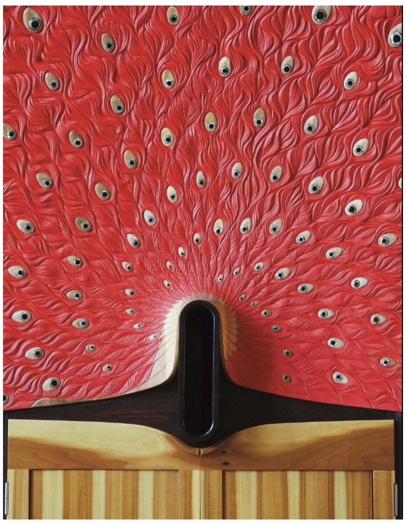
Rear profile and front of Taweret (Bjørn Blikstad). Photo: Jørn Aagaard (for HULIAS. Taweret is the terrible mother—daughter of the Nile—that will do anything to protect her children. Taweret is a crocodile, lion and hippo compounded. Her teeth and claws are sharp. On her back a gaping void. In Bjørn Blikstad's lingo; a black hole. The walls of the hole approach a thinness that also verge to nothing. On the front side the carving is maximally full.

Arguably, vectors are ornamental in that they indicate a tendency, a direction, a proclivity and are empowered to indicate a *dynamic state* of an object that, by virtue of our *vectorial* understanding of it, is the mode of appearance of a *body*: this expanded phenomenology of embodiment, expresses a notion of the body found in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The internal relationship between the vector's coordinates can be functional/not. But it is the vectorial sum—expressed in A + B**i** = X—featuring the *ornamental* function. Entering the object into the œcumene of bodies.

In Schelling's *Ages of the world* (p. 129-130) the point is made that **A = B** that **A** and **B** relate to a common **X** by the intermedium of what **A** and **B** refer to: THAT *which is* **= A**, and THAT *which is* **= B**. THAT being **X**. So, **A** and **B** are *not* abstract entities that are identical, that can be swapped and used as substitutes. Instead, they are rather conceived in a striking similarity to Spinoza's attributes: that is, **A** and **B** are attributes of the same **X**. Then the **=** sign can be understood as an indication of an ornamental function. The conjugation of attributes, or: **+** (in a vectorial sense).

In sum, there is a difference that makes a difference between the terms of the = sign, otherwise it would be *void* of any information (useful/not), and thereby uninteresting. An equation is the equality of non-same terms. At this point we stand the challenge of making a consequential choice. The choice stands between two alternatives: a) to accept the two expressions **A** and **B** on each side of the = sign as substitutes; b) to intercept a third entity **X** to which both **A** and **B** can be attributed. In the latter case, an available strategy is to exaggerate the difference of **A** and **B.**



The Peacock cabinet by Bjørn Blikstad. Photo for HULIAS: Jørn Aagaard. It was made before Taweret (above). Here, the "eyes" of the peacock feathers are looking towards the gaping hole, that begot Taweret.

That is, *without* loosing the equation: the relation to **X** perdures. This is a strategy that has been explored and exploited in the two examples on this page: two strikingly different bids on the object **X** (which, as the bringing together of different elements as attributes of the same, yields a *body*). The work Taweret (above) is in this sense a body. The same as the peacock cabinet to the left. The body in the dual sense of Spinoza: a certain mind for things **A** and the way we act **B** are two different attribute of the same **X**: *thought* and *extension*. The function is *ornamental* (*not* mechanic).

The clockworker is put to rest, for the time being. There needs be no functional relation between what we set our mind on **A** and the way we act **B**, if guided by *intuition* (**X**): in Spinoza, the trope of the specific, the singular, the unique. It homes in on substance. The ornamental strategy is *not* mimetic, in the sense that it gathers and empowers the relationship between non-same elements. Of course, there are and will be elements of *pareidolia*, but they do not express the essence of the ornamental function. Here, such mimetic elements are diversions, that amuse us, but lead us *nowhere*. Or, rather they lead us to the point of erasure.

 theodor.barth@khio.no

Which means that the ornamental strategy departing from the interception of **A = B** as **A + Bi = X**, can be functionally linked to the development of mathematical intuition: that is, not by the looks of the end result, but rather in the process of *creating* new math. It is no secret that mathematicians often can see solutions, paths or ways that have little to do with the look and syntax of math-equations. Which makes the proposition possible that the ornamental function—which is *to hold in pattern*—belongs to the *creative* part of math, on which we tend to be vague and inconclusive.

Nevertheless, the ornamental function might be the only option we have in order to shed light on how the change in the *knower* that *precedes* the emergence of *new* knowledge. Indeed: how do we account for the reductive capacity of humans—which we know i.a. as the phenomenological reduction—to take stock of things that *exceed* us (we cannot contain them, but we can make them readable/interceptive)? The part where we are makers of expressions/artefacts that look back/*without*, and also are attributed introspective affordances: that is, an ability to look *within*.

Seen from a phenomenological vantage point a mathematical expression—an equation—will these qualities. But having said so, we have moved from **X** (as in the elementary understanding of A + B**i** = X) to **X'**: the vectorial sum of looking within and looking without. Arguably, these are clearly expressed in Bjørn Blikstad's ornamental work with wood-carving, surface treatment and colour finish. Which means that categories that are used to relating with in thought, were are given an extension: cf the black hole on the *back* of Taweret and on *front* of the Peacock-cabinet.

These are equivalents in the world of physics of *introspection* (as a mode): or, precisely a *black hole*. While the figurative elements (which are crowded/saturated in counterpoint to the abysmal element) are the ones that look without: they look back. Hence the ornamental function **ψ** will be be defined by this transition— **ψ: X —> X'**. Where X' will be the *vectorial sum* of the *black hole and* the *crocodile-lion-hippo* (Taweret in ancient Egyptian mythology). It does not take much imagination to determine what the next step might be: **X'—> X''** etc. to the completion of a cycle.

The transition from the *Peacock cabinet* to *Taweret* is an example of this: the Peacock cabinet came *first* and Taweret *later*. **X—> X'** begets **X'—> X"** etc. But where does it stop? If it has some parallels to the philosophical inquiry—as Schopenhauer's philosophy is a case in point—where the aggregate steps of entrapment of human being leads to some conclusions: but the entrapment in what? Life as it is, or a maze of stepwise beguilement, proving to ourselves that we have indeed lost our way. In design this is more explicit, as it deals with how we build the world.

In my own experiments in stories of nothing the journey from story-to-story—10 stories in all—starts with the entrapment in illusion, rather than concluding with it. As other stories begin to hatch from the first, a fictional element starts to evolve and evolve to a joint discussion of William Kentridge and the social injustice in South African society, during the Apartheid (and also the post-Apartheid society). The first story is a world unto itself that contains its own reality (the definition of illusion). The last story is marked by reality to a point of moving from imagination to mobilisation. That is, a fictional content evolves: *experience*.

Support, crutch, stilt or peck underneath Taweret, preventing the structure from tilting. The appearance of the ibis-bird is likely wanton. Or, alternatively, it relates to the logic of things. That is, when things start operating according to their own logic.

At some point, I move from a lower grade illusion to a fledgling fiction. Which is why the 'stories of nothing' might serve to shed light on one aspect of the ornamental journey, that has not been considered so far. All the stories of nothing first came as *onslaughts* of the real: to which I was vulnerable and unprepared. They happened before they were told. They were deeply uncanny before they became readable and entertaining. Telling them was hard labour. If we are immersed in the world (not shedded in a secret place) we can also be assailed by it.

Which means that our labours of accepting the world—or, barely dealing with it—is what prompts human beings for instance to do math. That is, something comes before the playful creativity that we readily assign to ornaments and to stories. In a narrow sense, ornaments is a way of making our peace with the world. And that it is in a hope and chase of completeness that we engage in ornamental pursuits. In Hebrew peace writes (שָׁלוֹם) *shalom*, while completeness writes *shalem* (שָׁלֵם wholeness, or perfect peace). Support is קַב (kav).

theodor.barth@khio.no