

EVEN MORE ON PROCEDURE FROM A PRINCIPLE

There are still more errors that follow on the confusion of the categories that proceed from a principle. It will be a good idea to set out again the schema to refresh our recollection of the distinctions involved.

		[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 <i>but with knowledge</i>	
	[	[ <i>of end presupposed in its</i>	
	[	[ <i>Author</i>	
	[[
	[or from a principle	[	[ only MATERIAL
	[INTRINSIC to its	[	[ KNOWLEDGE
	[subject, and then	[or WITH	the SPONTANEOUS
	[either—	[	[ of end
		[[
		[FORMAL	
		[KNOWLEDGE	the VOLUNTARY
		[of end	

Error over "Artificial Intelligence"

One hears it said that it is possible to create artificial intelligence. Much of the discussion on the topic has to do with computers and their programming. The effects produced do not amount to any sort of intelligence. They are, rather, the effects of intelligence ; in other words, *the artificial* : sophisticated artificial, no doubt, but nonetheless *the artificial*. Moreover, the expression 'artificial intelligence' is a contradiction in terms. Intelligence is not from an *extrinsic* principle, but an *intrinsic* one. It is, ultimately, the source of *the voluntary* because the will, the power whose exercise is *the voluntary*, is the appetite that follows on intellect.

Assertions about 'artificial intelligence' are symptomatic of materialist naivety. It will assist to study the most significant of the errors that follow on confusion over *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* principle.

Darwinian Evolutionary Theory

Darwin treats reality on analogy with the artificial for he holds that a thing is determined as to what it is by nothing but a series of accidents, *extrinsic* influences. The natural, for Darwin, is simply a matrix on which accidents work to 'evolve' new things. They operate somewhat in the way the carpenter operates as he works on his materials to produce a table. With 'evolution', however, there is no intellectual maker doing the working, just blind chance coupled with the passage of time producing fortunate results. (Though why the results should have been fortunate rather than unfortunate ones is a question that remains unanswered.) Darwin's ascription to 'the survival of the fittest' as a determining influence in his theory serves to accommodate among extrinsic influences not only *the artificial* but *the violent*. So there is an internal logic at work.

It is when Darwin tries to address the reality of living things that the shortcomings of his theory appear most clearly. For he seeks to explain their faculty of moving themselves by focusing on their *material* make-up, as if a happy disposition of the matter coupled with a fortunate series of (extrinsic) accidents was sufficient to explain the miracle of self-movement. This naivety appears in his early theorising : “[T]he intimate relation of Life with laws of chemical combination, & the universality of [the] latter render spontaneous generation not improbable,” he remarked. (*Private notebooks*, 1837) He cannot see beyond the material structure of the living thing. If the right conditions should appear, a material thing will suddenly begin to move itself ! It is no valid objection to his theory “that science as yet throws no light on the far higher problem of the essence or origin of life.” (*Origin of the Species*, 3rd Ed. 1861)

In a letter to Joseph Dalton Hooker on 29th March 1863 he writes, “it is mere rubbish thinking, at present, of [the] origin of life ; one might as well think of origin of matter.” And in a further letter to Hooker of 1st February, 1871, he says :

“[I]t is often said that all the conditions for the first production of a living being are now present, which could ever have been present. But if (and oh what a big if) we could conceive in some warm little pond with all sort of ammonia and phosphoric salts,—light, heat, electricity present, that a protein compound was chemically formed, ready to undergo still more complex changes, at the present such matter would be instantly devoured, or absorbed, which would not have been the case before living creatures were formed...”

He has no idea what life is or what it causes it.

His acknowledgement of the essential mystery connecting life and matter's very existence recalls Aristotle's aphorism, “For living things to live is the same as to be.” But he does not follow the path of common sense with Aristotle to acknowledge that the only adequate explanation is that living things are so in virtue of an *intrinsic* principle.

Matter is a continuum. Though the forms it takes may change from one thing to another, matter itself is continuous throughout the universe. Look at the universe *formally* and you see the infinite diversity of things. Look at it *materially* and all you see is this continuous-ness. Darwin sees reality as nothing more than a continuum increasing in subtlety as things pass from the inanimate, minerals and the chemical elements, through to plants, animals and men. He closes his mind to any *qualitative* differences they manifest for this implies an *intrinsic* difference in things.

dominates their thinking. It is no surprise, then, to hear biologists claim there are many more than just three levels at which things live. The apparent overlapping between the higher forms of vegetative life with certain of the lower forms of animal life seems to justify this view, but if you allow yourself to be bound by appearances and ignore *formal* differences, such a simplistic judgement is inevitable. (For the reason why there are three, and only three, forms of living things, see Lessons 11 and 12 in our First Year of philosophy.)
