

Review of: "Causal Principles in Material Constitution: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Composition of Objects"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Interesting manuscript! I am happy to have read it. This new, corrected version has very good quality and deserves to be published.

I think it is extremely important to make an effort, from the very beginning of the article, to state the general “ontological question” in understandable terms for larger audiences. Otherwise, the main theses of the article will be restricted to a small group of specialists, the readability may be barred, and the interest of readers diminished. Along this line, I suggest changing and expanding the first paragraph:

“The question of material constitution (no capitals, please) asks for the relation between a thing and what it is made of, e.g., “What is the relation between a clay statue and the lump of clay from which it is made?” (Wasserman, 2002, p. 197). A second question in this vein is what the relationship is between the lump of clay and the molecules it is made of. In a reductionistic manner, we can form additional questions concerning relations between molecules and atoms, as well as relations between atoms and elementary particles.”

In this paragraph, there is a classical formulation of the ontological question, stated via a citation of Wasserman, that is then mixed up with modern and contemporary formulations. In my opinion, the classical formulation is too simplified -only the relation between the statue and the “lump” of material is stated, without any other of the Greek “intermediates” that were postulated for this type of questions (e.g., form, template, idea, matter, substance, element, etc.). On the other hand, the contemporary formulation, only in terms of molecules, is naïf and reductionist per se; it does not deal with “chemical” materials and substances.

My suggestion is that the author fully rewrites this intro in order to give readers a more nuanced and rich -and, at the same time, more developed and “aided”- presentation of the problem that is suited for scientists and teachers with an interest in philosophical problems. With a fully rewritten “intro of the intro,” the presentation of the “special composition” problem would become more smoothly integrated into the text and more solidly justified (I also propose the author to expand the treatment of such a problem at the beginning of the manuscript).

I also suggest the author reprise this initial discussion in key sections of the paper, especially in the concluding section.

