

Acts Series

Lesson #117

July 30, 2013

Dean Bible Ministries

www.deanbible.org

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The Acts of the Apostles “To the end of the earth” Acts 1:8

**Athens: GOD, Unknown gods,
Stoics, Epicureans, Evolution,
and the Chain of Being
Acts 17:16–31**



Those 88s became a legend. It was said that there were more soldiers converted to Christianity by the 88 than by Peter and Paul combined.
~Stephen Ambrose





0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometers

PAUL'S FIRST AND SECOND



Nicopolis

Ioannina

Dodona

Meteora

Spathes

Dion

Tempe

Berea

Thessalonica

Amphipolis

Philippi

Neapolis

Alexandroupolis

Delphi

Antirio

Eleusis

Athens

Corinth

Cenchrea

Mycenae

Argos

Tiryns

Olympia

Bassae

Paul's Areopagus address:

“the greatest missionary document in the New Testament.”

~New Testament Scholar Adolph Deissman

Introduction (17:16–21): Paul is upset over the number of idols in the city and goes to the synagogue and market place to reason. He is confronted by various Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who cannot comprehend his message. They take him to the Areopagus council for evaluation.

Paul's Sermon (17:22–31): Challenging the Athenians to worship the Creator rather than the creation.

- **Paul's introduction**: the touchstone of the unknown god (vs. 22–23)
- **Paul's description of God** (17:24–29)
- **Paul's challenge** (17:30–31)

The Reaction (17:32–34)

6 Questions:

Who,

What,

When,

Where,

Why, and

How

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Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What,

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6 Questions:

Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What: Paul is provoked by the idolatry and begins presenting the gospel to intellectual, polytheistic pagans.

When:

Where,

Why, and

How

Acts 17:16, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.”

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παροξύνω *paroxuno*

imperf pass indic 3 sing

**to provoke; be upset, stirred up,
angry**



Athens Temple of Hephaestus



Athens Temple of Themis from above



Athens theater of Dionysus



Athens Temple of Zeus from Acropolis



The Acropolis

6 Questions:

Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What: Paul is provoked by the idolatry and begins presenting the gospel to intellectual, polytheistic pagans.

When: Second Missionary Journey

Where:

Why, and

How

6 Questions:

Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What: Paul is provoked by the idolatry and begins presenting the gospel to intellectual, polytheistic pagans.

When: Second Missionary Journey

Where: Athens, the Areopagus (Mars Hill)

Why, and

How



Athens Acropolis from Likavittos



Athens Acropolis from east



Hill of Pnyx

propylae

Mars Hill

odeum of
Herodes Atticus

Erechtheion

Parthenon

theater of
Dionysus

Athens Acropolis from east

6 Questions:

Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What: Paul is provoked by the idolatry and begins presenting the gospel to intellectual, polytheistic pagans.

When: Second Missionary Journey

Where: Athens, the Areopagus (Mars Hill)

Why: The inability of unbelief to comprehend.

How:

Acts 17:17, “Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.”



6 Questions:

Who: Paul; “them:” Silas, Timothy; the Athenians, the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Council of the Areopagus.

What: Paul is provoked by the idolatry and begins presenting the gospel to intellectual, polytheistic pagans.

When: Second Missionary Journey

Where: Athens, the Areopagus (Mars Hill)

Why: The inability of unbelief to comprehend.

How: Paul’s strategy—block the envelopment strategy of unbelief.

Acts 17:18, “Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.”

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**σπερμολόγος *spermologos*
nom masc sing
scavenger; idea-picker**

Acts 17:19, “And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?’

Acts 17:20, “ ‘For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.’

Acts 17:21, “For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.”

Acts 17:22, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

Acts 17:23, “ ‘for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:’ ”

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δεισιδαίμων deisidaimōn

acc masc plur comp

religious; superstitious

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,”**

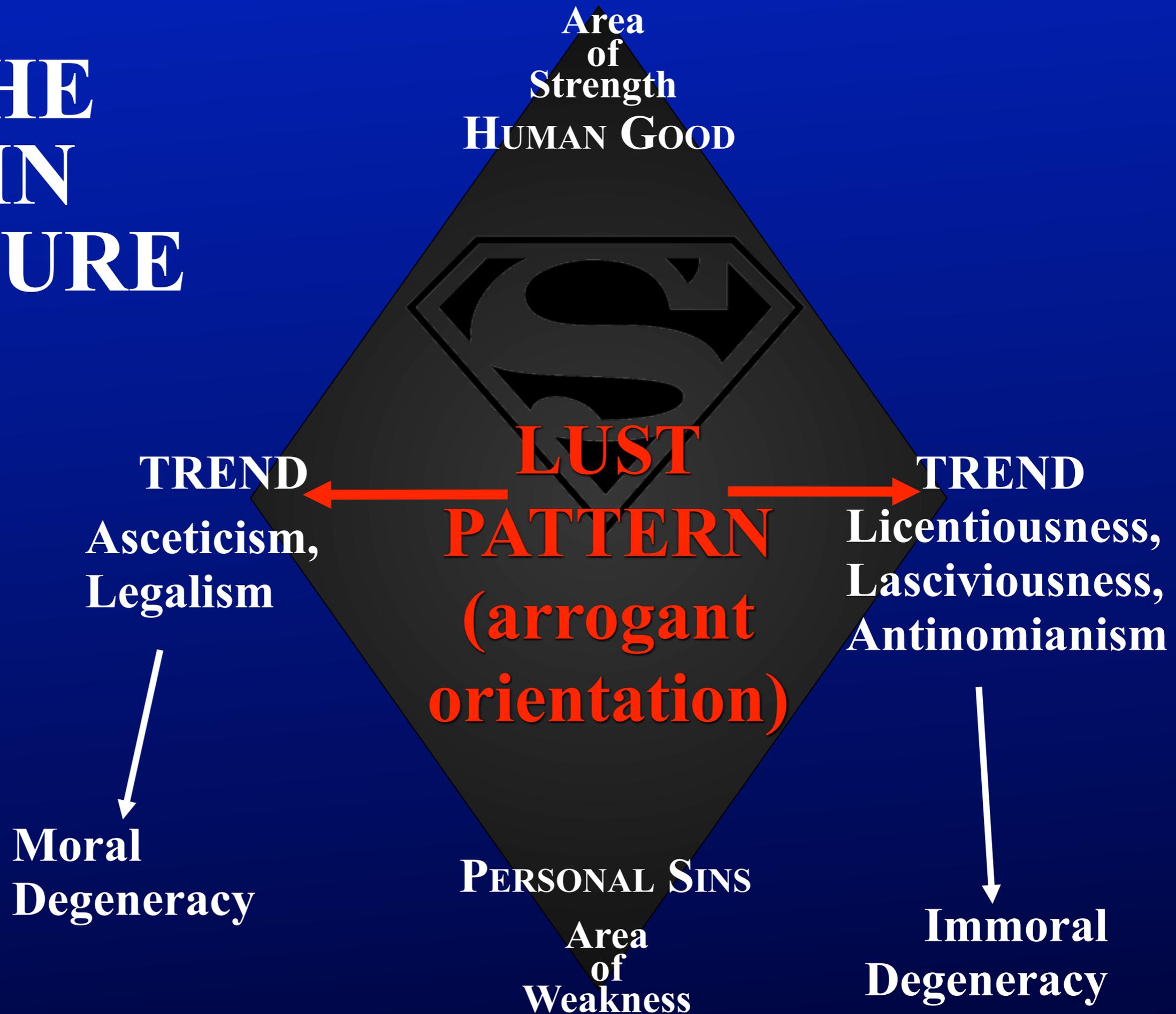
suppress, kate,cw katecho present active
participle genitive masculine plural;

- 1. to prevent the doing of something or cause to be ineffective, prevent, hinder, restrain; hold down, suppress ti. *ti* something**
- 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**

Romans 1:19, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”

Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”

THE SIN NATURE



Arrogance Skills

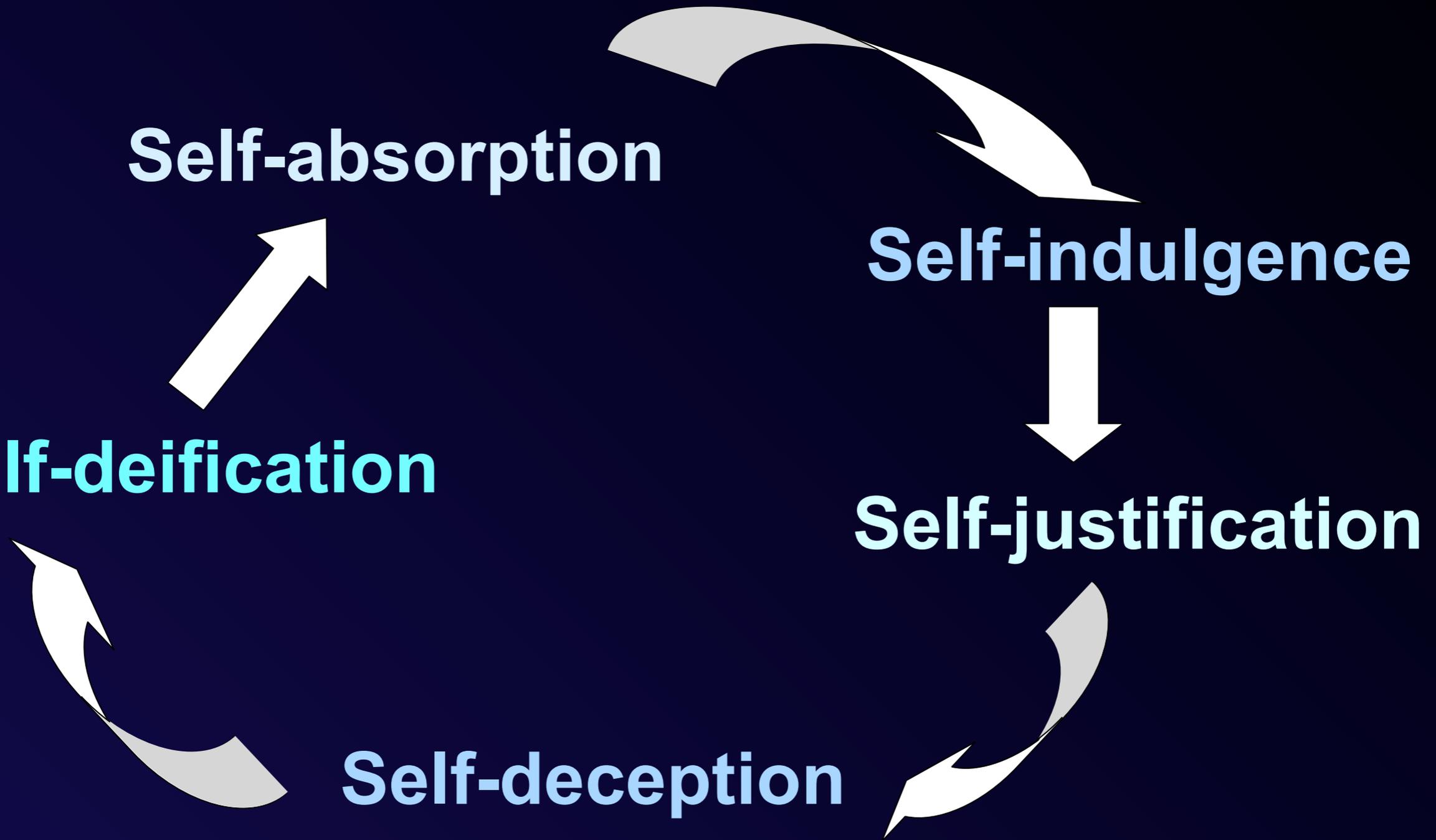
Self-absorption

Self-indulgence

Self-deification

Self-justification

Self-deception



Romans 1:21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:22, “Professing to be wise, they became fools,”

Romans 1:23, “and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Romans 1:24, “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,”

Romans 1:25, “who **exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served **the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.”**

The Great Chain of Being

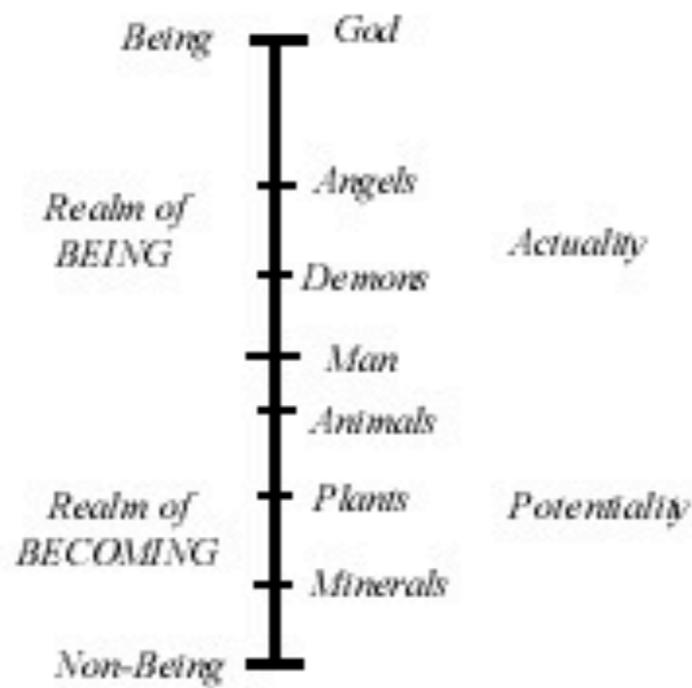


Fig. 1

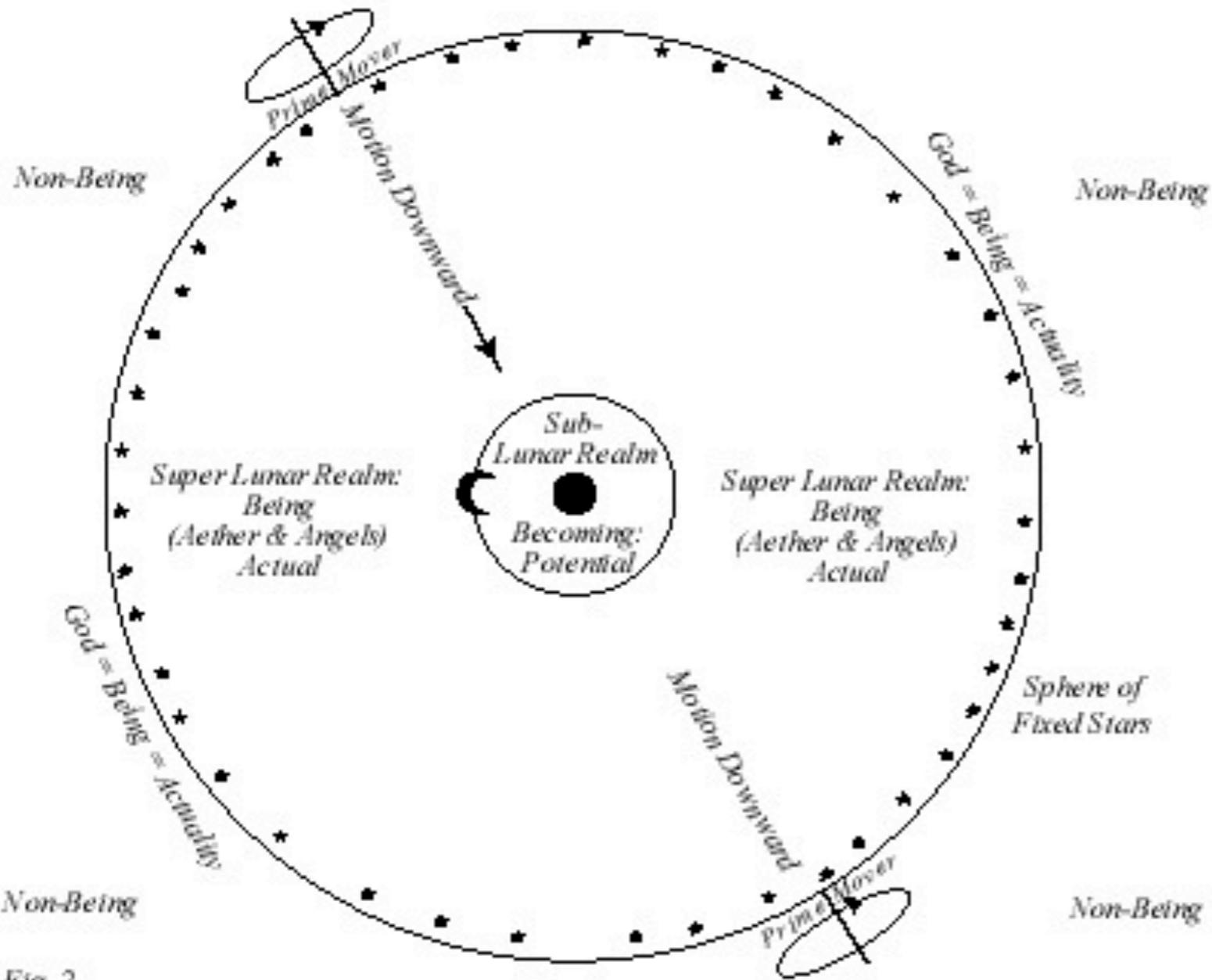


Fig. 2

The Great Chain of Being

What IS the Chain of Being?

Also known as: The Continuity of Being, *Scalae naturae* *echelle de etres*, or the chain of being.

1. A hierarchy of static, unchanging forms, with god (Being, Unmoved Mover, the Good, the Absolute, 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.

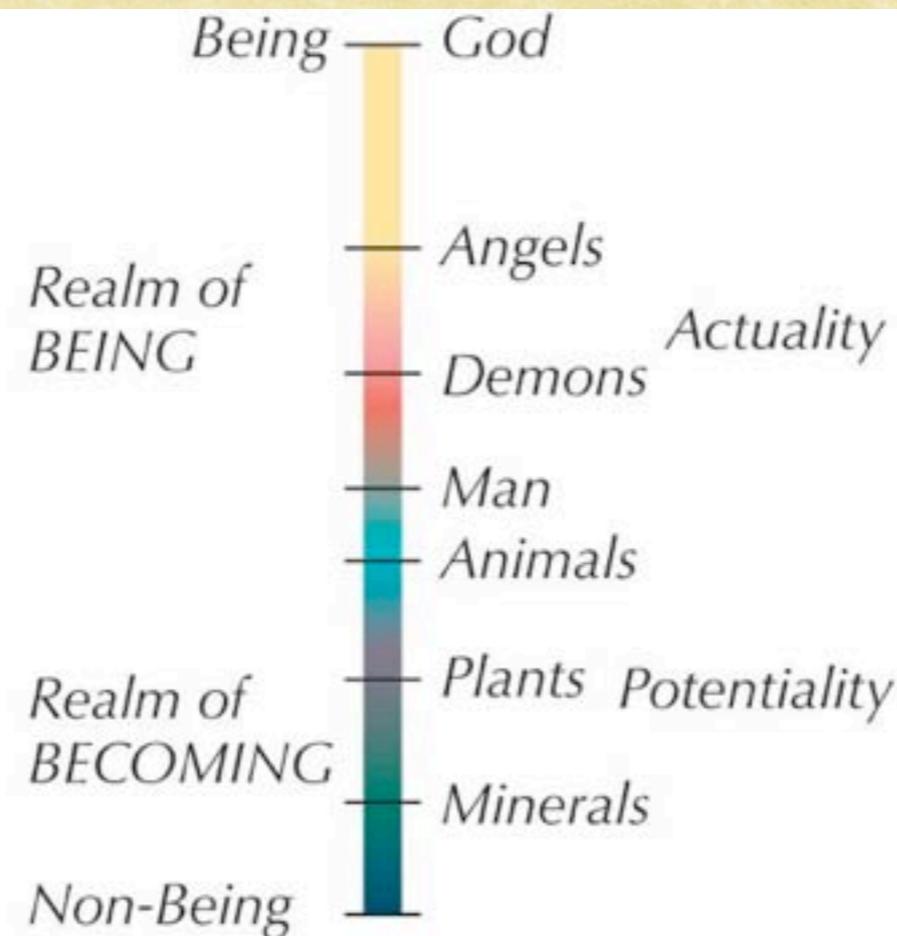


FIGURE 1.3. Medieval version of the Great Chain of Being based on Aristotle's ideas.

1.3, redrawn from [http:// web.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/images/greatChain.gif](http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/images/greatChain.gif), credit: Robert A. Hatch

“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.

This image became the basis for calling anything and everything ‘sacred.’ ”

~Arthur Lovejoy, *The Chain of Being*

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

~Lovejoy

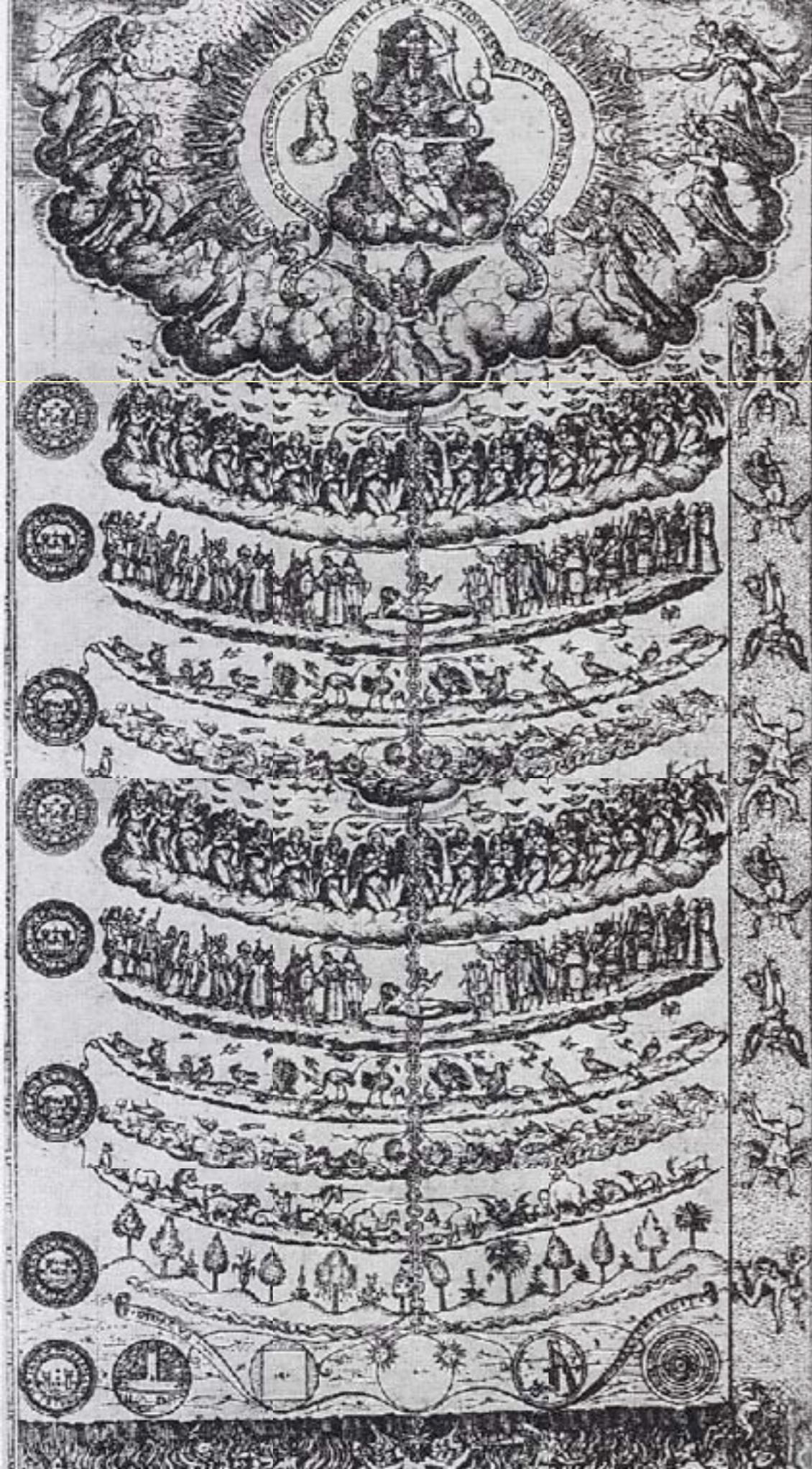
“The result was the conception of the plan and structure of the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century, many philosophers, most men of science, and, indeed, most educated men, were to accept without question—the conception of the universe as a ‘Great Chain of Being,’ 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, Arthur; *The Great Chain of Being*, 59.

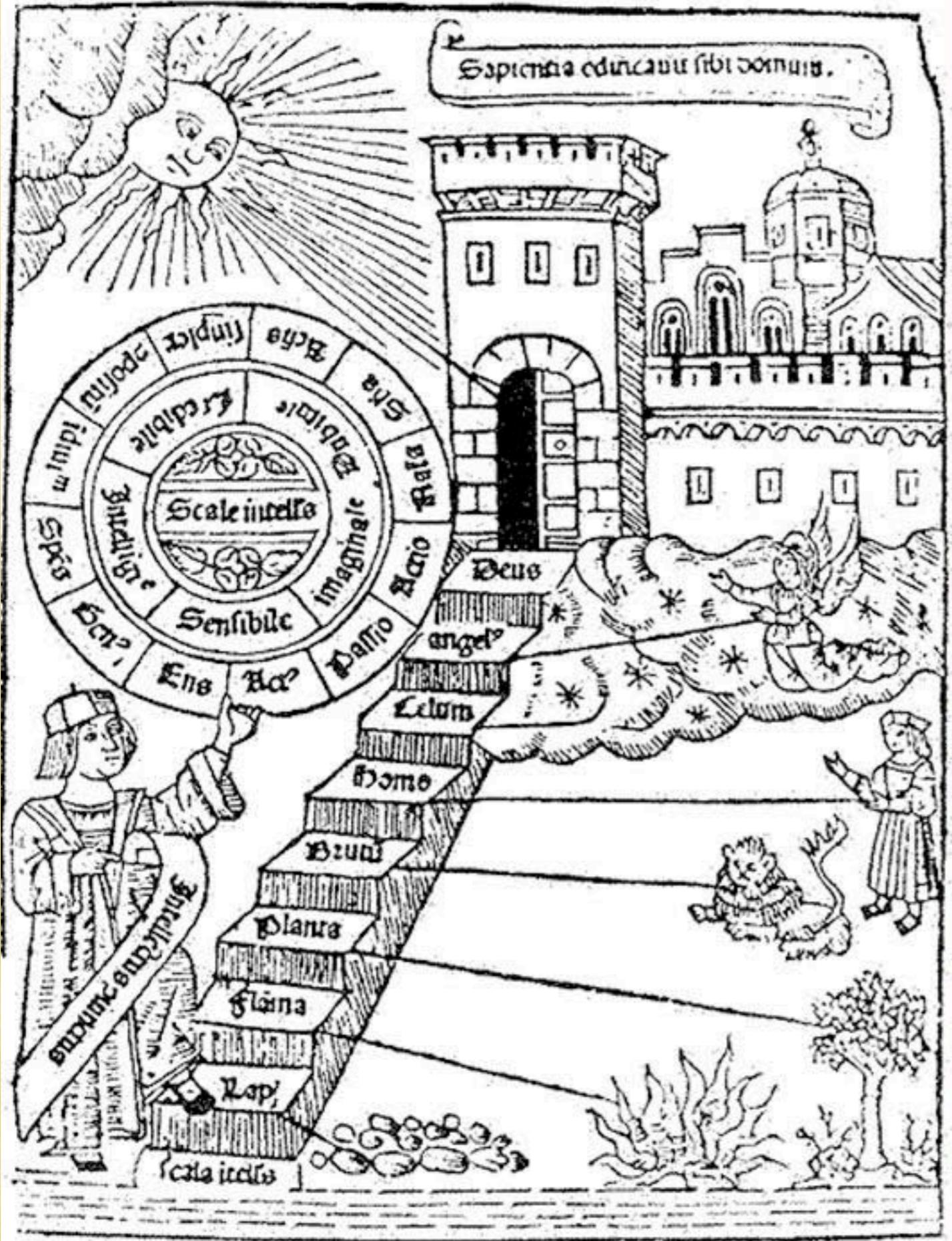
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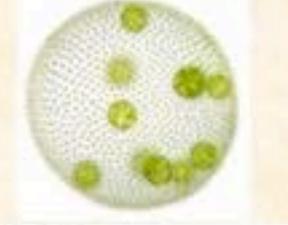
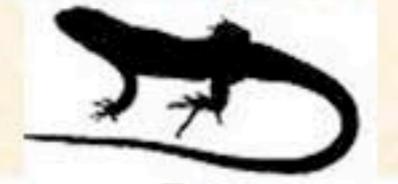
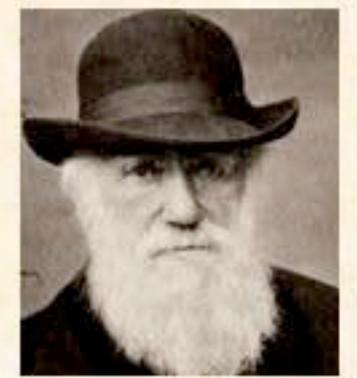


The Great Chain of Being. From Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579).



Great Chain of Being

- God
- Angels
- Heaven
- Humans
- Beasts
- Plants
- Flame
- Rocks



“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*. . .”

~R. J. 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**

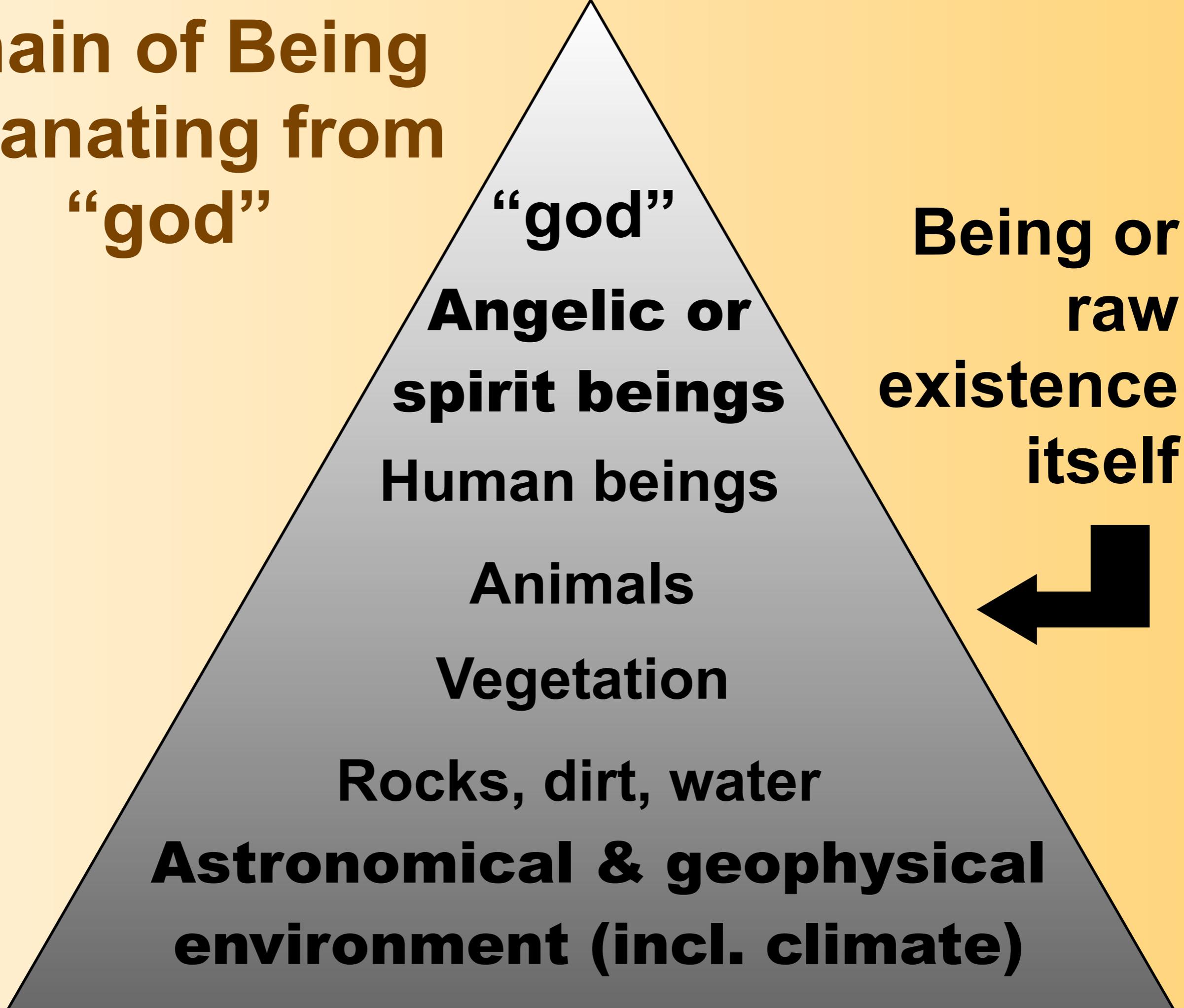
“At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes. . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies 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.”

~Darwin, *The Ascent of Man*

“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

**Chain of Being
emanating from
“god”**



The Great Chain of Being

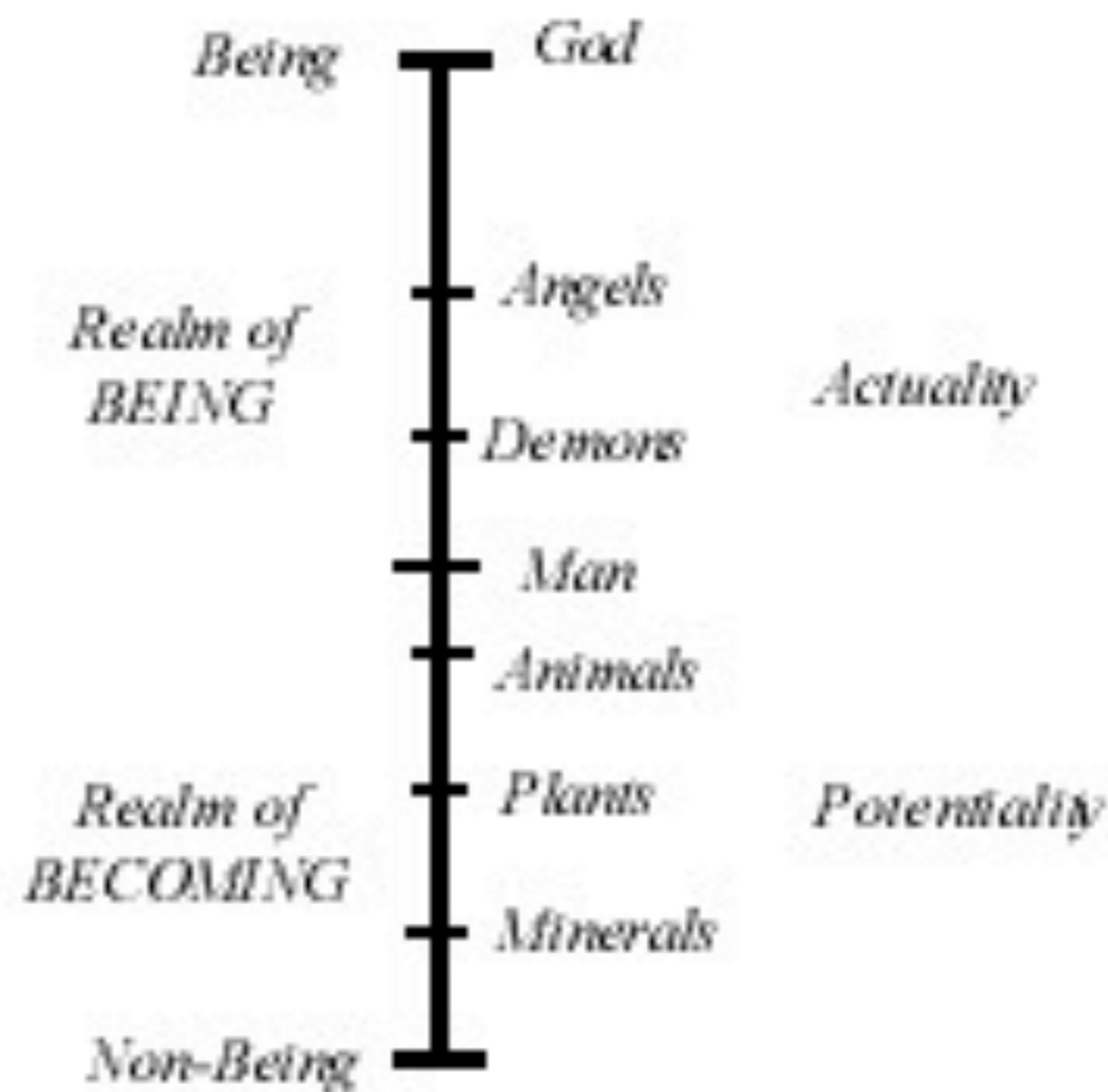
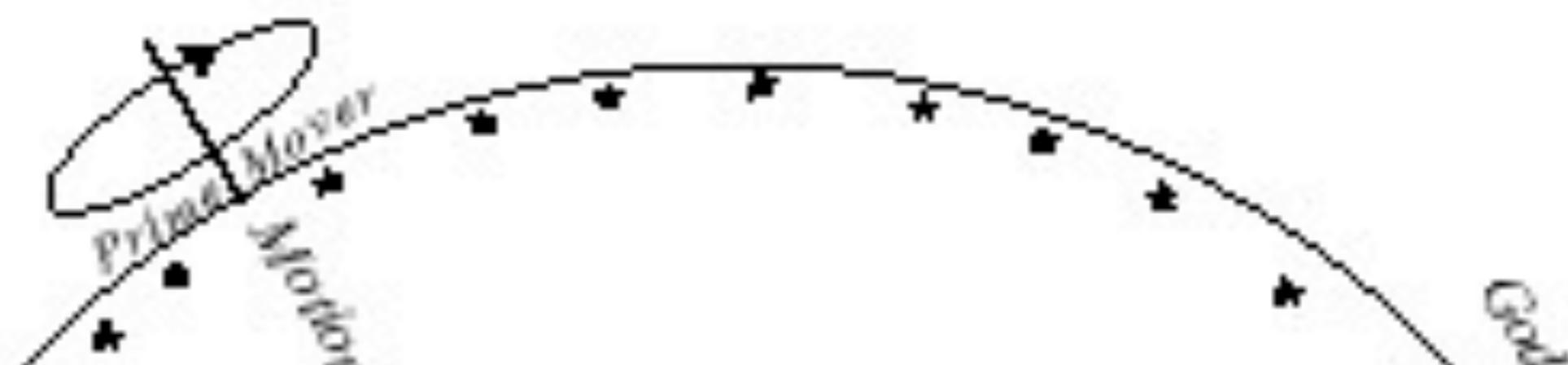


Fig. 1



**“Vast chain of being, which from God began,
Natures aetherial, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
No glass 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.”**

~Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*