

DOUGLAS OLENA • LIFE TOGETHER • JUNE, 2019

INTRODUCTION

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# GOD AND THE UNIVERSE:

A SPIRITED QUERY OF THE GREAT QUESTIONS IN EMERGENT TERMS

## BOOK OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Cosmologies, Physics, and Metaphysics
3. Being and Existence, Selves and Souls
4. Belief and Knowledge, The Emergence of Science, Scientific Reality
5. More Questions than Answers, New Models of Reality



# INTRODUCTION

# OUTLINE OF THE INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction
2. Outline
  1. Chapter 1
  2. Chapter 2
  3. Chapter 3
  4. Chapter 4



# INTRODUCTION TO THE INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Great Questions
- ▶ Our View of Reality
- ▶ Realism
- ▶ Emergence

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ What is our context?
- ▶ What is reality?
- ▶ Who are we as people?
- ▶ Why can we ask these questions about where, what, and who we are?
- ▶ Is there a cause for all this (universe and the human condition)?

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ Why do we ask these questions?
- ▶ Why do we think they are important?
- ▶ Why do we try to give true answers?
- ▶ Why can't we answer them accurately?
- ▶ What can we say about our failure here?
- ▶ What is the cost of sticking to the truth?

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ How is our view of reality composed?
  - ▶ observations
  - ▶ evaluations
- ▶ How are we entangled in our interaction with reality?

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ Emergence is a framework
  - ▶ Distinctions between lower and higher orders of complexity.
  - ▶ Higher orders are composed of lower orders of complexity
  - ▶ The rules governing lower orders of complexity are not sufficient to explain the phenomena of higher orders.
  - ▶ Higher orders of complexity impose order on lower orders of complexity.

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ Emergence is a framework (cont.)
  - ▶ Emergence is specifically not reductionism. It does not attempt to reduce explanation to monism, dualism, or any exact substance relations like most of the modern predecessors.
  - ▶ It is concerned with information and complexity, especially a complexity that grants a larger and more accurate view of reality than those predecessors.

## CHAPTER 0

- ▶ Architect
- ▶ Information
- ▶ First cause
- ▶ God

# CHAPTER 1

- ▶ Cosmologies
  - ▶ What are they and why do we make them?
  - ▶ Are we better off than the ancients?
- ▶ Physics and Metaphysics
  - ▶ Aristotle

## CHAPTER 2

- ▶ Being and Existence
  - ▶ How to categorize the variety of beings?
  - ▶ Material and non-material being
- ▶ Selves and Souls
  - ▶ Consciousness and self-consciousness
- ▶ Knowledge is perspectival

## CHAPTER 3

- ▶ Ground rules
- ▶ rationalism, empiricism, phenomenology
- ▶ tenacity, authority, a-priori, science
- ▶ deduction, induction, abduction
- ▶ tests of truth, all experience is interpreted

## CHAPTER 3

- ▶ Origin of science and its reliability
  - ▶ the world is both sensible and understandable
- ▶ The boundary between sense and non-sense
- ▶ Science as a morally-directed enterprise

## CHAPTER 4

- ▶ Grand narratives and their failures
  - ▶ Failure may be in the representatives, not in their respective truthfulness.
- ▶ Access to reality and its representations are not aligned
- ▶ Natural constraints

## CHAPTER 4

- ▶ Scatter plots
  - ▶ Truth as probability, functionality, and conditionality
- ▶ Journey on the knowledge project
- ▶ The result of the knowledge project is moral responsibility



## Emergence - How Stupid Things Become Smart Together

<https://youtu.be/16W7c0mb-rE> • Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell

# CHAPTER 1: COSMOLOGIES, PHYSICS, AND METAPHYSICS

# OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 1

1. Cosmologies
  1. Ancient cosmologies
  2. The Biblical cosmology
2. The Modern Cosmology
  1. Four Idols
3. Physics and Metaphysics
  1. Laws of Nature
  2. Great Chain of Being: emergent hierarchy
  3. The Standard Timeline
  4. Metaphysics and its Diminishment
  5. Aristotle's Metaphysics



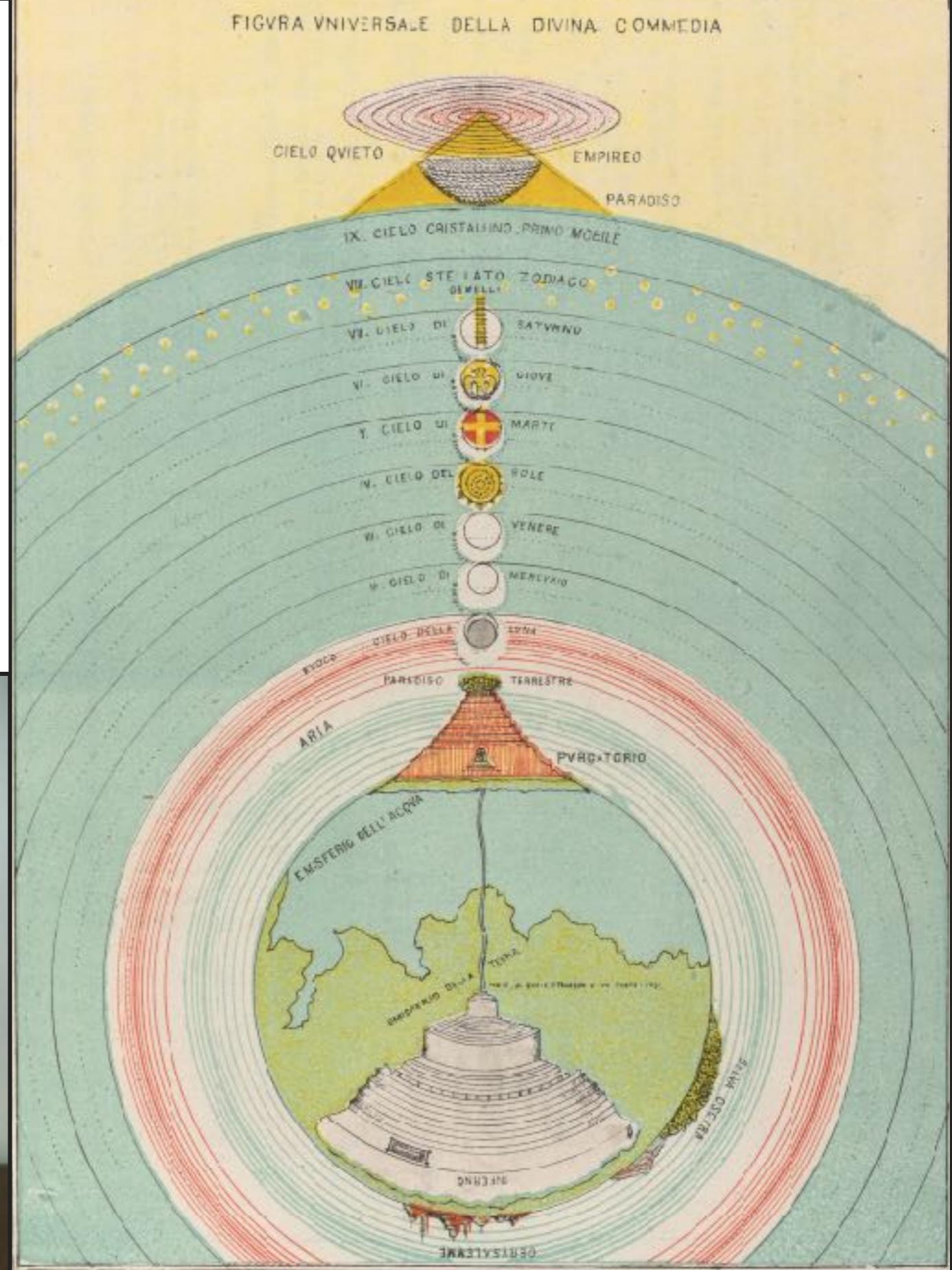
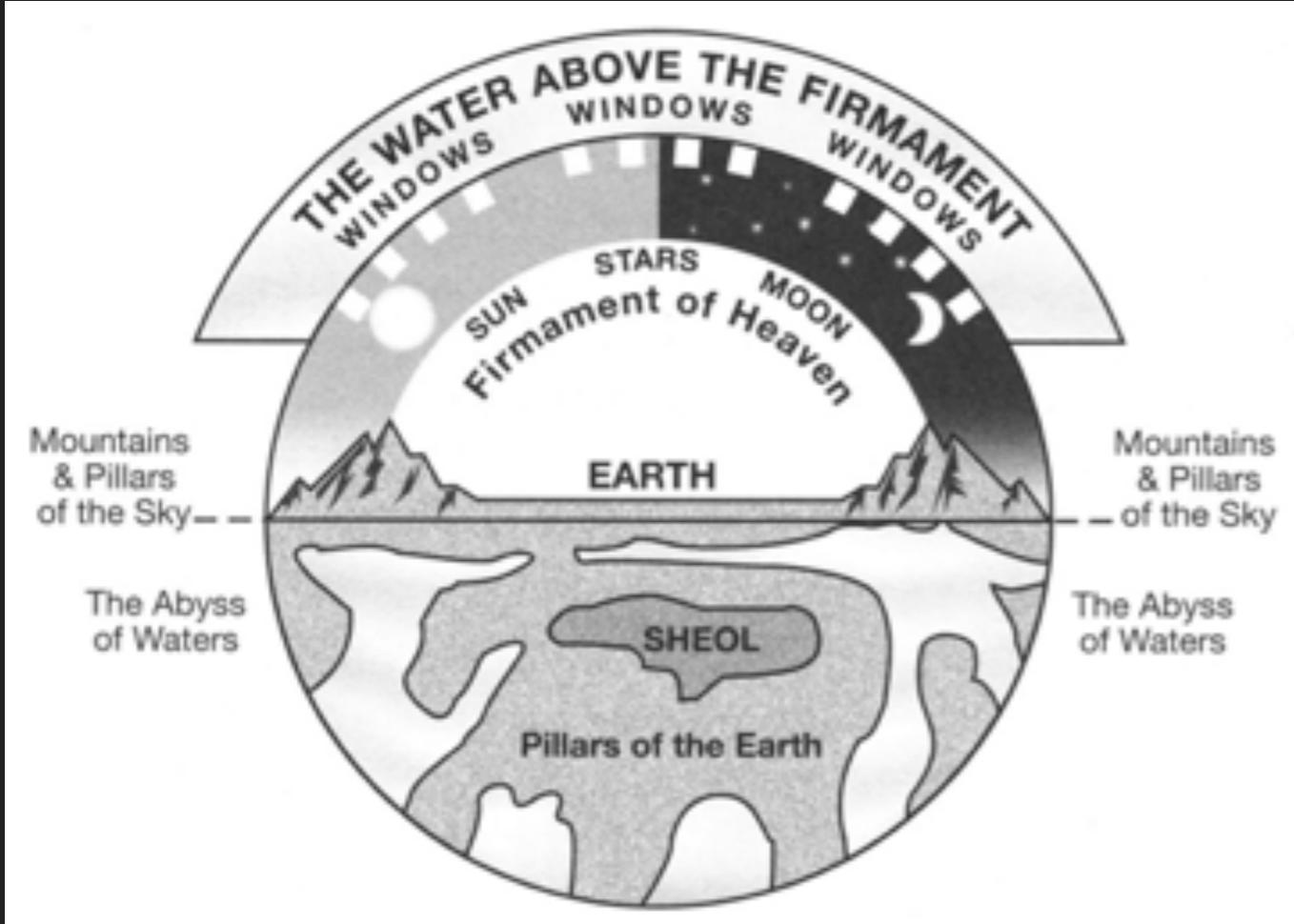
## CHAPTER 1: COSMOLOGIES

- ▶ Ancient cosmologies, including the biblical one, have similarities. They let us know something about the ancient mind.
- ▶ Biblical cosmologies, ancient and medieval.

## CHAPTER 1: THE MODERN COSMOLOGY

- ▶ The modern, Expanding Universe cosmology: The Big Bang
- ▶ Models or, from Thomas Kuhn, Paradigms

FIGURA UNIVERSALE DELLA DIVINA COMMEDIA



## CHAPTER 1: THE MODERN COSMOLOGY

- ▶ Novum Organum: The four idols (read 27)
  - ▶ Tribe
  - ▶ Den
  - ▶ Market
  - ▶ Theater

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ The Laws of Nature from a realist perspective
- ▶ The Great Chain of Being: emergent hierarchy

## CHAPTER 1: THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

- ▶ Emptiness and Nothing to a Universe with space and time, then
- ▶ From an undifferentiated (plasma) Universe to distinct clusters of organized matter in stars, galaxies, and planetary systems, then
- ▶ From that organized material (chemistry, physics) to self-replicating Life, then
- ▶ From Life to Consciousness of the external world, then
- ▶ From Consciousness to Intelligence in relation to survival, then
- ▶ From Intelligence to Self-Conscious rational reflection, then
- ▶ From Self-Consciousness to Freedom and the Moral Law, then
- ▶ From Freedom to Spirituality, imitation of the Son of God.

## CHAPTER 1: THE STANDARD TIMELINE

- ▶ The universe is approximately 13.7 billion years old.
  - ▶ The first 10 seconds comprise the plasma universe.
  - ▶ Within minutes the universe sorted out its components into hydrogen and helium. Gravity slowed the expansion.
  - ▶ Within 70,000 years matter dominates,
  - ▶ Within 400,000 years the only available light is from the cosmic microwave background radiation.
  - ▶ In 100 million years stars begin to form.
  - ▶ Visible light begins to dominate the universe at 600 million years and galaxies begin to form.

## CHAPTER 1: THE STANDARD TIMELINE 2

- ▶ The birth of our solar system took place approximately 4.6 billion years ago, 9.1 billion years from the beginning.
  - ▶ Our sun is probably a second or third generation star.
  - ▶ The earth coalesced from interstellar gas and dust as did the other planets, moons, and asteroids, comets, etc.
  - ▶ The birth of biology in the earth begins around 3.8 billion years ago,
    - ▶ Complex cellular life around 1.25 billion years ago.
    - ▶ Land animals and plants appear around 500 million years ago.

## CHAPTER 1: THE STANDARD TIMELINE 3

- ▶ The emergence of distinctly human life is a question for biology, anthropology, and archaeology, though some trace the most distinctive feature of humans, bipedalism, to around 7.5 million years ago.
- ▶ The evidence for the first distinctive tool use by early people, is around 2.5 million years ago.
- ▶ Modern tool use began around 50 thousand years ago
- ▶ Some of the earliest evidences of agriculture and human civilization are found around 12 thousand years ago.

## CHAPTER 1: THE STANDARD TIMELINE 4

- ▶ One cannot give a date of the origin of spoken human language, one of the most distinct features of human rationality
  - ▶ Guesses about the origins of human language range from 2.5 million years ago to 50 thousand years ago.
  - ▶ Records of the emergence of written language, the time when humans began to write their own histories and keep accounts of their possessions.
  - ▶ Current evidence shows us that language systems like Mesopotamian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics, or the Chinese glyphs show up in history around 5,500 to 6,000 years ago.
  - ▶ But there are evidences of symbol use as far back as 20 thousand years or more.

**FOR THOSE WHO REQUIRE UNIFORMITY OF BELIEF, EDUCATION IS AN UNBOUNDED THREAT. BUT THOSE WHO ALLOW ALL THE EVIDENCES TO REMAIN AS A CONSTANT MEDITATION WILL FIND THAT RELATION TO TRUTH WHICH MARKS THE MATURE INDIVIDUAL OF ANY SOCIETY. UNFORTUNATELY, MATURITY IS AS MUCH A THREAT AS THE TRUTH IS FOR MANY SOCIETIES, AND THERE IS NO GUARANTEE OF SAFETY OR SECURITY IN MATURITY. THE REWARD OF A WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION IS CONFIDENCE AND REASONABLE EVIDENTIALLY SUPPORTED SELF ASSURANCE.**

## CHAPTER 1: METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Much is yet unknown, and much that is unknown is not even known to be unknown.
- ▶ Each horizon we cross delivers its own unique set of resolutions, problems, and puzzles.
- ▶ At each step along the way we are forced to adopt new and unfamiliar structures and objects while at the same time adjusting to or abandoning prior ones.

## CHAPTER 1: METAPHYSICS 2

- ▶ But some objects of our knowledge remain as persistent guideposts for future explorations no matter how many horizons we cross.
- ▶ These elements seem to persist, no matter how we categorize them, explain them, or even explain them away.
- ▶ Philosophers in history have categorized these objects as **First Principles**.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Metaphysics and its Diminishment
  - ▶ Science often supplants metaphysics
- ▶ Aristotle's Metaphysics
  - ▶ "ALL men by nature desire to know."
  - ▶ There is a difference between the artisan and the master builder. That difference is Wisdom.
  - ▶ => reading Bacon before Aristotle
  - ▶ => critique of first principles, absolutes by adherence to induction

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Science often supplants metaphysics
  - ▶ Metaphysics is generally the attempt to describe what exists outside of our ability to observe, or as a logical extension of what we observe.
  - ▶ It is speculative.
  - ▶ Elements of our reality like the soul, first principles, absolutes, and God are the most famous objects of metaphysics.
  - ▶ But first causes, first principles are derived by logic from physics. They are not observable reality, they are the product of wisdom.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ The planets are heavenly bodies of a luminous substance different from what makes up earthly materials.
  - ▶ Each planet resides in its own impenetrable sphere nested in each more distant planetary sphere, all with the earth as its center.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Though people had been watching the heavens since our awakening on this planet, no instrument had yet been devised to dissuade us from our primitive cosmology.
- ▶ Aristotle's metaphysics could not improve our observational skills. And his metaphysics as speculative answers were incapable of leading us to the scientific truth of our cosmos, and often prevented us from doing so.
- ▶ Modern instruments helped us to gain a better view of our heavenly reality and reject his metaphysics.

# CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Washington University, Princeton Metaphysician

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Some questions have not yet yielded to science
- ▶ Example:
  - ▶ The soul, for Aristotle is what animates the body.
  - ▶ It is what distinguishes the living from non living bodies.
  - ▶ Each type of living being, from plants to people have a different type of soul.
  - ▶ Soul is not a separate substance from the body.
    - ▶ This is an Old Testament view.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ What are some attributes of the soul?

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ Efforts to explain the soul have relied wildly on a variety of speculations, but haven't been capable of cornering that thing we call life in any happy way.
- ▶ What the soul is has remained elusive.
- ▶ What the difference between soul and spirit is, if there is any difference, has also foundered on a variety of speculations because as long as we think of the soul or spirit as substance in themselves, we are trapped in a logic that doesn't permit resolution.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ The key to resolving the dispute between physics and metaphysics may rely on the removal of any concept of the absolute from discussions about things beyond our ken.

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

### ▶ Aristotle's Metaphysics

- ▶ "ALL men by nature desire to know." 41
- ▶ There is a difference between the artisan and the master builder.
- ▶ That difference is Wisdom.
  - ▶ "The man of experience is thought to be wiser than the possessors of any sense-perception whatever, the artist wiser than the men of experience, the masterworker than the mechanic, and the theoretical kinds of knowledge to be more of the nature of Wisdom than the productive. Clearly then Wisdom is knowledge about certain principles and causes." 42

## CHAPTER 1: PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

- ▶ None of us has the capacity to stand objectively above our own human circumstances to view reality without a certain annoying stickiness, a permanent attachment to the world.

43

- ▶ => reading Bacon before Aristotle
- ▶ => critique of first principles, causes, and absolutes by adherence to induction
- ▶ So we arrive at the Age of Reason.

**THE VIEW ABOVE THE WORLD IS BOTH PHILOSOPHICALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY A GOD'S-EYE VIEW, NOT A HUMAN ONE. THE BEST WE CAN DO IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR ATTACHMENT AND PREJUDICES AND WORK AROUND THEM BY OPENING OURSELVES TO A LARGER HUMAN COMMUNITY OF OBSERVATIONS. THE ERROR OF METAPHYSICS IS IN REACHING TOO FAR, CLAIMING TOO MUCH, AND REMAINING UNABLE TO ESTABLISH ITS CLAIMS BECAUSE OF HUMAN LIMITATIONS.**

# CHAPTER 2: BEING AND EXISTENCE, SELVES AND SOULS

## OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 2

1. Introduction
  1. What does life mean?
  2. Circle of life
2. Modes of Belief
  1. Most Skeptical
  2. Middle Ground
  3. Most Believing
3. History of the Issue
  1. A variety of answers
  2. Libertarian Freedom
    1. Hospers, 56-7
    2. Causality, Determinism, and Fate
4. Modern views
5. Conclusions



## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ The characteristic treatment of the soul here is that it is an emergent property of the body in society.
- ▶ This doesn't answer the question about what the soul is specifically, but how a person (in freedom) acts with respect to the decisions they face.
- ▶ Reductionist treatments of the soul are unhelpful, that is, whether the soul is a separate non-material substance.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ “What does it mean that I am a person in a universe that asks questions about why the universe and why I myself exist?” This is a question like: “Why am I here?” or “What is the meaning of my life?” 45
- ▶ Grand narratives of Philosophy, Religion, and Science
- ▶ Some ways of life are exclusive, but for the philosopher, those ways must be robust enough to withstand critique and examination.
- ▶ Other ways are too open ended.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Why are morals important?
- ▶ The meaning of life has material aspects 46
- ▶ What are the reasons for being?
- ▶ What does it mean to be circumspect?

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Most Skeptical
  - ▶ Should we doubt everything like Descartes did or live, not as Descartes, but as if one shouldn't believe anything?
- ▶ Middle Ground
  - ▶ Is agnosticism just an excuse not to do the real work?
- ▶ Most Believing
  - ▶ Should we be credulous?
- ▶ William James and *The Will to Believe*.
  - ▶ "In James' parlance, an option is genuine when it is living, forced, and momentous." 49

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

### ▶ *Analects of Confucius*

- ▶ “For Kongzi, morality is not only a private affair but an affair of social interaction. One must study hard, and work hard to achieve a measure of success in it.” 50
- ▶ “A being is therefore not merely a self but a self in society.”
- ▶ “Fulfilling one’s purpose and discovering meaning in life is not immediately given by nature. There are many ways to go wrong, and only a few ways to go right. Meaning arises as part of a studied and disciplined life, not the result of following one’s instincts.”

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Plato and Justice
  - ▶ The Republic: a metaphor about the individual answering what it is like to be just as a function of the different parts of city governance.
  - ▶ Logic and rational feature of the soul
  - ▶ Spirited features: Passions as the driver of the body
  - ▶ Appetites: Human Instinct

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Plato is not saying that a soul is split into three distinct features, but that describing a person this way helps to expose how things ought to be and how things can go wrong.
- ▶ The just person aligns their spirited features with the logic and rational part of the soul to control the appetites.
- ▶ The mind of a person is the part that most corresponds with God.

FOR PLATO, LIKE KONGZI, PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST INDIVIDUALS BUT SOCIAL CREATURES AS WELL. THE PURPOSE OF PEOPLE IS TO LIVE WELL WITHIN SOCIETY, AND NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE GUIDED BY FOOLISHNESS, OR ALLOW THE PASSIONATE NATURE TO BE GUIDED BY BASE HUMAN INSTINCTS. FOR BOTH PLATO AND KONGZI, THERE IS A SENSE OF DIVINE REASON AND PROVIDENCE BEHIND THE MOTIVATIONS A HUMAN MUST ADOPT. THERE ARE PRINCIPLES, THAT HOWEVER WELL UNDERSTOOD OR KNOWN, NEVERTHELESS COMMAND OUR ATTENTION AND OBEDIENCE. PURPOSE AND MEANING IN LIFE ARE DERIVED BY PAYING ATTENTION TO THOSE PRINCIPLES, BEING SELF-CONTROLLED, AND JUST.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Aristotle asks what the *function* of a person is.
- ▶ Being just requires that a person fulfill their proper function.
  - ▶ Building boats...
- ▶ What a person's function is determines their life. But we know how hard it is to discover one's function. Most of us puzzle it endlessly.
- ▶ "The meaning of life is found by that individual when they achieve happiness by living according to virtue."

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: THREE RULES

- ▶ Each of these descriptions of meaning and purpose defines responsibility to a rule, self-control, and living justly in society as the best way to find meaning and fulfill purpose. And in some sense they are all correct.
- ▶ The best offerings in all of history have these characteristics.
  - ▶ Recognition of some version of the good life,
  - ▶ Following a rule which can be attained to some degree,
  - ▶ Having a society within which one can flourish.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ In that sense most religions and philosophies fulfill the drive toward meaning and purpose, recognizing the broad similarities between us and our societies.
- ▶ Humans are both individuals and social creatures.
- ▶ We are all biological, rational, and social beings.
- ▶ I am reminded of the Stoic virtue found in the reading of Epictetus, that one must not be anxious to change what is not in our control even though we must make an effort to change things we can and should.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ The Christian era adds the requirement of finding God's will onto living a just life of virtue.
- ▶ "Meaning in life was then associated with believing, and a person advanced in virtue as they learned to follow God's will." 52
- ▶ Like Confucianism, the responsibility we take on is found outside oneself.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Saint Augustine: People are dependent on God for their life and meaning.
- ▶ Boethius: "If God knows everything, then he knows my entire future, and there is nothing I can do to change it. My freedom is only driving me into a predetermined set of steps, set in stone before my birth." 53
  - ▶ So, is freedom real and meaningful?
  - ▶ He answers in the affirmative: freedom and moral responsibility are still the domain of humans, but it is also true that God knows what choices we will make.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: BOETHIUS

- ▶ To reject libertarian freedom as an aspect of God's sovereignty, is tantamount to a modern theory called determinism.
- ▶ "The sovereignty of God therefore takes up the task of saving unworthy people, and damning objectively worthy decent people." 54
- ▶ People "become cogs in a machine about which they have no legitimate concern, and ultimately no responsibility."
- ▶ The result of this rejection of determinism is that our choices mean something for us.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM

- ▶ John Hospers in "What Means This Freedom?"
- ▶ What makes a person responsible?
  - ▶ Thesis 1: Premeditating an act makes a person responsible.
  - ▶ Thesis 2: A person is not responsible for his act unless he can defend it with reasons.
  - ▶ Thesis 3: A person is responsible for his action unless it is the result of unconscious forces of which he knows nothing.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: HOSPERS

- ▶ What makes a person responsible? (cont.)
  - ▶ Thesis 4: A person is responsible for his act unless it is compelled.
  - ▶ Thesis 5: A person is responsible to the degree to which that act can be (or could have been) changed by the use of reasons.
- ▶ Hospers thinks thesis 5 is the beginning of a definition of what freedom must include.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: MACHAN

- ▶ Tibor Machan: "A Brief Defense of Free Will"
  - ▶ We see material evidence of free will everywhere
  - ▶ Determinism, a strict denial of libertarian freedom, is a logical dead end.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: ALTERNATIVES

- ▶ Determinism
  - ▶ Scientific determinism assumes primal causality without the necessary attendant evidence.
  - ▶ Leaves the individual with the **illusion** of choice and responsibility

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: ALTERNATIVES

### ▶ Fatalism

- ▶ Wrests time out of sequence to assert lack of choice. “What happens is inevitable.” (Joke here about Presbyterian minister falling down stairs.)
- ▶ A version of the God’s sovereignty by foreknowledge argument, without God.
- ▶ The assumption is that we can use the logic of future time as an object like past time. This is a mistake!

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: BAD DOGMA

- ▶ Original Sin
  - ▶ Logical problem making Christ unnecessary
- ▶ Calvinism
  - ▶ Divine election makes living well meaningless

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: FREEDOM REQUIRED

- ▶ If life is to have some universal meaning then freedom is required.
- ▶ Human life is superior to animal life in freedom. The fact that we can pose for ourselves a moral law that is superior attests to that superiority, and makes striving for its accomplishment useful.
- ▶ Freedom is the foundation of the perceived distinction between the creatures we are and the creator who made us so.

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: AGE OF REASON

- ▶ Capitalism and sidelining the Church
- ▶ Protestant Reformation: protestant splintering

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS: AGE OF REASON

- ▶ Descartes
  - ▶ Dualism: Avicenna, flying man
- ▶ Kant
- ▶ Modern Dualism and Atheism
- ▶ Evolutionism and the denial of God
- ▶ Naturalism
- ▶ Purposiveness without God

## CHAPTER 2: SELVES AND SOULS

- ▶ Real Problems in finding meaning:
  - ▶ Theoretical Problems
    - ▶ Translation
    - ▶ Meaning as intention of the writer
  - ▶ Hope for Success