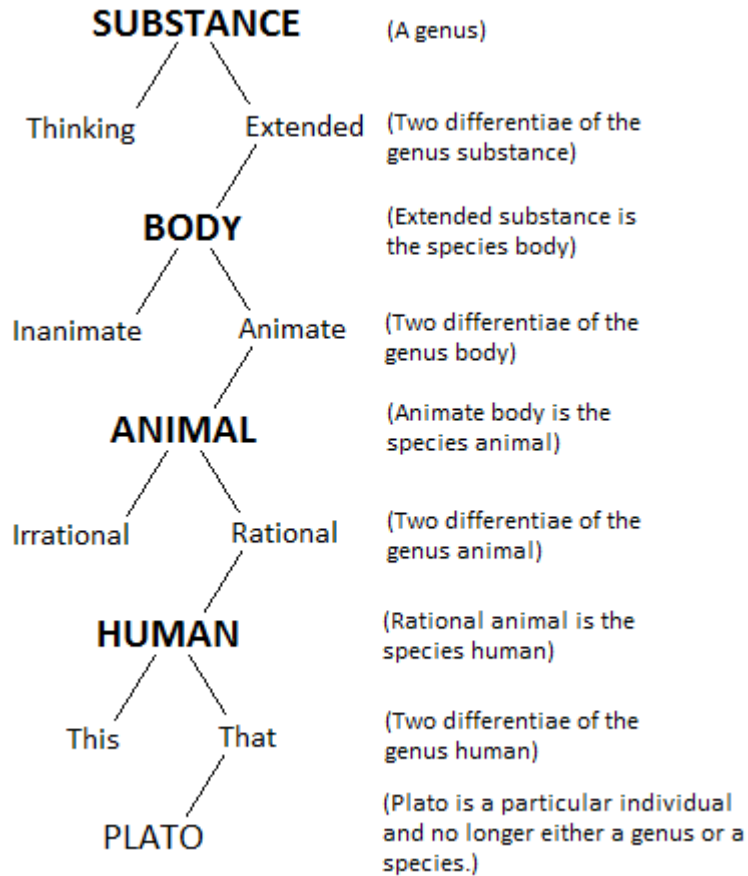


11. THE ORDER OF SUBSTANCES

The various categories of substances were laid out by the neo-Platonic philosopher, Porphyry of Tyre (c234-305 AD) and adopted by the most influential philosopher of the Middle Ages, Boëthius (St Severinus), in the fifth century AD. Here is Porphyry's celebrated 'Tree'.



Substance, let us recall, has two characteristics : 1. It is immaterial, and 2. its definition is *Be-in-self*. Substances which do not need a body are pure spirits such as the angels. They are simple ; perfectly immaterial. The reason we can't see them is that they don't have bodies ! Our concern is with *corporeal* substances, the ones with bodies.

Corporeal substances are composite. Each one, regardless of its nature, is a compound of what is material, and what is not material.

[substantial	i.e., <i>immaterial</i>
[form,	
[&	
[
[matter	i.e., <i>material</i> (obviously !)

Corporeal substances are comprised of :

And, to reinforce the point yet again, the substantial form of a corporeal substance is its essential constitutive. Remove it (as happens with the rabbit killed by a bullet) and what remains is no longer a rabbit but another substance or rather, collection of substances that comprise a carcass, the body now reduces to its components, the various elements, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen etc.

Even rocks, or heavy elements like iron and lead, have substantial forms which are immaterial. They have, it is true, very material bodies—a consequence of first accident, *quantity*, and second accident, *quality* (whence they get their singular characteristics of hardness or softness, durability, colour, texture etc.), the chief properties, of the substance—but that which underlies all this, their substantial forms, are immaterial.

Since we struggle as corporeal beings to come to terms with the incorporeal, it is important constantly to remind ourselves that *substantial form* is immaterial.

This is what St Thomas has to say of the various corporeal substances found in nature :

“[God] brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them ; and because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided ; and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever.” [*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 47, a. 1]

He spells out the ways things communicate God's being :

“[S]ome things are like to God first (and most commonly) because they exist ; secondly, because they live ; and thirdly, because they know or understand...” [*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93. a. 2]

So rocks, iron, lead, water and air replicate God's being simply *by existing*, the most fundamental of all perfections. Trees and shrubs manifest God's being more fully in that they *live*, for God is a living God as the priest reminds us when, at the conclusion of a prayer addressing God, he intones... *Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.* Brute animals, like horses, cattle, dogs and cats, manifest God's being even more fully in that *they know*, for God knows ; His knowledge is infinite. But men manifest God's being most perfectly because *they understand*, that is, they know the natures, or essences, of things in imitation of God. But whereas man is characterised as *an understander*, God is *understand* its very self. That is, *God is Intellect.* So we can see the force of the teaching in *Genesis* [1 : 27] that God made man in His own image and likeness.

Let's pause for a moment and endeavour to grasp the difference between how animals *know*, and how men not only *know*, but *understand*. Assume you are in a utility and you are driving along a country road and way up ahead you see on the road a lump. It is too far away, for the moment, to work out the details : all you can see is a lump. Let's assume that you have in the back of the vehicle in which you are travelling, a dog, a kelpie (generally known as a pretty 'bright' breed) leaning out the side of the cab. He sees the lump too. But what you see and what the dog sees are not the same thing. Or, to put it better, what you grasp and what the dog grasps about the lump are not the same thing.

As the vehicle gets closer you try and work out just what the lump is. Is it a rock ? Is it an old bag ? Is

it someone's jumper ? Is it a dead wombat, or hare, or wallaby ? What you want to know is *WHAT* it is : that is, you are concerned with its *what-ness*, its essence or nature. As far as the dog is concerned, if it does not move he sees it as just another of the physical things that he encounters. If it moves, and he perceives it as a hare or rabbit, he will be most interested in it as possible prey to be chased (if only he could free himself of the chain with which you have prudently constrained him). If the lump turns out to be a live dog, he will express himself vociferously by barking wildly, but not, (interestingly !) if it is dead. The dog knows only singulars, and particularly those singular things upon which he is focused as a result of programming by his Author. Man, in contrast, knows universals, the natures of things ; *what* things are.

*

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Now, before we move on to see the differences between the way a dog knows and the way a man knows (understands), we have to consider an important distinction, in three parts.

Let's say I want to go sailing on the Tasman Sea to Lord Howe Island, about 800 kms from Sydney. There are three separate steps involved. First there is the proposing of *the end*, the sailing, or navigation, to give it a proper name ; second, the means demanded by the end requires that I take account of the demands of the sea. In other words, ship design. *Formality*, you will recall me saying many lessons ago, *follows finality*. So ship design is *the form* I must adopt to attain the end. But I will be going nowhere unless I apply the design to materials to produce a ship to do the job. This last part of the exercise is called *execution*. Here are the three laid out schematically—

<i>Execution</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>End</i>
Adapting materials to	a design	enabling navigation

This illustration is borrowed from St Thomas (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 18, a. 3) but we can replicate it any number of times. Thus, if I am tired of eating my dinner off the floor I will choose a design in the form of a table and then build it. If a mother is going to feed her family she must work out from what is available, just what will serve the end. It's useless her thinking to feed her children lumps of wood —they are not beavers, or termites—or grass,—they are not cattle. The food must be suitable for human consumption. Having worked out just what to give them, she must then put that is into effect.

<i>Execution</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>End</i>
Putting into materials Preparation	table design appropriate food	a table to eat off feeding the family

Two friends of mine go off searching, periodically, for a De Havilland *Dragon Rapide* that crashed some time during the Second World War in the southern Blue Mountains. The *end* of their activity is clear : they want to find the remains of the plane. The *execution* is their searching. The critical element for their success, however, is the *form*. Ideally, they would have a map but no one knows just where the aeroplane crashed so there is no map. They must rely on anecdotal evidence from very old witnesses, evidence which is growing more and more unreliable with the passing of the years. But, hoping for

the best, they carry out their searching. So far, they have not succeeded in finding it.



DH 89 *Dragon Rapide*

Another instance may be taken from the illustration I used many lessons ago of the man swinging his arm in a paddock. What he is doing (waving an arm) is clear. But the waving is only *the matter* of the action : it does not tell us really *what he is doing* because, without more, it does not reveal *the form* of his action. What we want to know is *why* he is doing it, for it is this that gives us *the form*, because *formality (form) follows on finality (end)*. Of the many possibilities on offer we may choose his desire for a cup of tea, with the swinging of his arm as the prearranged signal to his wife.

<i>Execution</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>End</i>
Searching	Oral information	Find plane
Swinging arm	Signal	Cup of tea

Now, I want you to commit these three categories, *Execution*, *Form* and *End*, to memory. For, in the next lesson, after a short interlude where we study one of the essential tools of Logic, we will explore the implications of the three in the make-up of living things.
