

A Paradox for Hylomorphism?

No

The Hylomorphism Envisaged

- Hylomorphism Motivated:
- ‘In the face of the puzzles of material constitution, some philosophers have been moved to posit a distinction between an object’s matter and its form. The puzzles are familiar: it seems that, by Leibniz’s Law, the statue must be distinct from the lump of clay that makes it up, because the lump can survive squashing while the statue cannot. My favorite knit hat must be distinct from its yarn, because the yarn can survive unraveling, but the hat (sadly) cannot. The matter that makes up the oak tree outside my window is distinct from the tree itself, because the matter can survive being fashioned into a table after the tree has been destroyed. On the other hand, it is hard to see how these things could differ from each other when they appear so intimately related. After all, the statue and the lump seem to share their material parts, occupy the same regions, have many of their nonmodal properties in common, and so on.
 - Hylomorphism purports to address both sides of this puzzle.’

The Resulting Job for Hylomorphism

- ‘For a theory to be viable as a response to the puzzles of material constitution, it must have a permissive enough conception of forms to generate all of the objects we ordinarily recognize. Whenever some matter instantiates the property being statue shaped, we want the account to guarantee that there is a further object—a statue—which embodies that property. The difficulty is finding some principled stopping point: it seems that it would be intolerably arbitrary to say that being statue-shaped is eligible as a form, but that a range of other complex shape properties aren’t. To avoid arbitrariness, it seems that we should avoid positing any restriction on forms, which will in turn lead us to an abundant ontology of embodiments.’

The Problem

- ✦ ‘One standard complaint about this picture is that the superabundance of material objects is too extraordinary to accept. I want to raise a different and prior worry: that the most natural and attractive way of developing this rough picture (what I’ll call “simple hylomorphism”) is already inconsistent. Simple hylomorphism is subject to problem analogous to Russell’s Paradox: I show that, on pain of contradiction, we’ll have to surrender something from the simple account.’

Some Terminology

- Qua-objects: every object which embodies any property ϕ generates a qua-object (following Fine (1999, 2008)).
 - Every qua-object is a hylomorphic compound of a *form* and a *base*.
 - For short, a base a and form ϕ yields the qua-object a/ϕ .

Simple Hylomorphism (SH)

- Let Simple Hylomorphism be defined by two principles:
 - *Existence*: Given any property ϕ and object a such that $\phi(a)$, there is some thing b such that b is a/ϕ .
 - $\forall x \forall F (Fx \rightarrow x/F \text{ exists})$
 - *Uniqueness*: For any properties ϕ and ψ and objects a , b , $a/\phi = b/\psi$ iff $a=b$ and ϕ is the same property as ψ .
 - $\forall x \forall y \forall F \forall G (x/F = y/G \leftrightarrow x = y \ \& \ F =_2 G)$

Bad news for SH?

- (1) There is a property ***N*** which an object instantiates *iff* it embodies a property that it does not instantiate.
- (2) Something *m* instantiates ***N***.
- (3) By (i), (ii), and Existence, there is a qua-object *m/N*.
- (4) The existence of the qua-object *m/N* is inconsistent with Uniqueness.
- (5) Hence, SH is inconsistent.

On behalf of (2)

- Two strategies: Distinctness and Direct
 - Distinctness: every base a is distinct from every qua object a/ϕ
 - Suppose, then, that there is one qua-object that embodies a property had only by its base a .
 - ‘Schematically: if there is at least one object a , the liberal conception of properties guarantees that there is a property F had only by a . By Existence, there is a qua-object a/F , and if the distinctness assumption holds, a/F isn’t F (because only a is F , and a/F isn’t a).’
 - ‘Given the plausible principle that a/F exists only when a is F , then if Michael is contingently God’s (uniquely) favorite angel, the qua-object Michael/*being God’s favorite angel* is more modally fragile than Michael himself. (And thus, plausibly distinct from Michael.) Michael/*being God’s favorite angel* doesn’t enjoy the same exalted status as Michael, and so embodies a property that it doesn’t instantiate.’

On behalf of (2)

- Directness

- ‘If there are at least two things a and b , the theory of properties guarantees that there is a property F had by only a , and a property G had by only a and b . By Existence, there is a/F and a/G , and by Uniqueness, these are distinct. In the absence of the distinctness assumption, we’re free to identify either a/F or a/G with a , but we cannot identify both with a . Ultimately, we can show that however this goes, there will still be something that fails to instantiate its own form, and so there will be something that instantiates N .’

Hylomorphism's Russell Moment?

- ✦ Existence then gives m/N .
- ✦ Does m/N instantiate N ?
 - ✦ 'If m/N doesn't instantiate N , then there is some property that it embodies which it does instantiate. But this is just what it is for something to be N . So if m/N doesn't instantiate N , then m/N does instantiate N .
 - ✦ If m/N does instantiate N , then m/N must fail to instantiate some property that it embodies. But by Uniqueness, the only property m/N embodies is N : so if m/N instantiates N , then m/N doesn't instantiate N .'