RENEWING PLATO. PART ONE: THE FLAWS OF ARISTOTELIAN HYLOMORPHISM

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Plato was manifestly an oracle (similar to Pythagoras), whose thesis of the subdivision of reality into a virtual realm (inaccessible to the senses) and a concrete realm of the senses ultimately came to elucidate his privileged experience of the superiority of supra-sensible reality; Aristotle, on the other hand, resembled much more what can only be described as being sensory. In what follows, I would like to defend a renovated version of the Platonic perspective, against the Aristotelian negation of the existence of virtual entities that Plato called "Ideas," but which the master of Aristotle rightly identified as the model of concrete entities.

Therefore, I will argue as follows:

1) Any concrete entity partakes of an ideational model (which may be termed, "archetype," but which, contrary to the traditional understanding of archetypes, must be deemed as the singular model of a given entity, and the model of the unique and shared traits of a given singular entity)—which configures, or determines, the layout and the composition of the aforesaid entity, and that the "matter" constituting concrete beings takes charge of its own information, except in the case of those concrete beings that are artificial.

2) Here, the ideal, or virtual realm is hierarchized: it is constituted by elementary archetypes, as well as archetypes implied by the elementary ones. Plus, the starting rules of the cosmos (as such, the laws present at the time of the Big-Bang) and the implications of such rules, the latter being incessantly iterated and complexified over the course of cosmic history.

Besides the ideal field is imbued with a possibly conscious impulse, whose object is the incarnation of the ideal realm into matter. This impulse engenders the temporal start of the material field, and therefore of the universe. Yet the ideal realm materializes itself, all the while remaining beyond matter.

3) Time occasions a process of communication between matter at the instant (T) and the actualizable properties of matter at the instant (T-1), which yields so many implications that it is possible to extract from elementary archetypes and from starting rules. Matter, within the framework of this extraction of the implications in collaboration with time, repeats in a fractal mode the starting rules of the cosmos. These consist of a handful of pairs of opposites (namely: attraction and repulsion, integration and differentiation, fission and fusion) branching (via the iteration which causes the extraction of their implications) into the laws of the cosmos.

4) The primordial unity from which the cosmos proceeds consists in the impulse on the part of the ideational field to selectively accomplish its own content into innovative matter, and the bliss for man (especially the Faustian man) lies in the knowledge of the material unfolding of the Spirit (by which I mean the ideational field taken from the angle of its unified multiplicity), and in the extension of the creative gesture of the cosmos—via science, technique, and art.

5) The atemporal movement consisting for the Spirit of actualizing (while sorting) the implications that it carries within it projects—on the walls of the metaphorical cavern of the material and temporal field—a shadow which consists in the begetting (at the level of matter and on the part of matter) of increasing levels of order and complexity. A generation nonetheless not assigned to a predetermined final state of cosmic evolution—and not kept away from randomness and from error.

The course and the laws of the cosmos that are the incarnation of the Spirit mobilize clairvoyance (i.e., the intuition of the supra-sensible field), just as well as conjecture (and induction) from the sensible datum.

Hylomorphism And The Emergence Process

As for Aristotle's substitution of the archetypes, from which proceed the concrete entities, with the notion that a concrete entity owes its determination to the "form" which is inherent to it, I will naturally begin by questioning the Aristotelian perspective for the benefit of the rehabilitation of archetypes.

The Aristotelian hylomorphic theory claims that any entity is a compound of two distinct realities—namely, form, which is to be taken in the precise sense of an active reality conferring onto matter a certain arrangement, and as such, determining the concerned entity. And matter, which is to be taken in the precise sense of a passive and indeterminate reality composing the entity, and giving it a concrete and tangible character, and carrying within it the potentiality of a given change at the level of form—a change which is spontaneously actualized in the case of natural beings. Such theory does not fail to pose a certain number of problems.

To begin with, it is hardly plausible that the arrangement of a certain (concrete) entity and its composition are only associated realities within the entity, instead of the information (in other words, the arrangement, the organization) of the entity being a property of that which composes the entity. In that

second scenario, which is much more likely, "form" must no longer be taken in the sense of an active reality. Rather, it must be seen as a passive emanation of the tenor of "matter," the matter composing the concrete entities and—at least in the case of those of concrete beings which are properly natural and which are therefore opposed to those artificial—taking charge of its own shaping.

Besides, it is manifestly false that the determination (of the identity) of a concrete entity relates exclusively to the arrangement of the entity, rather than to the combination of its arrangement and of its composition. The identity of a tree—apart from its foliage and the composition of its leaves—resides jointly in the (essential or contingent) qualities of the wood which composes it and in the (constitutive or accidental) features of the arrangement of its trunk and of its branches. The archetype which Pythagoras and Plato deal with (and which we cannot do without) must be reassessed accordingly.

Our way of envisioning the relationship of form to matter, and the nature of those two realities (and thus, the adequate definition of the concepts which cover them), owes its greatest plausibility most notably to the compatibility of our approach with the emergence process. The latter can be defined as the fact for a qualitatively new concrete entity—the novelty in question relating to the composition of the entity or its arrangement—to arise from one or more pre-existing entities (to which the new entity cannot however be reduced). Yet the only changes compatible with the Aristotelian approach to form as an active and informative element, which coexists with matter envisaged as passive and informed (but which is not a driving element of formal change), are those which do not consist in introducing a component or an arrangement of a new type on the world stage.

Hence the emergence exceeds the Aristotelian hylomorphic framework. The only intelligible changes in the hylomorphic framework are those which do not contravene the Aristotelian conception of the world as eternal and equal to itself, whether the object of changes is place, quality, quantity, or generation. For its part, the conception of the matter of concrete beings as active and self-informed also takes into account this kind of change that is emergence. Here it is elucidated as a process in which self-organized matter sets up an organization of a new type, and in which the emerging organization possibly merges with a component of a new type.

Hylomorphism And The Distinction Between Natural Beings And Artificial Beings

Further, my approach allows for a greater likelihood (and greater clarity) of examining the dichotomy between those of concrete beings which are "natural" and those which are "artificial": distinction

confusedly treated in Aristotelian hylomorphism (which affirms the spontaneous character of the occurrence of the various kinds of change in the case of natural beings, but claims, otherwise, that any change is due to an exterior motor), here clarified in these terms.

Namely that natural beings are those of concrete beings whose information is spontaneously set up by the tenor of what composes them, while artificial beings are those which owe their information to the exercise of an exterior action on the tenor of what composes them, regardless of whether the other kinds of change to affect them are spontaneous or not.

While water presents itself as a natural entity, whose information is spontaneously taken over (by the molecules composing it, which assemble two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom), and whose self-organization (in other words, self-information) is confused with the emergence of a certain sort of "matter" (which will enter in the composition, for example, of a floe), a snowman is an artificial being whose information is the result of the action of a human being having fun with snow.

The self-information constitutive of those of (concrete) beings which are natural will take specific modalities according to the types of the natural beings: from the particulate self-organization (of the quarks which enter in the composition) of hadrons to that of the cells which compose advanced (therefore multicellular) eukaryotes, and to that of the individual members of animal or human societies, these are genuinely incremental levels of emergence that hatch (as concerns the types of self-information, and in upstream, the types of natural being). The nutritive, generative, sensitive, motor, or cogitative functions which living beings endorse and which Aristotle classifies being only modalities of the self-information of living beings.

Just as the existence of the realm of concrete entities is corroborated by sensible experience; likewise, the existence of the realm of virtual entities—the mathematical laws which govern the concrete order, as well as the archetypes which Plato calls "Ideas" and that notably include numbers—is corroborated by the supra-sensible experience.

The Idea that Plato deals with (and whose definition which I will retain as adequate is that of the Idea as the supra-sensible model of concrete entities) has this particularity, compared to the form (in the Aristotelian sense), allegedly present in concrete entities, that it can utterly be conceived of as jointly determining the arrangement and the composition of a given concrete entity. The Idea is certainly virtual (rather than concrete); it nevertheless remains likely to contain just as much the essential or

accidental, necessary or contingent properties at the level of organization ("form" taken in the vague sense of the arrangement of a given concrete entity) as those at the level of the composition ("matter" taken in the vague sense of what a given concrete entity is made of). In this regard it would be worthwhile to distinguish between "matter" (understood as what enters in the composition of a given entity) and "materiality" (understood as a certain mode of existence which consists for a given entity in being concrete, tangible, firm).

Assuredly such an approach to Idea is not that of Plato. The latter does not only consider Ideas as the models only of general qualities (for example, the general qualities of blond, blue-eyed people… rather than the sum of the singular and common qualities of the blond, blue-eyed Donald Trump), which amounts to restricting the qualities configured in the Idea of a certain singular entity to the field of the general (in other words, shared, common) qualities of the entity, general qualities which are also necessary qualities (but which do not summarize the whole of necessary qualities). Besides he represents to himself Idea as the supra-sensible model of the sole organization of concrete entities (and not that jointly of their arrangement and of their composition). Yet the identity of a given concrete entity including both the qualities relating to its composition and those relating to its arrangement, the supra-sensible model of the identity must manifestly determine both what is characteristic of the arrangement and what belongs to the composition.

As archetypes deal as much with arrangement as with composition, the (singular) archetype of a given concrete entity will determine whether its arrangement is spontaneously set up by what enters in the composition of the entity—in other words, whether the entity in question is natural rather than artificial. In the case where the entity is effectively natural, the organization is jointly determined by the archetype and implemented by what enters in its composition… so that a distinction must be made between organization as predetermined in the archetype and organization as materialized. In other words, the materialized "form," that set up by matter (understood as what composes a concrete being), must be distinguished from its supra-sensible and virtual model: the form which is determined in the archetype of a given concrete entity, but which does not summarize the archetype. Given the latter includes as much the properties relating to the composition of the concerned concrete entity as those relating to its arrangement.

A New Approach To "Form" And "Matter"

Ultimately we can redefine in these terms the form and the matter which were the subject of Aristotle's

meditations. In the weak sense, matter is what composes a given entity (whether the entity is virtual or concrete, tangible, firm), while in the strong sense, matter is what composes a properly concretized (in other words, firm) entity, which we commonly call a "material" entity—a qualifier that we will make ours.

As for form, it is the arrangement (in other words, the organization) of a given entity… arrangement that (in the case of material entities) matter (taken in the strong sense) either gives itself actively or passively receives: that distinction at the level of the arrangement founding the dichotomy between those of material entities which are natural and those which are artificial.

When we will use the term "matter" without specifying the sense in which we understand it, we will take it in the strong sense mentioned above: matter understood as what composes a properly concrete entity… with a spontaneous arrangement of matter in the case of natural entities. While we reject the Aristotelian definition of matter (as a passive and concrete reality that composes any entity), we believe that the Aristotelian approach to form remains valid as concerns the arrangement of archetypes.

Aristotelian hylomorphism not only conceives of any entity as a compound of "form" and "matter," but defines the second as that which passively composes and concretizes a given entity, and the first as that which actively informs the composition of the entity. It is obviously intended to be an alternative to the theory of Ideas. Nevertheless the assertion that any properly material entity is a compound of form in the Aristotelian sense and of matter in the sense of what passively composes a material entity is hardly incompatible with the Platonic notion that any material (that is to say, materialized, tangible) entity aligns with a virtual archetype.

Better the virtual archetypes which Plato deals with are certainly deprived of a material existence, matter in the sense of what passively composes a given entity does not fail them: they are, so to speak, cut in the wood of virtual. While the arrangement of the archetypes (which merges with the content of the Ideas) actively informs the virtual reality of which the archetypes are made. As such, the form taken in the Aristotelian sense of an active reality which coexists with the passive composition of a given entity (and which arranges the entity) corresponds no less well to the virtual entities that are the archetypes… for want of applying to concrete entities the secrets of which Aristotelian hylomorphism yet believed to unlock.

Form as understood by Aristotle all the better lends itself to describing the arrangement of an archetype (rather than that of a material entity) as, while denying the existence of virtual entities, the

Stagirite does not conceive of form as a material reality (but as a reality coexisting with matter within a given material entity). If form as defined by Aristotle does not have a properly material existence, it is difficult to see how it could not be an arrangement whose mode of existence is virtual… therefore an arrangement which relates to a virtual entity.

Towards a New Version Of Platonism

By the way Idea can even be conceived of in Aristotelian terms of efficient cause and final cause, the efficient cause being Idea itself (which is sufficient in itself to exist, and that exists outside of time and world) and the final cause being the material entity that Idea is intended to determine (at the level of its composition and of its arrangement).

As archetype jointly includes the qualities associated with composition and those associated with arrangement, the emergence of matter from nothingness (which supposedly preceded the beginning of the cosmos) loses its mysterious character. The engendering of matter—of which vacuum, baryons, leptons, photons, dark matter, water, or bronze are all specific varieties—is the work of the Spirit, by which I hear the virtual bundle of archetypes (including numbers and figures), as well as of the laws of the cosmos.

More precisely, the renovated Platonic perspective to which I subscribe is that a swarm of atemporal and virtual axioms (namely, attraction and repulsion, integration and differentiation, fission and fusion), as well as of elementary archetypes (including the archetype of the quark or that of the void), presides over the creation of the universe. And that matter—in partnership with time which, at the instant (T), allows it to make a selection among those of properties at the level of the arrangement or of the composition of matter which, at the instant (T-1), are actualizable—accomplishes (while sorting them out) the virtual implications which flow from the axioms (by which I designate, so, the starting rules of the cosmos) and from the archetypes.

Matter certainly takes charge of its own information (in other words, it gives itself its own arrangement, its own formal determination, which is a function of the tenor of matter); nevertheless it acts under the impulse of a virtual swarm of archetypes and of axioms which—over the course of time and through time and matter—sees its own implications extracted (and selected) in the cosmos. The information of a given matter leading up from time to time to an incremental mode of matter—like the mode of matter that is methane gas and which emerges from the arrangement (within its molecules) of a carbon atom

and of four hydrogen atoms.

In that framework, the supra-sensible knowledge, the intuition of the virtual entities that are axioms (that matter declines at each level of emergence succeeding the original emergence of the universe) and the (elementary or implied) archetypes, is utterly conceivable. It is worthwhile to distinguish between the arrangement relating to archetypes (which merges with their content) and the arrangement which resides in the archetypes… the one which they express and which they determine. We will speak of "archetypal form" to designate the latter, and of the "arrangement of archetypes" to designate the former.

What ideology is to men who work to organize society on the model of an ideology, the archetypal form (by which I mean, so, the form that the archetype determines, and that it carries within it) is to matter which informs itself on the formal model of the archetype. Just as matter (at least in the case of natural entities) gives itself its own form, and just as the tenor of form will depend on the tenor of matter, the members of a certain human biocultural group—when they spontaneously organize their society—will give themselves an organization which will be a function of the tenor of their biology.

Besides the momentum of the archetypes of giving themselves a material translation—a translation jointly at the level of the tenor of matter and at the level of the organization of matter—communicates itself to matter which will strive to achieve the archetypal forms… just as the impulse of ideologies (in other words, memes) to organize matter communicates itself to humans who will endeavor to conform the organization of their societies to the formal models of ideologies.

Ultimately the process which consists for the archetype in realizing itself jointly into the tenor of matter and into the organization of matter finds itself to be incidentally mimicked by the process which consists for the meme—the equivalent of the duplicator of biological information in the field of acquired cultural behavior—in realizing itself into the organization of matter. It is not impossible that this similarity can also be observed in the relationship that the genetic program sustains with the arrangement of the individual organism.

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The *image* shows, "I Lock the Door Upon Myself," by Fernand Khnopff, painted in 1891.