

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Aristotle's Hylomorphism and the Mind-Body Problem
Student's name:	Nira Arapovic
Referee's name:	Janusz Salamon

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	34	
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	10	
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	10	
Total		54	
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	9	
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	4	
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	4	
Total		17	
TOTAL		71	

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

Nira Arapovic chose to devote her bachelor's thesis to an important and demanding topic, since it brings together some of the most challenging questions in the philosophy of mind (concerning the relation between mind and brain) and the debates of Aristotle scholars who disagree on the possible interpretation of his hylomorphism in the light of the contemporary debates in metaphysics. The challenge is magnified by the fact that, as Nira acknowledges in section 5.2.3, there exist a contemporary theory, known as a non-reductive physicalism that points to a similar solution to the mind-body problem, as Aristotle's hylomorphism which seem to imply ("it seems" because Aristotle could not and did not address the mind-body problem which has been formulated in its distinctively modern version by Descartes) that mind is a "form" (*morphe*) of the material body (*hyle*). Thus, on the plus side, Nira navigates what is a conceptually difficult territory with a degree of philosophical skill, showing in most cases the ability to grasp complex philosophical arguments and their implications. Perhaps the most impressive is Nira's ability to see the limitations of all the responses currently on offer to the mind-body problem, as well as the limitations of the Aristotelian hylomorphism. The resulting attempt to embrace a moderate position (non-reductive physicalism) and to complement it with insights of the Aristotelian hylomorphism shows a philosophical talent at work (even though a rather embarrassing description of the methodology followed by the author that appears to amount to "analyzing different articles and books" gives the thesis an improvisatory character).

Two all-important questions, decisive for my verdict on the quality of Nira's thesis, are as follows. Does this thesis include anything other than a reliable presentation of the views of other authors (especially Jaworski whose *Structure and the Metaphysics of Mind: How Hylomorphism Solves the Mind-Body Problem* (OUP, 2016), I have recommended to her as a point of reference.

- (A) who not only have already formulated (in the works included in Nira's Bibliography) all the relevant questions that Nira raises in her thesis, but also provided all the answers presented by Nira in her thesis?

(B) Did Nira succeed in her attempt to show that Aristotle's hylomorphic intuitions are indispensable in making non-reductive physicalism a more defensible theoretical position in the mind-body problem philosophical debate?

I am inclined towards a negative answer to both these questions, although I would be happy to give Nira a benefit of the doubt and allow her to argue to the contrary during the defence of the thesis. The thesis (especially the key portions of it, like chapter 5) are not always sufficiently lucid to be sure what the author intends, hence I propose to treat the above Questions A and B as the question that Nira might wish to answer during her defence to convince the Examination Board about the originality of her thesis which I have doubts about.

Nira is aware that the contribution of her thesis depends on a positive answer to both of the above questions and in the Introduction, she promises to deliver it as she writes: "Finally, in the last section, I will present non-reductive physicalism and *why it is possibly more accurate than hylomorphic dualism. I will show how we can incorporate hylomorphism with it.* I will lay out the solutions for the contemporary problems, but also the limitations of non-reductive physicalism, *with the attempt to resolve those issues by rules provided by the hylomorphic model.*" (p. 2-3) [*italics – JS*].

My main point is that I fail to see that Nira delivered on this promise to sufficiently impressive degree. She certainly remembers in Chapter 5 and in the Conclusion that this is the culmination of her thesis, and is there that she should show what is the point of her thesis. I believe at the end she just presented in a reliable way the views of Jaworski and few other authors who wrote on Aristotle's hylomorphism and/or on non-reductive physicalism.

At the crucial junction of the thesis (section 5.2.3), Nira states the following: „This is where I would strongly agree, since the hylomorphic theory possibly could be the right approach to the mind-body problem, only and specifically through non-reductive physicalism. I would argue that, indeed, non-reductive physicalism is fairly metaphysical, and explains the interactions and the general relationship between the mental and physical, through both physicality and metaphysicality. Whereas some would argue that this view is not entirely compatible with the worldview we have today, since it cannot be easily explained by science, I would disagree, since hylomorphism is specifically a theory on the reality of our world, and essentially how we perceive it. The metaphysical aspect of the non-reductive physicalism might just be the thing we need, and if it is accepted, perhaps, non-reductive physicalism would be significantly more credible.“ This key fragment of the thesis does not contain any argument. By using the phrase „I would argue“ and „I would disagree“, Nira does not provide any argument or evidence, she simply stresses that she agrees with Jaworski. But is presenting the views of Jaworski (whose book everybody can read for oneself) and declaring that one agrees with him as sufficient rationale for writing a thesis? The brief Conclusion of the thesis shows that Nira is not clear at the end of the journey what was the point of it.

Still, she showed herself to be capable of "discussing" difficult philosophical issues and therefore by the standards that I believe should be applied to a student of an interdisciplinary degree in social sciences, her thesis deserves a pass grade.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): C

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I included them above.

I do recommend the thesis for final defence.

Janusz Salamon

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.