

## PROCEDURE FROM A PRINCIPLE

"A principle," Aristotle says, "is that wherefrom something proceeds in any manner whatsoever." (*Metaphysics* v, 1) So, light ; gravity ; the soul of an animal ; the keel of a boat ; the foundation of a house ; the assertions in logic "nothing is without a reason of be" and "whatever is received is received according to the mode of the recipient" ; a circle ; a triangle ; a sphere ; and common sense ; are, each of them, instances of *principle* in one way or another.

Now a principle may, in respect of a particular subject, be *intrinsic* or *extrinsic*, as my soul is (to me) an intrinsic principle, and gravity an extrinsic one. There are different modes of proceeding in respect of each which are elaborated in the following schema. The distinctions exposed are grounded in a metaphysical, not merely physical (or material), understanding of reality, an understanding which accords with common sense.

	[ NOT AGAINST	
[ from a principle	[ the inclination of	the ARTIFICIAL
[ EXTRINSIC to	[ the subject,	
[ its subject, &	[	
[ then either—	[	
[	[	
[	[ or AGAINST	
[	[ the inclination	the VIOLENT
[	[ of the subject	
Something may	[	
proceed either	[	
[	[ WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE	the NATURAL
[	[ of end <b>but with knowledge</b>	
[	[ of end presupposed in its	
[	[ Author	
[	[	
[ or from a principle	[ [ only MATERIAL	
[ INTRINSIC to its	[ [ KNOWLEDGE	the SPONTANEOUS
[ subject, and then	[ or WITH [ of end	
[ either—	[ [	
	[ or	
	[ FORMAL	
	[ KNOWLEDGE	the VOLUNTARY
	[ of end	

If I leap into a river, the action is *voluntary*, for my willing follows on an understood end, e.g., my need to swim to the other side. If my dog follows me, his action is *spontaneous*, done on instinct. He does not know what I am jumping into the river to achieve, only that his act is an appropriate one if he is to accompany me. The water into which I jump, the gravity that causes it to flow, and the current that results, are all instances of *the natural* and operate according to inherent laws whose ambit we

recognise. These realities manifest a certain order and imply the end intended by nature's Author. If, however, I am *pushed* into the river, the action falls into the category *the violent* since this occurs against my will. Meanwhile, builders on each bank of the river are engaged in constructing, in accordance with the nature of certain materials—steel, concrete and wood (collectively, 'the subject')—are producing *the artificial*, a bridge.

A lack of understanding of how these distinctions are reached is characteristic of modern man.

#### *Rejection of the Formal in Nature*

We have mentioned in previous lessons the rejection of the formal in nature. Typical of the confusion that follows this error is the attribution to plants and brute animals of intellectual activity. Having denied God's existence and its corollary, his intellectual activity manifest in his creatures, scientists and commentators must find some other source of these effects. They seem to think it a rational solution to ascribe them to the creatures themselves. It's as if we were to ascribe the clearly intellectual effects manifest in a computer not to its makers but to the computer itself.

A computer is an instance of the artificial. It owes its *quiddity* (*what it is*) to a principle *extrinsic* to it (its intellectual makers taken collectively, hundreds working together). A plant is an instance of the natural, operating from an *intrinsic* principle (its determinate soul which gives it life, vigour, and ordination). It has no intellect but, much more than a computer, it manifests the effects of an intellectual maker. A computer, after all, cannot *move itself* as a plant does. It is not living.

A brute animal, like a Desert Sandgrouse, is an instance of the spontaneous. It knows via its senses (through the internal *estimative sense*) what is fitting for it and for its offspring. But it does not know these as ends as ends. It is programmed, as it were, by its maker (its Author) to seek ends fitting to it as a Sandgrouse, just as a computer is programmed to ends pre-ordained by its makers.



*Sandgrouse*

It is salutary to address certain areas of modern life where confusion about these five categories exists and to see how this confusion leads to evils in society.

#### *Error over Marriage*

The source of the errors over marriage began (for our own time) some 500 years ago with the tyrant

English king, Henry VIII, abandoning his lawful wife, Queen Catherine (of Aragon), in favour of his mistress, Anne Boleyn, and then forcing the English parliament to endorse his evil act by legislation. He sought to replace what was *natural* (since marriage is a natural institution) with the *voluntary*, his own will. He did something worse. He compelled the English populace to endorse the evil he had embraced by an oath, the failure of which brought the death penalty. This was an act which was *violent* in the extreme. Many died when they refused to endorse his evil actions including John Cardinal Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, the only bishop of the Catholic Church in England who refused to be compromised by the King's tyranny, and Sir Thomas More, his former Chancellor.

This error about marriage seeped into the public psyche, especially after the devastation caused by the First World War in the early part of the Twentieth Century, with parliaments passing laws which allowed divorce from one's spouse. At first the grounds for such an aberration were limited. But in due course their rigour abated to the point where marriage seemed hardly to differ from a state of concubinage, which is what obtains today.

What is not realised by people is that the same error, that marriage is something of human will (*voluntary*) rather than of nature (*natural*), is at the heart of the current push to try and legitimate 'same-sex marriage'. From legislation which arrogates to the state the question of what marriage is—rather than exercising its proper function which is merely to regulate within rational limits its exercise—the mindset has become entrenched that a man and woman marry as a result of the authority given them by the state.

They do not. Any such legislated 'marriage' lacks any objective reality. It is marriage in name only.

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