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.

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

- Potential counterexamples?

Kripke

- Analyticity without grounding: x invented the zip -> x is Julius.

- Grounding without analyticity: y is H2O -> 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->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 -> {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 -> 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 -> q) is analytic if it is metaphysically analytic.

Is This Grounding?

- Maybe: A grounds B iff (A->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?

- Grouding 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 is a bachelor) is conceptually grounded in (x is male) and (x 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 1

- Non-analytic grounding relations

  - H_2O-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 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.