

La realidad última: átomos y vínculos sustanciales

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«I do not profess to know what matter is in itself, and feel no confidence in the divination of those “esprits forts” who, leading a life of vice, thought the universe must be composed of nothing but dice and billiard-balls. I wait for the men of science to tell me what matter is, in so far as they can discover it, and am not at all surprised or troubled at the abstractness and vagueness of their ultimate conceptions: how should our notions of things so remote from the scale and scope of our senses be anything but schematic? But whatever matter may be, I call it matter boldly, as I call my acquaintances Smith and Jones without knowing their secrets: whatever it may be, it must present the aspects and undergo the motions of the gross objects that fill the world». Jorge Santayana.

Abstract

Concerning the essence of ultimate reality, the history of ideas has handed down to us four natural philosophies: atomism, hylomorphism, electromagnetism and the mathematism of spacetime. In this essay I propose some thoughts on atomism, a doctrine which has given us a good deal of substantial scientific knowledge on nature. It is as if from the beginning of rational thought biological evolution has sown in man one of the essential intuitions to understand the world, *i.e.* that every object is a compound of ultimate elements. But I do not state that a system is a whole equal to the sum of its parts, and that is why the truth of atomism is only partial and needs to be corrected and completed. Attention will be called to the fact that the main problem of an atomism aspiring to explain the natural hierarchy from ultimate components (emergentist atomism) is a lack of appreciation of the value of the relation among components. Now if there are ultimate components of the Universe, how should we imagine them or conceive of them so that natural systems be as they are? As a contribution to the answer to this question I will set up a list of the properties the ultimate components of the Universe should have – if they exist – so that nature, natural hierarchy, be as it is. .

Key words: Ultimate reality; Emergentist atomism; Category of relation; Substantial Chain (*Vinculum substantiale*); Natural hierarchy.

Resumen

En lo que concierne a la realidad última, la historia del pensamiento nos ha legado cuatro filosofías naturales: el atomismo, el hilemorfismo, el electromagnetismo y el matematismo del espaciotiempo. Este artículo es una reflexión sobre la hipótesis atomista. Es a esta doctrina a la que debemos una parte sustancial del conocimiento científico de la naturaleza. Es como si desde el comienzo del pensamiento racional la evolución biológica hubiera plantado en el hombre una de las intuiciones indispensables para entender el mundo, a saber, que todo objeto es un compuesto de elementos últimos. Pero no afirmo que un sistema sea un todo igual a la suma de sus partes, y por eso la verdad del atomismo es sólo parcial y tiene que ser corregida y completada. Haré notar que el problema principal del atomismo que aspira a explicar la jerarquía natural a partir de los últimos componentes del Universo (atomismo emergentista) es una falta de apreciación del valor de la relación entre los componentes. Ahora bien, si existen últimos componentes del Universo ¿cómo hay que imaginarlos o concebirllos para que los sistemas naturales sean como son? Para contribuir a la respuesta estableceré una lista de las propiedades que tendrían que tener los últimos componentes, si existieran, para que la naturaleza, la jerarquía natural, sea como es.

Palabras-clave: Realidad última; Atomismo emergentista; Categoría de relación; Vínculo sustancial (*Vinculum substantiale*); Jerarquía natural.

