is doing. The universe generates man and everything else. In contrast to this the Bible claimed:

6B Neoplatonism

1. Neo-Platonism is a modern term used to designate the period of Platonic philosophy beginning with the work of [Plotinus](#) (AD 205-270) and ending with the closing of the Platonic Academy by the Emperor Justinian in 529 CE.
2. NP was almost pure mysticism and pantheism.
3. Plotinus, was the link between ancient, classical philosophy and the middle ages.

One quote Medieval Roman Catholicism doesn't belong to the Middle Ages, but the last creative expression of classical philosophy which can be said to have died in giving birth to it. (Troeltsch, in a quote in Morris, LWAG)

4. NP was again the attempt of HVP philosophy to absorb, redefine and spin Biblical truth: Its roots go back to the introduction of Jewish thought in the Septuagint into Greek thought. Blend of mysticism, Platonism in the Timaeus, Jewish thought, Christian concepts into a toxic, metaphysical soup that poisoned the next 1500 years of Christianity. Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus were the architects of this system. Porphyry clearly influenced Origen.

Emphasis on order in the universe, in a hierarchy of being which determined each things place and moral value in the chain of being. This idea heavily influences all of medieval thought.

1B Gnosticism

One of the many spinoffs of Neoplatonism is Gnosticism.

- 1C Gnosticism is basically another version of evolutionary pantheism, with a complex system of revelations, gods, angels, intermediaries who can be known through mystical communications and various ascetic practices.
- 2C In the Gnostic Scale of Being, there are seven hostile angel deities between man and god. The highest of these is the wrathful, harsh Jehovah of Israel.

3A Philosophical Theology in the Early Church to Middle Ages

1B Neoplatonist influence on Christian thought

What we see as a result of the influence of Neoplatonism is that the Middle Ages see a development of these ideas in a covert way.

1. The Greek Philosophic idea of God is often understood as identical with the Biblical God. The Philosophical God is the One, the Most Perfect, Absolute Good, Absolute Perfection, but he cannot stay alone. He must overflow and create the Ideas, which in turn imprint on the Universal Soul. This then goes down a process of descending creatures to the very lowest of things.

What the Schoolmen called the *ens perfectissimum*, the summit of the hierarchy of being, the ultimate and only completely satisfying object of contemplation and adoration, there can be little doubt that the Idea of the Good was the God of Plato; and there can be none that it became the God of Aristotle, and one of the elements or aspects of the God of most of the philosophic theologies of the Middle Ages, and of nearly all the modern Platonizing poets and philosophers. Lovejoy

Koestler notes that it “is still a process of degeneration by descent, the very opposite of the evolutionary idea; but since every created being is ultimately an emanation of God, partaking of His essence in a measure diminishing with distance, the soul will always strive upward to its source.”

2. The Chain of Being is viewed as permanently fixed, and proceeds deterministically downward from primeval Oneness.
3. The first part of the Middle Ages (AD 400–1400) is dominated by Platonism, the latter part by Aristotle.
4. During this period you have a lot of problems because on the one hand they attempt to one degree or another to hold to creation and in some cases a finite universe and an ex nihilo creation, but due to the synthesis with Greek philosophy, these other ideas go underwater like a bunch of demonic mines that periodically explode through history and then pop back up to the surface in the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

1C Origin (ca. 185–254)

2C Augustine (354–430)

Augustine was heavily influenced by the NP ideas he studied prior to his conversion, this mostly influence his views of knowledge. He held to a Platonic concept of God being light and being the source of all knowing in the human mind.

Does not hold to a literal 7-day creation week.

Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500 AD)

1. The founder of Christian mysticism which is derived from his NP.
2. In *De Celestia Hierarchia* he translates the Neoplatonic hierarchy of intermediary beings between God and man into angelic hierarchies.

3C Boethius (AD 480–525) and Macrobius (early 5th Century)

1. Describe God both as Aristotelian Unmoved mover and as Platonic Light.
2. He orders the universe in a Neoplatonic Chain of Being.

Along with Macrobius he is a vital link in transmitting Neoplatonism and the Chain of Being into the Middle Ages.

excursis:

****Macrobius** (early 5th cent) wrote a commentary on Cicero, in which he sums up much of Plotinus' teaching. This work becomes a major vehicle through which the Neoplatonic Chain of Being is transmitted to medieval writers.

In this he writes:

Since, from the Supreme God Mind arise, and from Mind, Soul, and since this in turn creates all subsequent things and fills them all with life, and since this single radiance illumines all and is reflected in each, as a single face might be reflected in many mirrors placed in a series; and since all things follow in continuous succession, degenerating in sequence to the very bottom of the series, the attentive observer will discover a connection of parts, from the Supreme God down to the last dregs of things, mutually linked together and without a break. And this is Homer's golden chain, which God, he says bade hang down from heaven to earth. (p. 63). Note 53 (Comment. in *Somnium Scipionis*, I, 14, 15)

Though Macrobius is wrong in assigning this to Homer's golden chain, this shows the way these ideas have been brought together in the early middle ages to influence Medieval thought.

4C Abelard (1079–1142)

1. Described the Trinity as the One, Mind, and World Soul, as in Platonism.

For Abelard the One, Mind, and World Soul = the Trinity. So Abelard claims the early Greek philosophers held and taught the Trinity in all of its essential aspects.

He argued that the Platonists were given a special revelation before the Christian era.

A classic example of HVP absorbing and redefining, “spinning” DVP into its own framework. Just like Christiana, the tour guide in Greece, who said that Alexander the Great would have been a great Christian if he had lived 400 years later.

2. From this starting point he held to a hierarchical and emanationist relationship among the members of the Trinity. They weren't co-equal, or co-eternal.

5C Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141)

Held to the Neoplatonic procession of all things from God and their return to God.

2B Islamic Aristotelians

Their basic role is to transfer the texts of Aristotle to W. Europe by way of their translations and commentaries. Their commentaries are a blend of Plato and Aristotle, a Platonized Aristotelianism.

As Islam expanded its conquests over the Byzantine empire, former Byzantine subjects educated them in Greek philosophy, mathematics, music, medicine. Thus the Arabs served as transmitters of culture and did not originate anything.

Al Kindi, (800-866)

Initiated Islamic study of philosophy. One of his key ideas derived from Aristotle and given a Platonic twist was the concept of an Agent Intellect. He thought the agent intellect, the faculty of the human mind that enables us to formulate abstract ideas and to understand the causes of things was a separate spiritual entity or intelligence in the chain of being above mankind. (Colish, MFWIT, 140.)

Asserted that philosophical monotheists were saying the same thing as the Koran.

Al-farabi (870-950)

Born in a small village in Turkmenistan, he studied in Farab and Bukhara. In 901 he went to Bahdad to study, 40 years.

He was Platonic in his political theory, Neoplatonism in his metaphysics and cosmology, and Aristotelian in logic.

On the Agent Intellect he agreed with Al-Kindi, it was a separate intelligence, but identifies it with the NP Demiurge, imposing form on matter in creation. This idea of God sharing creative power with another being is incompatible with Islamic theology, shows that there is beginning to be a discontinuity between the conclusions of philosophy and theology in Islam. (How modern!)

Politically he conceptualizes the hierarchy of power in Islamic bureaucracy according to the Neoplatonic chain of being.

Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (980-1037)

An emanationist view of creation, and saw evil as privation of good.

Like Al Kindi and Al Farabi he has the Agent Intellect as a separate intelligence above mankind in the chain of being.

Averroes (Ibn Rochd) (1126-1198)

The high tide of philosophy and rationalism in Islam.

Most Aristotelian.

Strongest proponent of the separation of philosophy and theology; wrote commentaries on all of Aristotle, and sought to separate his ideas from Neoplatonic interpretations.

He rejects NP emanationism, but matter is as eternal as god and not inferior to spirit.

Did not believe in ex nihilo creation. Holds to an Aristotelian version of the chain of being, without the agent Intellect.

3B Latin Averroists

In the 13th century there was a revival of Aristotelianism, especially his Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics. This was extremely controversial, in 1210 Aristotle was banned at Paris, again in 1215, but by 1255 he was on the required reading list.

Two of the men responsible for this recovery of Aristotelianism (but through the commentaries of Averroes were:

Siger of Brabant (1240-1284)

Boethius of Dacia (1260-1277)

1. They held to a separation of Theology from Philosophy; the conclusions of philosophy don't have to agree with theology.
2. Held to Averroes interpretation of Aristotle, in that they had an eternity of matter, and held to his view of an agent intellect. The agent intellect is a separate entity or intelligence which makes knowledge possible for individual human minds.

Eternity of matter denied an ex nihilo creation

the agent intellect denied the immortality of the soul

3. This created a move to make Aristotelianism more palatable. This was done by Bonaventure and Aquinas. They did not always agree, Bonaventure was much more Platonic, but the impact of both was to make Scholastic thought more Aristotelian.

4B Christian Aristotelians

“By the twelfth century, significant changes were under way that would eventually challenge theology’s interpretation of the cosmos and the God who created it. the threat to theology and th church did not derive from astrology or witchcraft, which, though potentially dangerous, were successfully contained in the Middle Ages. It came from Greek natural philosophy and science, initially in its benign Platonic and Neoplatonic forms in the twelfth century, and then it its powerful and truly menacing Aristotelian form in the thirteenth. (Edward Grant, “Science and Theology in the Middle Ages,” ch. 2 in Lindberg, Numbers, *God and Nature*, 51.

Bonaventure (1221-1274)

1. He held to many elements of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism.
2. Viewed God as Being itself and as Light and as the Good, i.e., the *Summum Bonum*;
3. Thus, he holds to a Neoplatonic view of creation as a chain of being emanating from God.
4. He has a Neoplatonic view of procession but he uses an Aristotelian concept of the nature of creatures, thus a merger of the emanationism view of being with the Aristotelian *scalae naturae*.

Albertus Magnus (1206-1280), the mentor of Aquinas

in *De animalibus*, “nature does not make animal kinds separate without making something intermediate between them; for nature does not pass from extreme to extreme, *nisi per medium*. (CB, 79)

Aquinas (1225-1274)

Student of Albert the Great who made many contributions to natural science. Albert taught that many of the problems related to Aristotle were due to misinterpretations by these medieval commentaries. His studies led to a recovery of a better text of Aristotle which corrected some of the errors in the Islamic Aristotelians.

1. Accepts Aristotle’s natural philosophy in total including the chain of being.
2. Rejects Aristotle’s, Avicenna’s, Averroes concept of the Agent Intellect as a distinct intelligence.
3. Rejects creation by emanation, attempted to hold to a consistent *ex nihilo* creation.
4. Rejects eternity of matter.
5. Nevertheless his use of matter-form terminology; God as pure form, created things as matter + form, carries an implicit metaphysic inconsistent with a radical Creator-creature distinction.

By the twelfth century; significant changes were under way that would eventually challenge theology’s interpretation of the cosmos and the God who created it. The threat to theology and the church did not derive from astrology or witchcraft, which, though potentially dangerous, were successfully contained in the Middle Ages. It came from Greek natural philosophy and science, initially in its benign Platonic and Neoplatonic forms in the twelfth century and then in its powerful and truly menacing Aristotelian form in the thirteenth century;⁵⁻¹¹

Most importantly, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the great Catholic medieval philosopher and theologian, built upon Aristotle’s conception of there being a hierarchy of beings. As described in W.L. Reese’s “Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought” (1980), p. 24, Aquinas conceived of the chain of being as having gradations between God at the top and unformed matter at the bottom, with God being pure actuality and unformed matter as pure potentiality. As Reese describes Aquinas’ position:

“Instances of formed matter are differentiated by differences among the forms, and these differences allow us a vertical dimension of levels of

reality. . . . Between these two extremes [God and unformed matter] are to be found various levels of instances of formed matter, the order of nature; and both form and matter are abstract metaphysical elements of the concrete individual substance.” W.L. Reese’s "Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought"

Thomas clearly states the “wonderful linkage of beings” which nature reveals to us. The lowest member of the higher genus is always found to border upon the highest member of the lower genus. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 11.

The Argument

1. There are degrees of goodness in different things.
2. There are degrees of being in different things--the more being, the more goodness (the Great Chain of Being is assumed).
3. For there to be degrees of being at all there must be something which has being in the highest degree.

Therefore a Being in the Highest Degree or Perfect Being must exist.

Examples:

1. The Great Chain of Being: extends from unformed inorganic matter to man to God.
2. *E.g.*, a rabbit is higher than a snake and an angel is higher than a person--more form, more complexity.

Furthermore, though Aristotelian, St. Thomas is clearly influenced by the principle of plenitude flowing out of Platonic thought:

But God wills and loves His essence for its own sake. Now that essence is not augmentable or multipliable in itself but can be multiplied only in its likeness, which is shared by many. God therefore wills things to be multiplied, inasmuch as he wills and loves his own perfection.

Moreover, God in will himself wills all the things which are in himself; but all things in a certain manner pre-exist in God by their types (rationes).

There seems to be this underlying identification of God = the Good = the *ens perfectissimum*, when Aquinas elsewhere states:

“the universe is its own reason for being;”

This begins to equate God with the universe.

After concluding his analysis of Aquinas Lovejoy links the influence of Aquinas’ principle of Continuity to the Nicolaus Cusa.

“All things, however different, are linked together. There is in the genera of things such a connection between the higher and the lower that they meet in a common point; such an order obtains among species that the highest species of one genus coincides with the lowest of the next higher genus, in order that the universe maybe one, perfect, continuous.”

Nicholas Cusa

4B The Renaissance and Enlightenment Recovery of the Chain.

In a rather lengthy quote, Lovejoy states:

In the cosmography that by the beginning of the eighteenth century had come to be commonly held among educated men, the features which differentiated the new from the old world-picture most widely, those whereby it most affected the imagination and modified the prevalent conception of man’s place in the universe, the traditional religious beliefs, and the mood of religious feeling, these features owed their introduction and for the most part, their eventual general acceptance, not to the actual discoveries or the technical reasonings of astronomers but to the influence of those originally Platonistic metaphysical preconceptions which . . . had . . . been always repressed and abortive in medieval thought. (Lovejoy, *CB*, 99)

1C Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778)

A creationist

The *scala naturae* is evident in the physical anthropology of Carl Linnaeus. In the revised tenth edition of *Systema naturae* of 1758, Linnaeus suggested a system of racial classification with seven races, and gave the characteristics of each: the white *Europaeus* was "sanguine" and "muscular"; the sallow *Asiaticus* was "melancholy" and "stiff"; the red *Americanus* was "choleric" and "upright"; the black *Afer* was "phlegmatic" and "relaxed"; the wild and hirsute *Ferus* ran about on all fours; the *Troglodyte*; and what could not be classified other (such as giants and genetic mutants) was relegated to the category of the *Monstrous*.

1. Carolus Linnaeus and Taxonomy
 - a. **Taxonomy** is the science of classifying organisms; *taxonomy* had been a main concern of biology.
 - b. Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a Swedish naturalist in the field of taxonomy:
 1. Linnaeus developed a binomial system of nomenclature (two-part names for each species [e.g., *Homo sapiens*]).
 2. He developed a system of classification for all known plants.
 3. Like other taxonomists of his time, Linnaeus believed in the ideas of
 - a. *special creation* -- each species had an "ideal" structure and function; and
 - b. *fixity of species* -- each species had a place in the *scala naturae*, a sequential ladder of life.
 - c. Linnaeus thought that classification should describe the fixed features of species and reveal God's divine plan.
 - d. His ideas reflected the ideas of Plato and Aristotle: the ideal form can be deduced, and organisms can be arranged in order of increasing complexity.

2C Lamarck (1744-1829) (add picture)

Lamarck took the chain of being which was static and turned it into a moving or sliding scale which he called Nature's Parade, *La marche de la Nature*. The lowest forms of life were developed through spontaneous generation from lifeless matter, and each species up the chain evolved into the next. Though much of this was later discarded it provided key ideas which led to Darwin's model.

"Meanwhile, I shall show that nature, by giving existence in the course of long periods of time to all the animals and plants, has really formed a true scale in each of these kingdoms as regards the increasing complexity of organization; but that the gradations in this scale, which we are bound to recognize when we deal with objects according to their natural affinities, are only perceptible in the main groups of the general series, and not in the species or even in the genera." Lamarck

Influential French naturalist and evolutionary theorist. Initially a self-taught botanist working under the patronage of Buffon, he took up invertebrate zoology upon appointment to the *Muséum d'histoire naturelle*. Lamarck was a prodigious taxonomist and

wrote lengthy, poorly received theoretical discourses on mineralogy and meteorology, but is best known for his sweeping evolutionary theory, which he developed shortly after 1800. Although not the only transmutationist of his time - most of his colleagues at the Muséum d'histoire naturelle accepted at least a limited form of the idea - Lamarck was the first to seriously suggest that man and all other species may have evolved instead of being specially created. His theory of evolution, developed after the turn of the century, was very different from that of later "Lamarckians" and did not particularly emphasize the inheritance of acquired characters, which was already widely accepted at the time. Lamarck called for spontaneous generation of numerous lineages that evolved under the influence of vital fluids up one or a few scales of complexity.

Implications

1. Being generates its own values, authority, absolutes and definitions.

Implication for Moral values: derives from within creation, no external reference point, no real universals, no basis for "ought" or "should" or wrong.

Implication for Law and Politics,

2. The emanationist metaphysics of Neoplatonism was the foundation from the development of monasticism, mysticism in the early church and mysticism today.
3. Evil is always there in the pagan concept. In the Christian concept it was defined as privation, but this lacks something. Either minimizes evil, ignores evil, or reduces evil to normal or necessary.
4. Importance of epistemological overhaul. Rom. 12:2

"If not you, who, if not now when?"