

The Unity of Matter-Form Compounds

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In previous work, I have argued that a unity criterion of substancehood holds more promise than an independence criterion when applied to matter-form compounds, despite a general preference among Aristotelians for the latter. We therefore stand in need of a serviceable account of unity which captures the idea that matter-form compounds exhibit a higher degree of unity than other types of composite entities (e.g., heaps, collections or mereological sums). I develop a conception of unity according to which a structured whole derives its unity from the way in which its parts interact with other parts to allow both the whole and its parts to manifest those of their capacities which require “team-work” among the parts. With this conception of unity in place, interesting differences emerge between paradigmatic matter-form compounds belonging to natural (e.g., physical, chemical or biological) kinds and composite entities belonging to social kinds, in particular artifacts. In the latter case, we find that the interactional dependencies which connect the components of a system can be traced to mind-dependent factors which are extrinsic or external to the system in question, viz., the mental states of agents who invent, design, produce or use an artifact.