

# **FORM, MATTER, CATEGORIES AND VERTICAL COMPOSITION**

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# WHAT? CATEGORIES AND HYLOMORPHISM

## ❖ Categories:

- The most general concepts or kinds that organize reality.
  - What there is? What kinds of objects are there?

## ❖ Hylomorphism:

- The doctrine according to which objects are compounds of matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*).
  - How is the object composed?

# THE GAP

Although categories and hylomorphism are two important topics in contemporary ontology, no studies have connected them systematically. Consequently, this work aims to contribute to ongoing research on hylomorphism.

# MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the significance of categories for hylomorphism  
(and the other way around)?

# MAIN ARGUMENT

If hylomorphism is understood as a doctrine concerning the composition of *objects* and categories determine what kinds of *objects* there are, then categories are fundamental for any hylomorphic system.

# THREE CORE PROBLEMS

## [I.1] Forms

- What general conceptions of categories, and therefore of forms, there are?
  - Categories → Forms

## [I.2] Formation

- What the specific roles of the forms belonging to a given general conception are, i.e. how these specific forms differ from each other in terms of their formative power?
  - Different categorial forms → Different sorts of formation

## [II.3] Matter

- How the hylomorphic conception of matter can lead to a hierarchical understanding of hylomorphic composition, and what role each form plays within this hierarchical framework?
  - Material Constitution → Hierarchical Composition

# THREE CORE THESES

## **[I.1] Forms**

There are as many types of forms in a given hylomorphic doctrine as there are types of categories in a given ontology.

## **[I.2] Formation**

The way in which each form exerts its formative power over matter is grounded in the nature of its corresponding category.

## **[II.3] Matter**

The hierarchical or vertical nature of hylomorphic composition enables the integration of a plurivocal conception of categorial forms into a unitary system.

# HOW? STRUCTURAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ARISTOTLE AND KANT

- Two fundamentally different yet structurally complete ways in which categories organize hylomorphic principles.
- Aristotle's formulation is indispensable as it establishes the original categorial and hylomorphic framework that still implicitly governs contemporary debates.
- Kant's revision demonstrates how modifying these categorial foundations can overcome systematic limitations.
- How modifying the categorial architecture on which hylomorphism is grounded can yield different results.
- Two hylomorphisms: Aristotle's essential hylomorphism and Kant's functional hylomorphism.

# TWO DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFRONTATION

(1) Plurivocity of Forms and (2) Ontological-scope Dimensions

# (1) THE PLURIVOCITY OF FORMS DIMENSION

- ❖ If categories correspond to forms, and categories are many, could there be multiple forms within a single hylomorphic system? How could different forms coexist within a single hylomorphic doctrine? How can this be demonstrated in the cases of Aristotle and Kant?
- Kant's functional hylomorphism exhibits a rich plurivocity across multiple hierarchical levels—each level introduces a different categorial form with a distinct functional role. In contrast, Aristotle's essential hylomorphism lacks this formal diversity, as all material levels are governed by the same substantial form

## (2) THE ONTOLOGICAL-SCOPE DIMENSION

- ❖ If categories determine which entities are included in ontology, does this mean that the scope and limits of hylomorphism depend on the categories? What, then, is the scope and limit of Aristotle's and Kant's hylomorphic doctrines, and how can it be said that Kant goes beyond the limits of Aristotelian hylomorphism?
- Aristotle's hylomorphism terminates at the level of individual objects: the substantio-accidental compound—the apex of his hierarchical conception. Kant's categories of relation, by contrast, take such individual objects as matter for a *new sort of hylomorphic object*: higher-order composites whose field of application exceeds Aristotelian bounds, thereby expanding the doctrine's ontological scope (inter-objective hylomorphism).

# ARISTOTLE

- ❖ The kinds of forms involved in Aristotle's hylomorphism depend on the categories found in his ontology.
- ❖ Aristotle categories: substantial and accidental.
- ❖ Two kinds of hylomorphic compound: [A] the substantial and [B] the accidental.

# KANT'S TABLE OF JUDGMENTS

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**I.**  
**Quantity of Judgments**  
Universal  
Particular  
Singular

**2.**  
**Quality**  
Affirmative  
Negative  
Infinite

**3.**  
**Relation<sup>b</sup>**  
Categorical  
Hypothetical  
Disjunctive

**4.**  
**Modality**  
Problematic  
Assertoric  
Apodictic

# KANT'S TABLE OF CATEGORIES

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**I.**  
**Of Quantity**  
Unity  
Plurality  
Totality

**2.**  
**Of Quality**  
Reality  
Negation  
Limitation

**3.**  
**Of Relation<sup>c</sup>**  
Of Inherence and Subsistence  
(*substantia et accidens*)  
Of Causality and Dependence  
(cause and effect)  
Of Community (reciprocity  
between agent and patient)

**4.**  
**Of Modality**  
Possibility – Impossibility  
Existence – Non-existence  
Necessity – Contingency

# A POINT OF CONVERGENCE

**The connection between substance and accident.**

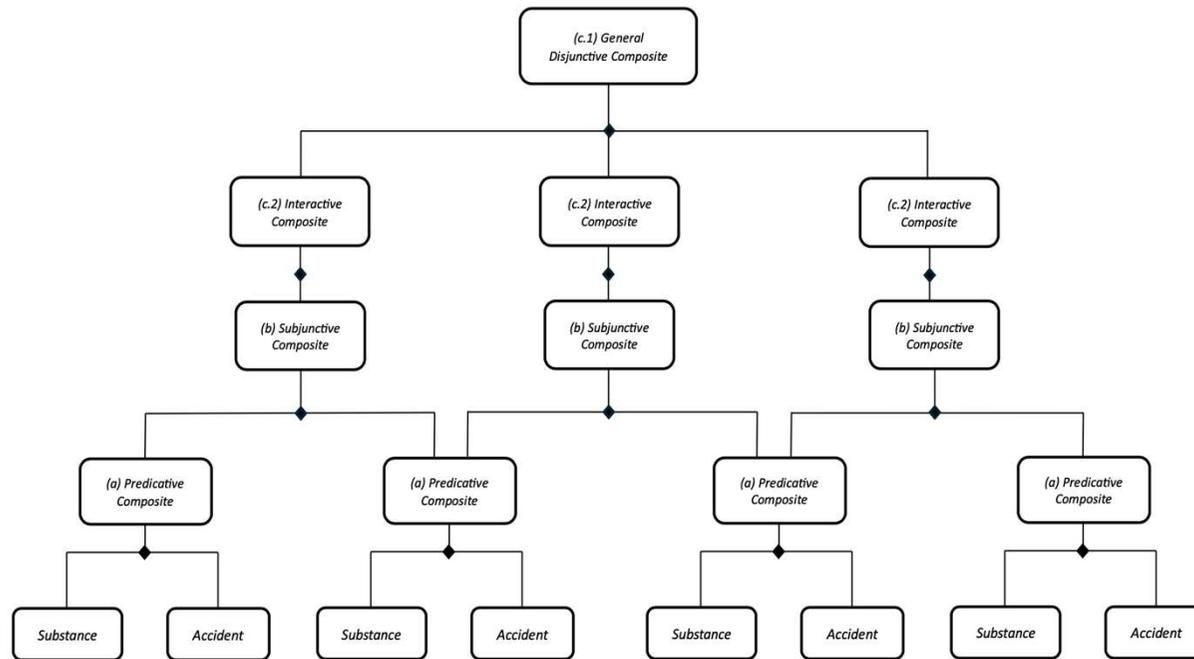
**Fundamental differences:**

Two types of categories for Aristotle.

One type of category for Kant.

The distinction between substance and accident is the upper terminus of Aristotle's categories.

For Kant it constitutes the beginning of a hierarchy of relations (categories of relation)



# KANT'S HIERARCHICAL (RELATIONAL) CONCEPTION OF CATEGORIAL FORMS

# CATEGORIAL VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL VARIATION

Vertical variation: the variation that occurs across levels

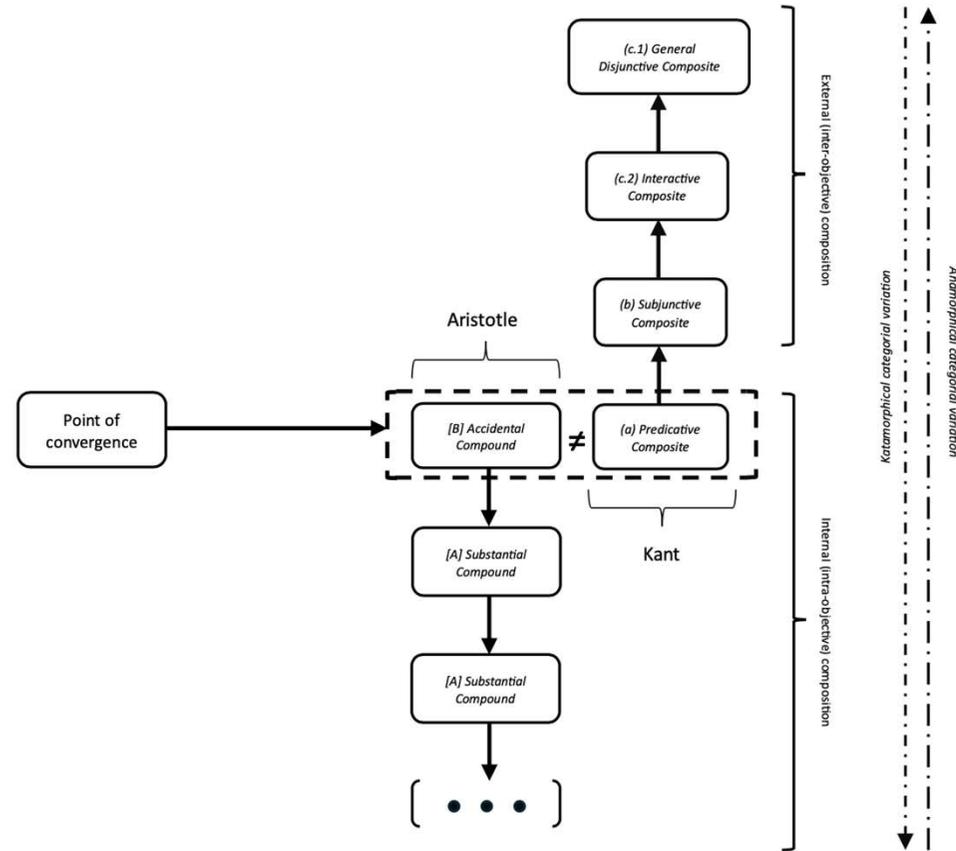
Two types:

- Anamorphical (upwards)
- Katamorphical (downwards)

Horizontal variation: the variation that occurs within each level.

# ARISTOTLE'S AND KANT'S CATEGORIAL HYLOMORPHISMS

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# CONCLUSIONS

Kant's innovations result in a richer plurivocal conception of categorial forms.

Kant's doctrine of categories results in an expansion of the ontological scope of hylomorphism as it deals with new sorts of objects to which the Aristotelian model is not designed to explain.

The categorial architecture on which a given hylomorphic system is grounded has enormous consequences for the domain of objects that can be analyzed in a given ontology.

# CONCLUSIONS

Hylomorphism could be considered a more ambitious doctrine than the contemporary analysis suggests, as it seeks not only to reveal the compositional structure of an object, but according to its categorial basis and intended design, to establish itself as a general method for ontology.

A method for an ontology that explains the imbrication, the interconnection in which all the distinct entities accepted within a given system find their proper place.

By grounding forms in the categories and systematic unity in a framework of formal variation (both vertical and horizontal), this approach provides some architectonic principles needed to propel the hylomorphic research program forward.



# THANK YOU!

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