

Acts Series

Lesson #118

August 6, 2013

Dean Bible Ministries

www.deanbible.org

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PAUL'S FIRST AND SECOND

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 (17:22–23)
- **Paul's description of God** (17:24–29)
- **Paul's challenge** (17:30–31)

The Reaction (17:32–34)

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 17:22, “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

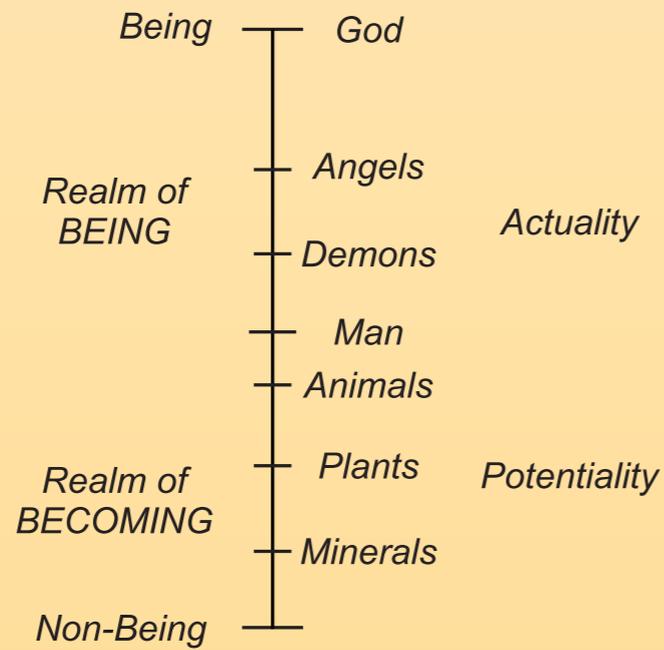
religious; superstitious

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,”**

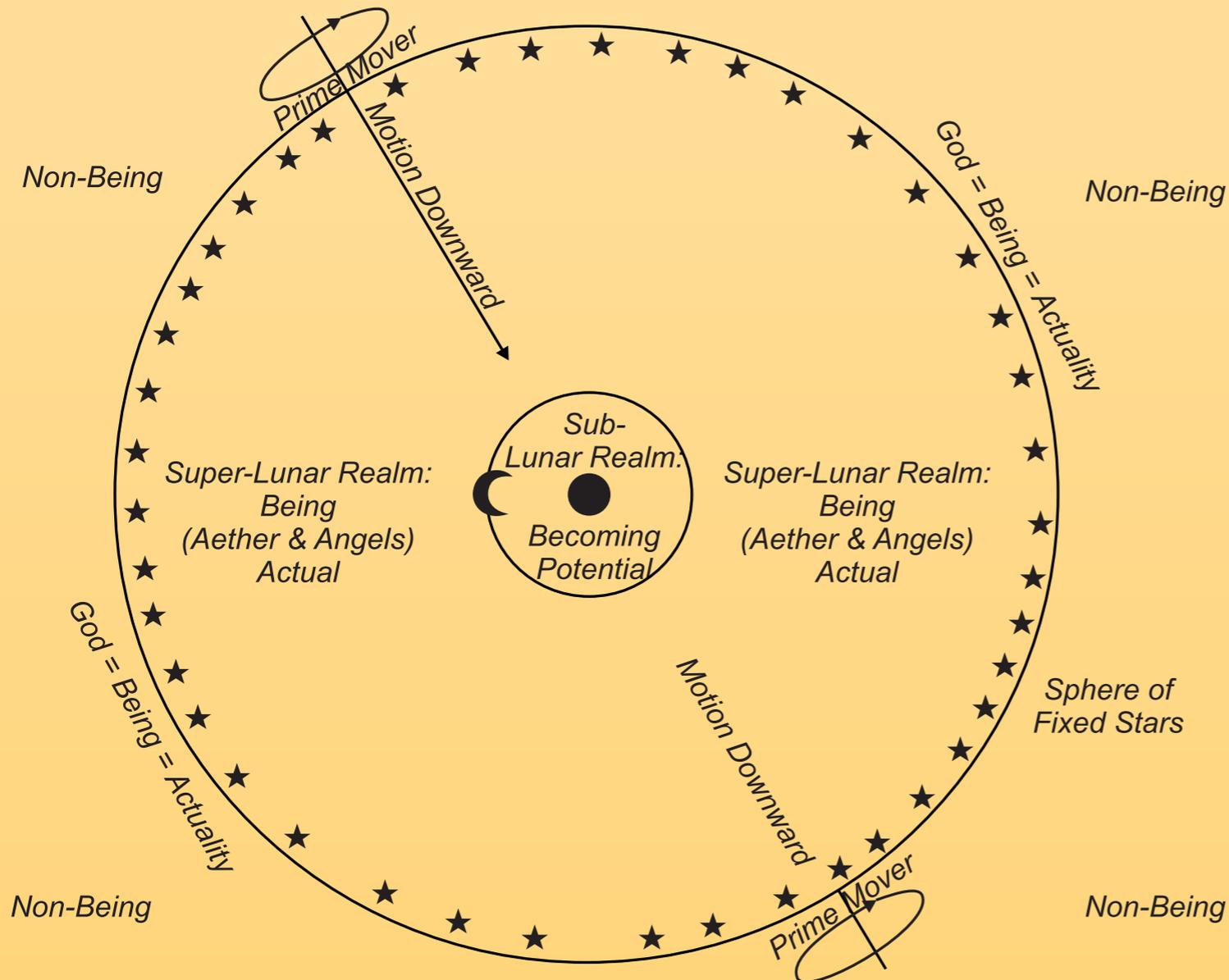
Romans 1:19, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.”

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 Great Chain of Being



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.

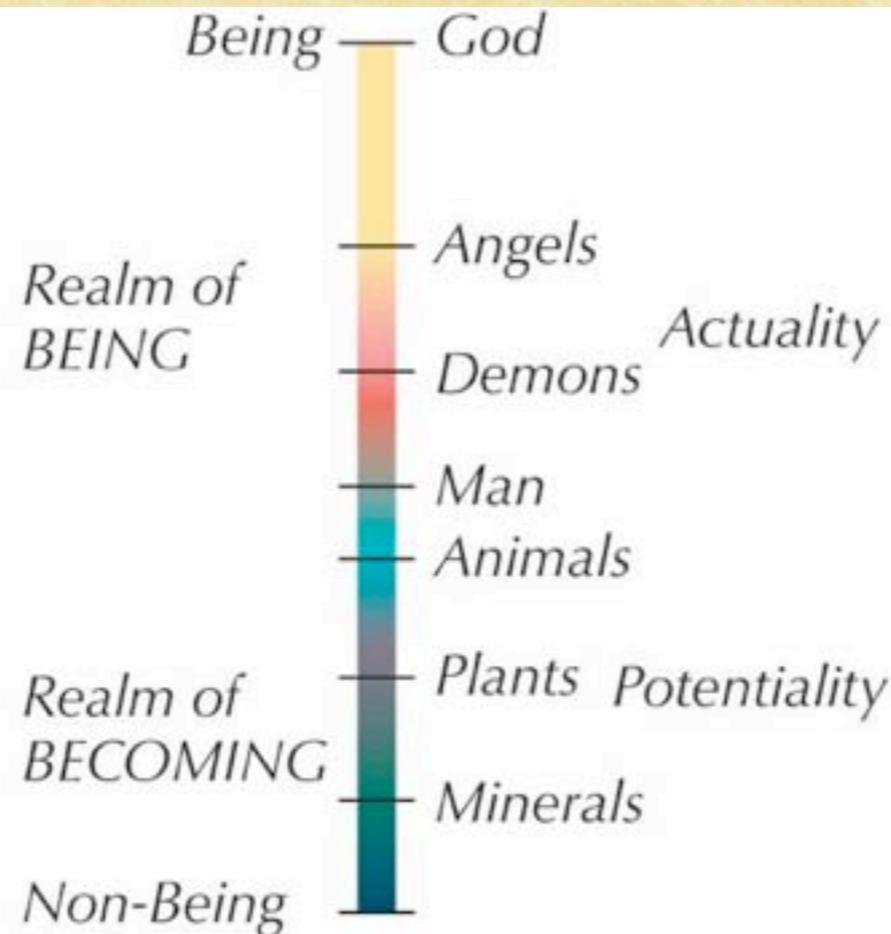


FIGURE 1.3. Medieval version of the Great Chain of Being based on Aristotle's ideas.

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.”

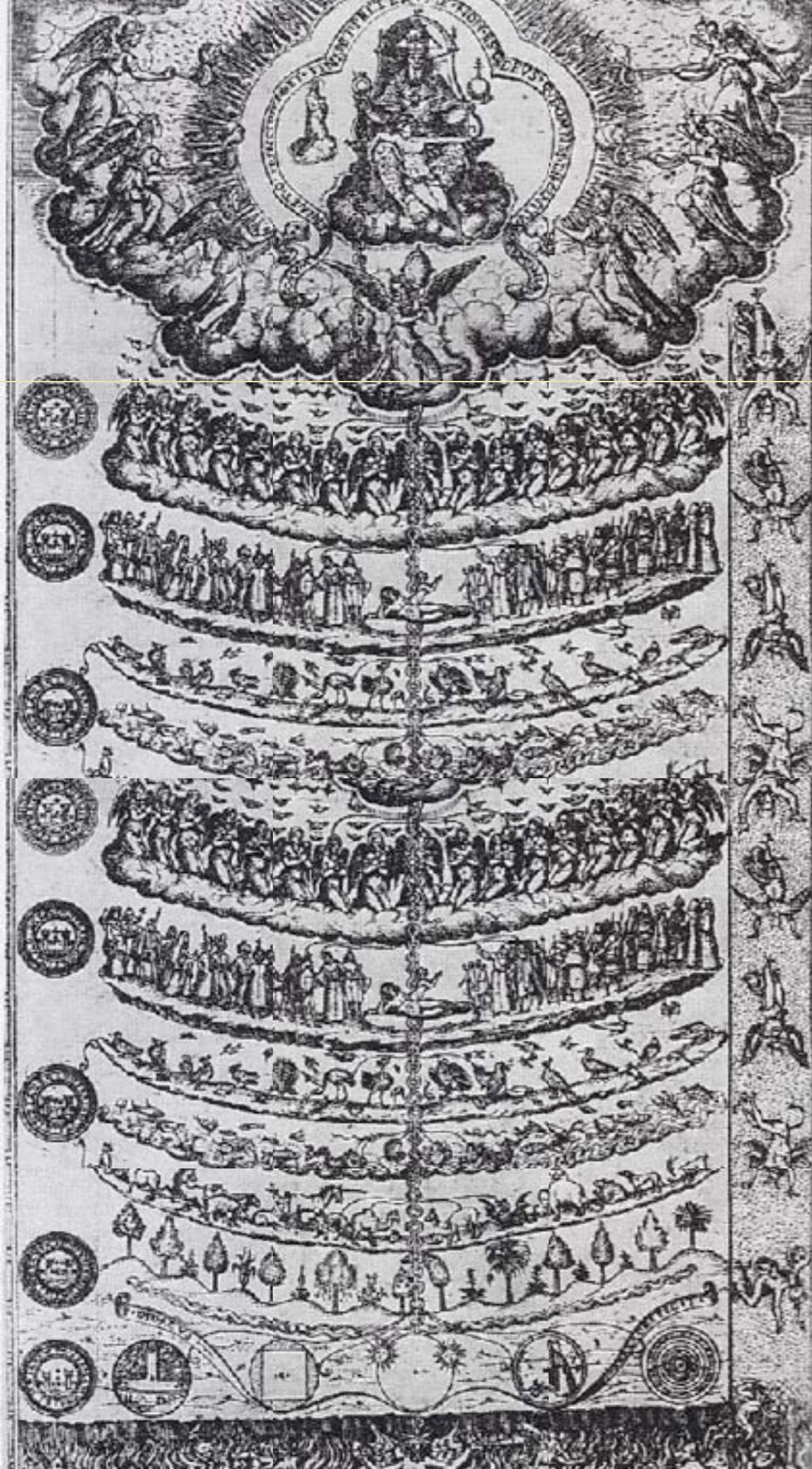
~Lovejoy

“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,”

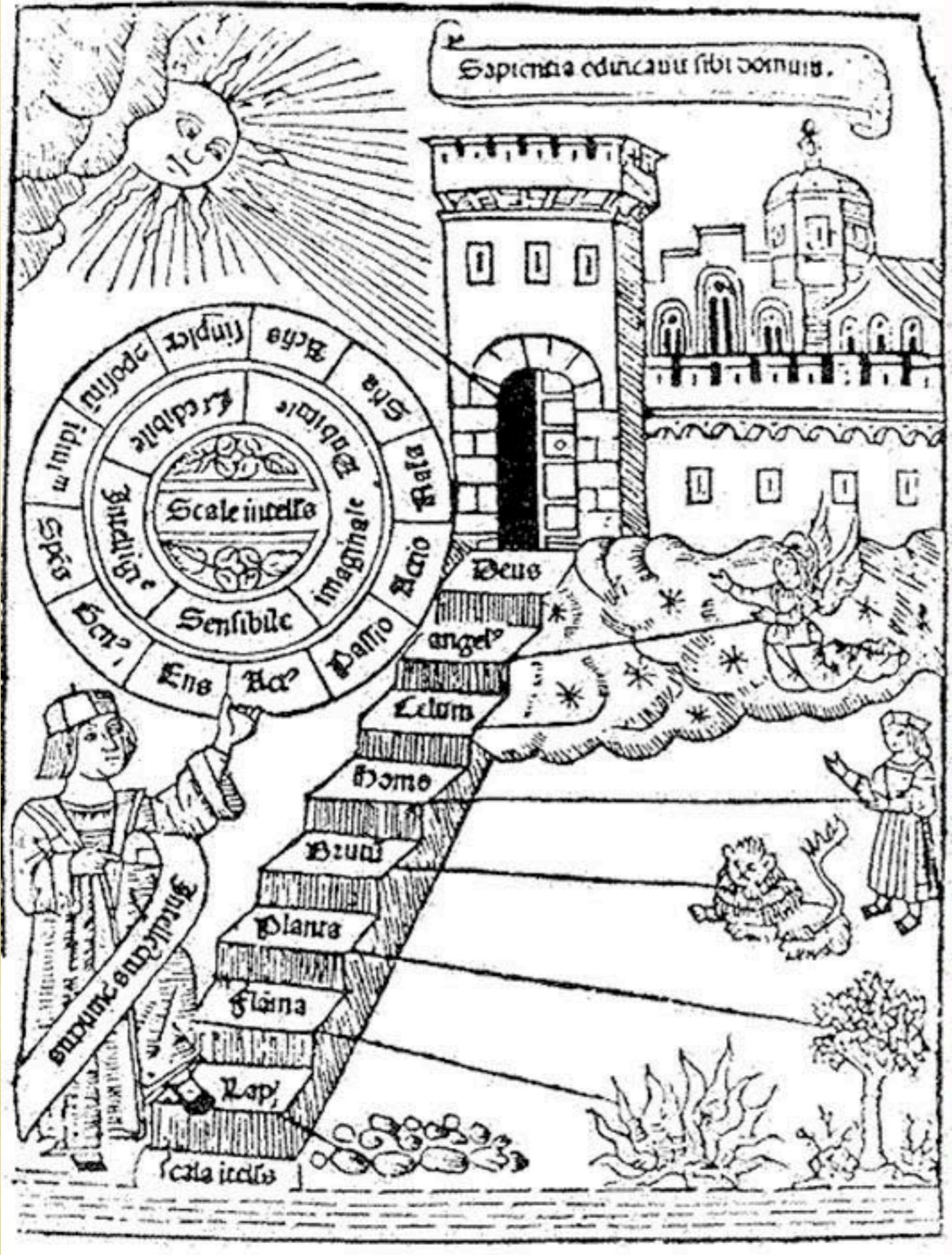
~Lovejoy, Arthur; *The Great Chain of Being*, 59

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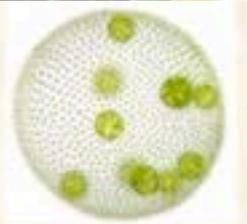
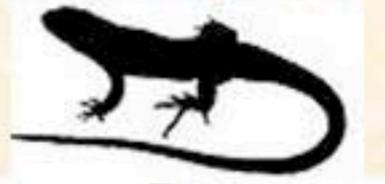
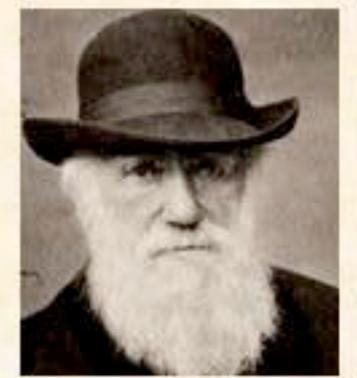


The Great Chain of Being. From Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579).



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

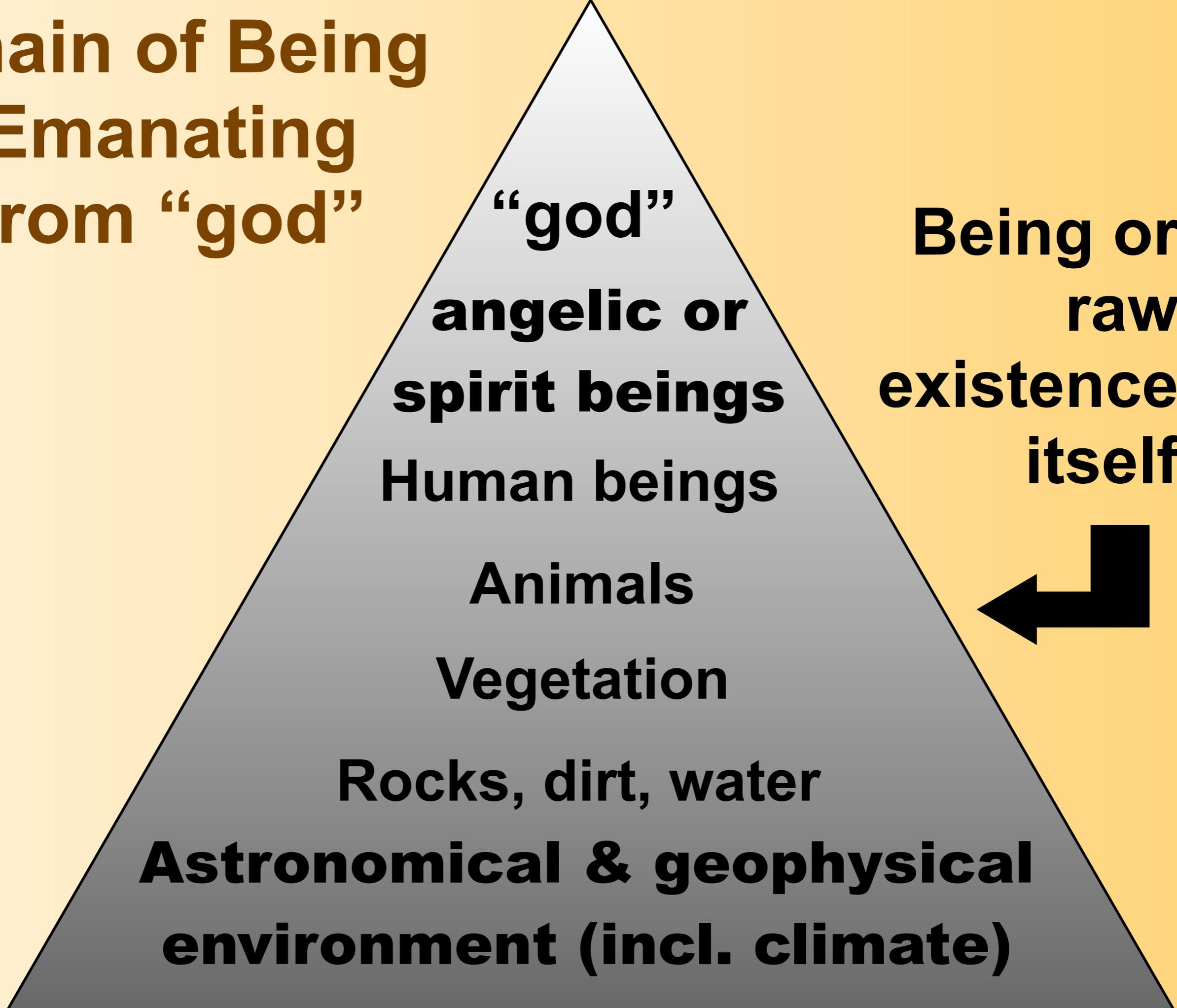
“At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes. . . will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies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

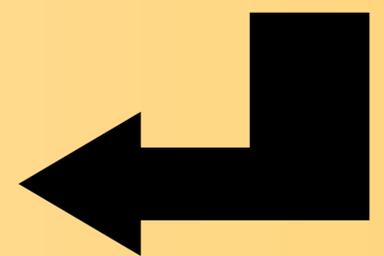
“What the Schoolmen called the *ens perfectissimum*, the summit of the hierarchy of being, the ultimate and only completely satisfying object of contemplation and adoration, there can be little doubt that the Idea of the Good was the God of Plato; and there can be none that it became the God of Aristotle,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

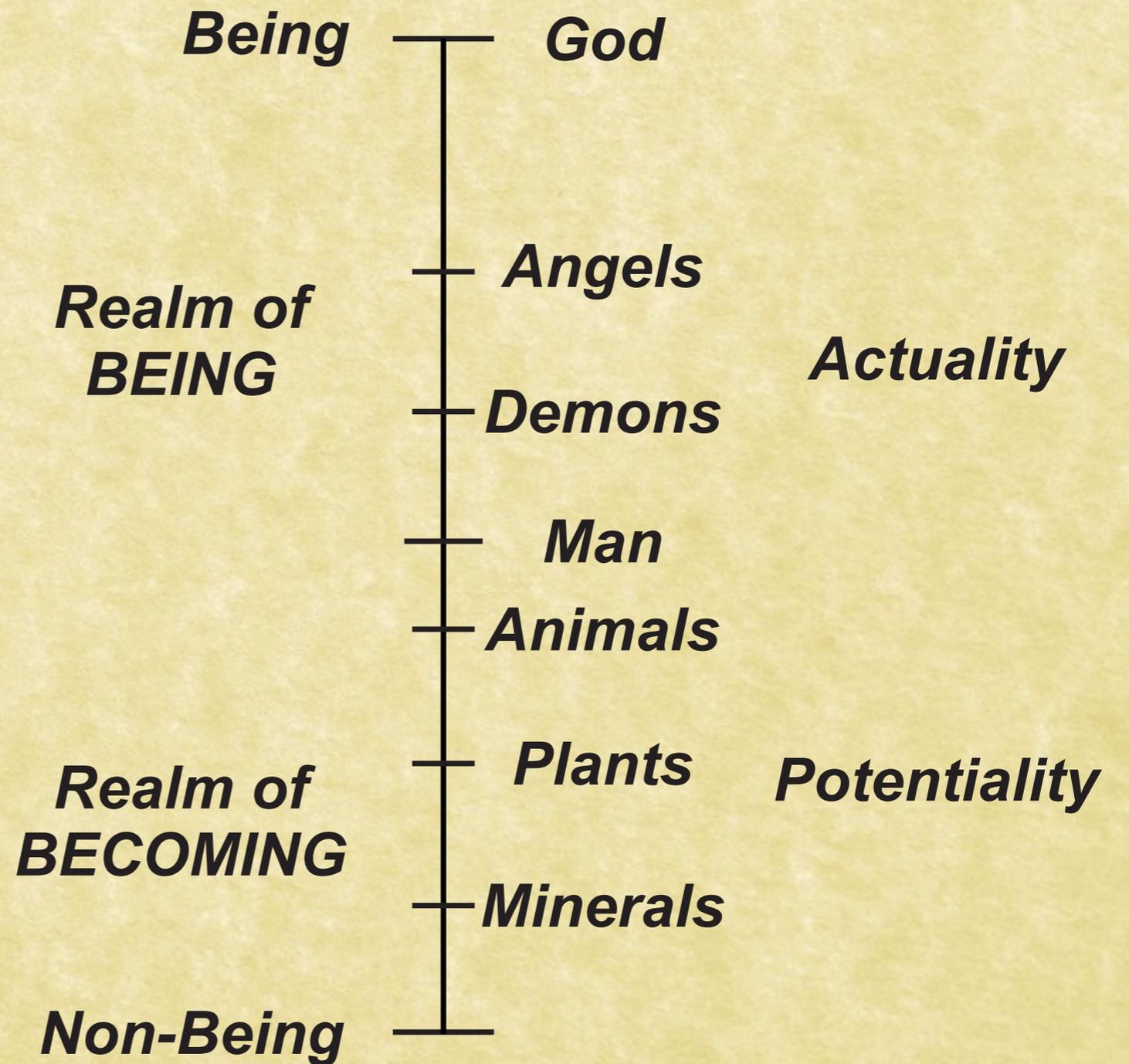
**Chain of Being
Emanating
from “god”**



**Being or
raw
existence
itself**



The Great Chain of Being



**“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.”**

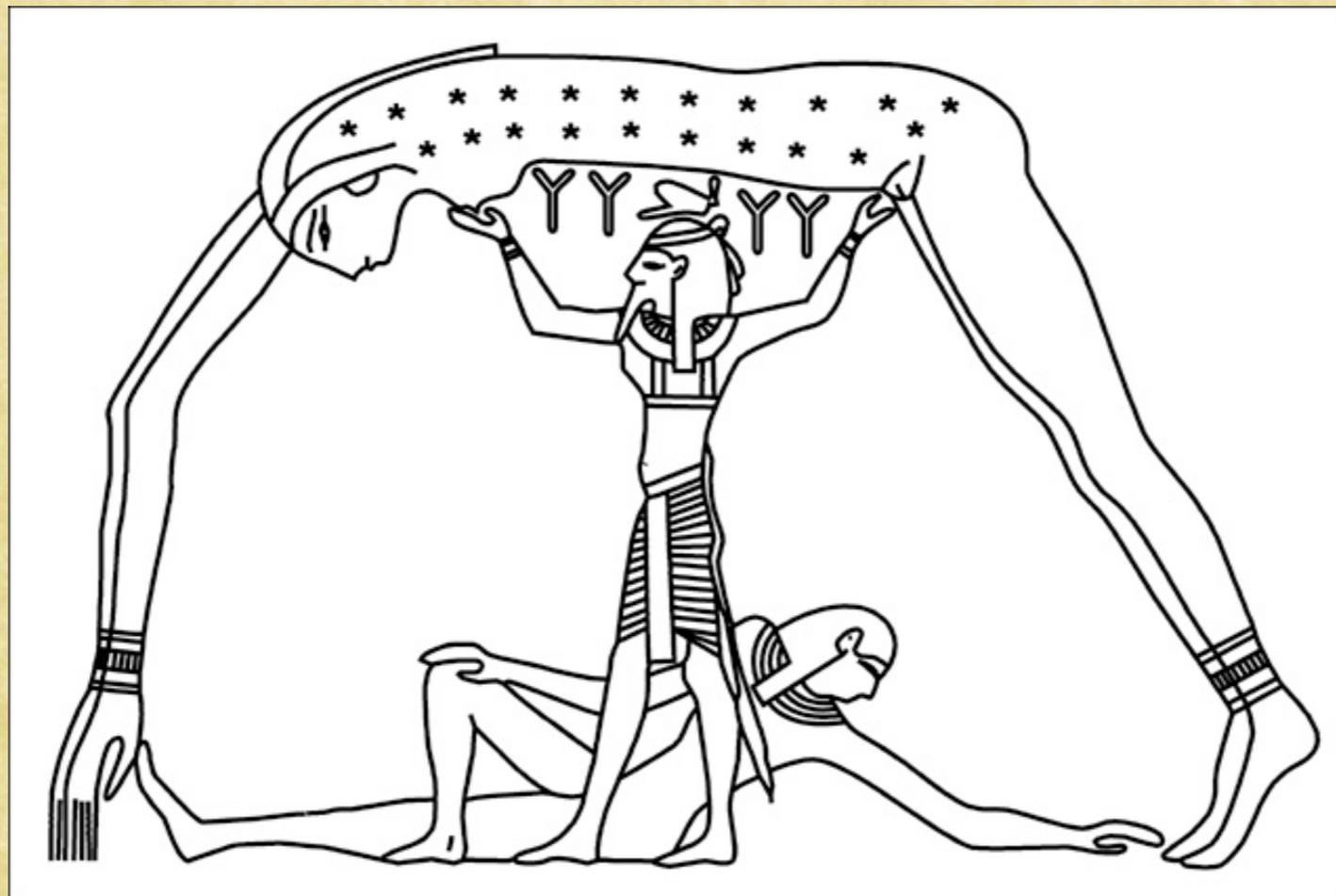
~Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*

Egyptian Cosmology

“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. . . Neber-tcher, a form of the Sun god Ra”

The Book of Knowing the Evolutions [kheperu] of Ra, and of Overthrowing Apepi.

“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).”



Babylonian Mythological Cosmology

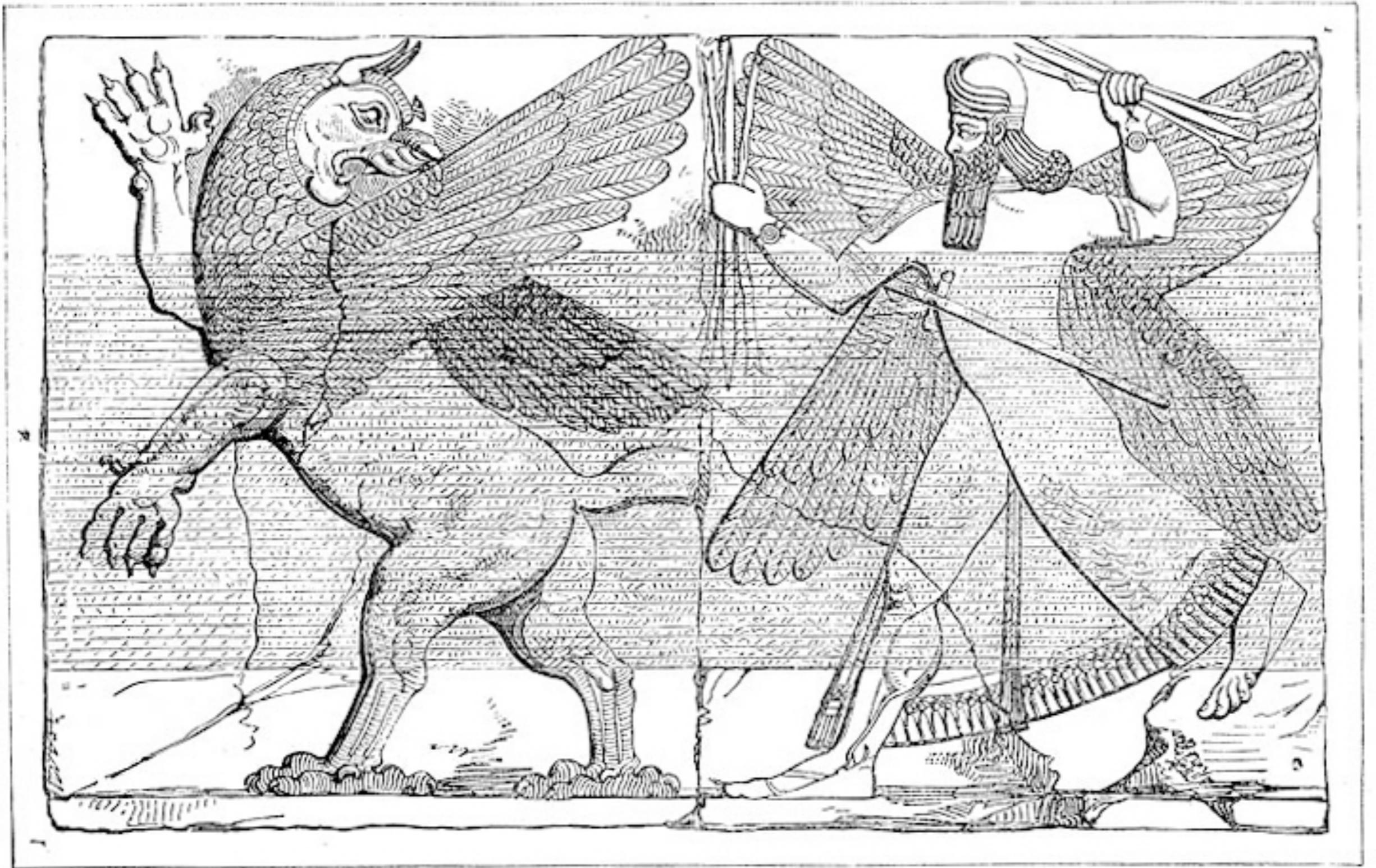


ENUMA ELISH

Mesopotamian Creation



Babylonian Mythological Cosmology



**“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. . .”**

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

The divine brothers gathered together.

They disturbed Tiamat and assaulted(?) their keeper,

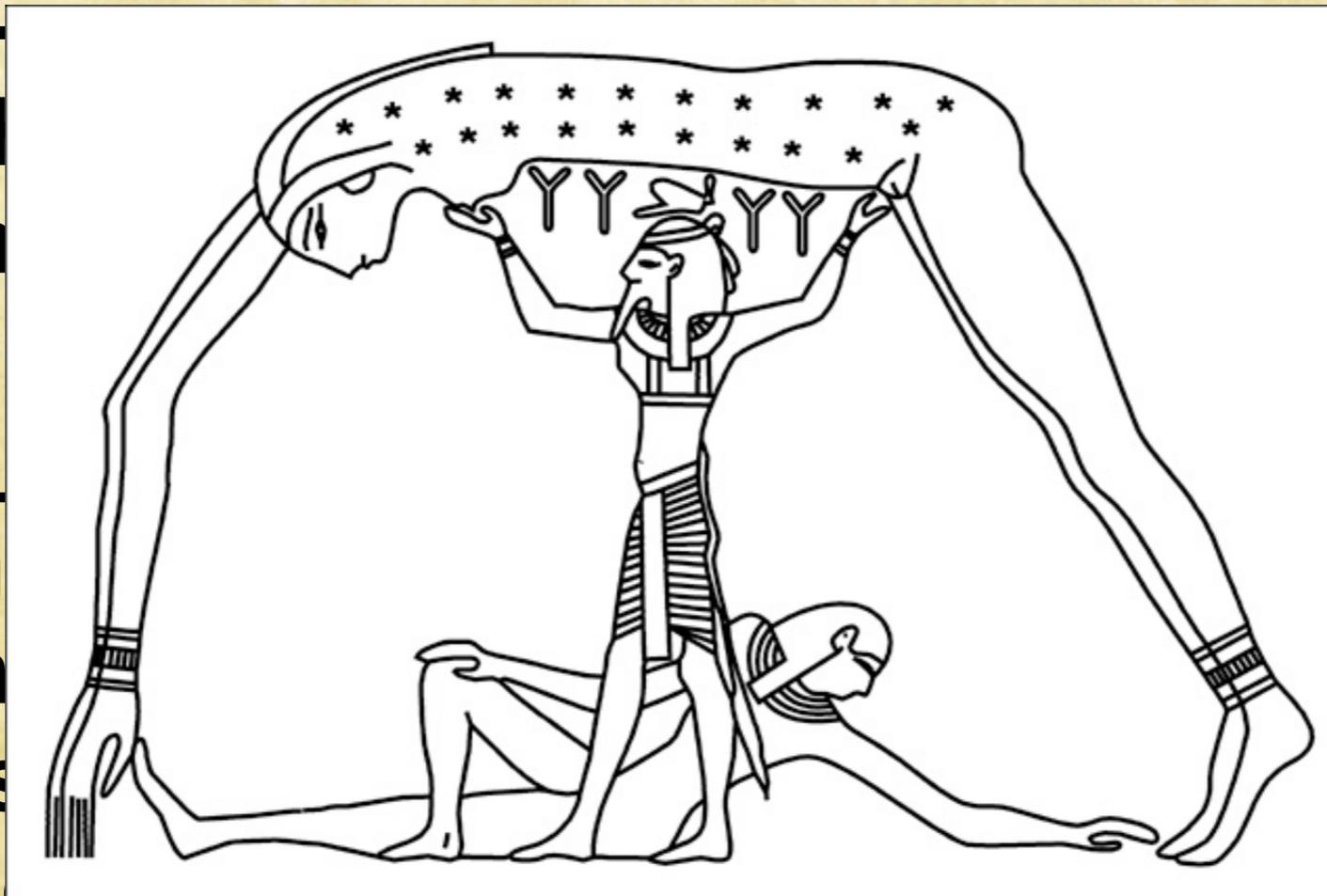
Yea, they disturbed the inner parts of Tiamat,

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. . .”**

“Strength
And then
subdued
The lord
And with
He cut th
And caus
way places.



ve gods;
he had

Tiamat,
er skull.

) to out-of-the-

[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.”

**“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. . .”**

**“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.”**”

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).

Greek Mythical Cosmology

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?



Orpheus
Founder of the “Orphic”
Mysteries

“The Titans had been formed by Father Heaven (*Ouranos*) and Mother Earth (*Gaiea*), 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.”

~Thomas Cahill, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea, Why the Greeks Matter*, 17

Conclusions:

- 1. All pagan myths begin with the existence of some sort of matter or the gods themselves.**

2. The mechanics of creation involve some sort of procreation, which is a natural process of creating one thing from something else. There is no *creation ex nihilo*.

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 implies 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.

GOD

Personal-Infinite

**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**

FINITE UNIVERSE

*angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy*

*god
angels
man
animals
nature*

GOD

Personal-Infinite

FINITE UNIVERSE

angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy

**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**



GOD

Personal-Infinite

**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**

being

FINITE UNIVERSE

*angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy*

*god
angels
man
animals
nature*

Philosophical Cosmogonies

“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

“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.”

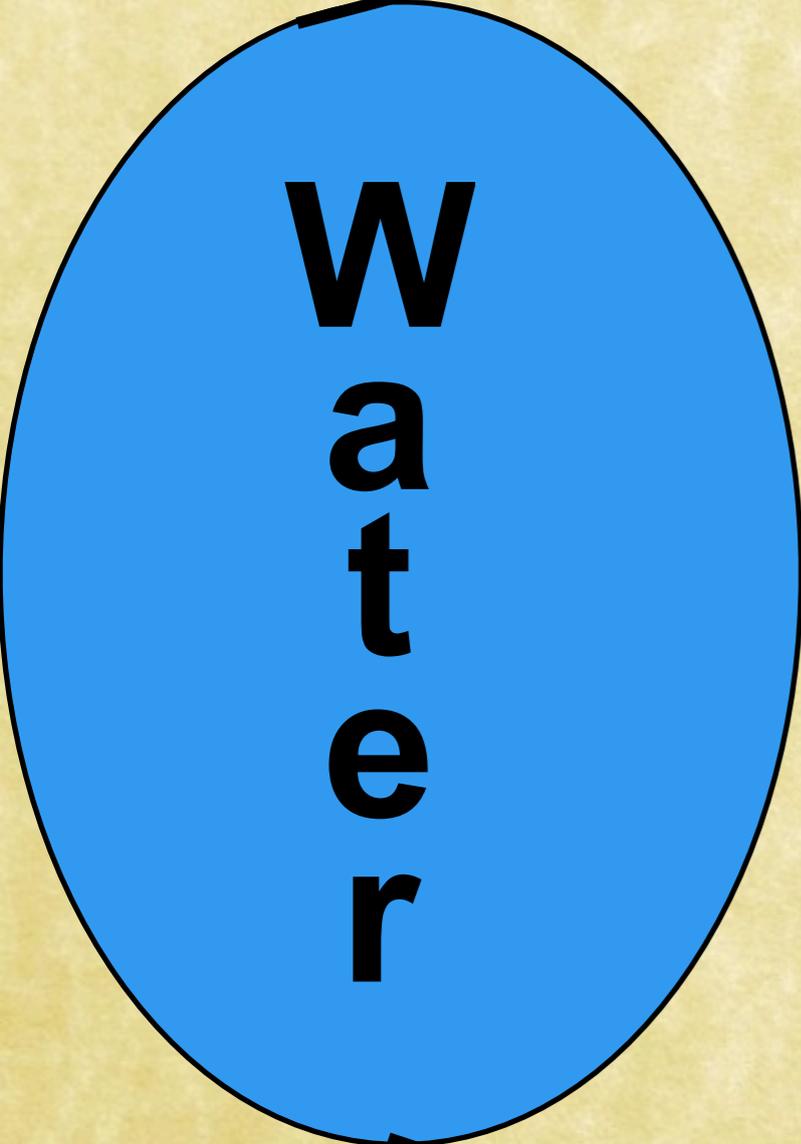
~L. T. More, *Dogma*, 48

Pre Socratics: Monistic Pantheists

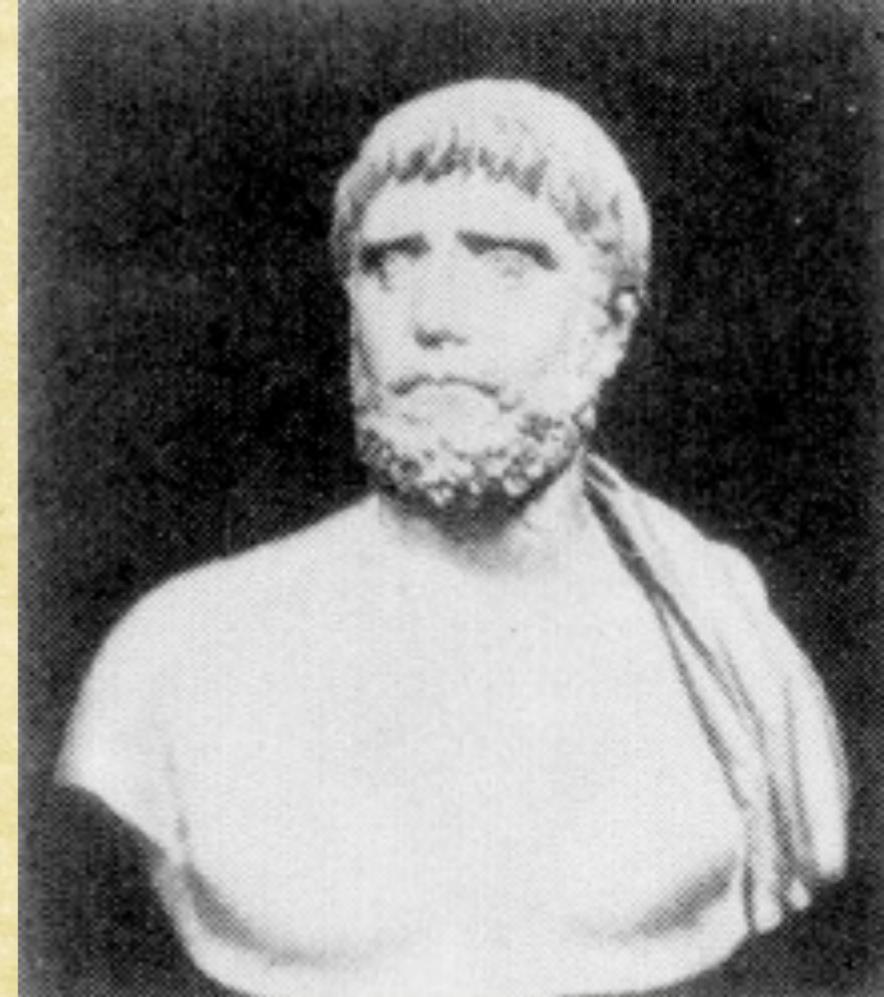
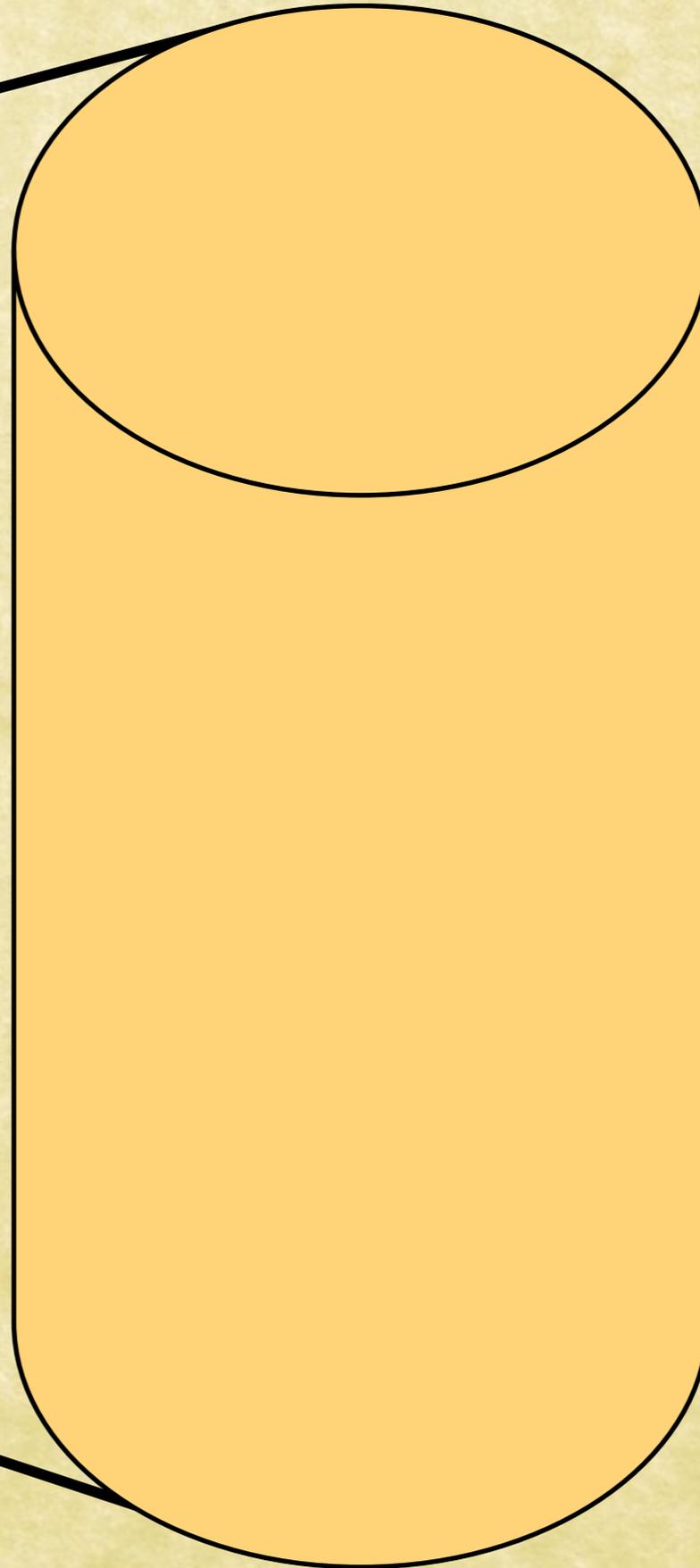
Monism: The view that all reality is of one kind; neutral monism, material monism, pantheistic monism.

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

In monistic pantheism the ultimate reality or basic stuff of the universe (matter, gas, being) is identified as god.

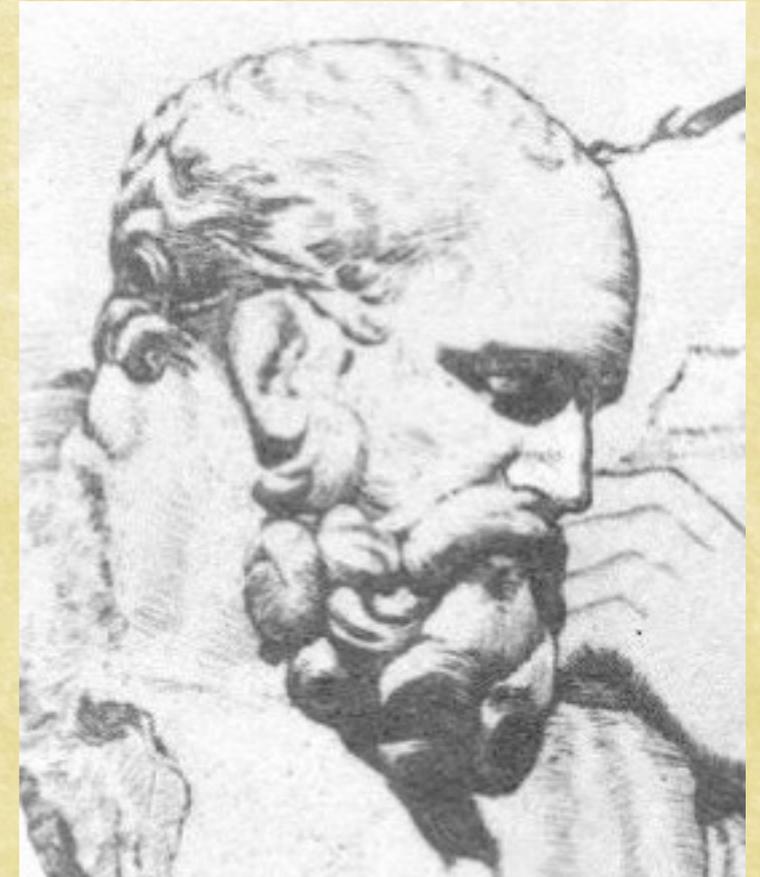


**Primordial
Matter**



**Thales (650–
580 BC)**

**Anaximander
(611–546 BC)**



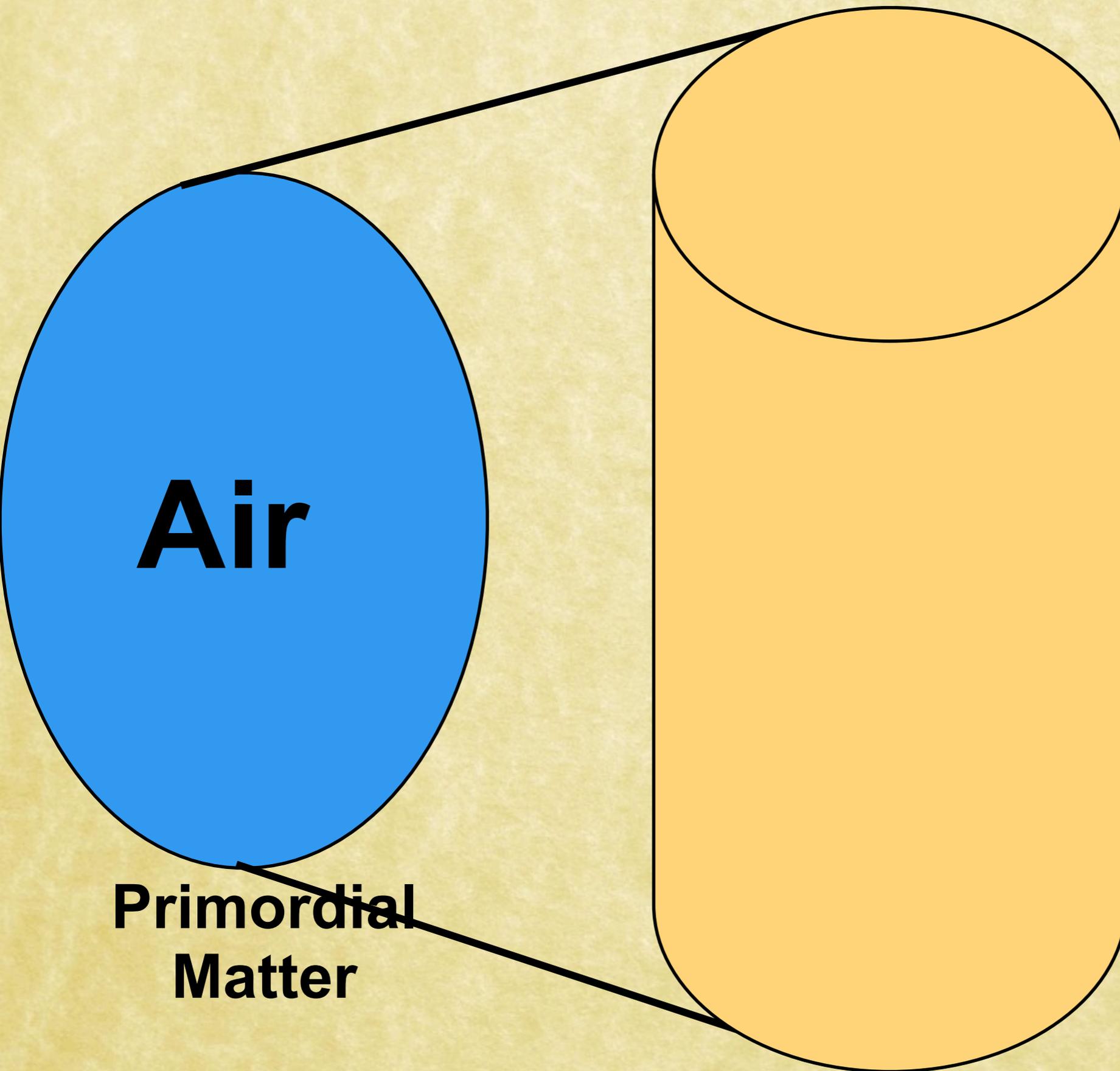
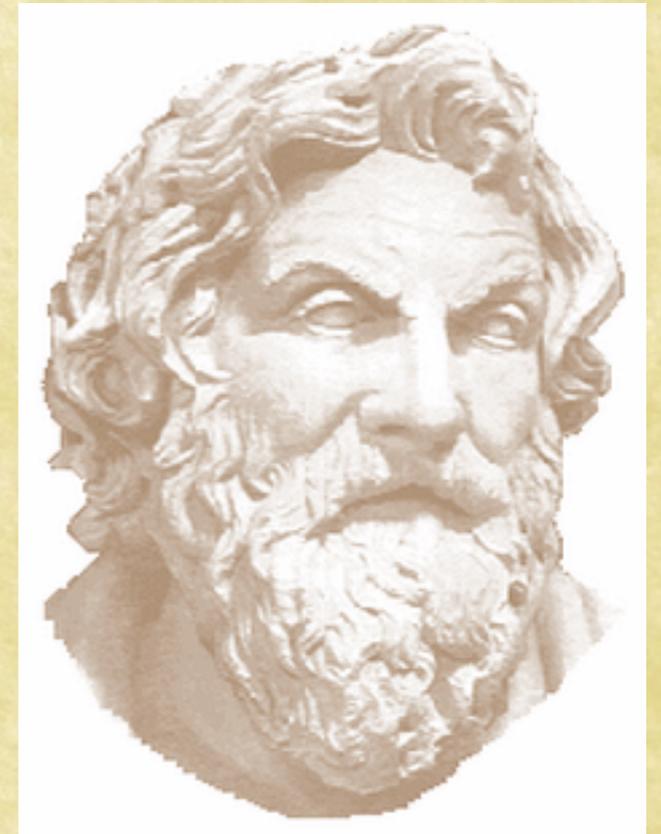
Hot–Cold

Wet–dry

**Primordial
Matter**

Everything in Existence

Anaximines (d. *ca.* 528 BC)

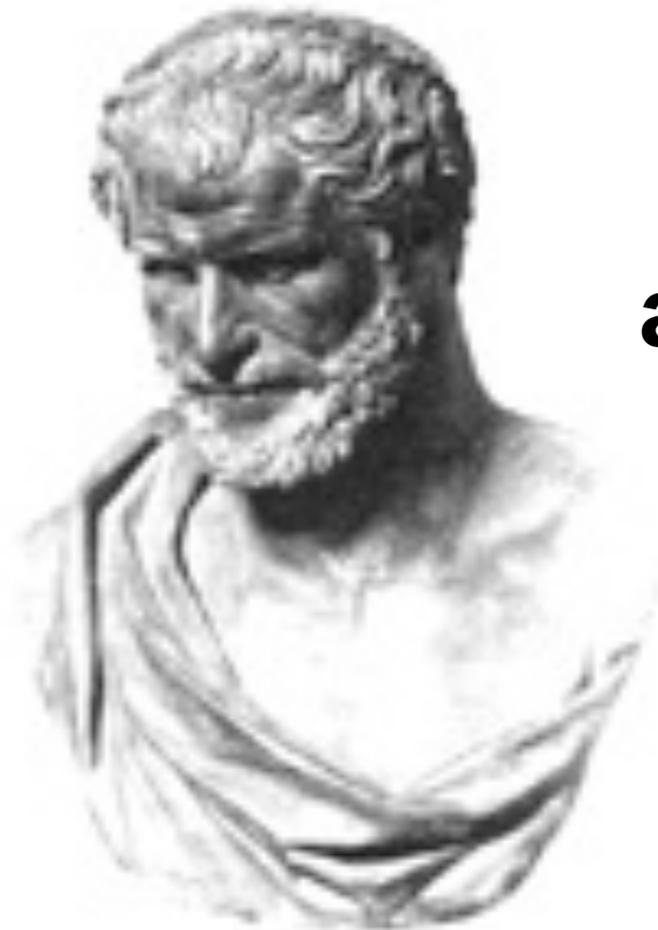


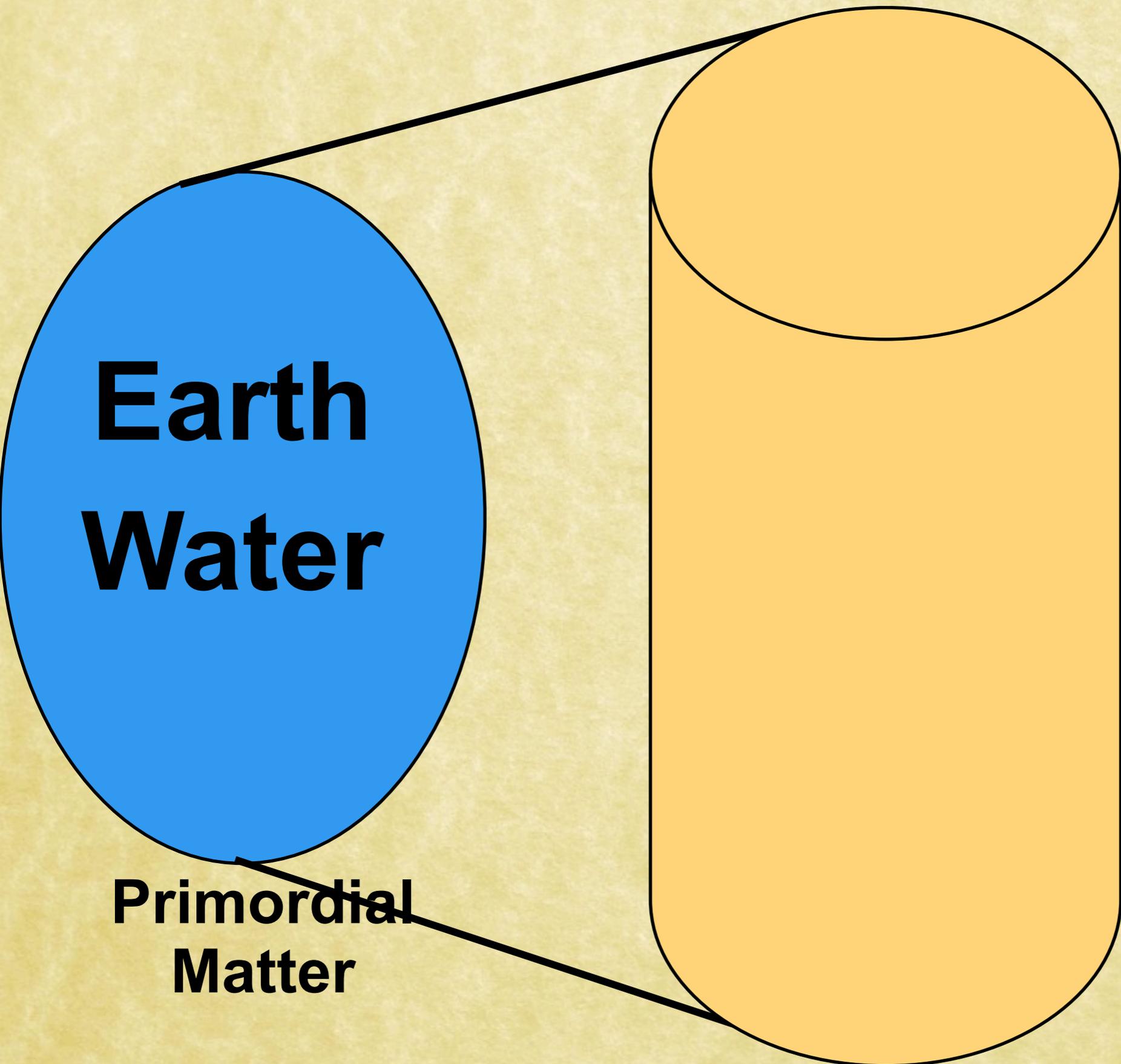
Air

**Primordial
Matter**

Everything in Existence

Heraclitus
6th cent. BC
all is change





**Earth
Water**

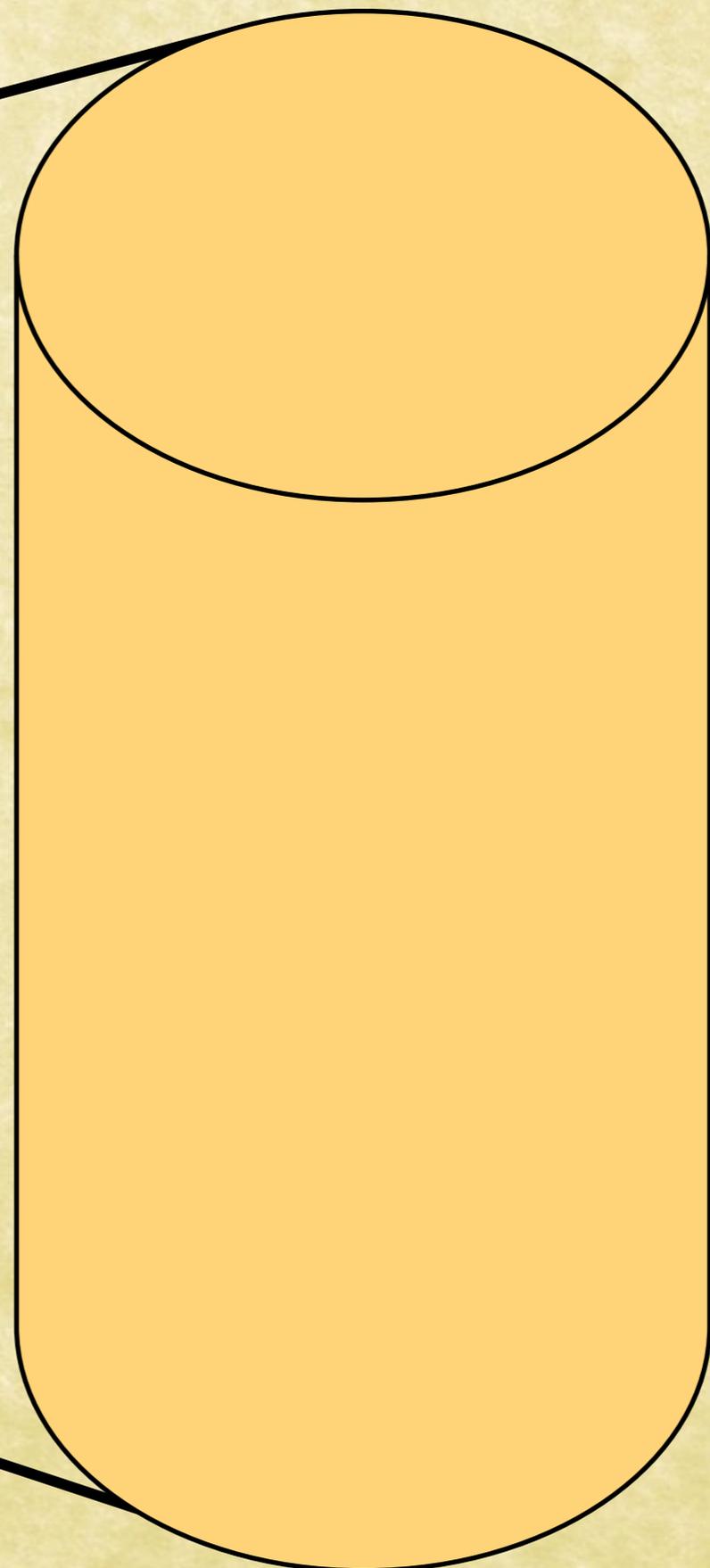
**Primordial
Matter**

Everything in Existence

**Xenophanes
(b. 570 BC)**



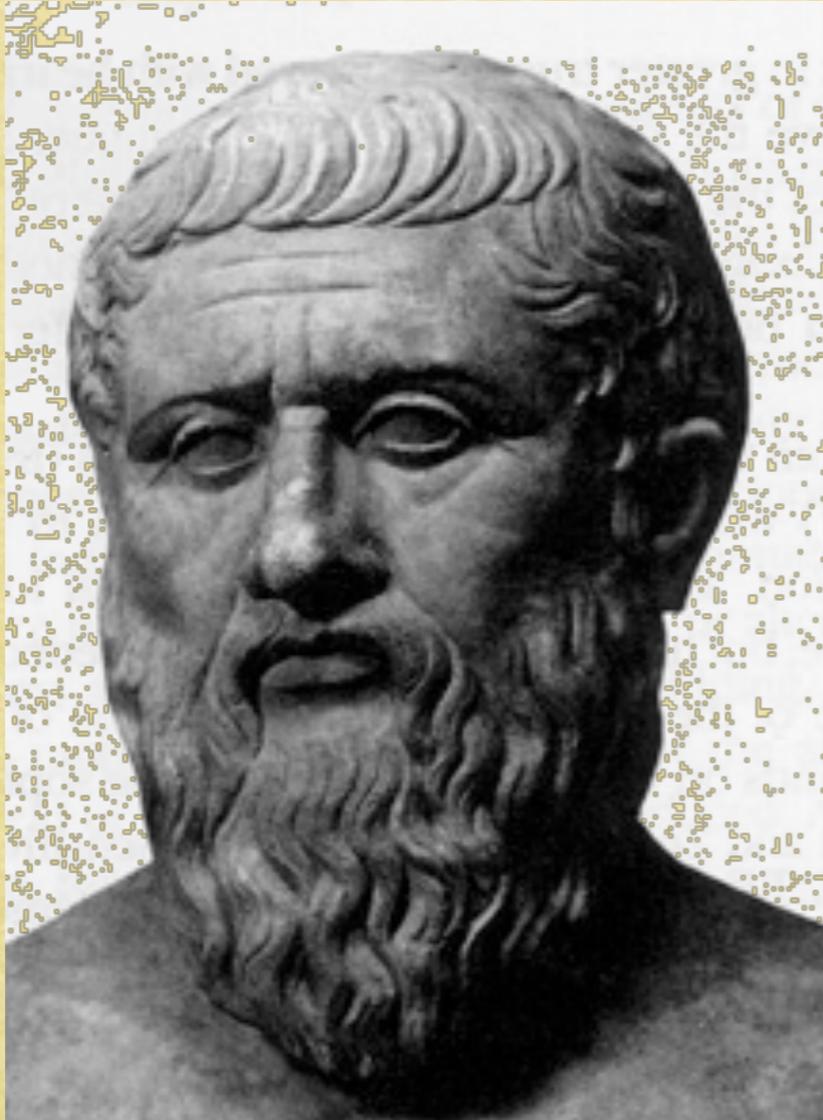
**Primordial
Matter**



**Empedocles
(b. 570 BC)**



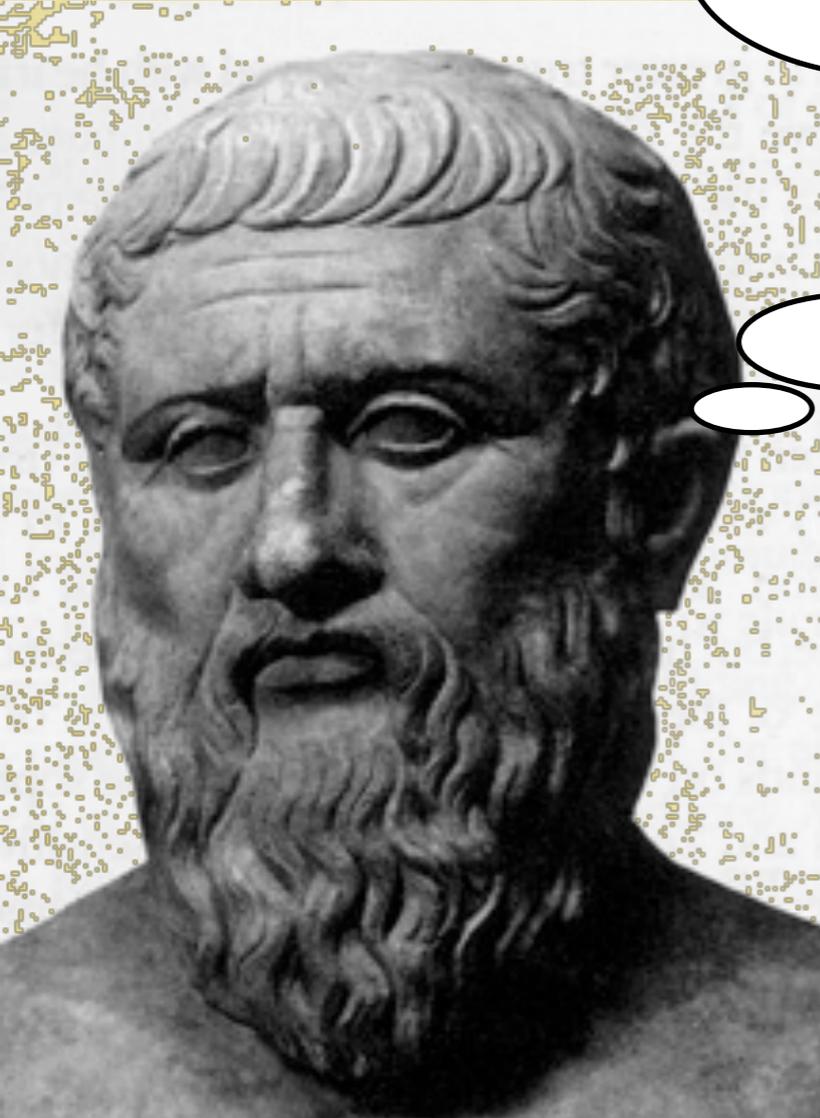
Plato (427?–347 BC)



2B Plato (427?)

IDEAS

**(Forms, absolutes, universals,
Other, Absolute Good,
Summum Bonum)**

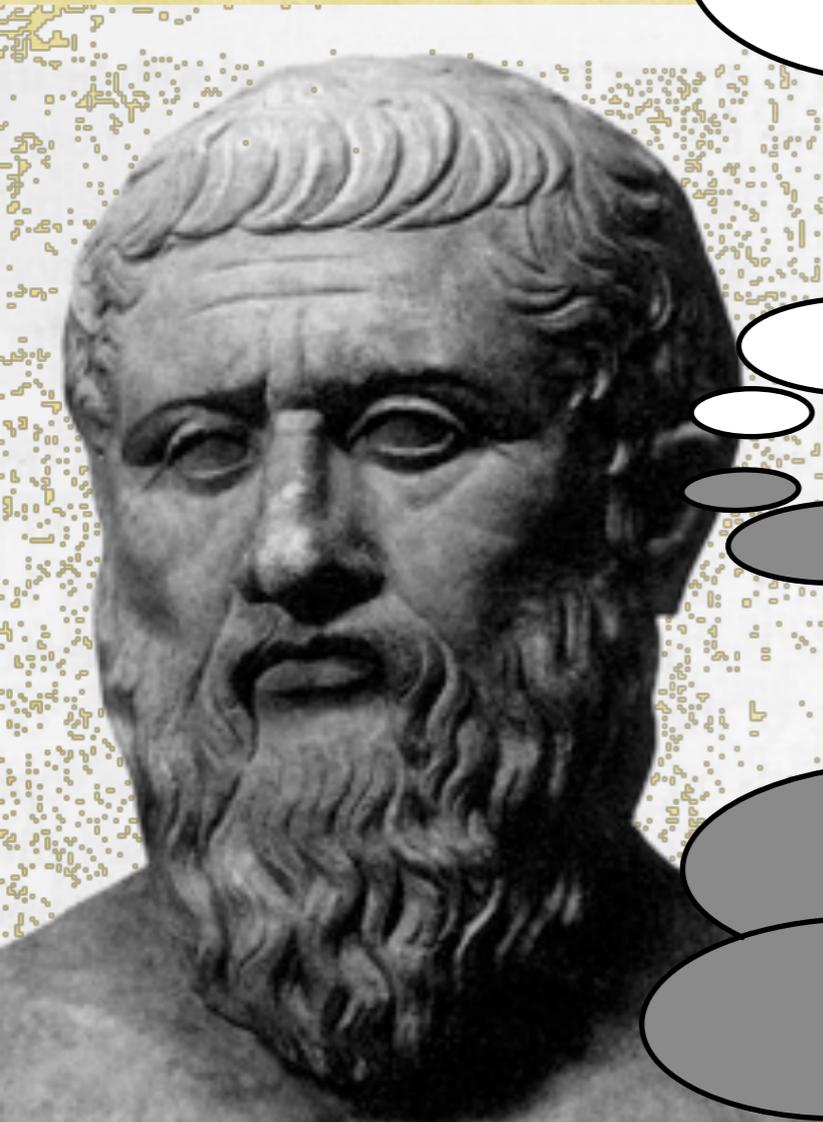


2B Plato (427?)

IDEAS

(Forms, absolutes, universals)

BEING ITSELF



Matter,

**Individual things, bodies
Becoming (flux, change)**

2B Plato (427?)

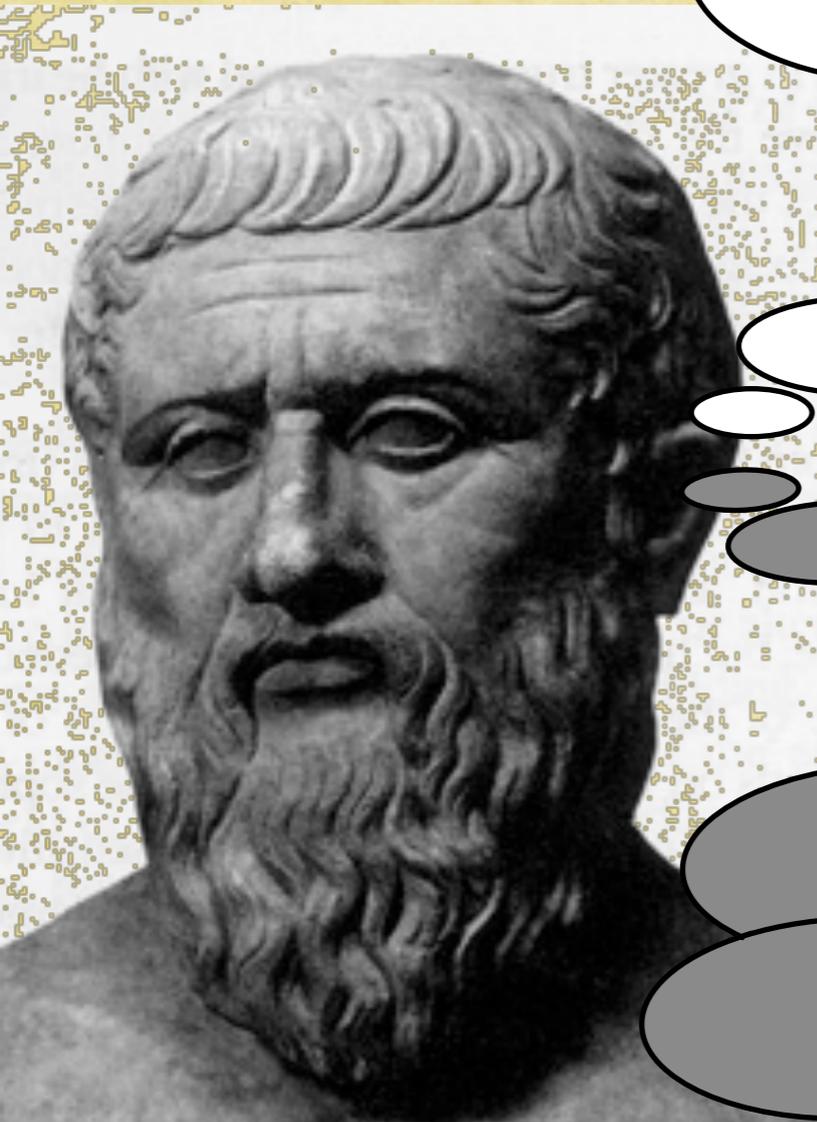
IDEAS

(Forms, absolutes, universals)

BEING ITSELF

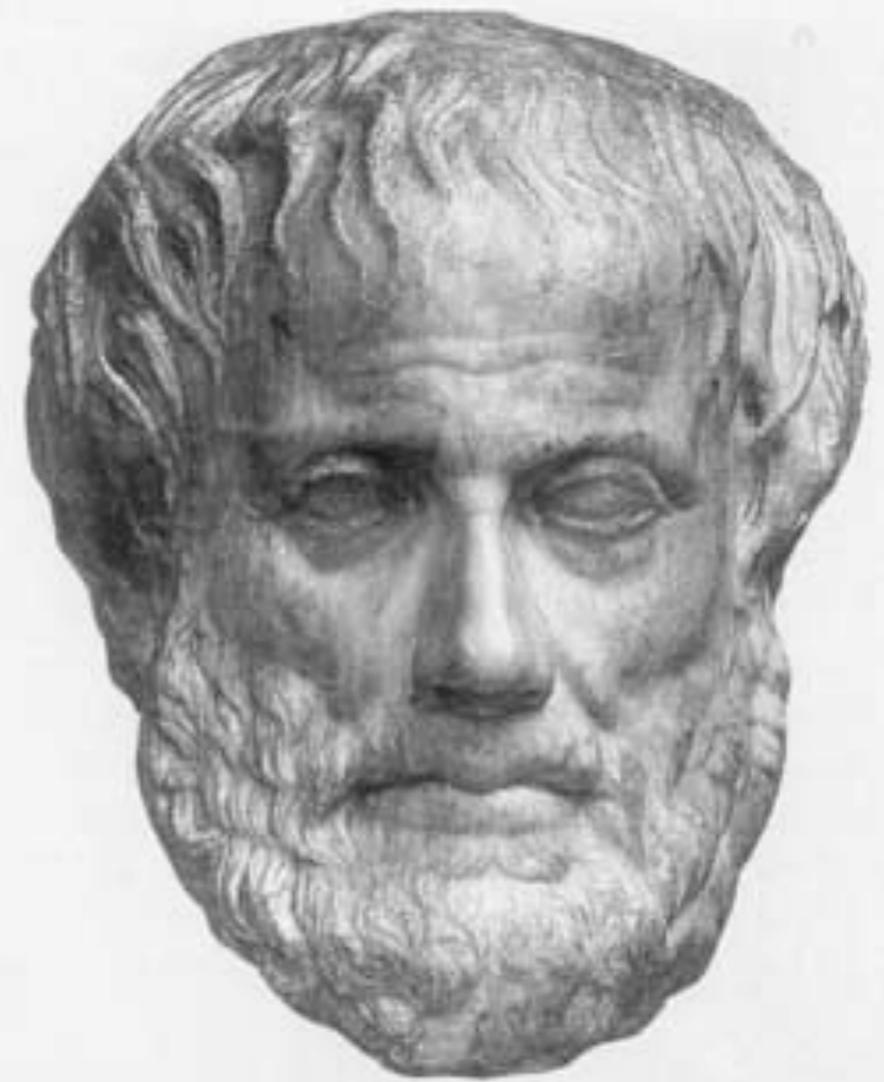
**Out of its *perfect fullness* it
Necessarily creates
All possible things
With all possible *transitions***

Matter

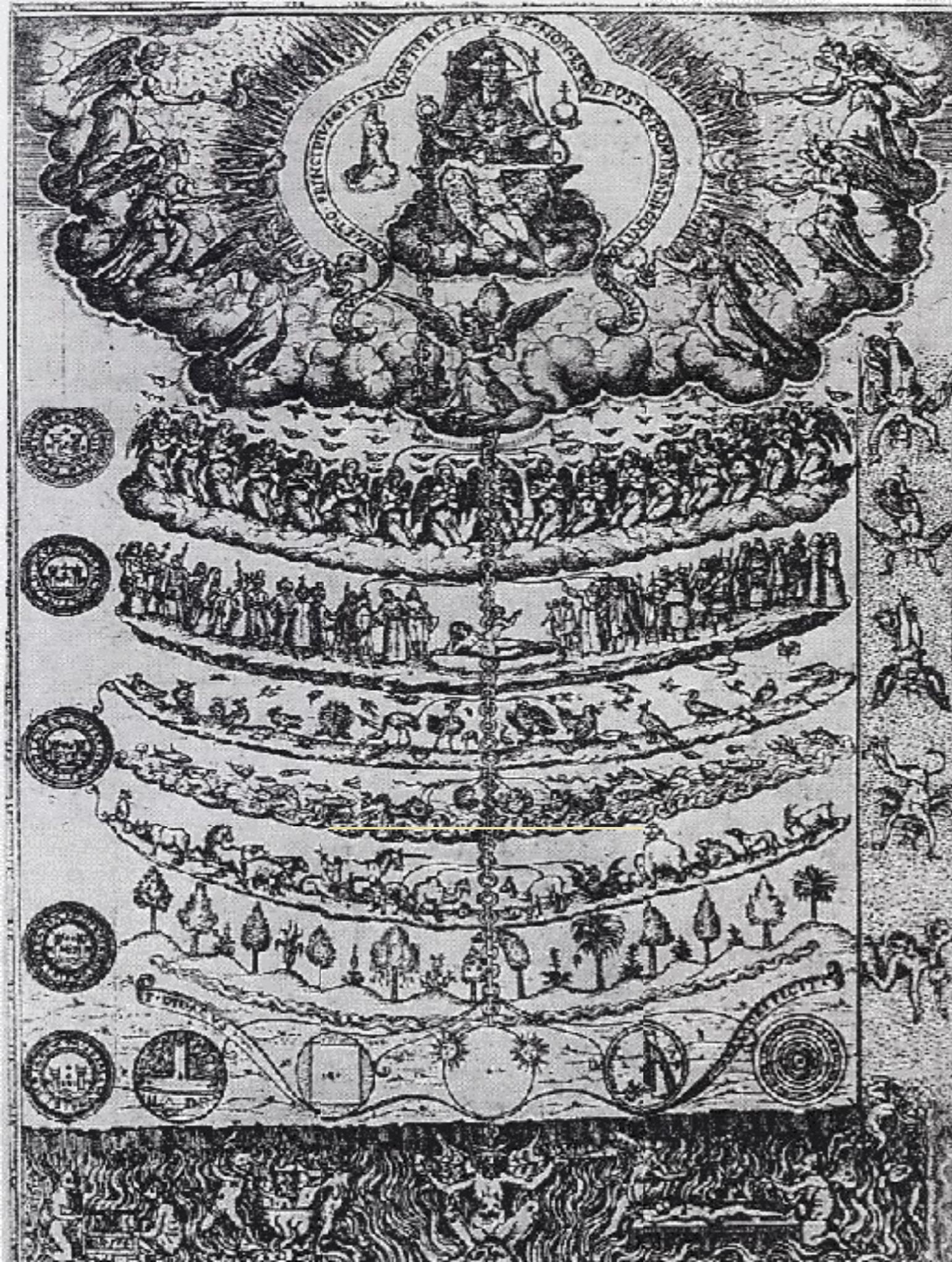


“What the Schoolmen called the *ens perfectissimum*, the summit of the hierarchy of being, the ultimate and only completely satisfying object of contemplation and adoration, there can be little doubt that the Idea of the Good was the God of Plato; and there can be none that it became the God of Aristotle,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



Aristotle
(384–322
BC)



god

angels

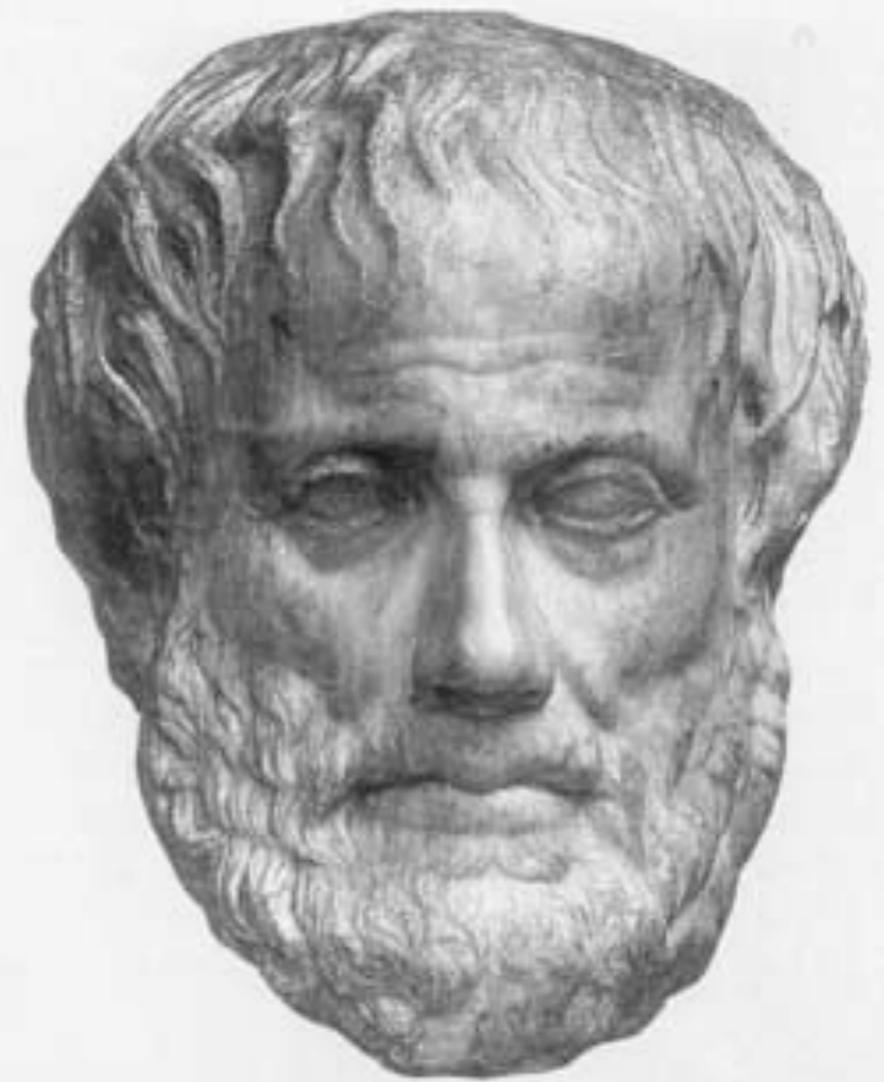
mankind

birds

animals

vegetation

“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.”



**Aristotle
(384–322
BC)**

Epicurus (342–270 BC)

“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*

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

~Lucritius

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

~Lucretius

Neoplatonism

