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Ideals of Aristotle and Hayek: A Synthesis

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It is an unfortunately common occurrence among Philosophy and Philosophers that upon the refutation of a specific aspect of a philosophers ideas, that philosophers entire contribution to philosophy as a whole is subject to violent disregard. The falsification of Aristotle's idea of natural kind by Darwinian evolution is just one such example. Aristotle's obvious incorrectness on this matter has been somehow carried over towards all of his theories and contributions to philosophy, thereby necessitating individual philosophers to "re-introduce" his still applicable theories one by one (i.e., Aristotle's ideas about "Energy" reintroduced by Leibniz in application to post-Cartesian Physics). In the case of Aristotle's approach to societies and evolution of culture, F.A. Hayek took advantage of the precedent set by Darwin and disavowed Aristotle's "totalitarian" approach to society. Hayek continually cites Aristotle's Ideas as direct contributions to the "socialist" cause, which has become so popular in present day terminology. In criticizing those connections, Hayek is systematically refuting Aristotle's (Zoon Politikon) notion of individuals being subordinate as well as fixed into society's "pre-existing" structure and therefore each individual has no value apart from this ideal structure of Aristotle's "city-state." At the same time Hayek is propagating his own (almost reactionarily opposite) theory of the individual's importance and "place" in society. There exists, however, a glaring similarity in these seemingly opposite and extreme ends. I will use analogy to explain how both Aristotle's and Hayek's interpretations of the individual's role in society actually co-exist (in harmony, I might add), differing only in their point of reference to the whole idea of "culture."

An important thing to remember when considering Aristotle's views and contributions to Philosophy is that he lived over 2000 years ago. His Lykeion was one of the first institutions which dealt exclusively with pure sciences, metaphysics, political science and logic. Realizing this, we need to give special consideration of any application of Aristotle to our "modern" Philosophy. Aristotle's "essence" will be my primary consideration for this paper. Through his ideal of an "essence" which drives those Platonic potentials towards their predetermined "Ideal" structure, there exists the basis for Aristotle's view of society and the individual in it. I mentioned using extreme consideration of Aristotle's terminology because he had no idea about such things as DNA, which perfectly represents the "essence" of biological life. Aristotle views "society" as having a potential which is continually striven towards (his own Athens' "city-state" representing the realization of this "potential"). Included in this view of society is the specific "individuals'" relative unimportance. The individual only fills in a pre-existing structure of society and has no "personal" influence in it. It should be noted that despite this structure, the individual may, by exerting free will, deviate from the form. However that individual is incapable of producing a new "essence" of society.

F.A. Hayek wrote, ”The Fatal Conceit” in the 1980’s (over 2000 years after Aristotle). Therefore he is privy to a culmination of knowledge and the wisdom of hindsight in his personal contribution to Philosophy. He defines the ”fatal conceit” as ”socialism.” A socialism which he feels derives itself from Aristotle’s’ teachings. Hayek viewed the application of ”essences” to society as completely absurd. He developed a theory of ”spontaneous order” which describes the formation of societal structure. Hayek, aided by hindsight saw the ”evolution” of societies (as well as market orders vis-a-vie Adam Smith) as driven not by an ideal form, but rather an entropic process whose only guide was negentropic spontaneity. In this view of society the individual possesses the conscious ability (and quasi-control) to influence the society as a whole. In this methodology, Aristotle’s and Hayek’s theories are completely opposite. Hayek supports his belief through comparison of societies with the ”spontaneous order” of culture, free market systems, the evolution of trade, and laws and morals. Aristotle viewed society as a pre-existing system which ”evolved” driven by ”essences” that use Platonic ”potential energy” to achieve the Ideal Society. This system leads to the notion (via Marx) of ”distributive Justice” as an inherent form of control in the society. Hayek deplored the concept of ”distributive justice” especially as it was applied by Marx towards the Communist ideals. The communists further abused Hayekian philosophy by misusing spontaneous order as the method for maintaining a supply and demand balance within the communist forum.

Simply put, Aristotle viewed Society as having a pre-existing structure, which was driven by an eternal ”essence.” Hayek described Society as having an ”order” which arose ”spontaneously” out of the random interactions of individuals. This leads to the idea of the individual as being the most important part of the ”society.” Contrastingly, Aristotle’s individual was merely a ”building block” that fit into the already made structure of the ”society.” Also, the individual’s will must conform to the structure of that pre-existing society or else become ”unsuccessful.”

I will now demonstrate how these two conflicting theories can be reconciled. In order to more clearly demonstrate the use of analogy in synthesizing these contrasting theories, I must briefly expound the concept. Everything in this universe exists in many levels of perfect analogy, which can be ”seen” on more simple (as well as more complex) levels; as the true nature of the universe is continuity and harmony which can only be achieved by repetition of rules/forces which exert themselves upon every Level of order in this universe. This ”true nature” can only be expressed mathematically in the complexly simple idea of a Fractal which is simply a recurring sequence of events, numbers, images (anything really), such that any part of the structure ”looks” exactly like a broader (or more ”close up”) view point. Examples abound in nature (if my theory is true, then everything is an example of this), Clouds, Waterfalls, Tornadoes, Waves, etc. Mathematics can easily generate sequences of numbers and feed a graphic computer which plots those numbers and displays them, enabling us to ”see” this effect. This idea goes so much beyond the interesting graphics on a computer screen.

Now, this notion of Fractals is quite relevant in Biology as well; I will use biological functioning as the analogy basis for this problem. If the universe is governed by some ”universal” rules/forces, then those forces are present among everything in the Universe

(pretty simple and safe assumption). Leibniz refers to these ”rules/forces” as a ”God who acts for the objectively best... it is from this that everything must be deduced in physics’” Similarly, one can assume that atomic rules which govern relationships between particles in space are universal, and if everything is made of Atoms (or whatever the newest ”smallest particle” is), then everything is subject to the same rules which we describe in Chemistry, Thermodynamics, Physics, and Mathematics. Now, granting that everything is made of atoms and subject to all the above stated ”rules/forces,” then biology is subordinate to those rules/forces as well. Therefore, biological processes are controlled by those same universal rules and are in harmony with the Universe. This harmony is analogous to the abstract concept of a Fractal in that the Fractal is a continuing propagation of the same ”rules” and structures. This analogy is crucial because it allows us to see the harmony in ”the natural world” as analogous to the harmony of biological organisms, namely our human bodies, specifically our human minds. Parallelly, the biological order of a living organism is a perfect congruent analogy to the ”behavior” of non-living structures (i.e. atoms, molecules, etc.; surely you must have seen the similarity of a cell to an atom in their parallel functioning in the biological and chemical worlds respectively). The connection lies in the fact that those ”living” biological structures are made up of atoms, molecules, etc., and this is how we can draw analogy because of the commonality of the ”atom” and its universal behavior and structure. This analogy theory has huge application potential to life and makes the extensive (and until now purely scholastic) effort to understand the workings of ”natural sciences” worth every bit of the toil. As analogy of known biological structures and organization is now possible with known chemical and mathematical ”laws/forces” and having been proven as correct we can now venture into unmarked territory. We can now use the Biological organization, because it is somewhat more easy to grasp and apply to the topic of this paper, as a basis with which to make and use analogies that deal with concepts we do not understand and cannot as easily deduce using ”scientific method.” Moreover, the ”sure path of science [which] has yet been found...” that Kant doubted actually existed, may at last be cleared and traversed. Additionally, the use of the ”scientific method” in this matter has been foreseen by Hayek himself as a ”revolutionary innovation which, if adopted, will secure rapid and undreamed progress.”

The analogy theory being somewhat stated, I will now apply it to existing philosophical arguments in order to demonstrate its correctness and power. In using the theory I also hope to explain it further. Keep in mind that, as all scientific theories should, this theory leaves open the possibilities of addition, correction, adaptation, and refutation in the hopes of creating an even more effective and applicable theory to describe the universe we live in.

I have presented the problem of Aristotle versus Hayek regarding the true nature of society and the individual’s place and function in it. I will use an analogy of a multi-cellular organism as Society and the individual cell as an individual person. The question exists in the completely opposite views of society and the individual’s place in it. Hayek demonstrates how the individual is the source of the overall structure of the Society. In analogy terms; the cell is the source of the organization of the multi-cellular organism. Aristotle demonstrates how the structure of society is pre-existing or predisposed upon human individuals and therefore negates the effect of the individual on society’s

approach of its ideal ”essence.” In analogy terms; the cell does not determine the organization of the multi-cellular organism. Now, this is where the theory takes effect, we simply need to assign representatives from the ”problem” we have, to specific and observably analogous structures in biology.

This is where some interpretation and ”scientific-method” comes in to play, because that sort of method will be needed to acquire a ”model Match.” The only philosophical debate comes in at the assignation of ”our world” structures (i.e., people, society) to ”bio-world” structures (i.e., cells, multi-cellular organism respectively). This debate can easily apply the scientific method so that incorrect ”model Matches” are systematically, and objectively discarded. Continuing on with the analogy at hand; the debate goes on, and is answered by the application of known biology to this seemingly uncompromisable situation. The case of the cell controlling (unconsciously of course) the organization of the multi-cellular organism is biologically supported by the fact that one cell was the pre-cursor to all the following cells and from the one cell, its descendants are able to dissociate and specialize until all the required ”niches” and functions for the organism as a whole are filled. ”Niches” here is applied toward the society of the problem, the symbolism is quite clear otherwise. From this biological fact, we can obviously deduce the importance of the individual cell in its ability to effect the structure of the entire organism (society). Moreover, the innate organization and ability to differentiate, which the one cell possesses, is telling of the innate ability of humanity to unconsciously organize itself without a pre-existing structure.

There seems to be a completely one-sided compromise going on here, but wait. Aristotle’s view of a pre-existing society not dependent on any specific individual cell is also quite founded in biology. Here we need only to look at the life-span of the organism beyond the individual cells’ lives. The organism maintains its order and even ”grows” towards a more organized structure, all the while individual cells are dying or changing to fill specific requirements. The death of a cell is inconsequential to the success and continuing order of the society. We can therefore conclude that Aristotle’s theory is quite correct as well.

So how does that answer the debate if we simply say that they both are correct? Simple, the previously held thought of these two theories as being irreconcilable was proven incorrect, thus ending the controversy and debate (which has hitherto lead to years of unproductive philosophical discussion). How does this theory prove this conclusion? Simply in that the ”model Match” does exist, in its duality, in nature as a completely objective and observable phenomenon.

In the consideration of fairness, I must point out some specific problems inherent with this theory. I must repeat how it has been well defined that ”life” in its use of atoms and molecules, etc. follow an Entropic path. Whereas ”non-living” physics uses atoms and molecules, etc. in a purely Negentropic way. This is not of concern in the given use of this ”biological analogy” theory, however it does represent logical problems when attempting to further apply the theory to ”all” aspects of Humanity (i.e., culture, society, religion, evolution, etc.). Important to note, in keeping with the theory, that life simply

uses negentropic properties of physics in order to create entropic ”order.” Therefore the use of analogy is still applicable.

Now the successful synthesis of two irreconcilable theories has been shown. The method, being not fully explained, will be the subject of my continuing work, however the results are clear in this matter. Aristotle’s pre-existing society driven by Platonic potentials towards the ”essence” of ideal society is completely compatible with Hayek’s notion of individual contribution towards a ”spontaneous order” of society. In the interest of fairness and a purely academic approach, I feel it necessary to also mention some possible problems. Firstly, I need to explicitly state that this ”synthesis” of Aristotle and Hayek only pertains to their respective notions of the individual in society. In no way does this paper attempt to consolidate any other aspects of their philosophical approaches. Secondly, it needs to be reiterated how the fundamental ideas of Aristotle’s and Hayek’s ”essences” and ”spontaneous order” respectively, are completely opposite. For Aristotle, essences are eternal, self evident, independent, and ideal. Whereas Hayek’s ”spontaneous order” is relative, dependent, random, and completely non-existent without ”matter” to act upon. These differences do damage the validity of my synthesis, yet the logic is completely sound and therefore leads us to a paradox, the limit of our reasoning ability.

Appendix

This is attached so as to provide a better understanding of the precise meaning of my usage of the term ”evolution.” It is most applicable towards Hayek’s theory of ”spontaneous order,” however it can also be applied towards Aristotle’s theory of ”essences” in that the material world we perceive is continuously in the process of evolving towards its full potential.

Evolution

It needs to be discussed about the correctness, if misapplication, of the genetic theory of evolution. It is undeniable that all life has evolved from some more simple forms of life. The idea of the genetic code as containing all the information necessary to produce the animal is perfect and indisputable. The evolution of more complex structures is also ”visible” in the genetic code. However, it needs to be extrinsicly stated that ”evolution” is not driven towards complexity per se. The addition of cells to an organism creates a more complex structure which has more potential ”creativity” in its functioning. Nevertheless, the specific motive of ”evolution” is driven by a random ”trial-and-error” method of the changing of bits of genetic information and subjecting the results to the universal rules and laws. If that organism is able to survive, then it is propagated with direct correlation to the amount of its successfulness. This does not ensure the continuing increase in complexity however. There is a 50\50 chance of complexity verses simplicity. Success is not correlated to an organisms complexity per se, but more (potentially) creative organisms are more successful and that is what produces this apparent ”drive” of evolution towards complexity. Evolution exists in biology- that has been established.

Using this theory in a ”less than conventional” way (notice it does not, however decrease its accuracy, or usefulness), we can demonstrate how all aspects of (everything really) human nature also undergoes ”evolution.” Culture, language, music, religion and philosophy, Creativeness (both creativity as a concept and as an aspect of humanity reflected in art, music, language, etc. as evolving throughout history), and yes- even the Market system. The existence of evolution in these rather abstract characteristics of humanity is proven by the existence of evolution of biology.

Do you see how the theory is applied differently here. This time, biology is being acted upon by a concept like ”evolution.” In proving that evolution exerts itself upon biological structures we indirectly prove that evolution exerts itself upon human conceptions. This is possible because biology has been proven (which is the basis of this entire method theory) to be perfectly analogous with those human conceptions. (if A=B, B=C, therefore A=C). Evolution can occur within the life span of a person, inside their brain, creativity can ”evolve” as we build more neuro-connections- thereby increasing the complexity of our brain and therefore our ”creativity” as well. Evolution can also occur through history without the already known ”biological” changes commonly associated with ”evolution.” Using the same example of ”creativity” above, evolution exists in our accumulation of knowledge (i.e., philosophical and mathematical theories, but also architectural style), thereby presenting to each younger generation more and more information (i.e., math, biology, etc.) with which they are able to form more neural-connections in their brain... increasing its complexity... increasing its stores of ”Technicalness” and simultaneously, ”creativity.” In this way, creativity ”evolves” through history. A great analogy here is the continual advancement of Math and equations. Every generation stands on the shoulders of the one before. It could be said that this ”accumulation of knowledge” causes our human society to evolve towards more complex (ordered, technical) culture/society which has an increasing amount of ”creativity” at its disposal to solve problems and deal with changing situations.

An applicable, if obscure continuation of the ”evolution” of creativity towards consciousness exists in G.W.F. Hegel’s Master/Slave dialectics. The ”self-consciousness” defined by a relationship of Lordship and Bondage is subject to precisely the ”evolution” discussed above. Hagel’s theory supports the conscious arrival, via evolution, of our ability to approach social sciences with the same reason we apply to natural sciences. Therein lies the ”analogy theory” stated in this paper, such that we can use the methods of biology in describing and explaining more obscure social phenomena.