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Categorial hylomorphism: an inquiry into the significance of categories for the doctrine of hylomorphism through a confrontation of the ideas of Aristotle and Kant

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation systematically investigates how categories determine the ontological structure of hylomorphic compounds through a structural confrontation of Aristotle's and Kant's paradigmatic formulations of the doctrine. Its core philosophical question—what is the significance of categories for hylomorphism?—requires addressing two fundamental dimensions: how categories ground genuine form-matter unities, and how they delimit the doctrine's explanatory boundaries. These dimensions—later developed as (1) the plurivocity of forms and (2) the ontological-scope dimensions—structure the dissertation's progression. Rather than approaching this abstractly, I employ Aristotle and Kant as methodological touchstones because their theories embody two fundamentally different yet structurally complete ways in which categories organize hylomorphic principles. Aristotle's formulation is indispensable as it establishes the original categorial framework that still implicitly governs contemporary debates, while Kant's revision demonstrates how modifying these categorial foundations can overcome systematic limitations. This approach which I will call a categorial approach to hylomorphism—which analyzes how the categories operative within a given ontology determine and demarcate hylomorphic composition—finds in these two philosophers not mere historical positions, but exemplars of how categorial structures shape ontological possibilities. Through this methodological engagement with their systems, this work demonstrates that categories constitutively determine the range of admissible hylomorphic compounds, and consequently how Kant's categorial innovations provide the conceptual means to ontologically enrich hylomorphism—that is, to systematically expand its explanatory capacity to hylomorphic structures that exceed classical form-matter paradigms while preserving rigorous compositional analysis. Thus, by using Aristotle and Kant as methodological guides, this categorial approach reveals how hylomorphism's very possibility as an ontological doctrine depends on its underlying categorial architecture.

1. The Problems of This Dissertation

In general, hylomorphism can be understood as the doctrine according to which objects are compounds of form and matter¹. In this way, hylomorphism aims to present in a unified doctrine of the object two complementary elements, namely: (I) form and (II) matter, two elements that nevertheless presuppose different problems. This is why hylomorphism has recently been characterized as a “middle way”² or a “balancing act”³, i.e. as a theoretical device that is ductile enough to allow us to think in a unified way problems that our understanding leads us to think separately. By asking about form, hylomorphism attempts to answer two questions about the object, namely (I.1) what kind of object it is, i.e. to which category it belongs, and (I.2) in what way form exercises its formative power over matter, thus organizing the material parts of the object. By asking about matter, hylomorphism attempts to answer (II.3) what parts the object consists of, whether these parts are themselves objects, so that the object can then participate in the material constitution of other objects, and thus whether the composition of the object can be thought of in levels, that is, hierarchically⁴. Accordingly, there are three core problems of hylomorphism, which might be called (I.1) the problem of the categorial forms, (I.2) the problem of the categorial formation, and (II.3) the problem of the hierarchical or vertical composition of the object.

To illustrate these three core problems and the way in which they are interconnected, consider the example of a house. Within the Aristotelian framework, the form of the house is its essence—what makes it a house rather than a mere heap of materials—which would be considered as belonging to the category of substance. The formation of the house concerns how this substantial form organizes its material parts, such as the arrangement of bricks, beams and other components according to the architectural design that defines a functional dwelling. Thus, the formative power of the form of the house ensures that the materials are unified into a coherent whole. Meanwhile, the matter of the house consists of its constituent parts, such as bricks, which in turn can be regarded as hylomorphic compounds⁵. Indeed,

¹ See, among others, Skrzypek (2017, p. 360), Shields (2022, p. 96), Goswick (2018, p. 52), Rea (2011, p. 341).

² Shields (2022, p. 97).

³ De Haas (2023, p. 174).

⁴ For this hierarchical conception of matter, to which I subscribe, see Fine (1992, pp. 37 ff; 1994, p. 16) and Koslicki (2008, pp. 186–188). See my discussion on their positions on Ch. 3, sect. 2.2.2.

⁵ Cf. Koslicki (2018a, p. 59).

one could argue that each brick has its own form (i.e. the form of a brick, which can also be categorized as a substance) and its own matter (clay). This reveals the hierarchical, or vertical, composition of the object: clay is formed into bricks, and bricks are organized into a house. Thus, the house exemplifies (I.1) the problem of categorial form (its status as a substance), (I.2) the problem of formation (how its form unifies the bricks to constitute the house) and (II.3) the problem of vertical composition (how bricks, as lower-level compounds, contribute to the material constitution of the higher-level compound, i.e. the house). Hylomorphism thereby exhibits its versatility in analyzing the same entity at different organizational levels and integrating these three core problems into a unified doctrine. In light of this scenario, one might wonder what would happen if we were to add categories other than substance to the equation, which is precisely the approach we will take in this dissertation with Aristotle and Kant.

Now, the doctrine of hylomorphism has attracted renewed interest in contemporary ontology⁶. However, in my view, the systematic unity of the three core problems of hylomorphism has not been fully realized, especially with regard to the implications that categories might have in the context of a unified account of these problems. Although categories and hylomorphism are two important topics in contemporary ontology, there are, to my knowledge, no studies that connect them systematically⁷. In this way, this work also indirectly aims to contribute to ongoing research on hylomorphism.

This lack of attention to the connection between categories and hylomorphism is particularly significant, given that it has been a concern for the hylomorphic tradition since the time of Aristotle, the philosopher from whom—in one way or another—all contemporary hylomorphists draw inspiration⁸. However, what is more significant is that, as we shall see throughout this study, the categorial framework adopted within a given

⁶ For a detailed bibliography of contemporary authors sympathetic to hylomorphism see Bailey & Wilkins (2018). See also Skrzypek (2017, p. 361–362, n. 5).

⁷ In the context of her structural conception of forms, Koslicki (2008) seems to ask the right question: “To what ontological category do structures belong? Are they themselves objects, or are they rather properties and relations?” (p. 252; cf. pp. 174–175). She seems to have three categories as candidates for structures: objects, properties and relations. However, after some brief remarks on the view that structures “behave as objects”, she finally leaves the problem unresolved, claiming that she will “leave this question to be addressed by future research” (see pp. 252–254).

⁸ As Shields (2022) has observed, in the context of contemporary hylomorphism “we find ourselves confronted with a wide range of doctrines presented under the banner of hylomorphism, all looking, if at times only noddingly, to their common origin in Aristotle” (pp. 96–97).

hylomorphic system has implications for the problem of forms in particular, and from there to the other core problems mentioned above. In this sense, a categorial approach to hylomorphism offers different ways to understand how these problems are related to each other. Specifically, it achieves this by addressing two constitutive dimensions: (1) the plurivocity dimension, which reveals how forms coexist and exercise distinct formative roles across hierarchical levels, and (2) the ontological-scope dimension, which demarcates hylomorphism's boundaries of application. Let me begin addressing (1) the plurivocity dimension.

The drawbacks resulting from the absence of an explicit treatment of the importance of categories for hylomorphism can be seen, firstly, in the way contemporary hylomorphists treat forms. Indeed, as Shields (2022) has recently pointed out, “the different strands in contemporary hylomorphism [...] differ primarily in virtue of their varying attempts to make room for form” (p. 122). In this context, the debate focuses primarily on what is the definitive general conception of form, i.e., whether form is an essence (Fine, 1999), a structure (Koslicki, 2008), powers (Koons, 2014), a principle of unity (Johnston, 2006), and so on⁹. It is not my interest in this dissertation to focus on each of these positions, but to highlight a more general issue.

When considering forms from the perspective of hylomorphism, it is possible to distinguish between a general way of thinking their nature, which is properly concerned with what we might call the general conception of form, and a more specific way of thinking them, which takes into account the internal differences between forms that are inherent in each general conception.

It is my contention that categories play an important role in both of these ways of considering forms. Indeed, categories show us, on the one hand, what general conception of forms we are dealing with and, on the other hand, according to the peculiar kinds of forms that emerge from how they are classified within a given general conception, they show us those more specific differences to which we have referred above. It is this second, more specific aspect of forms that has been underemphasized in my opinion, an underemphasis that a categorial approach might help to address. Indeed, contemporary hylomorphism seems to concentrate mainly on the general aspect of forms, which leads it to work with a univocal notion of form, as if there were just a single kind of form (essences, structures, etc.). This, in turn, leads to a multipurpose notion of form, in the sense that every object must conform just to this general conception of form, while failing to account for

⁹ In his survey of contemporary hylomorphism Shields (2022) treats each of these positions in more detail.

the possibility of multiple, distinct formal kinds—each with its own distinctive features—within the broader general conception.

This last point represents one of the main advantages of a categorial approach to hylomorphism, which, in addition to a general reflection on the nature of forms, could also offer a plurivocal conception of them. In this sense, my view is that depending on the nature of each of the categories available within a given general conception, it is possible to specify the role that each of them, as forms of the object, can play (by means of the concept of formation) in the composition of the latter. Accordingly, in the same system (i.e. under the same general conception of categories) there can be more than one kind of form and, therefore, of formation and compound, each one different from the others, which justifies a different type of analysis for each one and raises a crucial question: how can these different categorial forms fit into a single hylomorphic system? To address this, I introduce the concept of *categorial formal variation*, which captures how different forms may operate at distinct levels of hierarchical analysis¹⁰. Of course, one could always have an ontology with only one category¹¹. However, the question here is whether this is really the case for contemporary hylomorphists. In my view, this question has not been asked rigorously enough at present. Now let me turn to (2) the ontological-scope dimension.

A second, more significant issue related to the previous one that arises from the absence of a systematic treatment of the connection between categories and hylomorphism is that it is precisely the categories, by establishing in the most general way possible what kinds of objects there are, that indicate the limits and the objective scope of our ontology and hence of hylomorphism. Thus, in addition to (1) offering a plurivocal alternative to a univocal conception of forms and thereby illustrating how different forms can coexist and fulfil distinct roles within the same hylomorphic system, a categorial approach could also (2) have significant implications for the ontological scope and limits of the application of the hylomorphic doctrine—enabling us to distinguish a variety of complexes corresponding to the number of accepted categorial forms.

The significance of categories for (2) the ontological-scope dimension was already foreshadowed by the example of the house. Indeed, if in our ontology we accept only the category of individual object or substance,

¹⁰ The concept of categorial formal variation will be crucial for confronting Aristotle's and Kant's hylomorphism in the context of [II.3] the problem of hierarchical object composition (Ch. 3). See particularly, Ch. 3, sects. 2.4 and 3.3.3.

¹¹ Although not in the context of hylomorphism, Paul (2017) has argued for a one-category ontology.

then—as Aristotle’s hylomorphism is often interpreted¹²—there will be only one kind of form and compound, namely the substantial compound. Likewise, every formation will correspond to this form. And the hierarchical composition of this object will be constituted at its various levels by the same kind of object, i.e. substances, formed in each level by the same categorial form and thus showing no categorial variation¹³, the same as it happened with the house. In other words, the limits and ontological scope of such a substantial hylomorphism will be determined by only one kind of category, allowing thus for the constitution of only one kind of hylomorphic object, namely the substantial compound.

This becomes all the more relevant when one considers that the need to extend the ontological limits of hylomorphism has recently been raised. Fine (1992), for example, has claimed that Aristotle “assumes that concrete substances are not, strictly speaking, the matter of anything else” and that “the idea that there is a distinctive notion of constitution, terminating in the concrete substances is one that should be given up” (p. 38)¹⁴. In a subsequent paper, Fine (1999), who has claimed that his work “falls squarely within the hylomorphic tradition of Aristotle” (p. 62) builds on his initial intuition by suggesting that hylomorphism should lead

to a picture of the material world that has much more in common with the abstract realms of sets or of propositions than with the realms of concreta [...]. Material things enjoy a hierarchical structure [...] and they will belong to a vast superstructure, of which the objects we usually recognize are but a small part. [...] it is only by abandoning our usual conception of material things as relatively unstructured, completely unconceptual, and ontologically limited in their nature that we can attain a proper understanding of what they are (p. 74).

These quotes raise two important issues for this dissertation. One related to (1) and the other to (2). On the one hand, they suggest Aristotle held a

¹² That is, as if there were only one form in his hylomorphic doctrine. As we shall see below, this is not the case. Consider, for example, Oderberg (2005, pp. 157 and 37), who pays close attention to this distinction when discussing Aristotelian categories but neglects it entirely in his work on hylomorphism (Oderberg, 2013). An exception is Studtmann (2008, pp. 60 and 67), who correctly identifies two general hylomorphic forms in Aristotle, but does not correlate them with the Aristotelian distinction between substantial and accidental categories. I will discuss Studtmann’s position in Ch. 2, sect. 3.1, n.

¹³ Cf. Koslicki (2018b, p. 352). See Ch. 3, sect. 2.4, n.

¹⁴ For now, I set aside the fact that Fine (1992) only considers a hierarchical conception of matter, and not of forms, as Koslicki (2018a)—whom I follow—does. For my discussion on Fine’s position see Ch. 3 sect. 2.2.2..

univocal conception of forms, as if there were no forms in Aristotle other than substantial forms¹⁵. On the other hand, and more importantly, they invite us to embrace the idea that the hierarchical composition of the object should transcend the ontological limits established by Aristotelian hylomorphism. The first issue will play a key role in interpreting Aristotle's hylomorphism, while the second has broader implications for the dissertation as a whole, highlighting Kant's importance to the discussion. Let me begin with the first of these issues.

The fact that Aristotle did not share this univocal conception of forms can easily be evidenced if we fully endorse the idea that the hylomorphic theory of forms should depend on the categories. Indeed, Aristotle held a plurivocal notion of categories and thus also of forms. In addition to the category of substance, there are also the so-called non-substantial or accidental categories (quality, quantity, etc.). As will be demonstrated throughout this work, there are therefore two kinds of form and hylomorphic compound in his doctrine: the substantial and the substantio-accidental or accidental compound—two kinds of compound whose forms correspond to Aristotle's categorial division, and which are combined in a hierarchical fashion. In this sense, it would not be correct to claim that Aristotelian hylomorphism is a mere substantial hylomorphism, but one would have to ask what these two kinds of forms (corresponding to these two kinds of categories) have in common in order to give it a more precise name. In the course of this work, we shall rather refer to them as essential forms in the sense that they—albeit to varying degrees—specify the conditions of identity of the object. Accordingly, Aristotle's hylomorphism will be presented here as an essential hylomorphism, a name that allows us to capture the common character of these two kinds of forms¹⁶.

However, even if it is true that Aristotle's hylomorphism is not exhausted by the substantial form, one could still argue that its scope is very limited in that it seems to concern only the "objects we usually recognize". Ultimately, accidents are modifications of substance, and in this respect, Aristotelian hylomorphism remains bound by its dependency on substance. Here, Aristotle's framework reveals its categorial horizon: while plurivocal in its formal distinctions (substantial/accidental), it remains ontologically anchored in the ontology of individual objects—a decisive limit that takes us back to (2) the ontological-scope dimension and the importance of Kant. In

¹⁵ Cf. Fine (1999, p. 70).

¹⁶ For the treatment of Aristotle's essential forms (substantial and accidental) and the compounds constituted by these forms, see Ch. 2 sect. 3. For an explanation of how these two compounds are hierarchically entangled see Ch. 3 sect. 2.

other words: Aristotle has formal plurivocity but ontological constraints, whereas Kant offers categorial tools to overcome those constraints.

Indeed, it is here that Kant's work becomes particularly relevant to this dissertation. The importance of Kant's hylomorphism lies in the fact that, on the one hand, it shares a common analytical framework with Aristotle's doctrine concerning the core problems of hylomorphism, and, on the other hand, Kant's plurivocal conception of categories gives hylomorphism a new direction, which could be said to expand the scope of application of this doctrine.

These two hylomorphic doctrines share three fundamental structural principles, organized around the three core problems of hylomorphism: [I.1] their general conception of forms depends on their general conception of categories and, accordingly, there are as many forms as there are categories, [I.2] there are as many kinds of formation as there are forms, and [II.3] the different forms, and therefore the different kinds of compounds constituted by these forms, find a place in their respective systems thanks to a hylomorphic conception of matter¹⁷ that leads to a hierarchical conception of the hylomorphic composition of the object. This shared architecture ensures that both systems, despite their divergent categorial foundations, maintain coherent structures for object composition.

Now, it is precisely through the decisive role that Aristotle's and Kant's divergent categorial foundations play in structuring hylomorphism that the categorial approach proves its systematic value. Indeed, Kant's conception of categories is radically different from Aristotle's. While Aristotle's ten categories are divided into two kinds—the category of substance and the accidental categories, which include the other nine categories (quality, quantity, etc.)¹⁸—Kant's twelve categories are divided into four groups, each consisting of three categories: quantity (unity, plurality, totality); quality (reality, negation, limitation); relation ('substance and accident', 'cause and effect', and 'community'); and modality (possibility, existence, necessity)¹⁹.

In this context, Kant holds a general conception of categories and, therefore, of forms which, although also plurivocal, structurally differs from Aristotle's conception and which due to its logical origins will be presented in this dissertation as a function-based conception. Indeed, Kant finds in the functions of logic the origin of the forms that constitute his categorial framework. In this manner, his classification of categories reflects the way in

¹⁷ I take this expression from Koslicki (2018a, p. 59). On this see Ch. 3, sect. 2.2.2.

¹⁸ Cf. *Cat.*, iv, 1b25–2a3 and *Top.*, I, ix, 103b21–23.

¹⁹ Cf. *KrV* B106.

which judgments²⁰ in general logic are classified (i.e., according to quantity, quality, relation and modality)²¹. This functional conception of categories and forms contrasts with the essential conception of Aristotle and most contemporary hylomorphisms, which generally retain the essential character of forms²². Indeed, they do not provide the conditions of identity of the object, but rather operate—in Kant’s terms—as syntheses of a manifold. In other words, these forms operate as ways in which a plurality of (material) elements are bound together in an object in a manner analogous to the way in which concepts are bound together in judgments and they are exhausted by this very role. To express it differently, instead of providing formal conditions of identity, the Kantian forms provide formal conditions of possibility of the object. And as such, these forms for Kant in no way express the essence of an object²³.

As we will see throughout this dissertation with the addition of Kant’s categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality, we will be able to find a much richer doctrine than the Aristotelian in regard to (1) the plurivocity dimension of our categorial approach²⁴. On the other hand, especially with Kant’s categories of relation we will find an ontologically enriched reflection on (2) the ontological-scope dimension²⁵. Indeed, if we pay attention to these categories the first of them is the category of ‘substance and accident’. Following their divergent general conceptions of categories, this will be a pivotal juncture at which to confront Aristotle’s and Kant’s hylomorphisms. The contrast between their respective views on the manner in which the hylomorphic composition of a substance and its accidents occur will form the basis for further points of contrast concerning the plurivocity and ontological-

²⁰ When using the term ‘judgment’ in relation to both Kant and Aristotle, it is important to emphasize that I will not be referring to a modern conception of judgment, in which this structure is understood on the basis of its assertive character. In this sense, I will use the concept of judgment in a pre-modern way, without considering the assertive force given to it in the contemporary context. Therefore, when I refer to judgments, I will understand them as being closer to what is currently understood as a proposition; that is to say, the assertible content to which the assertive force of judgment (in the modern sense) is applied. However, I should note that, as van der Schaar (2008, pp. 329 ff.) explains, the pre-modern notion of judgment or proposition (‘snow is white’, for example) is better understood as an assertible (or judgment-candidate)—with the form of a full declarative sentence, not as with the form of a that-clause, as it has on the modern conception.

²¹ For my discussion on this topic see Ch. 1, sect. 3.

²² Indeed, as Shields (2022, p. 102) has pointed out, one of the main features of forms, in the context of what he has called minimal hylomorphism, is the fact that forms are identity-providing.

²³ See Ch. 2, sect. 4.3.

²⁴ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.3.3.

²⁵ See Ch. 3, sect. 4.

scope dimensions. While Aristotle's hylomorphism is exhausted in this sort of hylomorphic complex, Kant's is not because the remaining categorial forms of relation operate on this complex of substance and accident as the matter upon which a hierarchical hylomorphic system of relations is built. In this sense, the remaining Kantian forms of relation will play an even more important role for us, since these are precisely the forms that will give rise to new kinds of hylomorphic complexes that extend beyond the ontological limits of Aristotle's doctrine²⁶. The corresponding logical forms of these categorial forms—the hypothetical form for the category of 'cause and effect' and the disjunctive form for the category of 'community'—will reveal new hylomorphic complexes that constitute higher-order composites. As it will be shown, these composites are materially constituted by individual objects in a way that allows us to present Kant's doctrine as an inter-objective hylomorphic doctrine²⁷.

Thus, new kinds of objects will emerge within Kant's categorial framework. New kinds of composites whose forms could be said, to paraphrase Fine's quote, to be 'structured' and 'conceptual'—rather than 'ontologically limited'—as they originate in 'the abstract realm' of logic. These hylomorphic composites constitute what might be called a 'vast superstructure', the infrastructure of which could be constituted by the individual objects proper to Aristotle's matter-form paradigm. In this sense, Kant's expansion of hylomorphism also suggests a means of integrating both hylomorphic systems. However, this is something that we can only outline for the time being, the possibility of which will be examined tentatively in our conclusions. Before concluding this section, let me return to our initial question to present our general and specific sub-questions.

In light of everything we have set out so far regarding a categorial approach to hylomorphism, the main question formulated at the beginning of this introduction—What is the significance of categories for hylomorphism?—can be divided into two groups of general questions corresponding to (1) the plurivocity and (2) the ontological-scope dimensions:

- (1) If categories correspond to forms, could there be multiple forms within a single hylomorphic system? How could this be possible, i.e. how could different forms coexist in one hylomorphic doctrine? How can this be demonstrated in the cases of Aristotle and Kant?

²⁶ For the full treatment of Kant's relational hylomorphism see Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.

²⁷ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.3.2.

- (2) 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?

It is important to note that these are overarching questions that will determine the argumentation of the entire dissertation, as they will only be fully answered at the end of the confrontations between Aristotle and Kant. Indeed, it is by answering these two clusters of general sub-questions relating to both Aristotle and Kant that it will become clear, as this dissertation develops, how Kant's categorial framework enriches hylomorphism and how impactful a categorial approach to this doctrine is.

In this context, in order to provide a comprehensive response to these general questions, the structure of this dissertation will mirror the division of the core problems of hylomorphism. Accordingly, the dissertation is divided into two parts: one on forms and the other on matter. The first part will tackle [I.1] categorial forms (Chapter 1) and [I.2] formation (Chapter 2), while the second part will address [II.3] matter and hierarchical composition (Chapter 3). This reflects the inherent theoretical dependency of the core problems. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, a categorial approach could demonstrate the interconnectedness of these core problems. With this in mind, the sub-questions I will address in each chapter are as follows: [I.1] What general conceptions of categories, and therefore of forms, there are; [I.2] 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; and [II.3] How the concept of matter can lead to a hierarchical understanding of hylomorphic composition, and what role each form plays within this hierarchical framework. The present dissertation therefore undertakes a systematic examination of hylomorphism, developing a comprehensive account of the doctrine by articulating the interdependence of its core issues and explaining how this interdependence operates within the context of the categorial frameworks of Aristotle and Kant, answering each of the above questions sequentially.

It is therefore on the basis of successive structural confrontations between Aristotle's and Kant's hylomorphic doctrines of the object carried out according to the division established by the three core problems of hylomorphism that we will be able to demonstrate that the underlying categorial framework of a given hylomorphic doctrine determines: (1) how many complexes can be allowed in a single doctrine and (2) the ontological limits and scope of hylomorphism.

2. General Remarks on Method

Kant's Hylomorphism

The choice of these two authors may seem somewhat strange, especially to those unfamiliar with Kant's theoretical philosophy. It is Aristotle who is typically invoked when considering the doctrine of hylomorphism²⁸. Moreover, the philosophies of Aristotle and Kant have often been seen as antagonistic or incompatible, and in this sense Kant has even been seen as an anti-Aristotelian philosopher²⁹. Nevertheless, Kant is a deeply hylomorphic philosopher³⁰, for whom the concepts of matter and form have a wide range of application, close to that of Aristotle³¹. It could be said that, for both Aristotle and Kant, the concepts of matter and form have a ubiquitous³² character and, in this sense, hylomorphism is for them a theoretical device sufficiently ductile to explain a myriad of things (the nature of knowledge, the relationship between body and soul, the problem of change, the nature of objects, etc.).

In this context, the hylomorphic character of Kant's theoretical philosophy is often accepted by scholars³³, and there are even those who argue that his doctrine is a direct inheritance of Aristotelianism, both from a historical³⁴ and from a systematic perspective³⁵. By highlighting the continuity between the two hylomorphisms, the common framework that we propose in this work for confronting Aristotle and Kant follows this same line of thought. However, it pays attention to an aspect of Kant's hylomorphic

²⁸ See, for example, the bibliography on hylomorphism by Bailey & Wilkins (2018). While this is a very valuable bibliography and should be consulted by anyone wishing to get a general picture of contemporary hylomorphism, there is virtually no mention of authors outside the Aristotelian tradition.

²⁹ See Sgarbi (2016) who claims that “[i]f we consider the most important reconstructions of Kantian philosophy, we find no reference to Aristotle and modern Aristotelianism; rather, Kant is often pictured as an anti-Aristotelian philosopher” (p. 217).

³⁰ Some of the most relevant passages to understand Kant's general conception of hylomorphism are *KrV* A77; B118; B322 (cf. also B84–5).

³¹ Aristotle introduced hylomorphism in *Met.* as a way to overcome the problems generated by Plato's concept of participation (cf. *Met.* VIII, vi; especially 1045a 23–25). However, Aristotle did not only use hylomorphism in the context of his ontology but also in the field of psychology and physics, for example (see, *De An.* II, i, iv and *Phys.* I, vii).

³² This is why Kant goes so far as to say that matter and form “are two concepts that ground all other reflection” (*KrV* B322). On the ubiquity of these concepts in Kant, see Pollok (2017, p. 130).

³³ See Tegtmeier (2023, p. 60, n. 12); Pollok (2017, pp. 117 ff.; 2014); Kern (2023).

³⁴ See Sgarbi (2016, p. 80).

³⁵ See Longuenesse (1998, p. 149). See also Kern (2023, p. 87).

thought that is rarely explored in contemporary ontology: his hylomorphic doctrine of the object in general³⁶.

In the specialized literature, Kant's hylomorphism is generally understood in at least two ways. On the one hand, some claim that while the faculty of sensibility provides the material conditions of experience, the faculty of understanding provides its formal conditions³⁷. On the other hand, some take a broader approach, understanding how the various faculties (extending beyond sensibility and understanding to include the faculties of judgment and reason) and representations involved in Kant's critical system organize themselves in a hylomorphic and hierarchical manner³⁸. I agree with the first position in that I will focus on the material and formal elements corresponding only to sensibility and understanding. Likewise, I agree with the more sophisticated hierarchical interpretation of the second position. However, the point at which my approach differs from both of these positions is that I aim to offer a more fine-grained approach to the categories. While these positions are correct in principle and align with Kant's philosophy, my approach refines their focus: I identify the specific formal operations of each category within a hierarchical framework.

For Kant, the categories are the pure concepts of the understanding—the ultimate, irreducible functions into which this faculty can be decomposed. In this sense, I will exclusively consider them as formal conditions for the possibility of the object, without delving into the problems arising from the respective faculties involved. More importantly, however, my approach differs from other hylomorphic interpretations of Kant in that I will conduct a hylomorphic and hierarchical analysis that considers the peculiarity of each of the Kantian categories, rather than taking the understanding *en masse* as the form for sensibility. Therefore, the question I will pose is whether the categories, as forms of the object, operate *en bloc* and directly, or whether they operate in an orderly fashion with certain categories mediating the application of others to their matter, i.e. appearance. Through this approach, I will demonstrate how the categories constitute progressively more complex hylomorphic composites in a hierarchical manner. Therefore, unlike other interpretations that focus on the hierarchy constituted by the faculties and their corresponding representations, I will provide a hylomorphic interpretation of Kant's categorial forms by focusing on how these forms

³⁶ There are, however, references to Kant's hylomorphism in the context of some other contemporary discussions, such as personhood and self-consciousness. See for example Kraus (2020), Aquila (1997).

³⁷ Cf. Tegtmeier (2023) and Sgarbi (2016).

³⁸ Cf. Pollock (2017) and Longuenesse (1998). For my discussion on their hierarchical interpretations of Kant see Ch. 3, sect. 3.2.

constitute diverse hylomorphic complexes that are nonetheless hierarchically entangled with each other.

It should be noted that the early phenomenology of Husserl (2001), especially the *Sixth Logical Investigation*, and the late neo-Kantianism of Lask (1923), particularly *Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre*, offer pioneering antecedents for the ontological interpretation of Kant's hylomorphism that I present here. These works laid the groundwork for my approach by treating their Kantian-inspired categories in an objectivistic fashion as constitutive forms of the object³⁹. However, a thorough examination of their contributions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, for both systematic and spatial reasons. On the one hand, my argument demands a precise, category-focused analysis of Kant's hylomorphism that diverges from the broader epistemological and metaphysical commitments of Husserl and Lask (e.g. their theories of truth and the ontological status of categories). On the other hand, providing a thorough critique of their assumptions would require a level of detail that is disproportionate to the primary aim of this study in relation to Kant: to structurally reconstruct his hylomorphic doctrine. Nevertheless, their influence remains pivotal. By treating categories as object-constituting forms, they anticipated my methodological neutrality regarding the role of the faculties, even though I depart from some of their ontological commitments. This selective engagement reflects a deliberate bracketing of ontological disputes in order to prioritize the architectonic role of categories in hylomorphic composition, a point which I will elaborate on below.

The Structural Character of the Confrontation between Aristotle and Kant

Even if we take into account the continuity between Aristotle's and Kant's hylomorphisms mentioned above, one might ask how it is possible to confront their respective hylomorphic doctrines of the object when there are well-known ontological differences between them. On this point, it is important to emphasize a methodological principle that is of the utmost importance for this work. The confrontation between Aristotle and Kant was stated to have a structural character precisely to avoid inconveniences arising from such differences.

Indeed, the several confrontations that will be carried out in this dissertation will be of a purely morphological or structural character in the sense that in their execution I will bracket the question about the ontological

³⁹ Cf. Ainbinder (2015) and Vigo (2002, 2004).

status of form and matter in each of these authors. In this sense, the present study is designed to be immune to textbook questions about how it is possible to confront Aristotle and Kant when, for example, with regard to categories and forms, one understands them in a realist framework and the other in a conceptualist one, or when, with regard to matter, one speaks of the ultimate substratum of all reality while the other says that we cannot know the thing in itself, but only appearances, and so on. Even though one could be critical of these divisions—for example, by arguing that, for Kant, the world of appearances is real in the sense that, ultimately, appearances are all we have, or by suggesting that Aristotle’s distinction between matter and form cannot necessarily be interpreted as a real distinction, but also as a conceptual one—still, as many of these issues persist in some academic circles, it is better to establish clear limits in order to avoid any misunderstandings in this regard. Indeed, the consideration of the ontological status is too great a hindrance for the confrontation between these two types of hylomorphism to be as productive and fruitful as possible allowing us to reflect on both doctrines in a comprehensive way and, consequently, to draw relevant conclusions regarding the systematic significance of categories for hylomorphism. This basic idea, which we could call *the neutrality with regard to the ontological status of form and matter in the confrontation between Aristotelian and Kantian hylomorphism*, will be crucial for the whole development of this thesis and, in this sense, it is necessary to stress that it constitutes one of its fundamental pillars. It is important to note, however, that although this thesis will be neutral with respect to the ontological status of form and matter in both authors, it will have an ontological character insofar as it will deal with *the hylomorphic composition of the object in general*. For this reason, and in order to eliminate any potential errors of interpretation, we can also refer to this structural confrontation as a *metaphysically neutral confrontation*.

The fact that this investigation is metaphysically neutral in the sense just described has the advantage that the ideas presented about Aristotle’s and Kant’s hylomorphism can be used in different frameworks if they happen to be appealing to different ontological positions (realism, conceptualism, nominalism, etc.). In other words: its metaphysical neutrality ensures cross-paradigm applicability. Another important point related to the neutral and structural character of the present work is that no attempt will be made here to answer the question of what the definitive list of categories is or what matter is in an ultimate or fundamental sense, i.e. the elements to which any object can ultimately be reduced (atoms, physical particles, etc.). In this sense, both Aristotle’s and Kant’s conceptions of the categories will be considered rather as a datum from which the main consequences they have for

hylomorphism will be drawn, but in no case will the validity or completeness of each of them be questioned.

Further Methodological Remarks

Now, as indicated above, the development of this work will be carried out on the basis of successive structural confrontations between Aristotle and Kant around what we have called the core problems of hylomorphism. In this sense, it is also important to stress that, since the emphasis will be placed mainly on these problems, this dissertation has a systematic rather than a historical character, which will permeate its entire argumentation. As such, this work is intended neither as a defense of Aristotle nor of Kant, but as a positive contribution to hylomorphism in its own right. Additionally, the inherent difficulty of any confrontation between two philosophical systems will make it necessary, for strategic reasons, to make some concessions regarding the division of labour in Aristotle and Kant on these core problems. This means that the full development of these problems will not always be found in each chapter dedicated to them, but will be supplemented in later chapters. This point will become clearer below. The importance of categories for the issue of the systematic unity of these core problems, as well as the value of Kantian hylomorphism as opposed to Aristotelian hylomorphism in relation to the dimensions related to (1) the plurivocity of forms, and (2) the ontological limits and scope of application of the hylomorphic doctrine, are thus general results that will only be able to be appreciated from the full development of the present dissertation.

Regarding the value of this thesis for contemporary hylomorphism, it should be noted that although this work is intended to be a contribution to that discussion, for which I have included references and some discussions with contemporary hylomorphists, especially when considering Aristotle, an exhaustive discussion on this point will not be included. In this sense, it is my hope that the discussion of Aristotle, of whom, as mentioned above, a large part of contemporary hylomorphists see themselves, with different nuances, as heirs, can in some sense fill this gap. Nevertheless, in the conclusion to this work, I will present some general findings on the potential contributions that the categorial approach to Aristotle's and particularly Kant's hylomorphism could make to this discussion. This proves particularly relevant for Fine and Koslicki, who stand out for maintaining what I consider to be one of the most essential features of hylomorphism: its hierarchical nature.

Another important point is that, since one of the aims of this thesis is to examine how Kant's conception of categories allows for an expansion of the ontological limits and scope of the hylomorphic doctrine as understood

by Aristotle, I will also explore the possibility of integrating the two hylomorphic doctrines while maintaining strict focus on their architectonic principles (rather than ontological commitments). However, this is part of a larger project for which I can only give some hints, also to be included in the conclusions.

Finally, in view of the variety of topics to be dealt with in both Aristotle and Kant, I have not been able to include an exhaustive discussion with the specialized scholarship on each of them. Only when I have found that the interpretation offered may be controversial among specialists or, above all, when the argumentation has required it, have I included more detailed discussions. To balance this out, the arguments presented for the interpretation of Aristotle and Kant have been developed as closely as possible to the texts themselves, for which I have included an extensive number of quotations from both philosophers. As far as the texts are concerned, in the case of Kant, the central work to be used here will be the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*KrV*). In the case of Aristotle, I have relied on more sources, although the most central ones will be the *Categories* (*Cat.*) and, more fundamentally, the *Metaphysics* (*Metaph.*). Having established these general methodological points, let me now present the general structure of this work, according to its established division.

3. The Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation is structured around the three core problems of hylomorphism identified at the beginning of this dissertation. These are: [I.1] the problem of categorial forms, [I.2] the problem of formation, and [II.3] the problem of the hierarchical composition of the object. We will therefore engage with Aristotle and Kant through a series of confrontations that follow the path traced by these core problems. In this sense, the work is divided in two parts: one dedicated to categorial forms (Part I) and the other dedicated to hierarchical composition (Part II). While Part I addresses categories and how their structure should be understood in general terms (Chapter 1), as well as formation and how categorial forms operate specifically on their matter (Chapter 2), Part II addresses matter and hierarchical composition and how each categorial form fits into this hierarchical framework (Chapter 3).

As this dissertation is based on a categorial approach to hylomorphism, Chapter 1 will begin by addressing Aristotle's and Kant's general conceptions of categories. One of the central arguments of this thesis is that, for both philosophers, their conception of forms depends on their

respective conceptions of categories. In this sense, there will be as many forms as there are types of categories in each of their conceptions. This idea is one of the most important aspects of the shared framework on which the confrontations between these two philosophers will be conducted, as it will underpin the entire analysis of the formation and the hierarchical composition of the object in the subsequent chapters. The main question of Chapter 1 is therefore as follows: What is the most significant difference between Aristotle's and Kant's general conceptions of categories? The strategy used in this chapter will focus on how Kant arrived at his particular conception of categories. It is from this route that we will obtain the elements necessary to analyze Aristotle's conception and ultimately carry out the confrontation between the two.

To understand how Kant developed his theory of categories in *KrV*, it is first necessary to consider his distinction between general and transcendental logic⁴⁰. While the former provides us with the table of judgments⁴¹, the latter provides us with the table of categories⁴². Kant holds that there is a correspondence between these two disciplines, and accordingly between these two tables. This is why his table of categories can be divided into the four groups shown above, as judgments are also divided in general logic according to quantity, quality, relation and modality. In this context, Kant argues that the table of judgments provided by general logic can serve as a guiding thread for the discovery of the pure concepts of understanding, or categories. These concepts constitute the core of his transcendental logic and his ontology as a theory of the object in general, forming thus the basis of the sub-discipline of transcendental logic known as transcendental analytic.

It is worth noting that Kant regarded general logic, and consequently his doctrine of judgments, as a discipline firmly rooted in Aristotelian logic⁴³. In Kant's view, this logic had neither advanced nor regressed since the time of Aristotle⁴⁴. This raises the following question: how did Kant arrive at a doctrine of categories so different from that of Aristotle, despite taking as his point of departure a discipline (i.e. general logic and the table of judgments) that he himself understood to be profoundly Aristotelian?

The key to answering this question lies in the fact that Kant identifies the functions corresponding to each of the categories with the logical functions of judgments. As we will see, this is in sharp contrast to Aristotle's

⁴⁰ See Ch. 1, sect. 3.1.

⁴¹ For Kant's table of judgments see Fig. 1 in Ch. 1, sect. 3.2.

⁴² For Kant's table of categories see Fig. 2 in Ch. 1, sect. 5.1.

⁴³ See Ch. 1, sect. 3.2.

⁴⁴ Cf. *KrV* Bviii.

understanding of the systematic connection between categories and judgments—a connection that, rather than involving identification, involves composition⁴⁵. In this context, the Kantian conception of categories will be presented here as a *functional conception* of categories. These categories are characterized by the fact that in their different variants, they always operate over a plurality. They are, as Kant himself calls them, functions of synthesis of a manifold. Consequently, the process of transformation of categories carried out by Kant, in contrast to the Aristotelian tradition, will be referred to as the *functionalization of categories*⁴⁶. In this context, the Aristotelian categories or forms will be presented provisionally in this chapter as non-functional categories or forms. A more specific characterization of these forms will be found in Chapter 2, where they will generally be referred to as *essential forms*, in contrast to Kant's functional forms.

With regard to Aristotelian forms, it should be noted that, in contrast to Kantian forms, they will be presented as having a strictly non-functional character in Chapter 1. That said, they also have a functional element, particularly in the case of forms corresponding to the category of substance (i.e. substantial forms), which is not the case for accidental forms. However, this can be properly observed in the context of [I.2] the problem of formation, i.e. in Chapter 2⁴⁷.

Finally, based on these considerations, I will address the question of the ontological and hylomorphic character of Kant's functional forms in his transcendental analytic⁴⁸. I will provide an initial response to this question, which will be progressively expanded upon in the subsequent chapters. Kant's functional conception of categories permeates the entire analysis of his hylomorphic doctrine of the object. It is indeed on this basis that we will arrive at the systematic significance of Kant's hylomorphism for (1) the plurivocity and (2) ontological scope dimensions in the final sections of this work.

As anticipated, the central theme of Chapter 2 will be the problem of formation. Two things need to be made clear here. First, the argument of this chapter is based on the idea that in both Aristotle and Kant there are as many types of formation as there are forms in their respective systems. Once we have shown the difference between Aristotle's and Kant's conceptions of categorial forms, we can proceed to show how each of the forms belonging

⁴⁵ See Ch. 1, sect. 4.

⁴⁶ See Ch. 1, sect. 5.1 and 5.2.

⁴⁷ For the analysis on the functional role of Aristotle's substantial forms see Ch. 2, sect. 3.2.2.1 and Ch. 3, sect. 2.2.3.

⁴⁸ See Ch. 1, sect. 5.3.

to these conceptions perform their roles differently in relation to matter. In this chapter, I will therefore continue exploring categorial forms and the idea that in each system there will be as many forms as categories, with the difference that I will approach this task from the perspective of formation. Second, since formation was understood as the way in which forms exercise their formative power over matter, unlike in Chapter 1 where we concentrated on the structure of categorial forms independently of matter, here we will fully address the problem of the object as a compound of form and matter. In other words, the proper hylomorphic analysis of the object will begin here. In this context, the central question of Chapter 2 is as follows: How does Aristotle's hylomorphic conception of the object differ from Kant's with regard to formation?

At this point, however, a methodological reservation is necessary in order to qualify this question. Instead of contrasting each of Aristotle's and Kant's categorial form and its corresponding formation one-to-one, I will try to find a point of convergence between the two doctrines of forms. To achieve this, I will consider Aristotle's two kinds of forms (substantial and accidental), but only one of Kant's twelve categorial forms, namely, the category of 'substance and accident'⁴⁹. In contrast to Aristotle, where substance and accident are two different kinds of categories, in Kant it is only one category, namely *the* categorial form of 'substance and accident'. The kind of composite⁵⁰ that will be formed from this categorial form will be called predicative composite (or *substantia phaenomenon*, as Kant calls it)⁵¹. I call it predicative composite because its form corresponds to that of the categorial judgment of the form S is P. As we will see, this judgment is central to all others for Kant⁵². In this sense, it is also apt to contrast the category of 'substance and accident' with Aristotle's approach.

As we saw above, Aristotle's categorial forms can be divided into two classes: the substantial and the accidental. Following this distinction, I will distinguish between two types of compounds, analyzing their respective formations, namely: the substantial compound and the accidental compound.

⁴⁹ It will be in Chapter 3 that Kant's hylomorphism will be developed more comprehensively, taking into account the totality of his categories.

⁵⁰ To differentiate between the two, 'compound' will denote Aristotle's hylomorphic objects and 'composite' will denote Kant's.

⁵¹ The predicative composite is different from other composites which occur in the case of the remaining categories of relation, namely the subjunctive composite (category of 'cause and effect' which corresponds to the hypothetical judgment) and the disjunctive composite (category of 'community' which corresponds to the disjunctive judgment). See Ch. 3, sect., 3.4.

⁵² See Ch. 1, sect. 3.2.3, Ch. 2, sect. 4.3 and Ch. 3, sect. 3.3.

I will argue that these two forms have a common feature: their main role is to specify the conditions of identity of the object. In this respect, they are essential forms because they answer the question “What is the object?”, i.e. they have a *specificatory character*, which is true of both. While the essential forms *par excellence* are the substantial ones, I will argue that the accidental forms are also essential, only that in this case there is a kind of specification of a lesser degree, which I will call *mere qualification*⁵³. Additionally, I will argue that substantial forms, though not accidental ones, have a *functional character*, but that, unlike Kant’s functional forms, this character is inseparable from their specificatory or essential character.

The idea behind the methodological decision to consider only one of Kant’s categories is to present both Aristotle’s and Kant’s doctrines as sharing at this level the same field of application: substance and its hylomorphic connection with accident. Thus, the aim is to demonstrate that, because they share a common field of application, the two doctrines offer different accounts of the same phenomenon: an object and its properties, or a substance and its accidents in the language of Aristotle and Kant. This will be very important for the confrontation that will be conducted later in Chapter 3, a point that will become clearer below.

In this context, the central question of the confrontation between Aristotle and Kant in Chapter 2, qualified by the strategy just outlined, will finally be: what is the special character of the kind of formation that occurs in the case of the composite formed by the Kantian category of ‘substance and accident’, i.e. the predicative composite, as opposed to the Aristotelian kind of formation of both the accidental and the substantial compound, bearing in mind that the form of the latter, like the Kantian forms, also has a functional character?

Answering this question will highlight a key difference between Kant’s and Aristotle’s hylomorphism: the former involves a strictly functional and by no means essential conception of forms. As we shall see, this distinguishes Kantian hylomorphism not only from Aristotelian hylomorphism, but also from most contemporary hylomorphisms, which generally retain the essential character of forms. In contrast to the specifying character of the Aristotelian formation, which is derived from the essential character of its forms, Kant’s formation will be called *improper specification*. Instead of being characterized by providing conditions of identity, it is characterized by having a mainly extensional element which can hardly be said to specify the compound formed by it.

⁵³ See Ch. 2, sect. 3.3.4.

It is from this confrontation between Kant's predicative composite and Aristotle's substantial and accidental compounds that the peculiar character of Kantian forms emerges in all its splendour. The point of convergence discussed in this chapter will enable us to demonstrate the following in Chapter 3: (1) that there is plurivocity of forms in Aristotle, but not *functional* plurivocity as in Kant and, more importantly, (2) that the hylomorphic composition of a substance and its accidents constitutes the terminus of Aristotle's general categorial hylomorphism, whereas for Kant it constitutes the material starting point for the hierarchy constituted by his remaining categories of relation. For this reason, these Kantian forms will be presented as having a meta-categorial or meta-formal character with regard to Aristotle's forms. These points will become clearer in our presentation of Chapter 3, to which I will now turn.

The third chapter, which is related to the problem of matter, is theoretically the most difficult, but also the most important. This is because all the elements presented in the first part of the thesis will acquire a systematic unity here. To what extent can it actually be said that the conception of categorial forms is significant for the conception of matter, and vice versa? So far, we have stated that this thesis will argue that, for both Aristotle and Kant, there are as many forms as there are categories in their respective systems, and the same is true of formation. However, how can different kinds of forms be accommodated within the same hylomorphic system of the object? It is precisely at this point that what we have called [II.3] the problem of the hierarchical or vertical composition of the object becomes relevant. If it can be shown that in Aristotle and Kant the concept of matter leads to the idea that the object is hylomorphically constituted in levels, then each type of form can find a place in their respective systems. For while some forms operate on certain levels, others may do so on different ones.

Furthermore, this hierarchical framework will finally allow us to see how Kant's categories enrich Aristotle's hylomorphic doctrine. It is through the manner in which their respective categories shape hierarchical hylomorphic composition that we will be able to demonstrate the impact that categories have on the (1) plurivocity and (2) ontological-scope dimensions. Based on these two dimensions, I will conduct two confrontations between Aristotle and Kant in this chapter, one for each dimension. However, before addressing this issue, I will first focus on the reconstruction of the hierarchical composition of the object in both Aristotle and Kant. Therefore, the first question we will address in this chapter is as follows: how can Aristotle's and Kant's conception of matter lead to a hierarchical conception of the composition of the object?

To answer this question, I will first argue that both philosophers share common principles surrounding the concept of matter. The first is that, for both philosophers, matter has a relative character. This in turn leads to the relative character of forms. This means that something can be matter in relation to one thing but at the same time be form in relation to another. This idea was already illustrated by the example of the house we saw earlier. Applying these principles to our example, the brick is matter *in relation to* the house, but at the same time it is form *in relation to* the clay. Building on this idea, I will analyze the conceptions of matter held by Aristotle and Kant, which can be represented as a “hylomorphic conception of matter”⁵⁴. In this sense, not only matter, but also form, has a relative character⁵⁵. Thus, what is matter for one thing is form for another, constituting levels. This type of composition will be referred to as the hierarchical composition of the hylomorphic object and will enable us to present the various categorial forms of Aristotle (substantial and accidental) and Kant (of quantity, quality, relation, and modality) in a unified way.

In the case of Aristotle, I will arrive at this idea through analyzing the matter of substantial and accidental compounds. Through this analysis, I will raise the question of how these two compounds can be integrated hierarchically. The main idea is to demonstrate how their composition can be understood hierarchically, and consequently how both types of compounds can be integrated within this framework. In the case of the substantial compound, the strategy adopted will consist of distinguishing between different types of matter: first matter, intermediate levels of matter, and ultimate matter⁵⁶. I will argue that each of these levels of matter is the proximate matter of a substantial form. Thus, I will demonstrate that—with the sole exception of first matter—each level of matter possesses a hylomorphic character, corresponding either to one or a plurality of substantial compounds. Regarding the accidental compound, I will argue that its matter also has a hylomorphic character, corresponding to the substantial compound which acts as its proximate matter⁵⁷. Finally, the hierarchical structure achieved by integrating the hierarchical composition of substantial

⁵⁴ I take this expression from Koslicki (2018a, p. 59).

⁵⁵ Here, I follow Longuenesse (1998), who has claimed that the concepts of matter and form “are themselves merely comparative or relative: [...] the matter for a certain form is, on its part, the form for a matter of lower determination, just as the form is the matter for a form of higher determination. Kant is faithful here to the relational meaning Aristotle himself had granted these concepts” (p. 150). To some extent, this character is also implicit in Koslicki’s (2018a) hylomorphic conception of matter.

⁵⁶ See Ch. 3, sect. 2.2.1.

⁵⁷ See Ch. 3, sect. 2.3.

and accidental compounds will be referred to as *the internal hierarchical composition of the object*.

In the case of Kant, I will argue that the relativity of matter and form can already be seen in the way he understands the concepts of matter and form in general, where the former is the determined and the latter its determination⁵⁸. Furthermore, the relative character and the hylomorphic conception of matter can also be seen in the way Kant understands appearance, which is actually the matter of his categorial forms. Indeed, Kant understands appearance as a kind of object that is itself hylomorphic⁵⁹.

Drawing on these ideas, I will argue for a vertical conception of the interconnectedness of the various categorial forms (quantity, quality, relation and modality) within Kant's system. In this sense, I will contend that not all of the Kantian categories apply directly to appearances; rather, they apply following a hierarchical order that can be understood hylomorphically. To demonstrate this, I will adopt a strategy based on the logical origin of the functional character of Kantian categories, as presented in Chapter 1. I will do this because Kant analyses the structure of judgments in a hylomorphic way⁶⁰. For this reason, I will adopt a strategy that establishes an analogy between the matter and form of judgments and the matter and form of objects. However, this analogy will not only be between each type of judgment and each type of category and its corresponding object; more fundamentally, it will be between how the different types of judgment can be hylomorphically related to each other, and how the categorial forms and the respective objects they constitute do so. It is important to note that this analogical approach is a tool for achieving Kant's hylomorphic structure of the object⁶¹.

As stated above, the confrontation between Aristotle and Kant in this chapter will be conducted in two parts: one related to (1) the plurivocity dimension, and the other to (2) the ontological-scope dimension. Accordingly, the analogical strategy regarding Kant will be employed twice in preparation for these confrontations with Aristotle's hierarchical composition. To this end, I will distinguish between what I refer to as Kant's general hylomorphism, in which I will address all of Kant's categories (quantity, quality, relation, and modality), and Kant's relational hylomorphism, in which I will address only his categories of relation ('substance and accident', 'cause and effect', and 'community'). The former will enable us to carry out the confrontation with Aristotle regarding (1) the plurivocity of forms dimension, while the latter

⁵⁸ Cf. *KrV* B322.

⁵⁹ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.2.

⁶⁰ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.3 and 3.4.3.

⁶¹ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.3.2.4.1.

will enable us to carry out the confrontation with Aristotle regarding (2) the ontological-scope dimension. In this context, the two questions concerning the two confrontations are: (1) How do Kant's categories in general allow for an expansion of the plurivocity of forms, and (2) how do his categories of relation in particular allow for an expansion of the ontological limits and scope of the hylomorphic doctrine? Let me begin with (1).

To reconstruct Kant's general hylomorphism, I will consider his categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality. It is important to note that, in the case of the categorial forms of relation, I will consider only the first of these, i.e. 'substance and accident', as the others will be dealt with in detail later, alongside the reconstruction of Kant's relational hylomorphism. In this context, I take quantity and quality to be the first in Kant's hierarchy of categorial forms⁶². These categories, when applied to appearance, constitute a kind of hylomorphic composite that I will refer to as *categorially quantified and qualified appearance*. This composite is basically the result of applying the forms of quantity and quality to appearance as its matter. In turn, this composite will constitute the proximate (hylomorphic) matter of the categorial form of 'substance and accident', and therefore of what was called the predicative composite above.

Now, whereas quantity and quality were considered to be matter in relation to the categorial form of 'substance and accident', modality will behave differently. Indeed, the modal categories will appear as forms of the predicative composite. In this sense, instead of fulfilling the role of form, the category of 'substance and accident' (as the form of the predicative composite) will fulfil the role of matter in relation to the categories of modality⁶³. From a bottom-up perspective, therefore, Kant's hierarchy will progress from appearance to quantity and quality, then to relation, and finally to modality. Against this backdrop, in the confrontation with Aristotle, we will highlight the richness of Kant's categorial diversification of forms, as well as the functional plurivocity inherent in his system⁶⁴. We will achieve this through the introduction of the notion of categorial variation, which plays the role of showing how different categorial forms can perform their distinct formative roles in different levels of the hierarchy⁶⁵. Now, let me consider (2).

The importance of Kant's relational hylomorphism will become apparent through a distinction found in the reconstruction of his general hylomorphism. Indeed, in our analysis of Kant's general hylomorphism, we

⁶² See Ch. 3, sect. 3.3.1.

⁶³ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.3.2.

⁶⁴ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.3.3.

⁶⁵ The different sorts of categorial variation can be seen in Ch. 3, sects. 2.4 and 3.3.3.

will be able to distinguish between two sorts of hierarchical composition: *the (comparatively⁶⁶) internal hierarchical composition of the object* and *the external hierarchical composition of the object*. We will be able to draw this distinction through a sharp contrast between the hierarchy constituted by the categories of quantity and quality, and the category of ‘substance and accident’, on the one hand, and the categories of modality, on the other. In this context, the hierarchy constituted by the ordered application of the categories of ‘substance and accident’ and quality and quantity to appearance corresponds to *the (comparatively) internal hierarchical composition of the object*. This kind of composition is internal because it deals with how the object structures itself, regardless of anything external to it. In this sense, this composition is concerned with the individual object. On the contrary, in the case of the categories of modality, Kant’s concern is not with the internal composition of the individual object, but with how the object can enter into relations that can be said to be external to it.

As we will see, the same is true of the categories of relation⁶⁷. However, there is a fundamental difference between these categories and those of modality⁶⁸. While the latter also point to the externality of the object, they only do so insofar as they relate it to the subjective faculties of cognition. In this sense, these categories point to an object-subject relation. In contrast, the categories of relation point to the ways in which an object can enter into relations with other objects. In this case, the relations play the role of forms, and the individual objects play the role of matter. Therefore, in the case of these categorial forms, we are not dealing with an object-subject relation, but rather with an object-object relation. Thus, the forms of relation are eminently inter-objective, representing the different ways in which internally constituted objects relate to each other. Consequently, they possess an ontological character lacking in the categories of modality. As such, the hierarchy constituted by the categories of relation is referred to as *the external (inter-objective⁶⁹) hierarchical composition of the object*.

⁶⁶ The fact that, in contrast to Aristotle’s *internal hierarchical composition of the object*, we call Kant’s first hierarchical composition *the comparatively internal hierarchical composition of the object* has to do with the fact that in Kant’s anti-essentialist conception of the object there is nothing that can be called completely internal to the object, since the object, even considered internally, is a complex of relations that are only comparatively internal (see Ch. 2, sect. 4.3).

⁶⁷ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.2.

⁶⁸ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.2.2.

⁶⁹ We introduce this term to distinguish it from composition involving the categories of modality, as explained above.

With this in mind, we will pose the following questions: How are the categorial forms of relation constituted hylomorphically and hierarchically? What is their matter, and what kind of composites do they constitute? According to the analysis of the forms and composites derived from the categories of relation ('substance and accident', 'cause and effect', and 'community'), we shall be able to distinguish a plurality of interconnected composites that constitute a new kind of hylomorphic object, in which the objects we ordinarily recognize—that is to say, what we have termed individual objects—play the role of matter⁷⁰. These new, higher-order composites present a new horizon for the scope of application of hylomorphism, configuring a new field of application for this doctrine that exceeds Aristotle's essence-based hylomorphism⁷¹. This is precisely why the hierarchy constituted by the categories of relation is so important, as it provides a framework within which we can examine Kant's most notable achievement in the context of (2) the ontological-scope dimension. In doing so, the ontological significance of categories to the hylomorphic doctrine is revealed.

Finally, in the conclusions, I will provide a general evaluation of the implications of the confrontation between Aristotle's and Kant's doctrines for the unity of the core problems of hylomorphism, and the significance of the categorial approach to this doctrine. In this sense, I will revisit the issues presented in the introduction regarding the possibility of harmonizing Aristotle and Kant, highlighting why this would be desirable and outlining some of its potential advantages and associated challenges. I will also discuss how Kant's achievements could help to refine some shortcomings in the contemporary understanding of forms and hylomorphism.

⁷⁰ See Ch. 3, sect. 3.4.3.2.

⁷¹ See Ch. 3, sect. 4.