

### **Book Review**

#### **Making Objects & Events:**

#### **A Hylomorphic Theory of Artifacts, Actions, and Organisms.**

**By Simon J. Evnine.**

Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2016.

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**A Review By**

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It is notable that these recent years have seen a few books with the word '*hylomorphism*' in their title. Hylomorphism is Aristotle's notion of analysis into a hylomorphic composite of matter and form, as well as of body and soul. The notion is mentioned recently in an analysis of Thomas Aquinas' theory of material objects (Brower, 2014), in John Duns Scotus' mereological conception (Ward, 2014), and more recently in the latest explanatory model of mind-body relation (Jaworski, 2016).

Nevertheless, in Simon J. Evnine's book *Making Objects & Events: A Hylomorphic Theory of Artifacts, Actions, & Organisms*, there is a new interpretation and adaptation of the notion of Aristotle's four causes for explaining how objects come into existence. What he means by the word *objects* here includes artifacts, actions (that is explained as artifactual events), and organisms. His project basically starts with a compelling explanation of how the artifacts are hylomorphically constituted, and then it is found that such an explanation would fit well with the constitution of the other objects.

Evnine considers his own theory as a possible one of hylomorphist interpretations. To be a necessary and sufficient condition of being called a hylomorphist theory (p. 7), his theory of an object's constitution needs an "irreflexive and asymmetric" relation of "being the matter of" the object (p. 3). However, there is an interesting invention in the oxymoronic character of Evnine's

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neologism “amorphic hylomorphism” which literally means a theory of object’s constitution of matter and form *without an allusion of forms* but methodologically and metabolically with prioritization of matter (pp. 12-17). According to my impression and rough understanding of Evnine’s conception, there is a use of Aristotle’s four causes which are matter, form, efficient cause, and final cause. For Evnine, the latter three are always in a concurrent unity (pp. 7-8), and can be interpreted that they form a hylomorphic complex considered as an essential function of the matter in the object. It is to make the object out of, but not be reducible to, its own matter (pp. 11-12).

The construction of a statue from bronze is a good example that Evnine has used many times in the book to explain his hylomorphism. Although the statue is made of bronze, it is not identical to its matter. There are some other things besides the bronze for the statue to exist on its own. Moreover, when the statue is melted by acid, the bronze continues to exist. Therefore, they are distinct from each other by their modal difference (pp. 3-5). There is a hint here that Evnine’s hylomorphism would be involved with human intellect when making the judgments.

There will surely be some questions asking what the merits of this new hylomorphic conception are, or asking whether it should be included in the bundle of hylomorphism. Evnine’s argument for the reality of artifacts is a good start of providing the answers. He admits that the artifacts, such as sandwiches and statues, are “ideal objects” in the sense of their dependent existence to human intentions of arranging them in a certain way. However, they are not only clumps of matters arranged sandwich-wise or statue-wise. This is because, to some extent, they are real from human activity (pp. 69-70). Artifacts can simply be brought out of some satisfied conditions made out of matter by human intentions. This is without the explanatory requirement of any metaphysical power of creation (p. 117).

The explanation of identity and essence of organisms can be developed in the same context of explaining the artifacts. It is with the necessity of “origin-as-matter thesis” in sexual reproduction (pp. 167-174). For natural non-organic objects, such as rocks and stars, it is, of course, difficult to explain them as human-made artifacts with efficient cause and final cause. However, Evnine makes use of the notion “revolutionary fictionalism” to explain the way people talk about them as facts without committing to their reality in the discourse (pp. 204-206). Moreover, actions can be explained as artifacts. The essence of an action is conducted from “the impress of mind on some matter” but not identical to its matter (p. 209).

In my opinion, Evnine's new explanation of hylomorphism can be considered a triumph in terms of its attempts to revise the metaphysical strategies in dealing with philosophical problems of objects and their cognate issues. Evnine's theory is rather different from Aristotle's, but, from his consideration, it should exactly be called a hylomorphic theory because it needs composition of matter and something else other than matter. Therefore, his book can be considered full of new conceptions which may be of interest not only to philosophers, but also to physicists and biologists.

## References

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