

Bodies without Matter?

*Peter Auriol and John of Jandun on Planets
and Stars*

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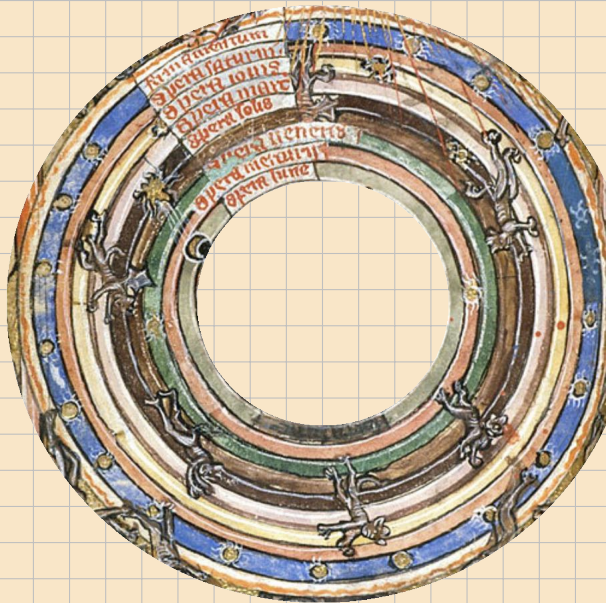
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Hylomorphic Background

The Cosmos



Celestial Bodies



Celestial Matter

- - The same matter as the earthly one;
- - Different matter;
- - They have no matter at all.

Peter Auriol and John of Jandun

Peter Auriol, In Sent. II.14.1.1

“The heavens are not form, because form is not in potency to its perfections; nor is it matter, because matter is in potency to the first act; therefore, it is something as if in the middle, having the nature of a subject, and a conjoined essence.... The heavens are a quantified [body], which is not composite, namely by matter and form, neither form, nor matter, but a subject that only has dimensions in its act (1605, p. 188bF).

John of Jandun, De substantia orbis, q. 1

“The heavens, which is the fifth essence, if we bracket from the mover, is not composed of matter and form, but is a simple subject, always subject to its mover, having matter not as [potency] to being but as potency to location [potentia ad ubi] (1552, fol. 51rB).

Peter Auriol and John of Jandun

- - heavenly bodies are not metaphysically composite
- - they are simple, but are neither matter nor form (they are in act, but they also have potency, and they cannot determine their own perfections as forms would)
- - they are a simple subject, having dimensions as act
- - they are quantified

Some Arguments - Jandun

Argument from incorruptibility; inadequacy of alternative positions

Aquinas:

the forms of the heavenly bodies are perfect, and hence they completely satisfy the potencies of heavenly matter.

Jandun:

not every celestial form is perfect; some of them are better than others

Giles of Rome:

the celestial bodies are incorruptible because although they have the same kind of matter as the matter below, the inherent potency of matter to acquire another form need not always be realized.

Jandun:

this violates the basic principle that nature does not act in vain.

Some Arguments - Auriol

Argument from parsimony; argument from dimensions

Corporeity?

No need for matter. (Corporeity is a form!)

Quantity?

No need for matter. (Inheres in the form of corporeity)

Sensible accidents?

No need for matter. (Due to form; inhere in quantity)

Celestial Bodies and Prime Matter

Similarity:

- cannot be understood except by the form / its mover
- does not exist except with the form/mover
- does not have qualities except due to their form/movers
- we infer the existence of PM by observing substantial change; we infer the existence of "local matter" by observing local motion
- but we cannot know the positive formal characteristic of either (since they don't have any, apart from their form/mover)

Dissimilarity:

- PM receives its existence from form; CBs have their own actuality
- the union of a CB and its mover is not like the union of PM&SF, but more like a ship and its captain.