

"No New Thing"

Philosophy

F. C. KOLBE, in *A Catholic View of Holism* (Macmillan):

How Aristotle and the Scholastics would have modified their theory of Matter and Form if they had known the results of modern analysis it would be idle to discuss. In practice the distinction is perceptible only by intellect and is hardly expressible in words. Science has now resolved all the tangible universe into atoms of some ninety different kinds. It, moreover, now claims to have resolved all atoms into nuclei and electrons. Further, they suspect that these electrons (and I suppose nuclei also) are nothing but vortices of the ether which we are obliged to postulate as a medium for the transmission of waves of light and other "forces." That is to say, they have reduced all matter to a basic indefinable substance indefinitely varied by forces playing upon it. Their formula then is that the visible world is equal to ether *plus* combinations of forces (which make wholes or forms). Aristotle's would be that the visible world is equal to *materia prima* plus its moulding forces. He would say: "Your formula is only one step in front of mine, for your ether is equal to *materia prima* plus the one form of capacity for transmitting force."

There has of late been a rebellion against the victorious ether, and General Smuts takes up a doubtful stand. But if this ether is dethroned, we shall have to substitute for it another vague substance with exactly the same quality of elasticity; and we may as well call the new substance by the same name. In that case the difference of ultimate basis between Lord Kelvin and Aristotle becomes very filmy. I wrote a paper on the subject in the *Dublin Review* many years ago, but I never heard if anybody read it besides the printers. At that time my paper, originally read for the Royal Society of S. Africa, was pooh-poohed as "metaphysics". But medievalism is coming into its own. *Materia prima* is just as much science as ether is.

And the whole is not merely the sum of the parts. Nor is it anything superadded to the parts. It is the parts in their co-existence and co-activities. This General Smuts says over and over again almost in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas himself.

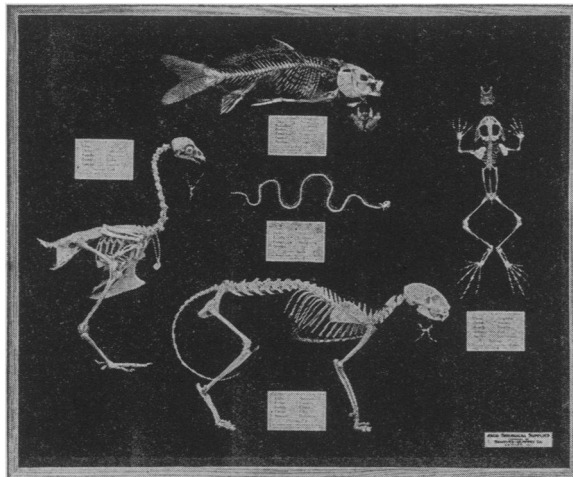
Science News-Letter, August 25, 1928

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A cold damp spring has cut down by 40 per cent. the expected harvest of roses for rose oil in Bulgaria.

Geologists say that a tunnel under the British Channel from Dover to Calais is a practical project.

The oldest known recipe for making perfume is in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus, in the Bible.

Marshall Foch recently stated that no new strategy of warfare has developed since the days of Hannibal.

Despite the chilly name of Iceland, the temperature at its capital, Reykjavik, rarely goes below freezing.

The congestion of the Chinese population is attributed to the majority of the people being crowded into one-third of its territory, chiefly because of poor transportation facilities.

Negro children are less likely to be attacked by measles than white children, but the disease goes harder with the negro child.

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