



Bonus: A Journey to Masculinity

By Jorge Rubio Department: Philosophy

Mentor: Kristin Bovaird-Abbo



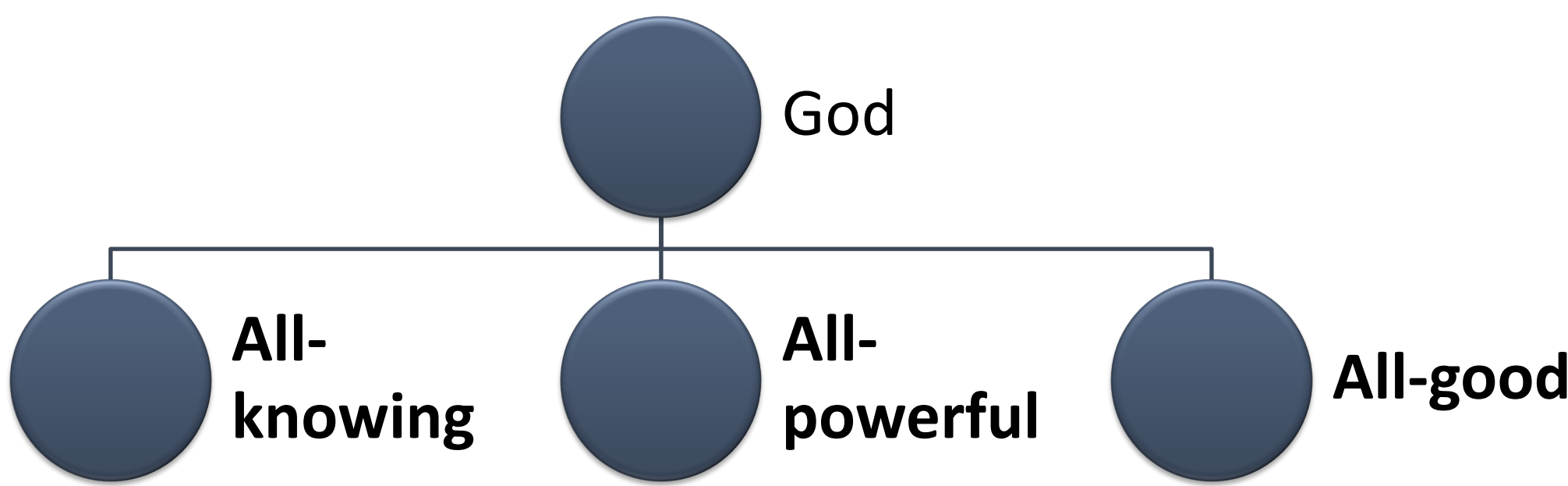
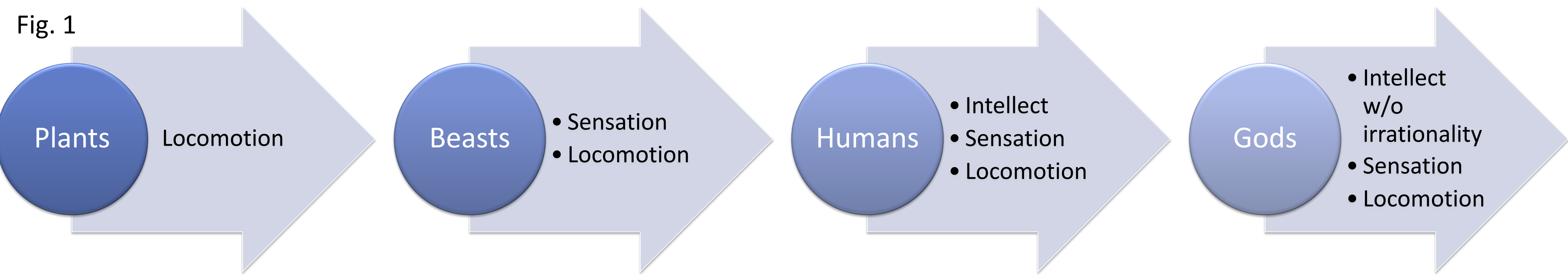
Abstract

Masculinity is a construct that has come into question in the recent past as society grapples with shifting concepts of gender and roles. The following quotation alludes to the significance of this project: "some masculine traits are concerning and potentially harmful for the person in question and those around him" (Mull 2). I intend to address the growing concerns society has with men's identities by writing a short, 80-page, 7-chapter, novella titled "Bonus: A Journey to Masculinity." I discuss morality, God, men and masculinity, and meaning and I argue that these topics play into one another. For example, the concept of God being male gives young men meaning for which to strive. Morality is a code of conduct for achieving this end, and masculinity as a label moves one in this direction as opposed to another. I am drawing on my previous work on morality, convention, and status function, a theoretical framework of morality "Convention and the normative structure. I intend to evoke thoughts in young men who identify with Bonus in order to help them rethink morality, God, men and masculinity and meaning as it applies to their identity. By the end of the novel, I hope that men can begin to identify with their labels, their privilege, the source of immorality, and how the concepts: men, God, and meaning play a role in their masculinity.

Meaning

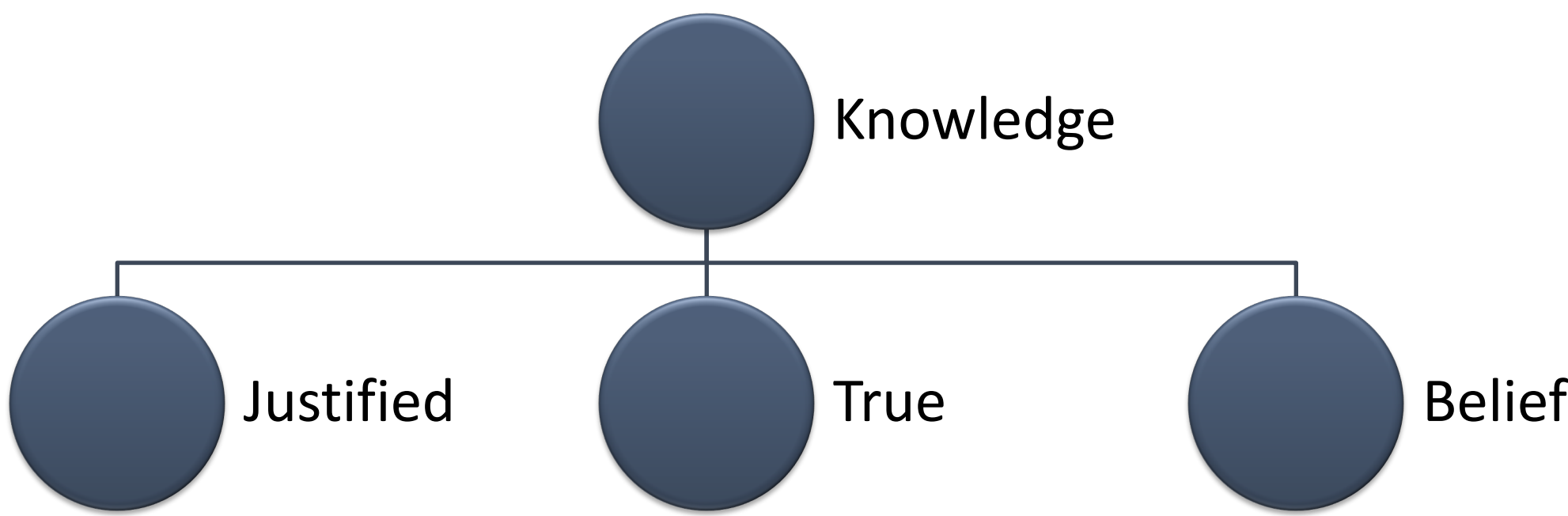
- According to Aristotle, something's *erga* (function/meaning) is determined through careful consideration of the inherent features of their [species] - specific features of their way of life.
1. Humans, specifically, are capable of intellectual activity, but ought to strive to participate in intellectual activity absent irrationality. This end, the absence of irrationality, is a specific feature of gods; thus we ought to be like gods, absent irrationality.
 2. According to a 2001 study, 85 percent of Americans are Christian. Christians hold that one ought to try to be like God: "So try to be like God, because you are his own dear children" (*Ephesians* 5). Christian god is all knowing, all-powerful, all-good.
 3. According to (1 and 2) God is without irrationality/all knowing(holds justified true beliefs). According to Christian Korsgaard, rationalities byproduct is morality. Therefore, God is both rationality/all-knowing and, by default, moral.
 4. As power can be understood as capability and strength, given the moral normative structure of morality, we need the ability to uphold moral norms using external force. An all-powerful god upholds morality through punishment of hell, humans uphold moral norms through the use of force as well, through social pressures.

Model



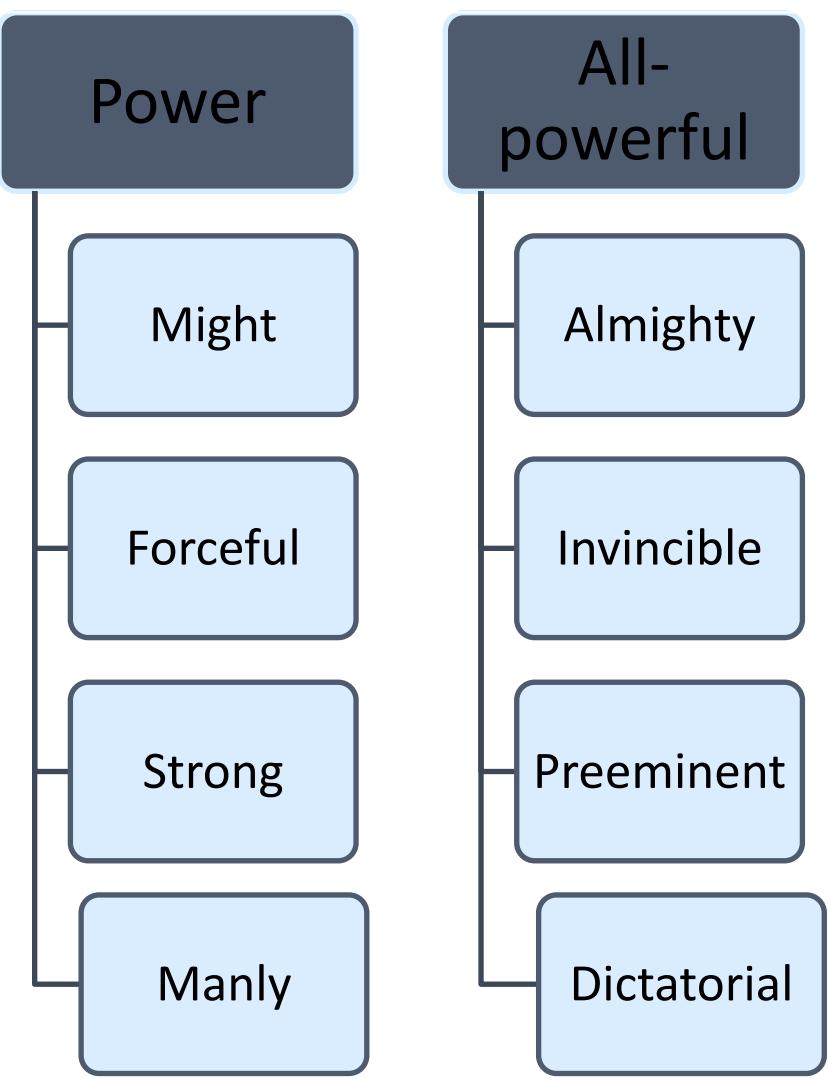
Features

In 2001, 85 percent of Americans identified as Christian. The Christian God is: all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-knowing.



Knowledge

According to Plato, Knowledge is Justified True Belief
Justified: Having good or legitimate reason
True: If something is not true, then it cannot be known
Belief: To know something is to believe it.



Power

- Having great power or strength
- The ability to do something or act in a particular way, especially as a faculty or quality

Given these two definition, one way to think power is strength to produce ability. Thus, more strength equals more ability. Someone who is stronger is more powerful, someone who is weaker is thought of as having less power.

Moral/Good

There are Two Types of Moral Norms (Principle: Treat others as ends and not means):
1.Those that do not require further specification (e.g., norms against rape) 2.Those that are abstract and require specification through solutions to coordination problems (e.g., norms about respect)
3a.Conventions solve coordination problems -> Conventions may solve moral coordination problems. 3b.Conventions generate related social norms to enforce adherence to conventions. 4a. Conventions produce generalized recognized roles, known as status functions. 4b.Status functions entail deontic powers, a cluster of rights, obligations, and permissions that provide more fine-grained moral norms.

Structure helps distinguish between moral norms and social norms which is helpful because some roles, like race and gender can be immoral. If something is immoral, it is our obligation not to act in that way. Therefore, men ought not be silent about their emotions because it would violate the morel norm not to cause self harm.

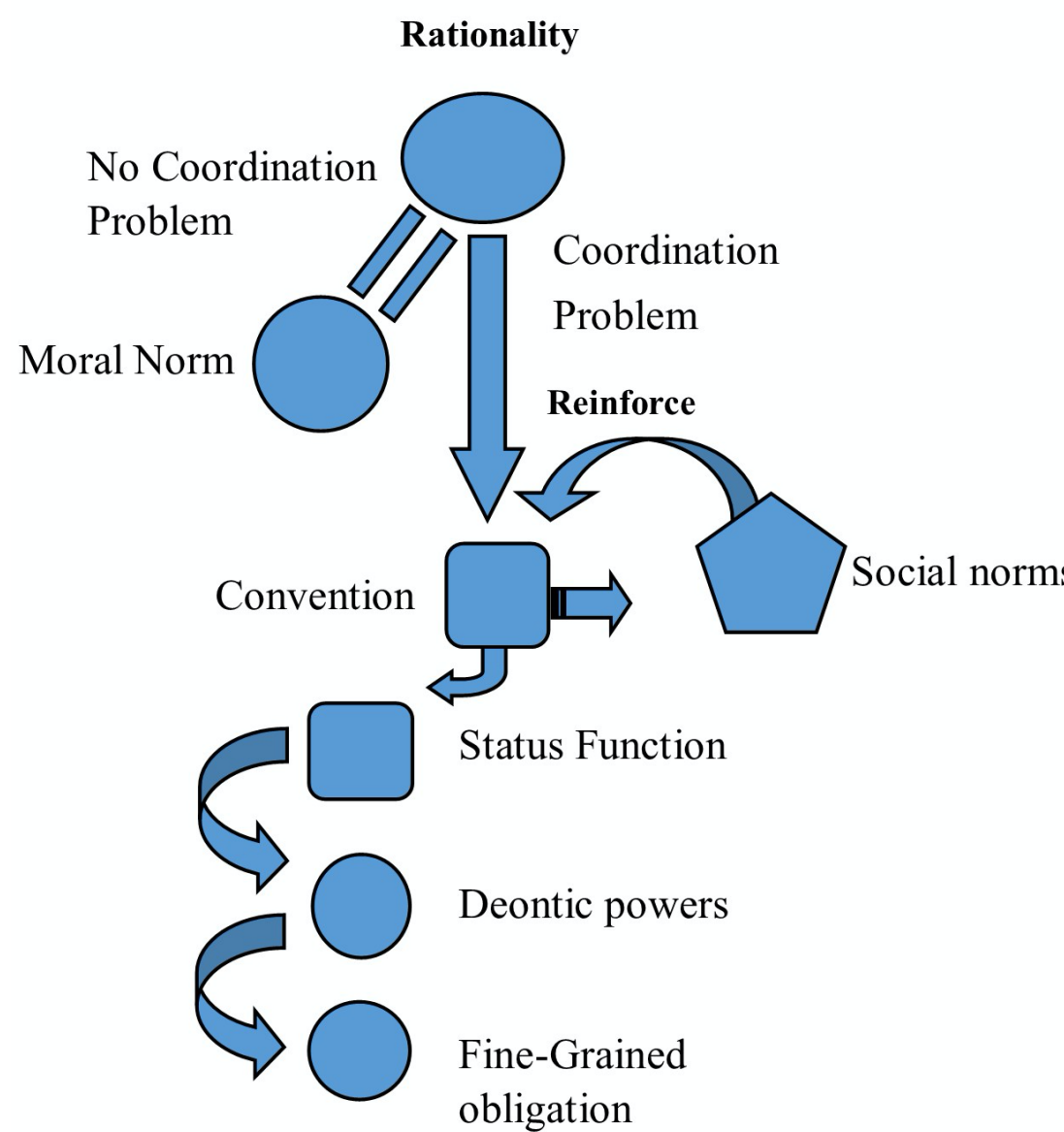


Fig 1.

According to Aristotle, plants, beasts/animals, humans and god have distance species specific features. Humans, can move up or down on this hierarchy. It is human purpose to move up this hierarchy by striving to participate in intellectual activity that is absent irrationality, this activity gives us meaning.

Masculinity

Masculinity is often thought of a conglomerate of features that together determine what is a man. A holder of these features is a "man" and one that holds more of them is more manly. I fundamentally disagree with this definition, because many of these features are arbitrary, like men wear blue, men don't wear dresses, et... Instead, I argue that a "man" is synonymous with the pursuit of. To be like god is, masculine which is to be good, strong, knowledgeable and to hold these is to have meaning.

Symbols

God is hermaphroditic – that is, our ideal is neither male or female, which contradicts Christian beliefs. This is because the features of god are not exclusive to men.

God steps on Bonus's head can be thought of as a metaphorical conquering of old patriarchal ideals for three universals – be strong, moral, and knowledgeable, which are absent gender norms.

Bonus's death is symbol of traditions perpetuation of parasitic social norms such that it is self-defeating.

Conclusions

The meaning of life, according to *Ephesians* and Aristotle, is to become greater than oneself, to become divine in a sense. To this end, we ought to replicate those features that made God great: knowledgeable, strong, and moral. This is the first calling my novel gives to men. The second is that the best way to achieve this, is open ended, so to be a real man, is simply to have higher levels of knowledge, strength, and morality. Arbitrary gender norms like men ought to wear blue do not move one closer to these goals. But being moral agents, exercising/being healthy and acquiring knowledge are.

- Given my moral structure, I demonstrate how gender norms are immoral, therefore my project can be thought of a search of meaning for all humanity not just men.

Sample



References

