

## Greek Worldview

### 1. Foundationalism:

- "The model of physics behind it [the particularization of reality] is the Newtonian assumption that everything is composed of basic building blocks and put together as in a machine. The other natural, human and social sciences have largely adopted this model of classical physics which prevails to this day. This approach and model splits the various aspects of human life into different realms. It also splits the sciences into disconnected disciplines. It creates a division of labor even with regard to any one product and absolutizes the gap between experts and laity.

Duchrow, Ulrich. 1979. The spiritual dimensions of the scientific world. Missiology. 7:9-26. quote p. 11.

### 2. Hierarchy:

- domination hierarchies and actualization hierarchies. Note vertical hierarchies. Eisler.

- We read hierarchy into the Bible. Gunton notes the culprit is: 'the neoplatonic doctrine of reality as a graded hierarchy. From where, if not from such an influence, did the notion of hierarchy derive? There is scarcely biblical evidence worthy of the name. But Aquinas implies, without ever spelling the matter out, that the hierarchy of the church-- [consists of] an ontological grading of persons--is modeled on that of heaven.'

- Aquinas spoke of 'a chain of being' beginning with God at the top and ranging down through angels, humans, animals in the order of their intelligence, and then plants and non-living things. Medieval cathedrals depict this chain of being in their carvings.

- Lovejoy. Traces the 'great chain of being'--a hierarchy from meagerest kind of things that border on non-existent to the highest kind of creature--every one of them differing from that immediately below and above with the least possible degree of difference.

Angel is over angel, man over man, beast over beast, bird over bird, fish over fish, etc.

- justifies some richer and others poorer, some brighter and others dumber. See Snyder's article.

Mencken's views surely must be astonishing to present-day readers even if they accept evolution in the physical realm. It must be noted that Social Darwinism even in its heyday was not acceptable to all evolutionists. Today, most scholars would rather forget that it ever existed. But it should never be forgotten that this theory was the foundation for the Superman ideology of Nazi Germany. Here is a sample, according to Wills, of Mencken's unflinching application of Darwinism to his social and political doctrine:

The superiorities already won--of men over women, of whites over blacks, of gentiles over Jews, of the elite over the mob--must be retained in the name of progress. Since men are stronger than women, women "cultivate cunning" in order to circumvent men, becoming "shrewd, resourceful, and acute; but the very fact that they are always concerned with imminent problems (because of their physical weakness) and that, in consequence

they are unaccustomed to dealing with the larger riddles of life, makes their mental attitude essentially petty...The net result is that feminine morality is a morality of opportunism and imminent expediency, and that the normal woman has no respect for, and scarcely any conception of, abstract truth."<sup>1</sup>

Shades of the Greeks!

Breaking all of human life into categories (taxonomies) was foundational to Greek philosophy. But once categories are established, it is but a small step to ranking them. And this is exactly what the Greeks did. They called it the "Great Chain of Being." Darwinian evolutionary theory does exactly the same thing. All animate beings are ranked from the simple to the most complex, with the most complex being highest. The Social Darwinists drew separate categories for human beings as well, and white males definitely ranked higher than all women, Jews, and people of color.<sup>2</sup> Fran's paper.

## **Bibliography**

Dumont, Louis. 1972. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications. London: Paladin.

Eisler, Riane. 1987. The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future. San Francisco: Hazrper and Row. Pp. 105-106.

Gunton, Colin. 1993. The Promise of Trinitarian Theology. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Hill, William J. 1982. The Three-Person God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press. [makes the Trinity a hierarchy]

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>2</sup>It is impossible not to suspect a correlation between a well-known Christian doctrine called "The Chain of Command" and the Greek and Darwinian philosophies. The question remains, however, whether the Chain of Command owes more to them than it does to Scripture!

Lovejoy, Arthur. 1960. The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea. New York: Harper Tournch. First published by Harvard Univ Press in 1936.

Snyder, Howard. 1998. Coherence in Christ: the larger meaning of ecology. Unpublished paper.