

Principial Differences: A Conversation

The Lighter Side

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- A. There is a difference, a principial difference, between theoretical and practical knowledge.
- B. No, not a principial difference. The issue here is twice about knowledge, two forms of one and the same thing.
- A. Hm. Practical knowledge is knowledge about norms and about how things are meant to be. Theoretical knowledge has to do with facts, about how things actually operate and are. A principial difference.
- B. No, that is not a principial difference.
- A. But when then, according to you, is a difference principial? Is there a principial difference between man and woman?
- B. No, a man and a woman are both humans and thus they do not differ principially.
- A. Is there then also no principial difference between humans and animals?
- B. That's correct. Humans and animals are all living beings—hence no principial difference.
- A. If you think further along this insane thought pattern of yours, then you must naturally also claim that there is no real difference between living beings and rocks, for they are all “beings.” And for that same reason, there will be no principial difference between God and humans.
- B. Again, correct.
- A. According to you, do principial differences exist anywhere at all?
- B. If they exist, they are bitterly few.
- A. In my opinion, there are many. There is something wrong with your criterion for “principial difference.” You seem to assume that there is no principial difference between two things, when you can classify both under a higher category. But I have already demonstrated that this has foolish consequences.

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- B. If so, where can you point to a principial difference?
- A. I don't know exactly. But in any case I can say this: There *are* differences. Some differences are principial; others, gradual. A gradual difference is not principial—and vice versa.
- B. You are a real Reformational philosopher!
- A. Thank you for the compliment. You are a monist.
- B. And you thank me for that compliment!
- A. That's not what this was about!