

Judges Series

Lesson #75

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Dean Bible Ministries

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**Chain of Being
Continues to the Present
Judges 10:6–18**

JUDGES

2021

When Chaos Was King

Review

Judg. 10:6, “Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and enslaved themselves to the Baals and the Ashtoreths: the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they abandoned the Lord and did not serve/worship Him.” ~RD

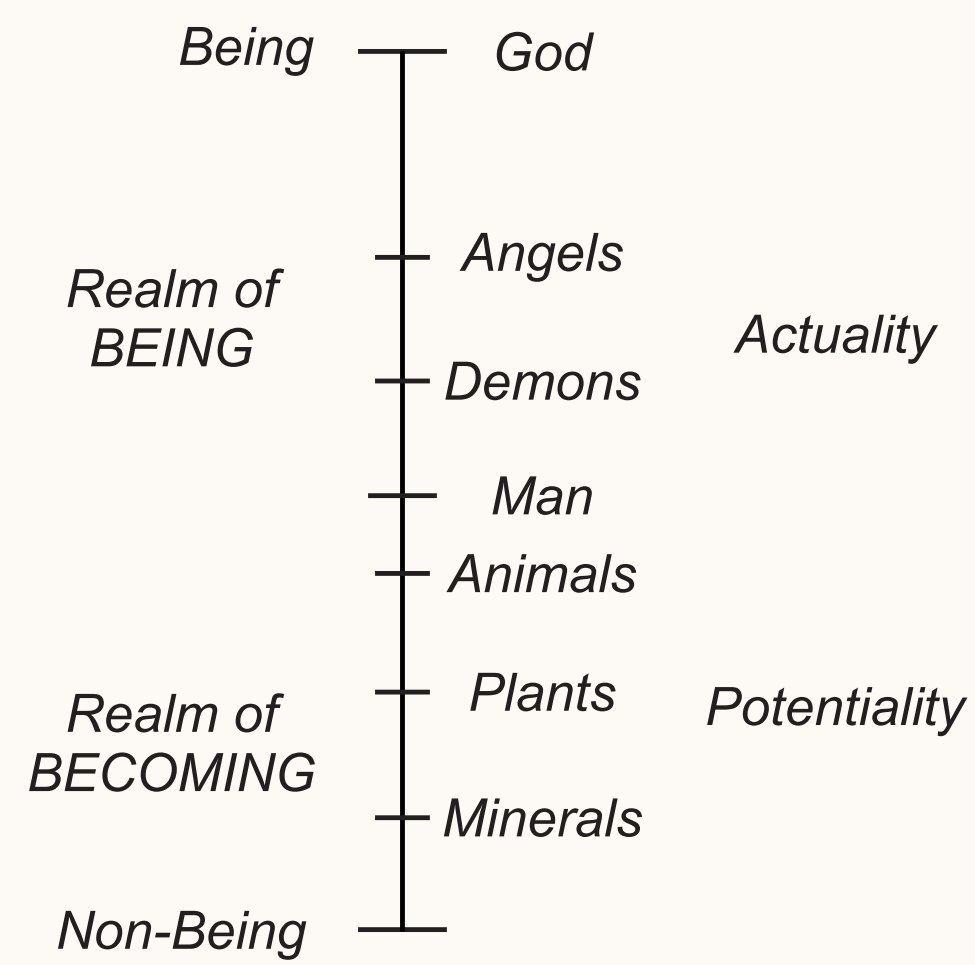
1. At root, this is a rejection of the Creator/creation distinction.

**Rom. 1:22, “Professing to be wise, they became fools,
Rom. 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.**

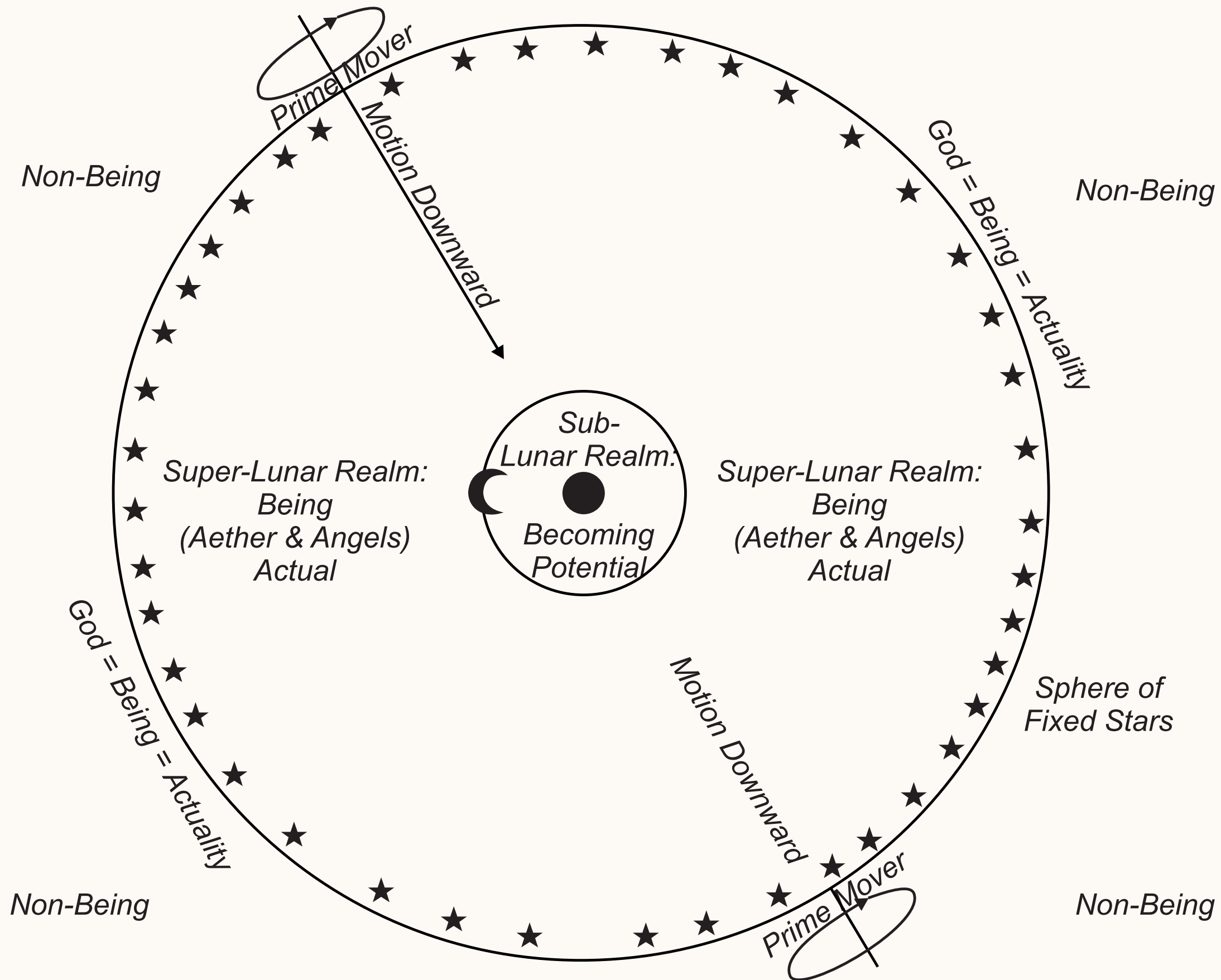
Rom. 1:24, “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

Rom. 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



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.”

What do we Mean by the Continuity of BEING?

Three Latin terms:

Ens being or existence, in itself.

Esse “to be, the act of existing.” Two things are necessary in any individual thing, *essentia* or whatness, the essence of something, what it is; second, existence, the act of existence or being. Without actual existence or being something is just a thought or concept.

Essentia the whatness of a being, that which distinguishes one thing from another.

Being or *existence* is distinct from the whatness or the essence of a thing.

What do we Mean by the Continuity of BEING?

Everything from “god” to rocks or sub-atomic particles shares to one degree or another in the same existence or same principle of being. Thus all are part of the same being of the universe.

Biblical Creation: Creator-Creature Distinction

1st level CREATOR

2nd level Creature: what God created



The Shining Star
wanted to promote
himself to be God

Summary of the Pagan (Non-Biblical) Worldview

1. Continuity of Being (A scale)

gods ————— man ————— nature

2. Impersonal Fate and Chance

3. Ultimate Authority: Self

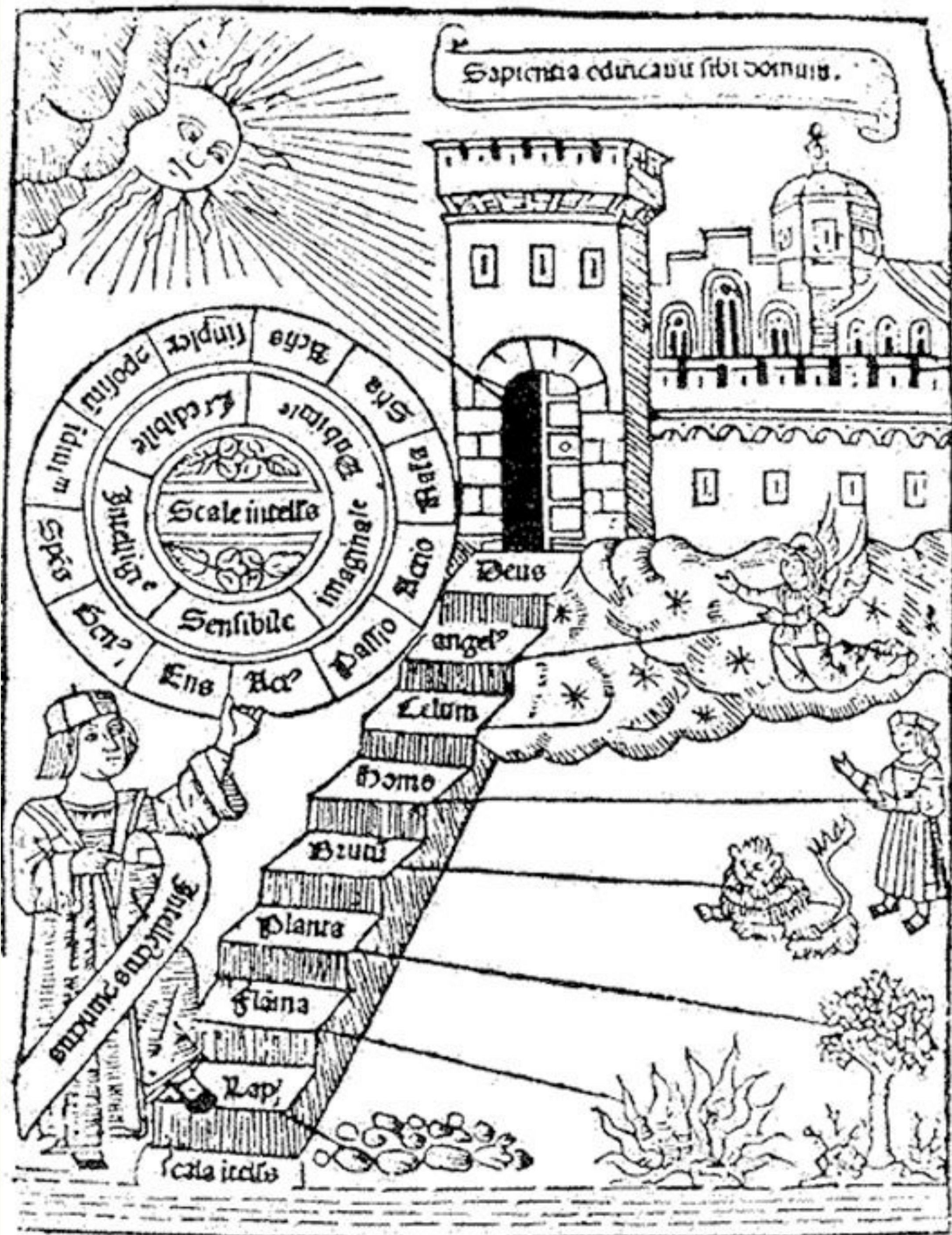
“The essential and unbreakable links in the chain include the Divine Creator, the angelic heavenly, the human, the animal, the world of plants and vegetation, and the planet Earth itself with its minerals and waters.

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

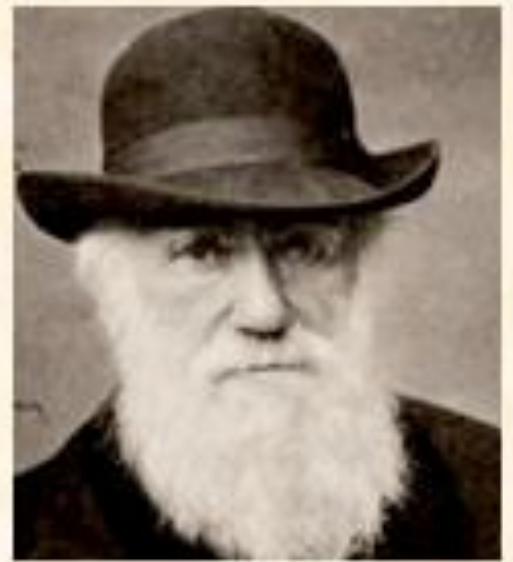
~Arthur Lovejoy, *The Chain of Being*

“The 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.

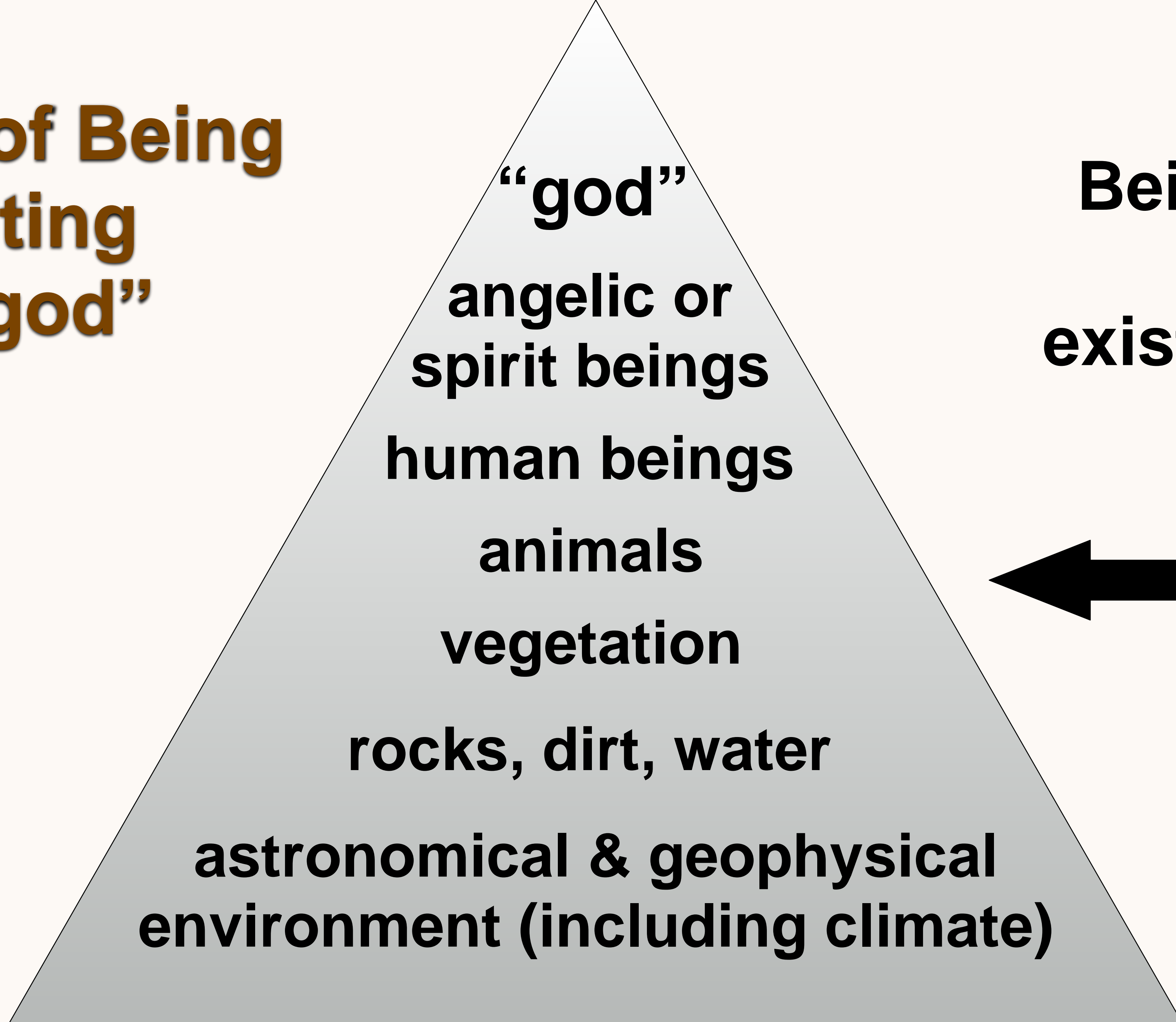


Great Chain of Being

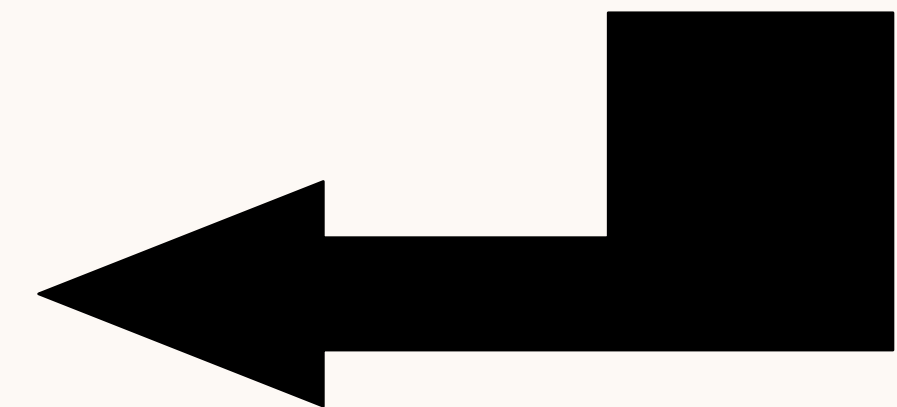


- God
- Angels
- Heaven
- Humans
- Beasts
- Plants
- Flame
- Rocks

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



**Being or
raw
existence
itself**



gods



man



nature



sliding up and down the scale of the continuity of being

Rom. 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.

Rom. 1:22, “Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Rom. 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.”

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

Rom. 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.”

Review/Introduction

- 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.

Ideas are important, good ideas produce good results, bad ideas, bad results.

Everything we read, watch, listen to is an expression of ideas. What are these ideas? From whence do they come? And, what is their impact?

How do we evaluate them?



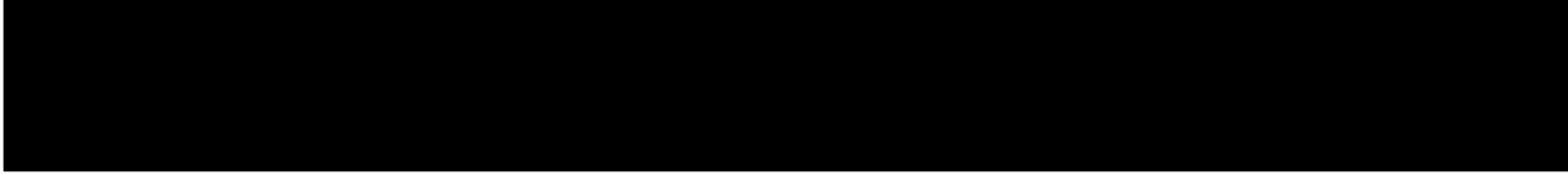
**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**

(god and everything are within a closed system)

FINITE UNIVERSE

angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy





FINITE UNIVERSE

- angels*
- man*
- animals*
- vegetation*
- matter/energy*

**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**





**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**

being

FINITE UNIVERSE

angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy



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)

“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.”

~Milton K. Munitz (prof. of philosophy of science at NYU, *Theories of the Universe*, p. 6.)

Pre-Socratics: These were all monistic pantheists

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

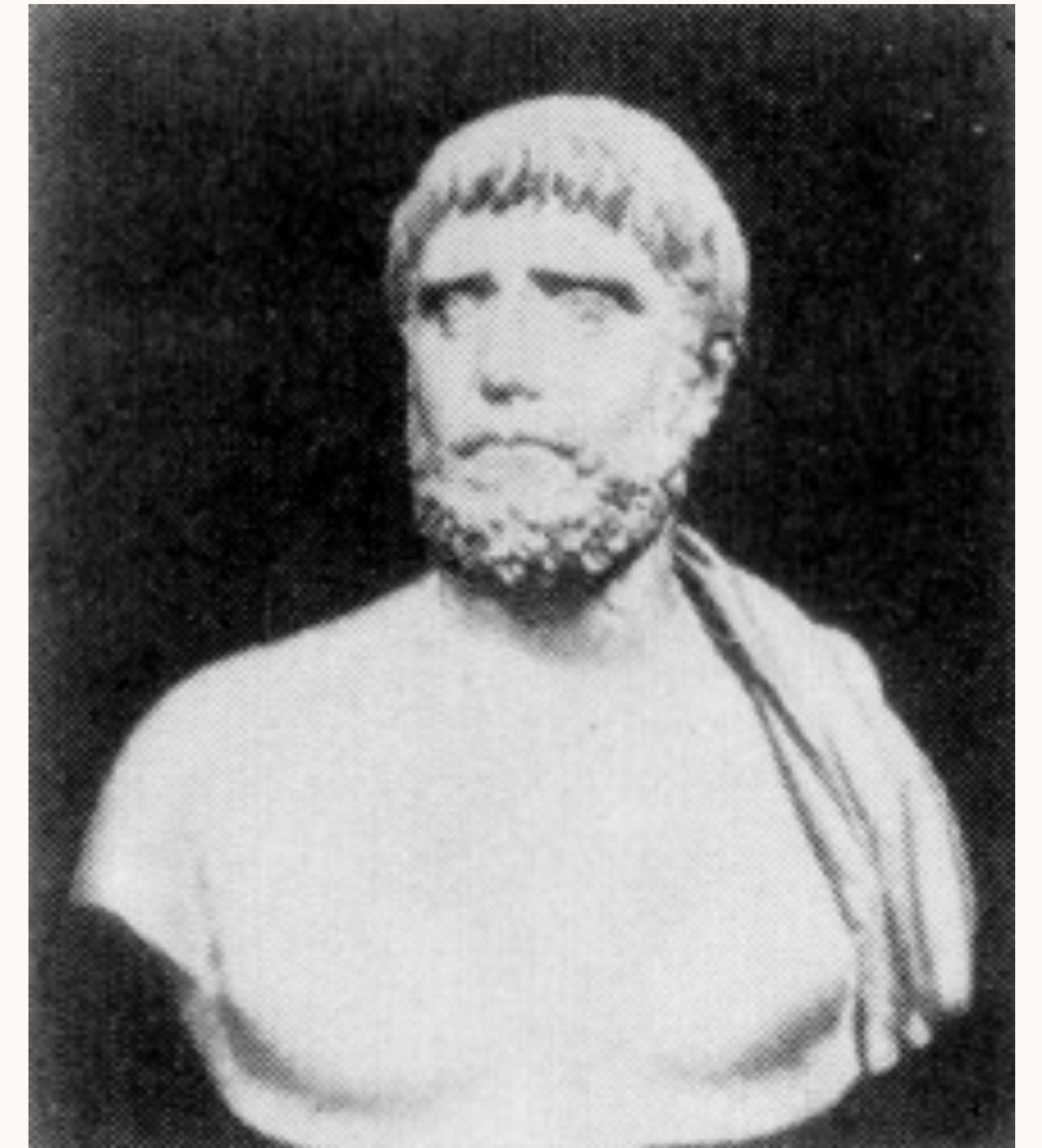
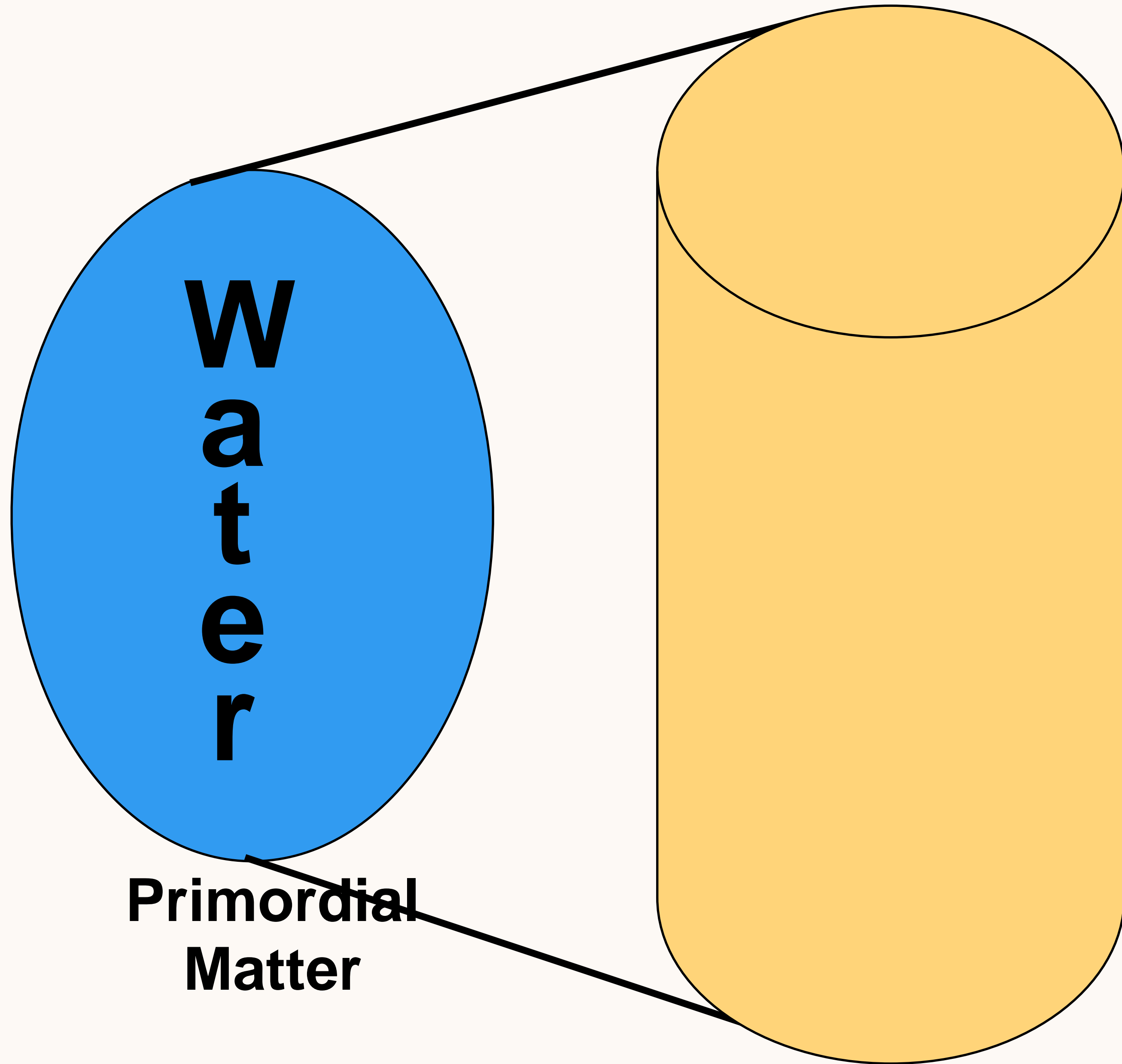
Materialistic monism: Everything is reducible to matter alone, which is eternal.

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.

Pre-Socratics: Monistic Pantheists

i.e., “the force” in *Star Wars*

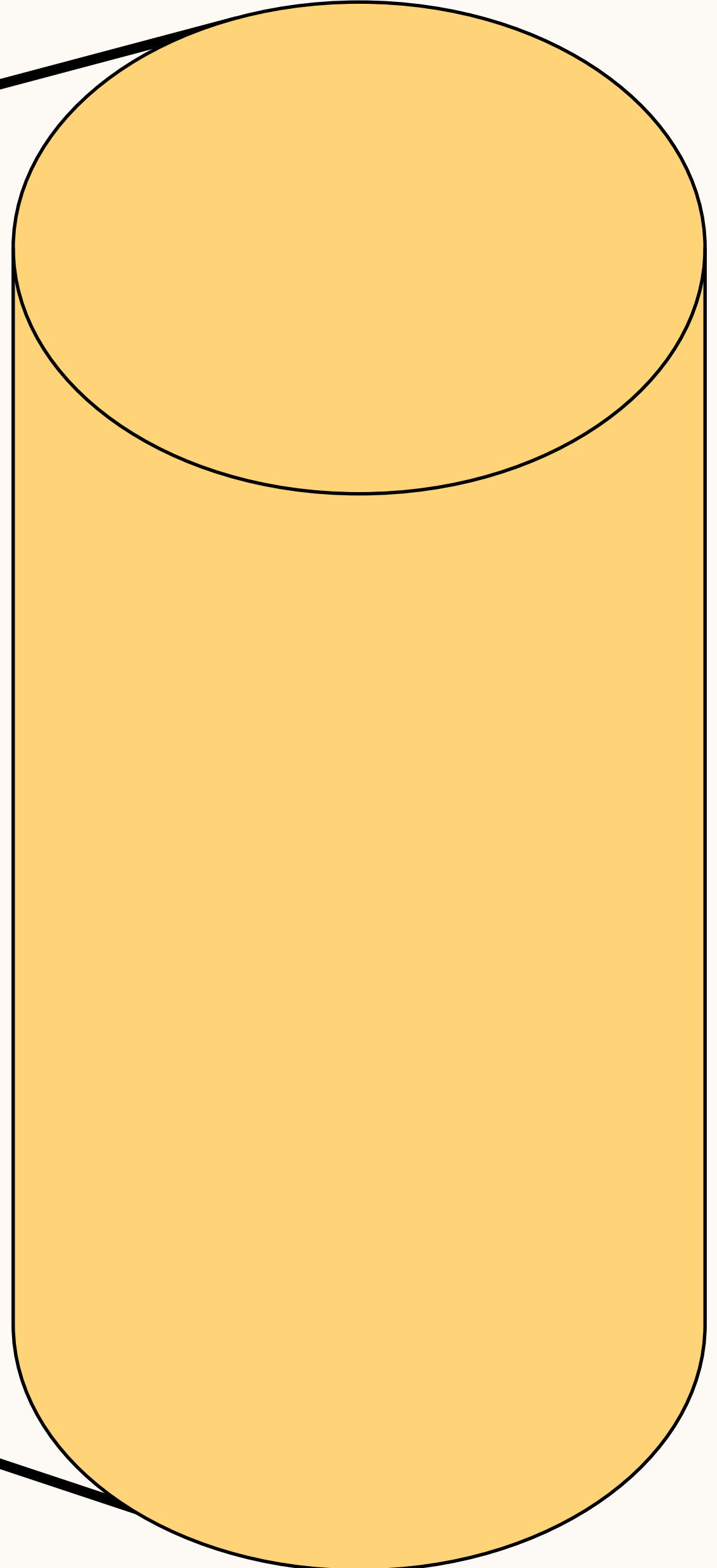


Thales (650–580 BC)

Everything in Existence

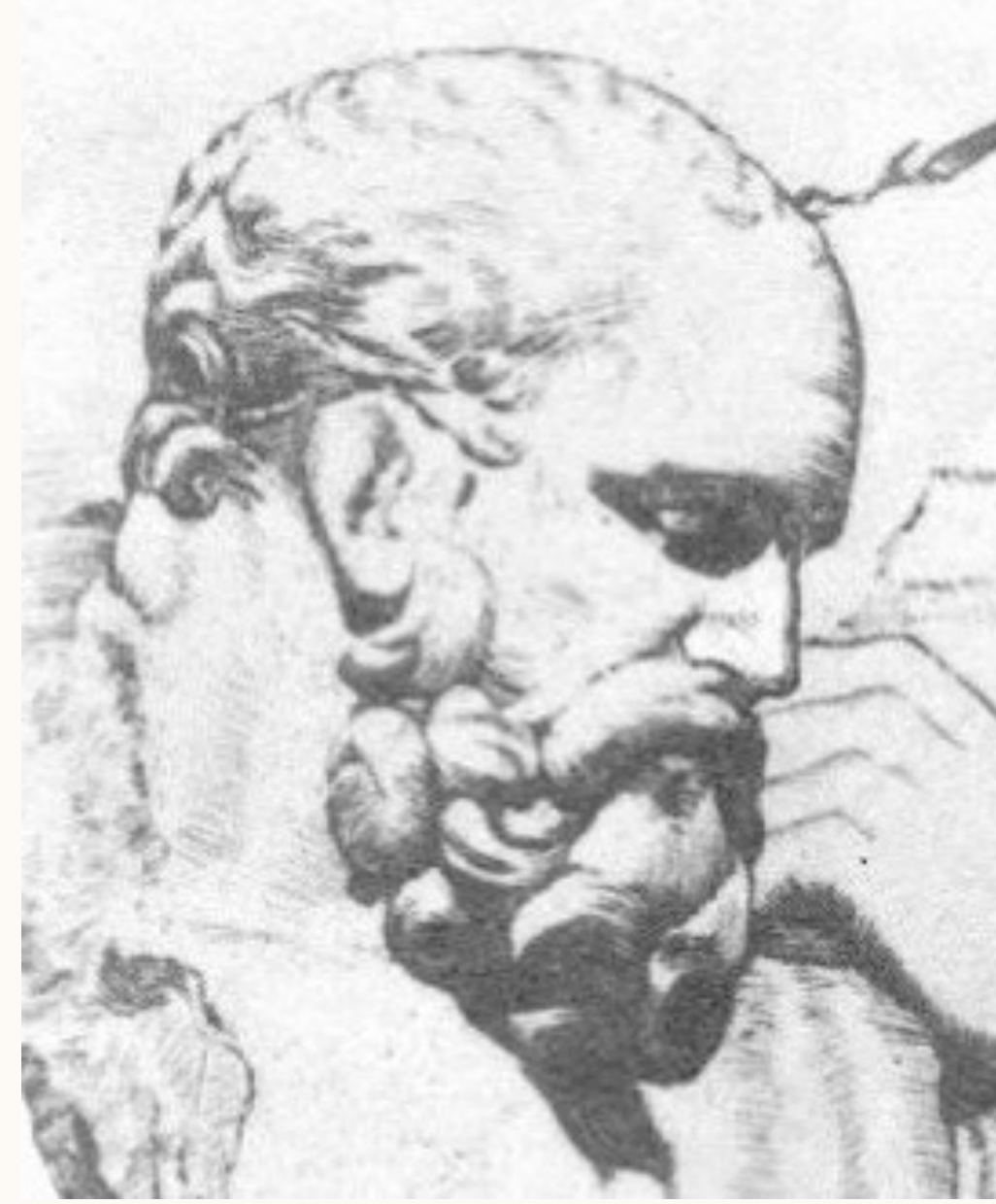


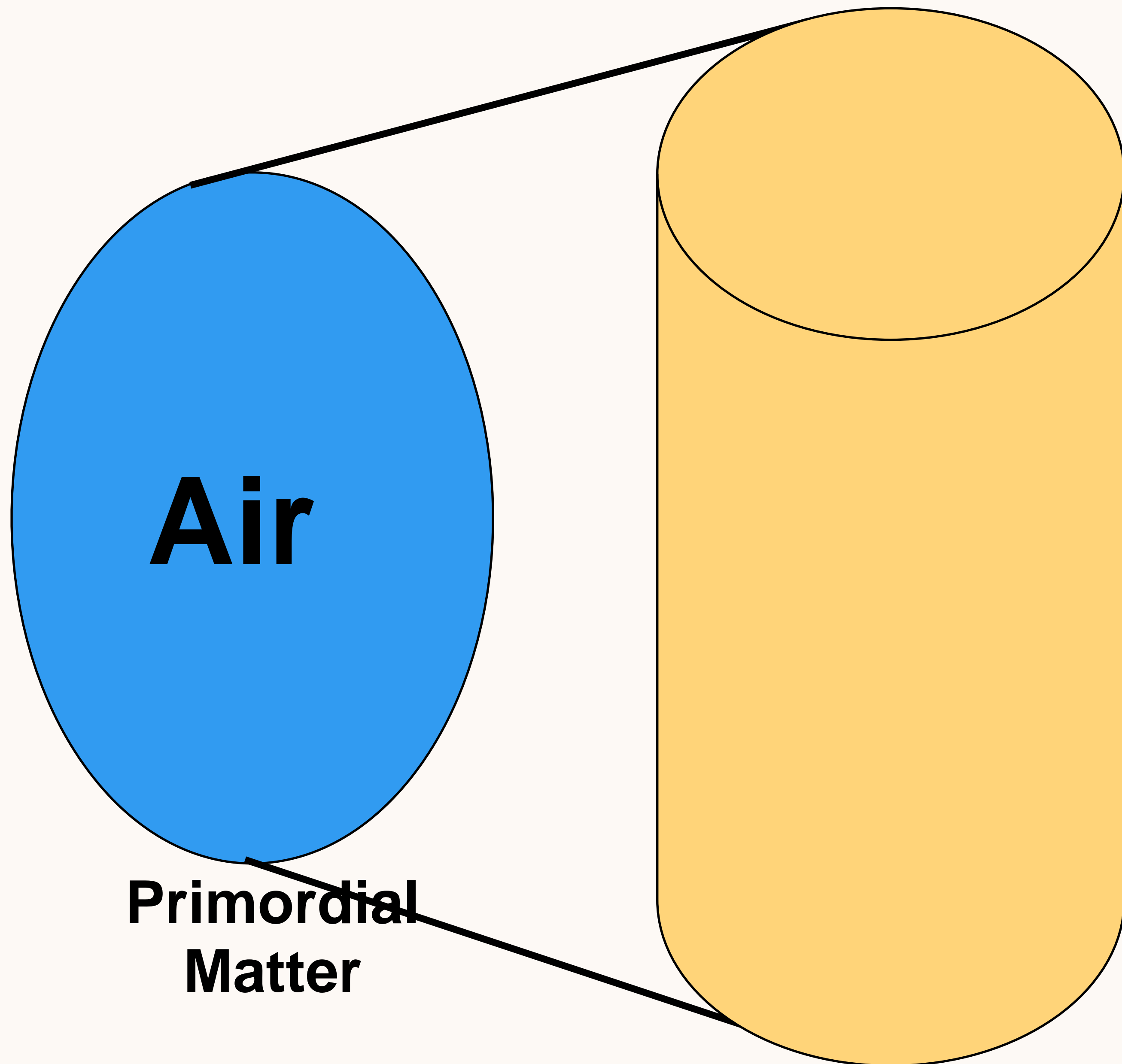
**Primordial
Matter**



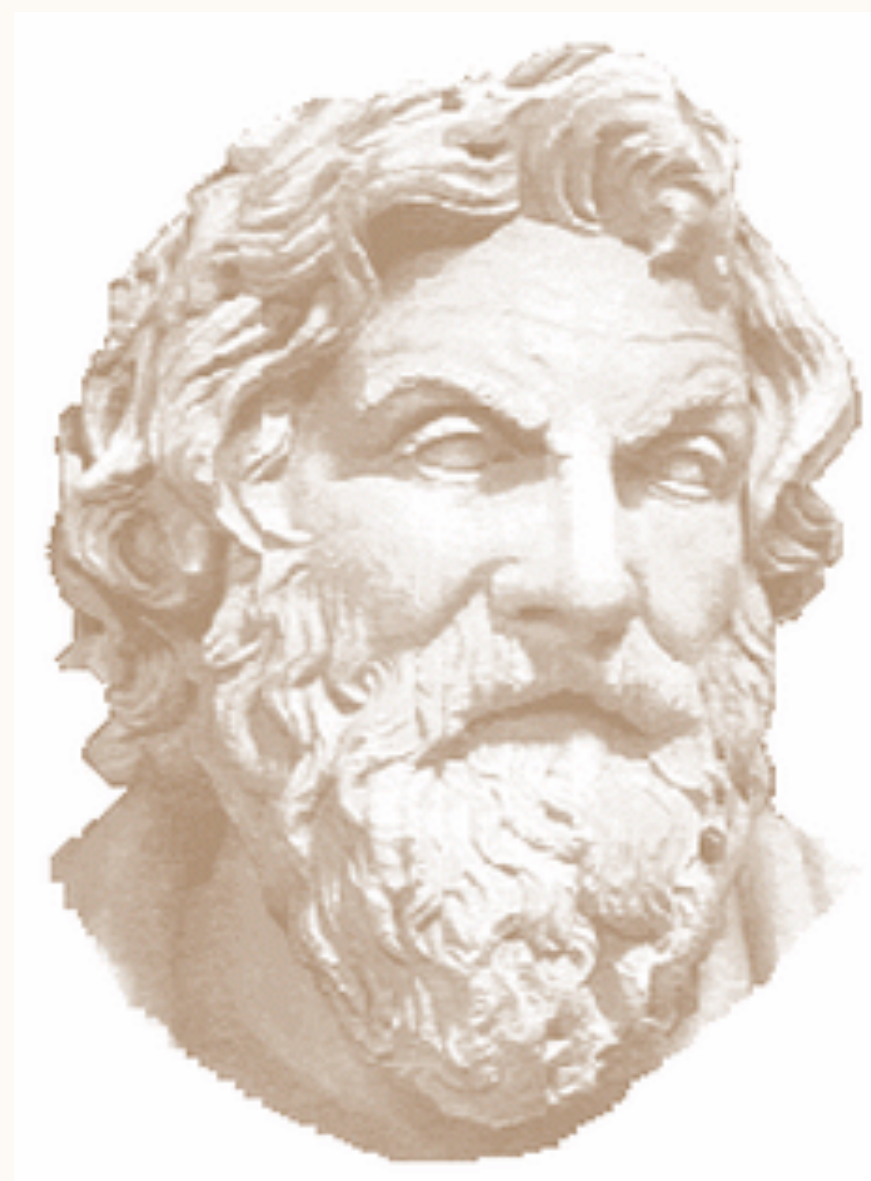
Everything in Existence

**Anaximander
(611–546 BC)**





Anaximines
(d. ca. 528 BC)

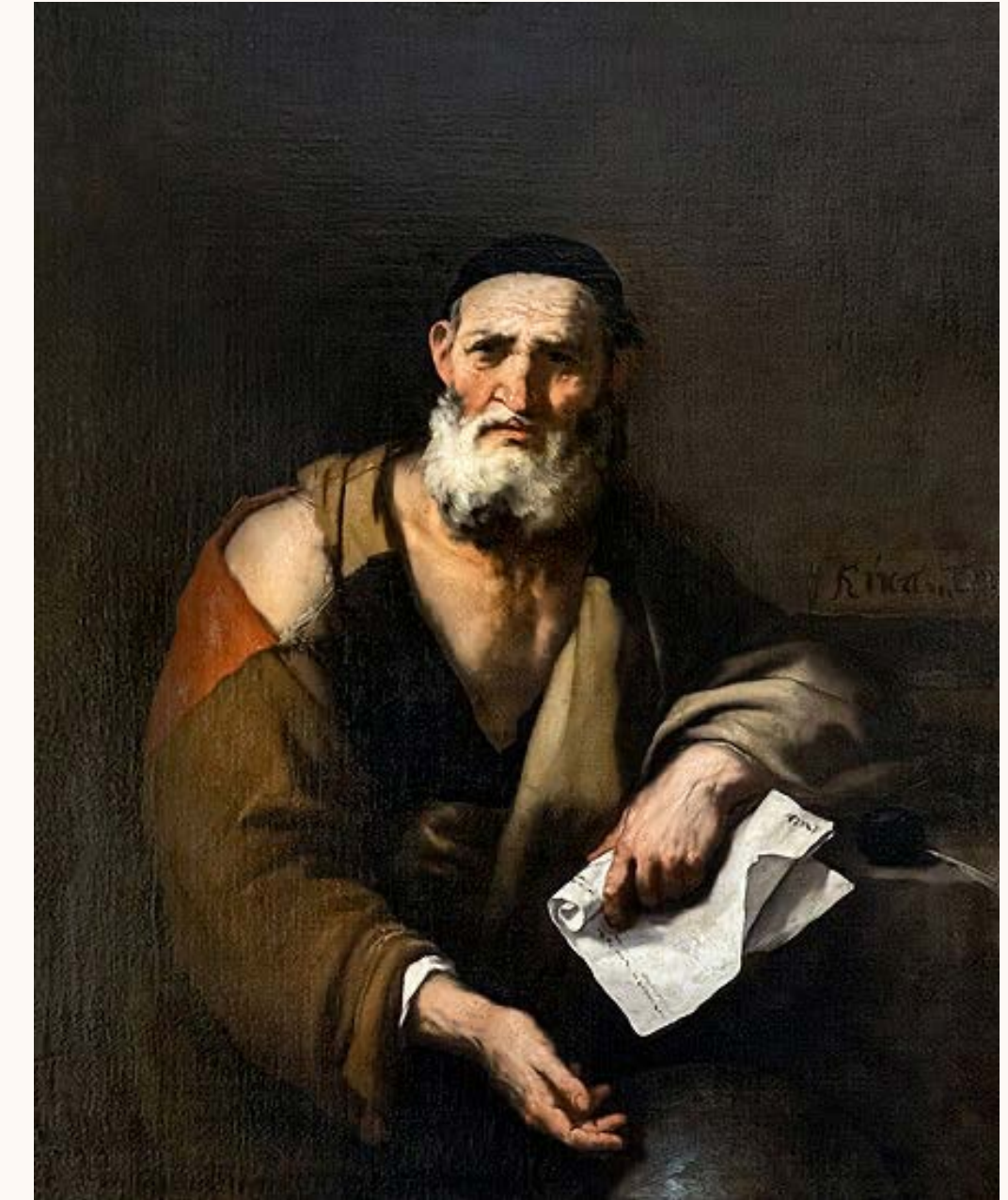


Everything in Existence

“The type of thinking initiated by the Milesian school of pre-Socratic thinkers—Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximines—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.”

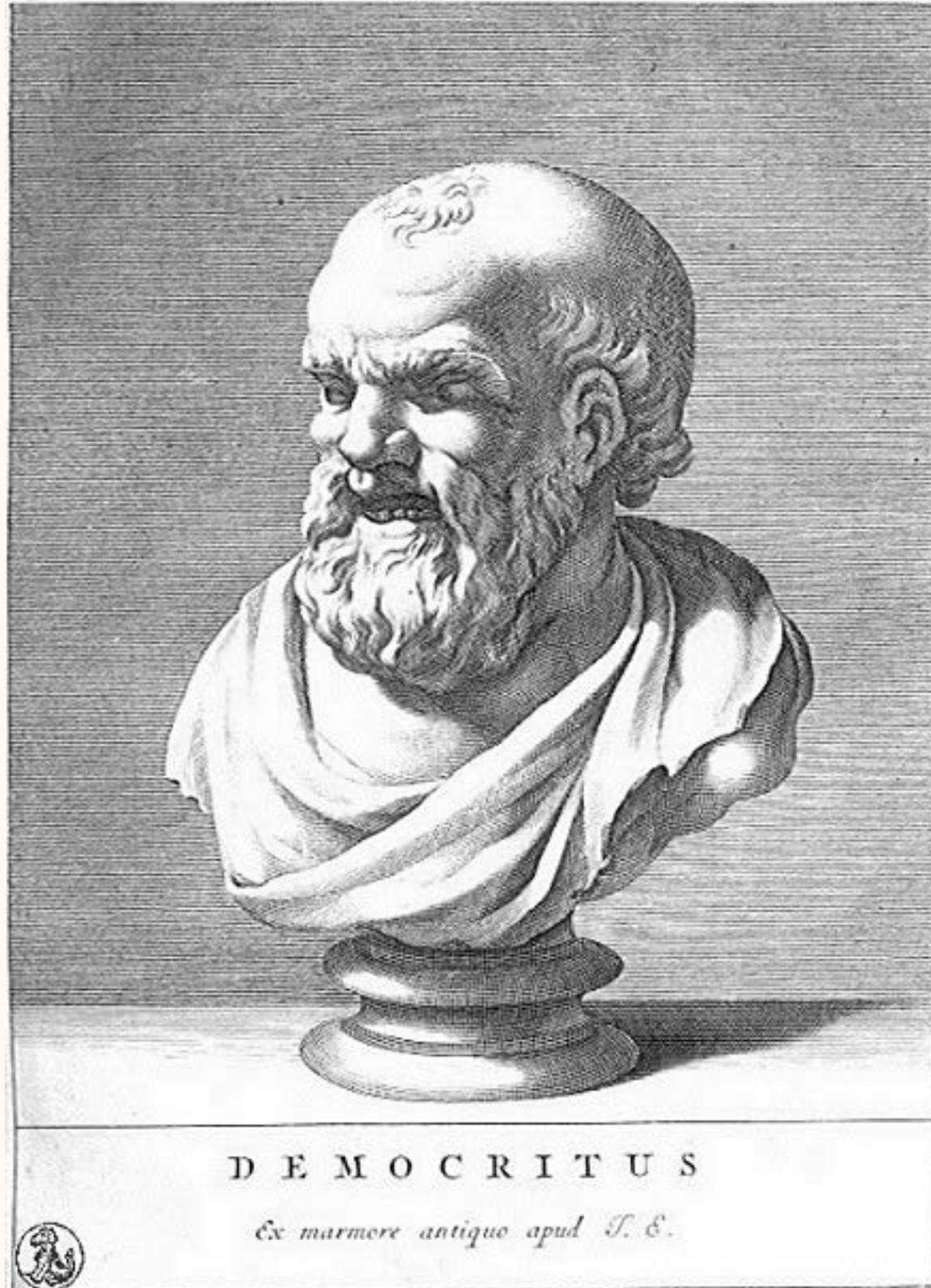
**Leucippus (5th century BC)
Pre-Socratic Philosopher
Developer of Atomism**

Best known disciple was Democritus.



Leucippus by [Luca Giordano](#)

All things were made of fundamental indivisible particles which Democritus called “atoms” (he coined the word).



Democritus
5th Century BC
Athens

“It [atomism] 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.”

~Munitz

“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
6th Cent BC

Atomism

Plato
Idealism

Aristotle

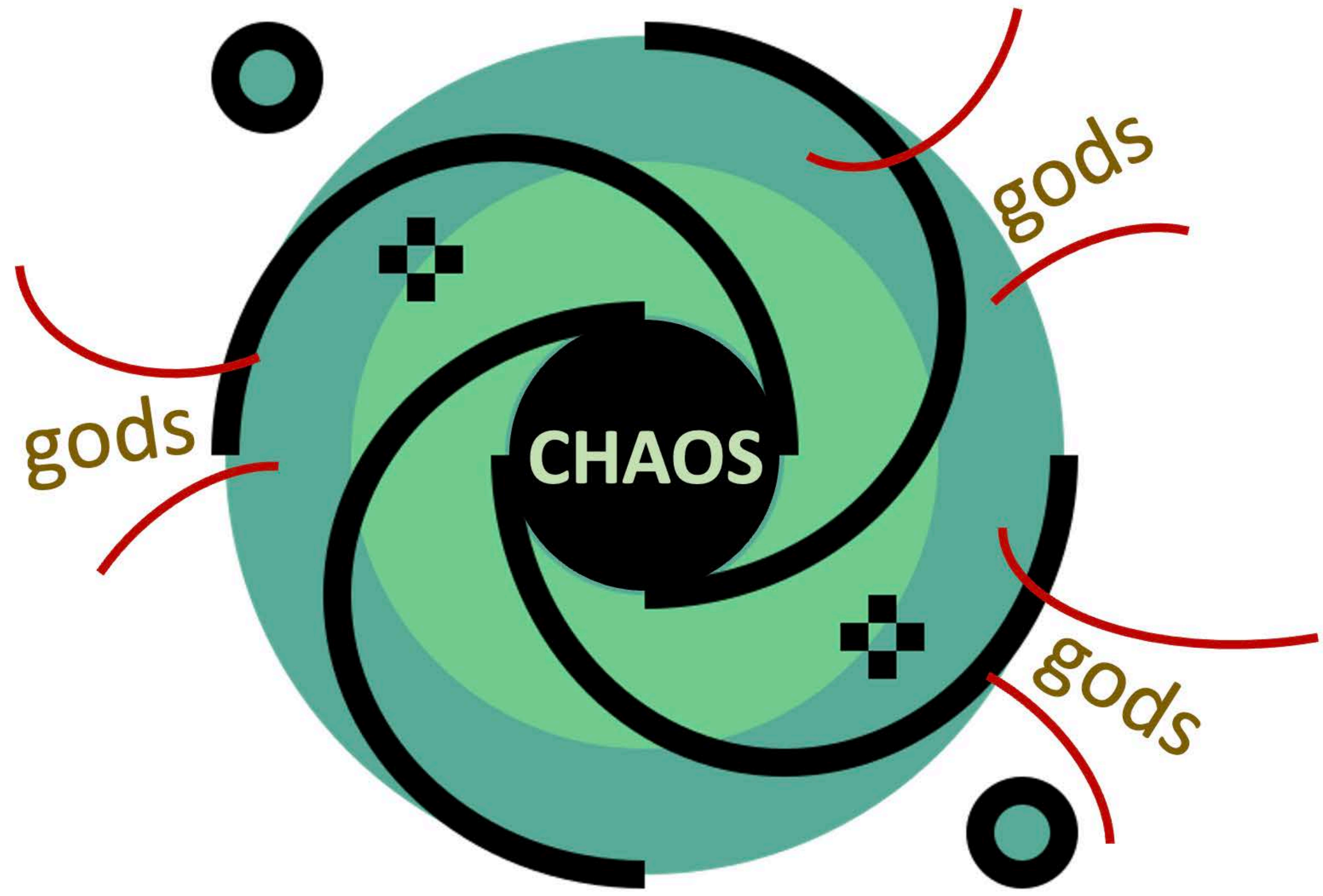
Thales
Anaximines
Anaximander

Leucippus
Democritus

Ultimate reality is in the realm of Ideas, 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 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.



“After Aristotle’s death, Greek thought gradually divided into the two schools of the Stoics and the Epicureans ... As these two schools held the world of thought in allegiance well into the Roman Empire and exerted much influence on Christian writers, their ideas of science and evolution are very important.”

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

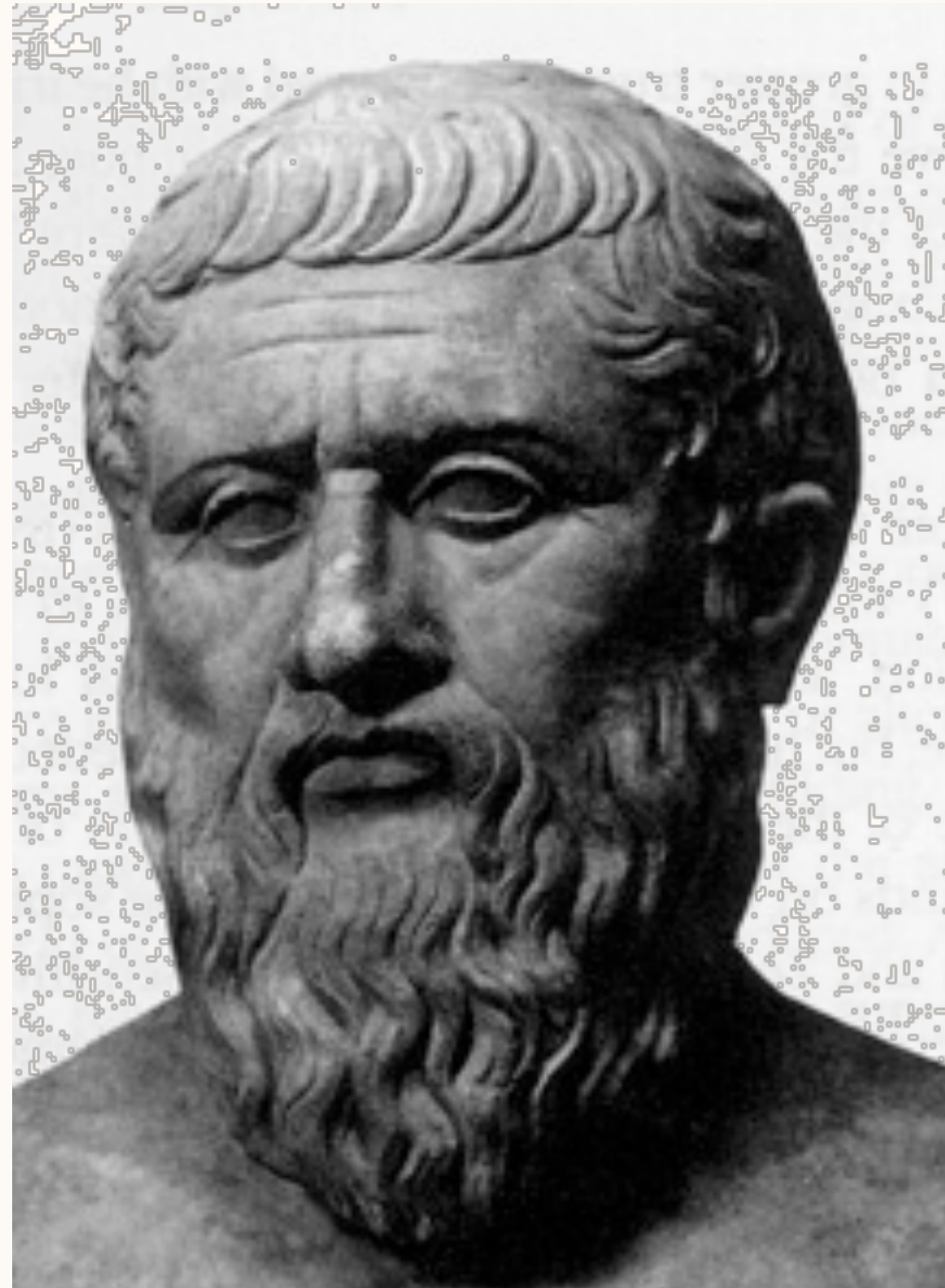
“This man also expressed the same thing by saying that man’s soul is a small part of the gods, the god being the Universe ...”

~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.



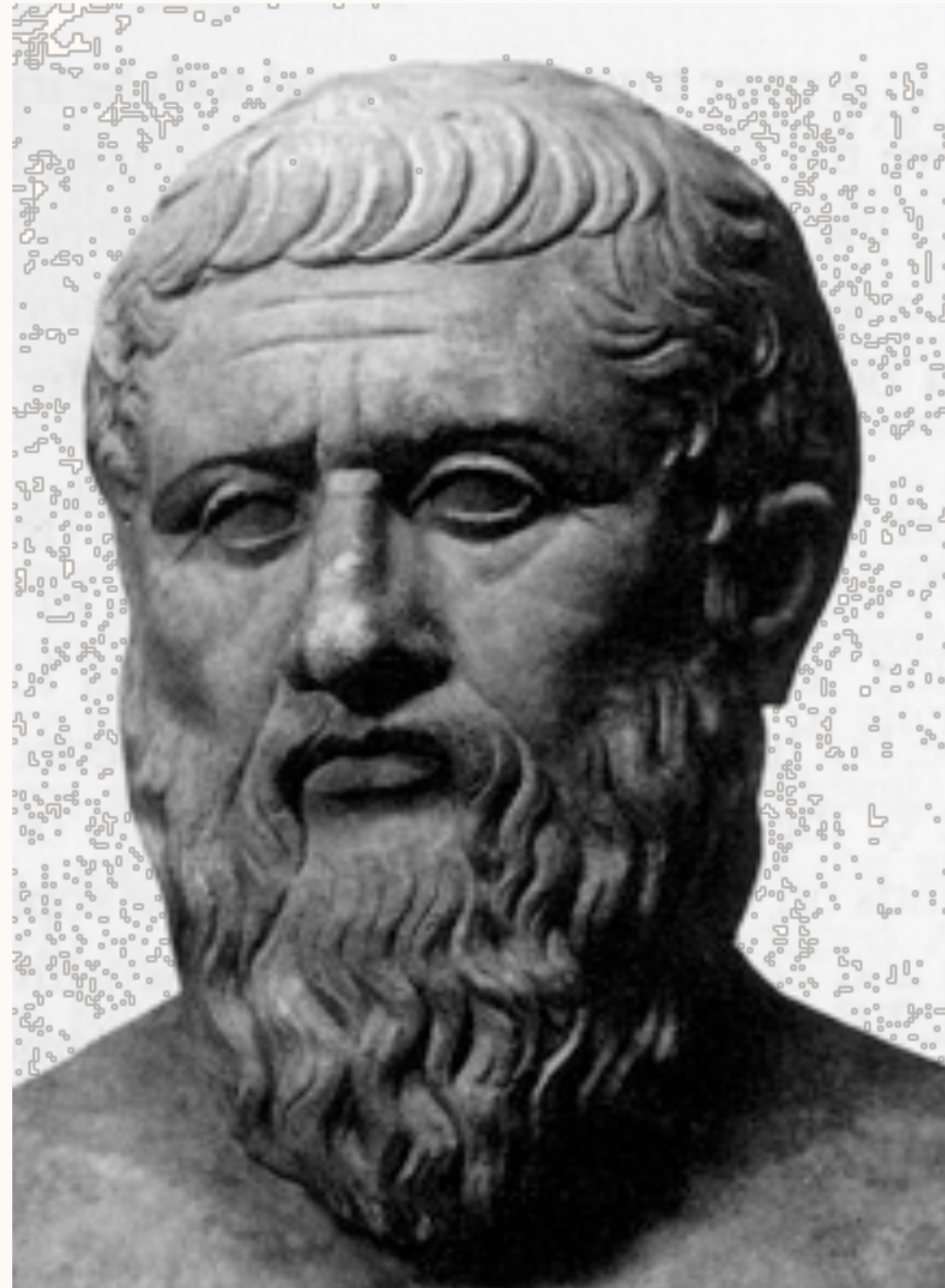
Plato (427?–347 BC)



IDEAS

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

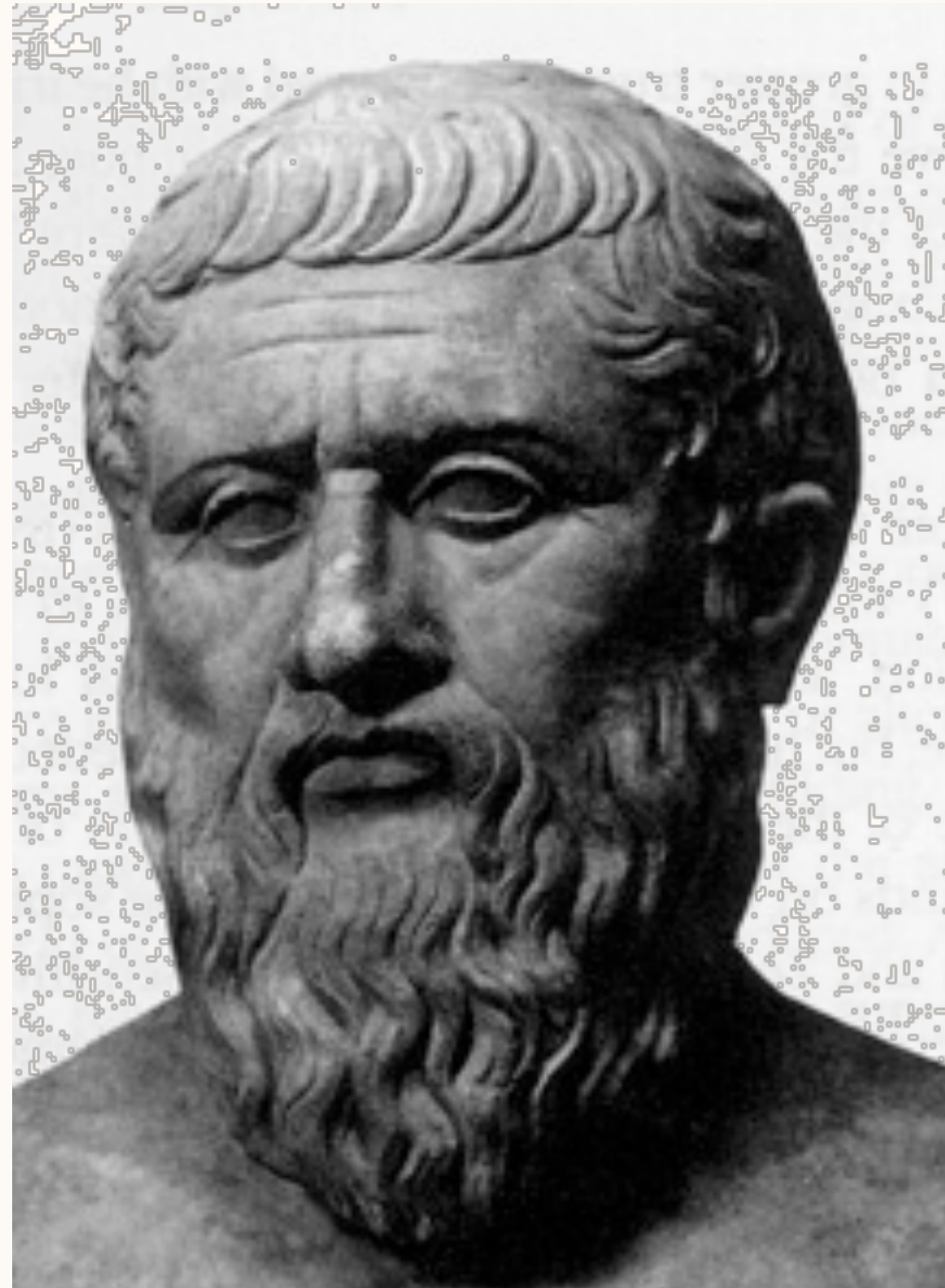
Plato (427?–347 BC)



IDEAS
(Forms, absolutes, universals)
BEING ITSELF

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

Plato (427?–347 BC)



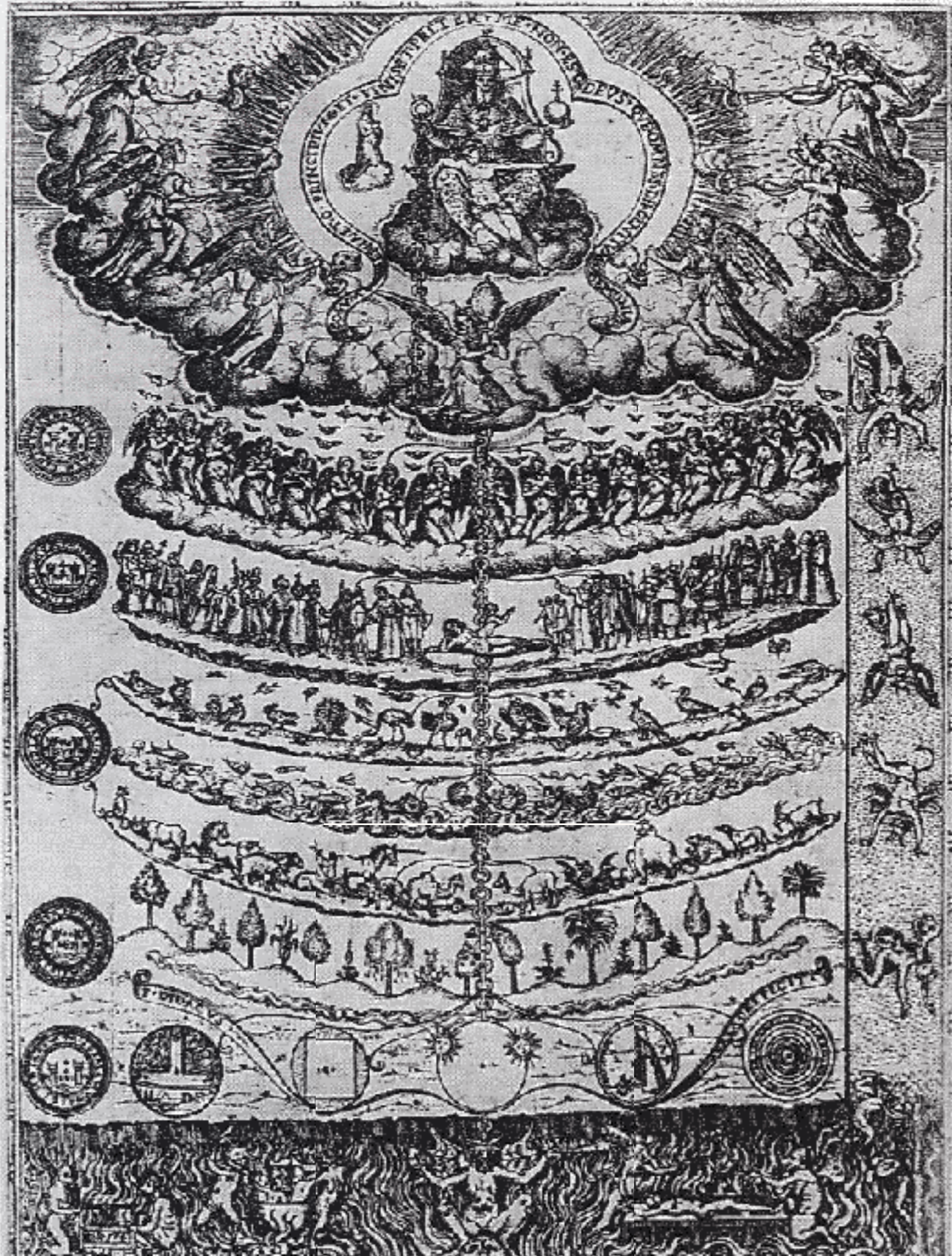
IDEAS
(Forms, absolutes, universals)
BEING ITSELF

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



“god”

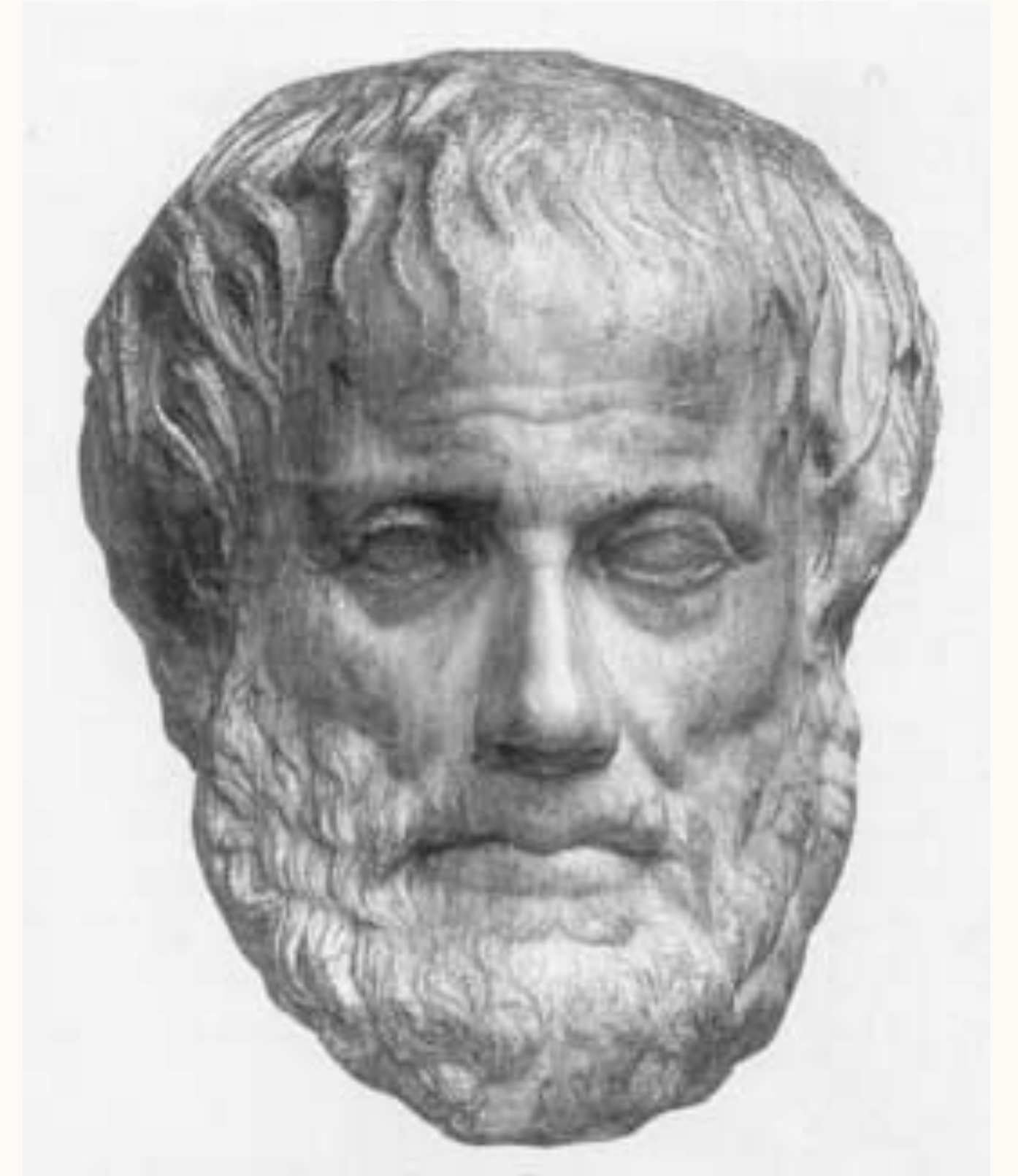
angels

mankind

birds

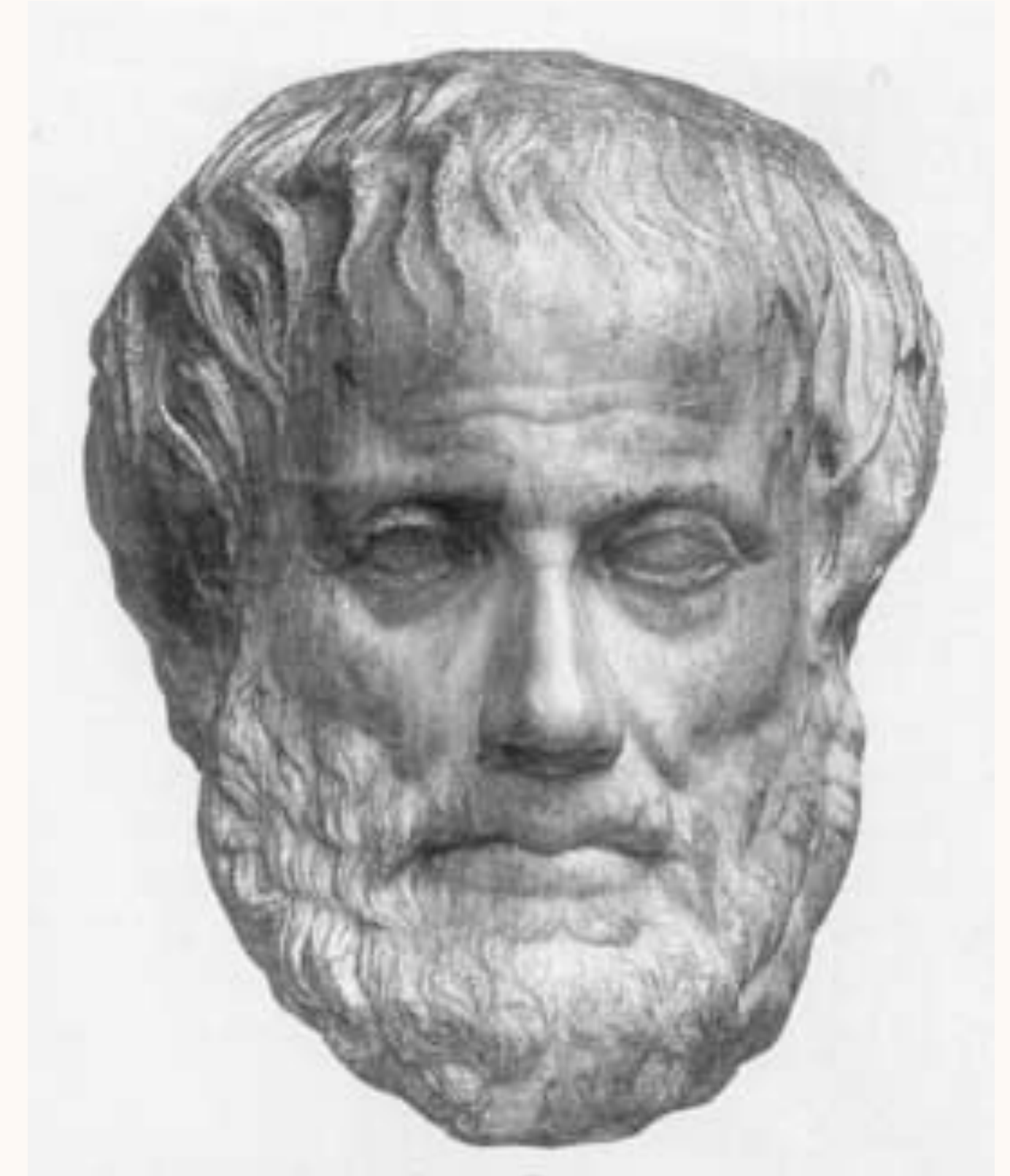
animals

vegetation



**Aristotle
(384–322 BC)**

“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)**

This leads to a number of questions, two for our purposes:

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

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

The internal contradiction is that this BEING necessarily and logically develops all other things.

This leads to a couple of other key ideas in the history of philosophy:

- **the eternality 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*.**

Plato (idealism, rationalism) fails to answer the deep questions.

Aristotle (empiricism) also fails to answer the deep questions.

This leads to skepticism, the apparent inability to find answers. Mankind cannot live in hopelessness, so this leads to:

Mysticism

The next step in this history of ideas, is the early church.

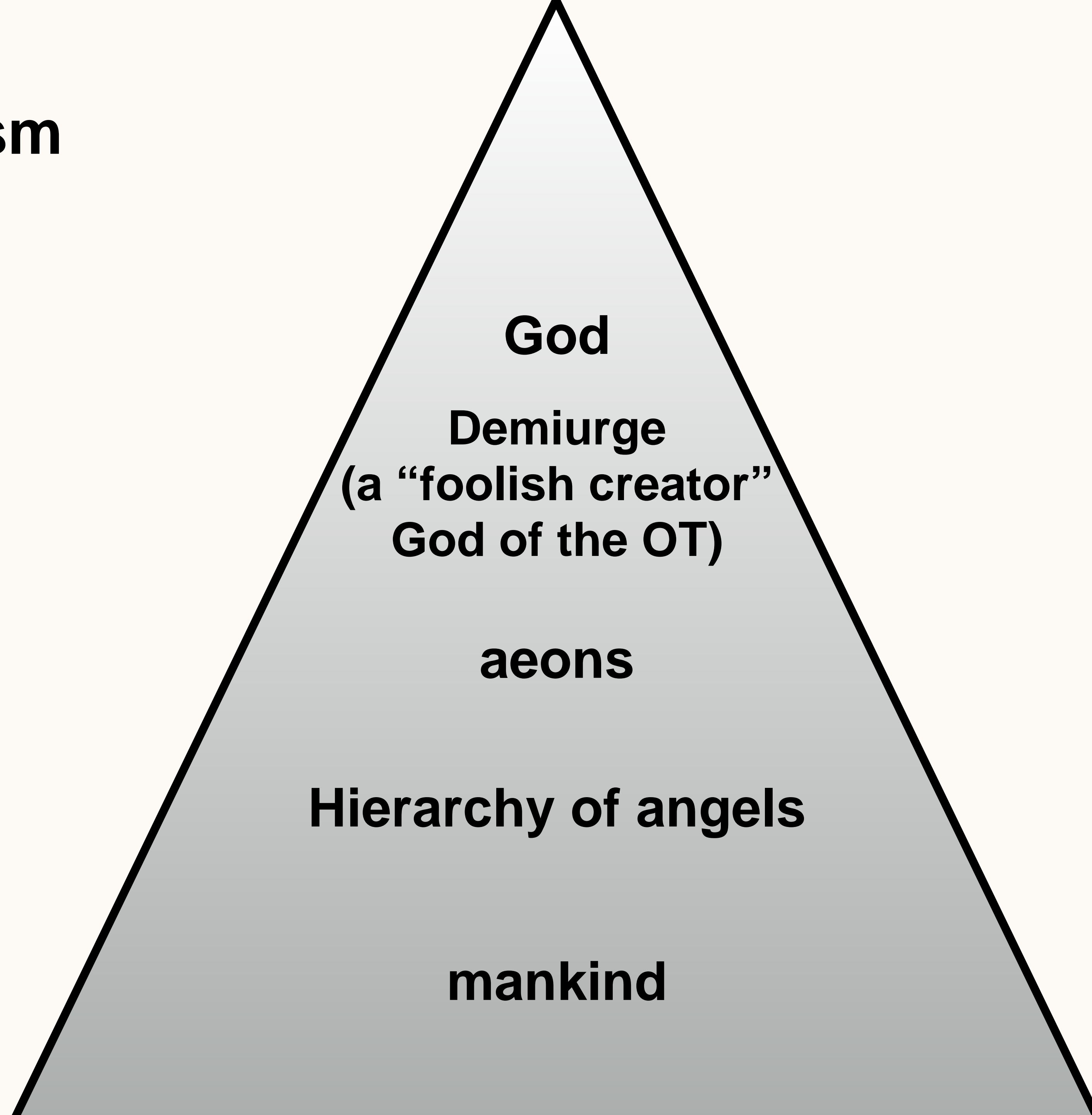
During this time a mystical form of Platonism develops called Neo-Platonism.

Neo-Platonism is pure mysticism and pantheism.

It is the worldview of the first four centuries AD.

Inherent to it is the chain of being.

Neoplatonism



“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

Neo-Platonism was again the attempt of human viewpoint 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 1,500 years of Christianity. Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus were the architects of this system. Porphyry clearly influenced Origen.

“[The chain of being] 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.”

~Arthur Koestler

Early Medieval Traces of the Chain of Being

Origin
(*ca.* 185–254)

Augustine
(354–430)

Dionysius the
Areopagite
(c. 500 AD)

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

“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)

Abelard (1079–1142)

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.

Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141)

Held to the Neo-Platonic procession of all things from God and their return to God.

Islamic Aristotelians

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.

Islamic Aristotelians

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)

Aquinas (1225–1274)

- 1. Accepts Aristotle's natural philosophy in total including the chain of being.**
- 2. Rejects creation by emanation, attempted to hold to a consistent *ex nihilo* creation.**
- 3. Rejects eternity of matter.**
- 4. 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.**

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***

Biblical Worldview

1. Creator-Creature Distinction
One God | Man | Nature
2. Personal Sovereign God
3. Ultimate Authority: God

Pagan Worldview

1. Continuity of Being (A scale)
gods ——— man ——— nature
2. Impersonal Fate and Chance
3. Ultimate Authority: Self