Grounding and Analyticity

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Interlevel Metaphysics

- Interlevel metaphysics:
  - how the macro relates to the micro
  - how nonfundamental levels relate to fundamental levels
Grounding Triumphalism

- The very bad very old days: interlevel metaphysics via conceptual analysis
- The bad old days: interlevel metaphysics via supervenience
- The good new days: interlevel metaphysics via grounding
Conceptual Analysis

• The conceptual analysis route to grounding: A grounds B if (iff?) there’s an appropriate relation between the concepts involved in (or associated with) A and B.

• E.g.: Carnap’s construction system in the *Aufbau*.

• Lewis, Jackson, Thomasson, others.
Strong Version

- Strong version: A grounds B iff there’s an appropriate analytic connection between A and B (or associated concepts).
Supervenience

• 1990s orthodoxy: physicalism requires supervenience (not the reverse; e.g. Horgan’s superdupervenience).

• So people argued against physicalism by arguing against supervenience.

• Some argued against supervenience via conceivability, apriority, analyticity.
Carnapian Thesis

- Carnapian Thesis: $S$ is necessary iff $S$ is analytic.
Problem 1: Synthetic Necessities

- Synthetic (a priori) necessities: e.g. mathematical truths, normative principles.
Kantian Thesis

- Kantian thesis: S is necessary iff S is a priori.
Problem 2: A Posteriori Necessities

- Necessary a posteriori: Hesperus is Phosphorus, water is H2O
- Contingent a priori: Julius invented the zip, meter stick is 1 meter long
2D Thesis

- S is a priori iff S has a necessary primary intension (across centered metaphysically possible worlds)
- Or: If the concepts involved in S are transparent, S is a priori iff S is necessary.
Opacity and Transparency

• 2D/Goff idea: Kripke cases always involve opaque concepts (or words).

• Opaque concepts: those with an opaque MOP. Referent is not knowable a priori.
  • E.g. water, heat, Godel

• Transparent concept: referent knowable a priori
  • E.g. zero, plus, cause, conscious?
2D Analysis

- Opaque concepts are epistemically nonrigid: nonrigid primary intension (picking out different objects in different epistemically possible scenarios).

- Transparent concepts are epistemically rigid, and super-rigid: rigid primary and secondary intensions (picking out the same objects in all scenarios and worlds).
Revised Thesis

- When $S$ involves only transparent concepts, $S$ is necessary iff $S$ is a priori.

- When $S$ involves opaque concepts: $S$ is necessary iff it’s a priori (analytic?) that (if nonmodal facts, then necessarily $S$).
Strong Necessities?

• Potential counterexamples: strong a posteriori necessities (involving transparent concepts)

• existence of god, laws of nature, unprovable mathematical truths, metaphysical truths?

• Argued elsewhere: none are counterexamples.
Apriority and Physicalism

So one can argue against physicalism by

1. arguing against a priori connections (e.g. zombies, knowledge argument)
2. inferring the absence of necessary connections
3. inferring the falsity of physicalism [the absence of grounding].
New Consensus

• New (and old) consensus: physicalism entails supervenience but not vice versa.

• Upshot: The old anti-physicalist arguments via apriority and supervenient are stronger than they need to be.

• Is there a more proportionate way to argue against physicalism?
Grounding

• Very rough idea: analyticity is to grounding as apriority is to necessitation.
Four Concepts

- apriority — necessitation
- analyticity — grounding
Propositions

• To simplify, I’ll understand all four as propositional notions (involving Fregean propositions).

• A proposition can be a priori or analytic (cognitively insignificant).

• Facts are true propositions.

• One set of facts can ground another or
Analyticity and Grounding

• Apriority/necessitation thesis (original): p necessitates q if (p->q) is a priori.

• Analyticity/grounding thesis: p grounds q iff (p->q) is analytic [and p is true].

• Potential counterexamples?
Kripke

• Analyticity without grounding: $x$ invented the zip $\rightarrow x$ is Julius.

• Grounding without analyticity: $y$ is H2O $\rightarrow y$ is water.

• So analyticity and grounding come apart in both directions.
Revised Thesis

• When \( p \) and \( q \) are composed of transparent concepts, \( p \) grounds \( q \) iff \( (p \rightarrow q) \) is analytic.

• Eliminates Kripke-style counterexamples.

• N.B. Transparency here = hyper-rigidity, or referent knowable analytically.
Directionality

• Other counterexamples arise from the directionality of grounding

• E.g. $x$ is a bachelor $\rightarrow \{x$ is male and $x$ is unmarried$\}$ is plausibly analytic, but the antecedent doesn’t ground the consequent.
Three Responses

• Three responses
  • Find an undirectional sibling of grounding (metaphysical analyticity)
  • Relativize grounding to frameworks (framework-dependent grounding)
  • Find a directional sibling of analyticity (conceptual grounding).
1. Metaphysical Analyticity

- Option 1: Dispense with directional notion of grounding, and use undirectional notion of analyticity to explicate an undirectional analog of grounding.

- Undirectional analog of grounding: metaphysical analyticity?
Metaphysical Analyticity

• When p grounds q, \(p \rightarrow q\) is
  metaphysically analytic.

• Metaphysically analytic = metaphysically
  trivial? adds nothing to reality? stems
  wholly from the natures of the entities/
  properties involved?

• Then when p and q are transparent, \(p \rightarrow q\)
  is analytic if it is metaphysically analytic.
Is This Grounding?

• Maybe: A grounds B iff \((A \rightarrow B)\) is metaphysically analytic.

• But then, A can ground B and vice versa, and no fundamental base [Carnap?].

• Maybe this is really grounding eliminativism?

• But at least: (metaphysical) analyticity can play part of the grounding role.
Framework-Relative Grounding

• Carnap seems to hold that there’s no objective fact about what’s metaphysically fundamental — it’s a matter of pragmatic choice.

• E.g. in the Aufbau: we could have an phenomenalist construction system, a physicalist one, a dualist one.
2. Grounding Frameworks

- Natural view: there are grounding frameworks (e.g. the physicalist and phenomenalist frameworks).
- Grounding claims are framework-relative.
- Internal grounding claims have truth-values, external grounding claims don’t.
What are Grounding Frameworks?

- Grounding frameworks aren’t just existence frameworks, as two grounding frameworks can agree on what objects exist.

- E.g. atomist and holist mereological universalist frameworks

- whole grounded in parts or vice versa
Grounding Frameworks as Construction Systems

- Grounding frameworks could be construction systems (*Aufbau*)
- base languages plus construction relations
Grounding Frameworks as Furnishing Functions

- Existence frameworks can be seen as furnishing functions: functions from worlds to furnished worlds (worlds plus domains).

- Grounding frameworks can be seen as grounding furnishing functions: functions from (furnished) worlds to layered worlds (worlds plus grounding relations).
Carnapiana

- Maybe Carnap in ESO intends frameworks to cover both existence frameworks and grounding frameworks
- E.g. physicalism vs dualism is arguably best seen as a grounding issue rather than an existence issue
3. Conceptual Grounding

- Third option: invoke a directional sibling of analyticity: conceptual grounding.
- E.g. \((x \text{ is a bachelor})\) is conceptually grounded in \((x \text{ is male})\) and \((x \text{ is unmarried})\).
- Conceptual grounding requires analyticity and conceptual priority (and more).
- Rough idea: the truth of \(p\) explains the truth of \(q\) in virtue of the concepts in both.
What is Conceptual Priority?

• On the classical model of concepts (all concepts composed from primitive concepts): C1 is conceptually prior to C2 when C1 is a constituent of C2.

• On an inferentialist model of concepts, C1 is conceptually prior to C2 when inferences to C1 are partly constitutive of C2.

• Or: explicate via direction of understanding, or via verbal disputes?
Conceptual/Metaphysical Grounding Thesis

• Revised thesis: When p and q are composed of transparent concepts, p metaphysically grounds q iff p conceptually grounds q.
Argument for CM Grounding Thesis

• (1) Simpler picture: conceptual relations do all the work we need.

• (2) Intuitively, grounding relations should follow trivially from nature of the relata, so should be epistemologically trivial (analytic) when the relata are presented transparently.

• (3) No compelling counterexamples!
Counterexamples I

• Non-analytic grounding relations
• H2O-water grounding (not transparent!)
• mereological grounding? (analytic, or perhaps indeterminate)
• natural-normative grounding? (not grounding!)
Counterexamples II

• Conceptual and metaphysical grounding in opposite directions
  
  • E.g. \(<x \text{ has negative charge}>\) is metaphysically fundamental but conceptually non-fundamental?
  
  • This works if charge concept is opaque (e.g. categorical property with role MOP) but not if it’s transparent.
Relative or Objective Grounding

• If conceptual grounding is framework-relative, this can be combined with option 2 (framework-dependent grounding).

• If conceptual grounding is objective (my tentative view), this will yield objective grounding and objective fundamentality (though perhaps with some wiggle room due to indeterminacy?).
Ungraspable Properties

- Carnapian idea for grounding grounding: phi grounds psi when transparent phi-concept conceptually ground transparent psi-concepts (or propositions).
- But: what about properties/objects that can’t be transparently grasped: e.g. singular entities and properties, ungraspable quiddities?
Singular and General Propositions

- E.g. on a standard view, existential facts (e.g. ExFx) are grounded in singular facts (e.g. Fa).
- But plausibly there’s no transparent concept of a when a is a concrete object.
- So no transparent grounding relation?
Response 1

• Possible response: Hold that grounding relations involving ungraspable entities these derive from general conceptual necessities

• e.g. $Fa$ grounds $ExFx$ because it’s a conceptual necessity that for all $y$, $Fy$ (if true) grounds $EyFy$. 
Response 2

- Hold that existential truths are more fundamental than singular truths and plurally ground singular truths.

- E.g. conceptually grounding the existence of 10 objects and thereby conceptually grounding each object.
Two Versions of the Thesis

- Carnapian version: conceptual grounding grounds metaphysical grounding.
- Non-Carnapian version: metaphysical grounding grounds conceptual grounding.
Carnapian Version

• Carnapian thesis: metaphysical relations are (metaphysically and conceptually) grounded in conceptual relations.

• So: metaphysical analyticity grounded in conceptual analyticity.

• Metaphysical grounding grounded in conceptual grounding

• Concepts before metaphysics!
Non-Carnapian Version

• E.g. Russell-style version: transparent concepts involve acquaintance with properties.

• When phi grounds psi, acquaintance with phi conceptually grounds acquaintance with psi (because phi metaphysically grounds psi).

• So: metaphysical grounding grounds conceptual grounding (metaphysically, and therefore conceptually)?
My View

• I’m not sure whether conceptual grounding grounds metaphysical grounding, or vice versa.

• So I’m not sure how Carnapian to be.
Philosophical Consequences

• We can use failures of analytic entailment (not just failures of a priori entailment) do diagnose failures of grounding.

• If normative truths are not analytically entailed by natural truths (and both are transparent, naturalism is false).

• E.g. mental truths are not analytically entailed by physical truths (and both are transparent), physicalism is false.
Open Question Argument

• Open question argument: given natural facts, normative facts are open question, so any normative facts are non-natural.

• Standard reaction: open question falsifies analytic entailment but not grounding.

• But: If grounding thesis is right (and normative concepts are transparent): the open question argument is good!
Consciousness Arguments

• This thesis can also support arguments against physicalism about consciousness.

• Argue against analytic connections between physical and phenomenal concepts, and argue for transparency.

• Weaker premises than knowledge/conceivability arguments: open question, absence of analysis.
Dialectic

• Ways to reject the argument
  • physical concepts are opaque (Russellian monism)
  • phenomenal concepts are opaque (type-B materialism)
  • analyticity/grounding thesis is false
Mathematics

• Mathematics isn’t analytic or analytically entailed by physical truths, so physicalism about mathematics is false?

• Plausibly: mathematical truths aren’t grounded in physical truths.

• So physicalism is simply false?
Weight and Weightlessness

• Prima facie any failures of physicalism for mathematics, normativity, etc are “lightweight” failures — the extra ontology is weightless (Parfit).

• Maybe physicalism should say: all weighty truths are grounded in physical truths?

• Homework question: what’s weightiness?
Conclusion

- Analyticity may provide a more fine-grained epistemic/semantic tool to serve as a guide to the more fine-grained metaphysical issues pertaining to grounding.