

Essence and Existence

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Abstract

Note to *eidōs* readers: Some (most?) of you have heard the first, second and parts of the third section two weeks ago. For today's discussion, I would like to focus on (i) the contrast between production/foundation and grounding ordinarily understood, (ii) the contrast between my (Aristotle's?) notion of essence and the Correia/Skiles and Fine 2015 accounts, (iii) the later parts.

Metametaphysical musings¹

Philosophers have always been a fightful bunch. Being fightful, they never have been and never will be able, or even willing, to agree with each other. Being philosophers, they do not even agree on the terms of engagement and have and will forever accuse each other of playing unfair. Some of us even think the others are not playing at all, and may want to demonstrate this, to their, their peers' and their students' satisfaction, by telling those 'others' what it is that they are in fact doing, not knowing and not wanting to be doing what in fact they are doing. So Carnap was not just telling Heidegger, who was making deep noises about the Nichten of the Nichts, that he was in fact speaking of nothing (with which, I presume, Heidegger could have quite happily have agreed), but he wanted to show that he had unintentionally and inadvertently lost his way, left the area where truth and falsity are at stake ("Gebiet [...], in dem es um wahr und falsch geht", 1931: 239) and entered the field of poetry.

I think it is safe to say (around here, at any rate) that in this early 20th century war about philosophy politics the right side won and we can be grateful to these **warriors** who valiantly fought that fight for us. It is important to note, however, that Carnap was *not* telling Heidegger what he should do philosophically instead; he told him to shut up and leave philosophy altogether. This changed subsequently when the respective positions became better defined and trenches were built, younger people were drafted into regular armies and 'schools' established. **Soldiers**, on both sides, were now fortifying their defenses and led coordinated attacks on the enemy's vulnerable side (psychoanalysis, for example, and naive optimism about sociological engineering on the other side). Such destructive engagements became less and less, however, as philosophers' natural risk-aversity took the other hand, and the war ended in a stalemate, or perhaps an unhappy truce.

Not everyone has the courage to be a soldier; and many of us still need the reassurance to be doing the right thing, contrastively, if possible. After the wars had ended, philosophy returned to its natural state, where each philosopher is the other philosophers' **policeman**. Even without actual murdering, levels of

1. Coda: I am no friend of metametaphysics and think this sterile and distorting practice should be discontinued. It will not, of course, for it feeds on itself and multiplies by division, in this and other respects being similar to bureaucracy. As with bureaucracy, the only effective remedies must be indirect and only once the proletariat (the productive ones, does doing real work) has established a dictatorship, bureaucracy and metametaphysics will gradually wither away (cf. Lenin, *State and Revolution*). To get the workers united, however, we need propaganda: this is how I understand this initial 'coda' – it is not part of the cognitive content of the paper.

acrimony remained quite high. Mr X, that mythical creature, was portrayed not just as not disposed to use the new fancy tools developed in Quine's forgery, but as being intellectually dishonest, not living up to his commitments he willingly, if perhaps unwittingly undertook. If he wanted to engage with serious philosophy (and be rescued from wrecked Europe to the lush wards of Harvard), he should sober up, regiment his language and get his quantifiers right.

Quine, of course, was not the only one immersed in the philosophy culture wars. Austin and Ryle were other cultural icons of the time, as were Heidegger and Adorno on the other side. Everyone shouting and accusing the others of fascism, the influencers of the time were preaching to the faithful. As philosophy became both broader and more specialised, some of these fights died out. As life became boring again and people settled in their little communities, tending to their own little garden, a new species evolved, realising that some of the weapons developed (such as the infamous criteria of ontological commitment and of empirical content) had a domestic use as well. Because it *is* commitment after all, they thought, better not have it, or at least have as little of it as possible: the **bean-counter** was born. Minimising the risk of being wrong became to be seen as something good in its own right. 'Why pay more if you can have the same for less money?', the motto of the time, fitted well into the wider socio-economical context and achieved the status of a self-evidently merely rhetorical question.

The problem with this line of thought, as only quite slowly became apparent, is that the 'market', supposed to set the right price of a fixed measure of philosophical insight, was not, still is not and never will be 'working'. People are biased, partisan, have prior commitments and are intellectually not flexible enough to value ideas rationally. The economic model itself was also far too simplistic: If parsimony really matters, then it does so 'quantitatively' as well as 'qualitatively', as they say (it is not the case, after all, that by investing your future just in one single type of stocks you are more likely to get rich, you have to 'diversify your portfolio'). But how do you convince someone, say, that an infinity of sets is less costly than a single all-powerful God?

So the bean-counters started policing the other bean-counters, accusing them of using the wrong criteria of bean-counting. It was soon discovered that there were no reliable standards: you can keep your quantifiers wide open, allow for wholesale reinterpretability, and still end up committed to both everything (in the sense that they could not accuse you of being too austere) and to nothing (in the sense that any apparent commitment can be made to disappear by a suitable proxy function) – a *reductio* of a research programme if ever there was one.

Ontology having made easy (and pointless and 'relativistic') by 'model theory', people retreated to internal questions, finding comfort in the safe space of their very own conceptual scheme. This *petit bourgeois* attitude provided a natural habitat for **the weasel**, who embraced the value-free individualism of the time and thought it best to have it all, for free, just by calling her quantifiers "lightweight", "italicised" or "flat-footed". Whatever makes you happy works for you, after all, and promiscuity is more fun.

More conservative temperaments quickly spotted that even weasels were products of their own cultures. They wanted to accept mathematics, but not numbers, computer science, but not information, physics, but not fields or particles etc. etc. But where to stop? Accept sociology but not people? Recipe books, but not food? The Nürnberg trials, but no nazis?

The **naturalist** objected to the weasel that he is no longer doing anything useful. The solution to the paradox of induction cannot be to say that both grue and green/blue are "ok" in the same way, but perhaps for different purposes – that they only seemed to be on a par precisely *was* the paradox and accepting appearances at face value does not constitute a viable solution to it. Natural bodies have natural joints and it is in virtue of having these joints and not others that they move and act the way they do; they could have others, and perhaps move in the same way, but they do not and this is something to be

explained. So it is nature itself that proves the weasel wrong, holding him on a tight leash by its invisible hand.

Not all cookie-cutting is done by nature itself, however, some, especially before Christmas, is of our own doing; and the good butcher knows that *she*, not nature, is really doing the carving at the joints. The **carvers** thus holds that they are carving better than others, *producing* more natural joints. Carving naturally, however, may be what good butchers do: but will this give us better steaks? That it will is just an article of faith, defended by propaganda, not argument: if the book of the world is told in fundamental terms, it is bound to be true, say the people who believe to have written it. Because there is only one such book to be written, they add that it should be as brief as possible, better than any other possible such book and still rich enough in content to be the story of everything, and so the carvers became policemen, bean-counters and weasels themselves.

As it was discovered that the carver was not writing the book of the world, but just talking about what it would be to write it, disillusioned clients started their own little butcheries. Rather than just hedge our commitments, it would be better to make profit out of this hedging. You cannot have a hedge-fund however, if you do not have leverage: and so the ‘getting the max out of the min’ methodology quite naturally turned to grounding. If you have the grounds, the motto was, this will give you everything. Spurred on by a new-found sense of purpose, **the builder** thus went to work, rebuilding the house of science on a more secure foundation. Not, of course, that he would actually really build anything (unlike Descartes who said what his grounds were); rather than doing something yourself, it is safer and more profitable to tell others what they should do (and so the builder also was a policeman, a bean-counter and a weasel).

The world does not have to wait for the Princeton faculty to be built, or rebuilt. It is built already: just open your eyes and look. Moreover, the same thing can be built in many different ways. Even if we had – what we have not – a sufficient and sufficiently independent grasp of top-down constraints (parsimony, simplicity, beauty, what have you) that gave us reason to believe that the world *is* built the way we believe it is, such reason would still be inconclusive: there is no guarantee that the world is as it should be, neither in metaphysics nor anywhere else. At this point, the builder lowers her ambitions and becomes a **modeller**: it is all about toy models anyway, after all, and if you can do it with your lego bricks, then probably nature does it that way too, or at least could do it, or could do it if it did it with lego bricks. The problem with models, however, is that there are quite many of them, and how things could be is not a reliable guide to how they are.

We thus understand why the **definer**, our last character on stage, recommends adopting a humbler attitude: rather than actually building things (and out of lego bricks, of all things!), we should just lay out building plans, define what it would mean to build what they depict. We can never reach beyond models anyway, so we may as well take the model as our explanandum: if we understand what it is, we will understand what it is a model of. At least this is the hope. We will not, however, understand that of which it is a model: ‘defining’ water by saying that it is H_2O is talking about what comes out of the tap only on condition that it is H_2O that comes out of the tap; and, as it has been remarked *ad nauseam*, that’s just not true: not only do many other things come out of the tap as well, it’s not even predominantly that type of molecule. So what is it we are defining?

Our present situation, of course, is not just the last step in this successive unfolding of the world spirit, it includes all the ghosts of the past as well. There still are some warriors, some soldiers and plenty of policemen too, “restricting” metaphysics or “redirecting” metaphysical inquiry to what they think the “real” questions are, e.g. what grounds what or to “what the world is like at the most fundamental level” (Sider 2011: 1). There are many weasels who just do not get it why people do not make their lives as easy as they make them in Florida, there are naturalists, gathering on beaches restricted to their own kind, builders, carvers and definers working with worldly and conceptual lego bricks, and some sharp knives to cut them up.

Our job as philosophers, and indeed as scientists more generally, is not to minimise our commitments, tell others what to do, getting away without being caught or rebuilding things which do not need to be fixed, defining things that are defined by themselves already: it is, as Plato realised, to save the phenomena. You do not ‘save’ the phenomena if you say they do not exist, or that some of them are not really real, or by translating what others say, on their behalf, into something they mean to deny, by telling people what is easy and what is not, and quite generally, by talking about them instead of the world. We should just get to work, do what we think is worth being done and stop arguing that this is the best, or only, or only respectable way to proceed. If asked for justification (by philosophers, not funding agencies, of course), we should just shrug our shoulders and go on. As with “Epistemology Naturalised”, which is not a paper in epistemology by its own lights, and Williamsonian musings about what philosophy is really about, which do not themselves live up to the strict standards they advocate, the request for justification is less well justified as the practice it questions.

As we gather at the table of the knights, do not bring your axe, your razor or your laser, but try to say contribute to the conversation by saying something illuminating (you see, I am a policeman myself). Saying something illuminating is not primarily a matter of explaining things, neither ‘ontologically’ nor to others, except perhaps a matter of explaining things to yourself, understanding them, what they are, in terms that bring out what it is that is special about them. This does not mean that we should make our conversation inclusive – quite to the contrary: we should exclude anyone who is not making a real contribution. Heidegger was really wrong, and there is something he was wrong about. He was wrong about the Jews, wrong about German, wrong about Aristotle (and even about Angst, though a little less wrong), but he also was wrong about Sein, his very topic, and not very interestingly so.

Which brings me to the topic of ontological pluralism. Ontological pluralism, whatever else it may be, is the claim that not just there are many different things but rather that they are in different ways: people have Dasein, events occur, properties are instantiated, hammers are at hand, and so on. But what does this mean? That people have essences of a special kind, that they are special in some ways, that they *are* in special ways? It is difficult to say, and even more difficult to decide. Perhaps an example helps.

What it is to be cool is to be considered cool, by the appropriate group of people in the right circumstances. To be cool, therefore, you have to get that kind of recognition from your peers, but this does not exhaust what is claimed: the nature of coolness may well go beyond what these people say or do. They may, after all, be wrong about you and your coolness may be hidden, even permanently, from the world.

You may call this “generalised identity”, but it is not identity of any kind: to be the morning star is precisely *not* to be the evening star and to be red is not to be of my favourite colour, even if my favourite colour is red. Not that we should therefrom conclude that, as people would put it, the “to ti en einai” operator would ‘create’ a hyperintensional context: what it is to be Socrates, after all, may well be what it is to be a rational animal, and you can certainly know Socrates without thinking he’s rational (or even thinking he’s not, as XX does). After the policeman, the bean-counter, out of the fire into the pan. That we should not think of claims about coolness as identity-statements does not mean that we should take them to be higher-order statements about facts, i.e. about what grounds supposedly unproblematic coolness facts. There are no facts about coolness, in any ontologically robust sense, and what is said when we say that she is cool just is not the kind of thing that would admit of either ‘conceptual’ nor ‘worldly’ grounding: it is not something to be explained, to anyone or to ourselves, but is just said, and true, and brutally so (metaphysically brute, of course, as it may of course be grounded in the shirt she is wearing). That the fact that she is cool is a brute one does not make the difficult task of saying something illuminating about it, to develop a theory of coolness, any less pressing; quite to the contrary, it makes it a more worthwhile endeavour. That people are cool is a deep fact about the social world; if only philosophers knew what it takes to be cool, they would have a quite different life than the one they in fact have.

Grounding: production and foundation

Our inquiry into the nature of coolness may take many different forms, and different distinctions may prove useful. A first such distinction is between **grounding and determination**: what grounds your coolness is what makes you cool, and different things, we hope, may accomplish this feat. What your coolness is determined by, however, is what makes it, wholly or in part, that particular coolness that it is. What only partly grounds your coolness, does not make you cool – it may contribute to its being the case that you are made cool, but it also may not: perhaps your not cool, not even partly so, even when in the possession of a partial ground (a cool shirt, say). While being partly grounded is not a way of being grounded, being partly determined *is* a way of being determined. If your coolness is even partly determined by, and thus partly depends on, your haircut, for example, it will not survive your wrong choice of hair-dresser. Another dimension of contrast is thus with modal flexibility. Your coolness could have, and perhaps had along your career, multiple grounds: you can be cool at different times for different reasons. Its determinations, however, are sticky: if the coolness of both of us really is determined by our respective and very different haircuts, we are not sharing our coolness, though of course we may still be as cool as the other.

Another important distinction is between **essence and dependence**. You may depend on things to be what you are (cool, e.g., or a human), but this is not the same thing as to depend on them *tout court*. Coolness may be lost, even when my coolness, as long as I had it, was essentially mine; what I depend on to be me, for my nature or identity, what makes me the thing I am, is not all I need to exist (unless, of course, I am God, on a certain conception of this) and conversely I may fall short of what I really am and be a little less rational than what would be my nature.

Even when distinguished from determination, essence and dependence, however, grounding is still said in many ways. Two such ways, for today, are production and foundation.²

Some things **produce** others, under certain circumstances, out of something:

- P-1 The sparkle and the dynamite produce an explosion.
- P-2 The builder and the bricks produce the house.
- P-3 The noise and my sensibility to it produce a headache.
- P-4 Some events in my brain produce a thought.
- P-5 Harvey Weinstein produces *Pulp Fiction*, an illegitimate child, and a scandal.
- P-6 The smile on Maria's face was produced by her amusement at Sam's joke.

Typically, the circumstances are contingent; but even when they are not, and thus production invariably happens, we have to distinguish necessarily obtaining conditions from *null* conditions. In the latter case, when production is *null*-conditional, we have production of a special type: the producer is then spontaneously active, a **generator** of its product all by itself. Typically, that out of which something is produced is external to the producer: when it is not, we have not just production, but **emanation**: out of itself, with no external input, the producer produces its product.

A certain conception of grounding applies to the case where generation and emanation intersect: when the production is both a generation and an emanation, the existence of the producer is sufficient for the existence of the product, and the latter is explainable in terms of the former and the fact that the product is produced by the producer, all by itself, and out of itself.

The match is not perfect, however. Some mixtures are both generated by their ingredients and emanate from them, but it does not always seem to be the case that they are grounded in them, at least not fully

2. Let me emphasise at the outset that I have no truck with the Grounding/grounding line of criticism – in fact, I am against capitalising quite generally and do not succumb to the belief that features of type-face ever make a semantic difference at all. I am neither claiming that “grounding” is ambiguous, nor that it has a focal meaning, but just drawing a distinction I find theoretically fruitful.

grounded. Mixtures emanate from their ingredients because this is what the ingredients are – the ingredients of this mixture. They are generated by their ingredients when these spontaneously mix, because the process of their mixing is not something additional to be added to the mixture and is not a way for the ingredients to be related to each other (for the ingredients no longer exist when the mixture does, except perhaps potentially). Are mixtures grounded in their ingredients? Not on a necessitarian picture of grounding: the existence of the mixture is not entailed by the existence of the ingredients. Even with contingent grounding, if there is such a thing, the answer is less than clear-cut: certainly, the mixture is something over and above its ingredients, it does not owe its existence to just them, they do not make it exist (but perhaps the mixer does, or their natural coming together, or something else).

Necessitarian grounding differs from self-sufficient and spontaneous production (i.e. production which is both generation and emanation) also with respect to its dependency on *ceteris absentibus* clauses: if “*p*” stands for the conjunction of all positive atomic facts (if there is such a thing), then the fact that there are no unicorns (or their absence) is both generated by and emanates from the fact that *p* – the atomic facts, all by themselves, generate this absence (by not including any positive atomic fact about unicorns), and the absence emanates from them, because the totality fact, whatever this is, is neither positive nor atomic. The absence of unicorns is not grounded in the positive facts, however, because it is something over and above them and is not explainable in terms of them. The positive facts alone do not exclude unicorns, only their totality fact does.

Both generation and emanation are relations that may hold between different things and between a thing and itself. The butterfly emanates from the caterpillar, but they are not identical. The fire generates the smoke, but it is not it. We also have cases of self-generation and self-emanation, however. The fresh apple generates the rotten apple, but they are one and the same. The steam emanates from the boiling water, but is not numerically distinct from it.

When restricted to facts, “make it the case” seems appropriate to express cases of production that are both generations and emanations: the fact that *p* makes it the case that (there is a fact that) $p \vee q$; the fact that *p* makes it the case that it is true that *p*; and so on. Even production which is both generation and emanation does not suffice for dependence: The step from *p* to $p \vee q$ does not require more truthmakers (those for *p* will still do), but it allows for more truthmaking possibilities – it does not depend on its ground from which it emanates.

Phenomena of production are sometimes aptly described in terms of priority, levels and fundamentality: the producer is prior to, at a lower level, more fundamental than the product, the product is posterior, emergent, derivative. This by itself, I think, does not give us a reason to believe that production is or entails or should be modelled by a strict partial order. Suppose Sam believes, as some neoplatonists Christians do, that the entire world is an emanation of the mind of God, out of which it was produced spontaneously and entirely, without external cause or ingredient. Is this, by itself, enough to ensure that Sam is not a pantheist, or might he be a panentheist instead? Clearly, more has to be said, and it will depend on these additional theory elements what (and possibly: who) is at stake.

Even when under circumstances and out of something, production is quite different from another relation which is also, in some sense of this word, ‘generative’. Some things **found** others, under certain circumstances, ‘underlie’ them as foundations, as something on which the founded thing is built:

- F-1 The basement founds the building, it is its foundation.
- F-2 The soil founds the plant, it nourishes it and the plant arises from it.
- F-3 The Swiss National Science foundation funds, and founds, our research; our careers are built on it.
- F-4 The fundament, e.g. Maria’s face, founds the moment, e.g. Maria’s smile.
- F-5 Socrates’ snub is founded in his nose, his snubnosedness in his having the particular nose he has.
- F-6 The amorality of this act is founded in its consequences.

The founding of something a by something else b may be full or partial: it is partial, if a also has a foundation different from b , and it is full if b is its only foundation. Socrates' snubnosedness is fully founded in his having a concave nose, i.e. in his nosedness and the shape of his nose, but only partially founded in his nosedness. The founding of something a by something else b may be transparent or opaque: it is transparent if a wears its being founded on b 'on its sleeve' as it were, and opaque if not. The foundation of x on y is transparent iff the very existence of x entails that it is founded on something like y , i.e. when x by itself determines the foundation it needs. Someone's bachelorhood, we may perhaps assume (excluding the pope, transgender cases and a lot more), is transparently founded in his being an adult unmarried male, whereas someone's knowledge, if at all, is certainly not transparently founded in her justified true belief.

Full foundation may be called "basing": what fully founds a thing is its **basis**, that on which something is based. A basis or a full foundation provides all the elements needed for the founded thing to 'arise', though it will of course not always necessitate it (cf. below). It provides for the possibility, not the actuality of the founded thing: only in cases of production which is both generation and emanation do things 'grow out' of their basis.

Transparent founding may be called "**manifestation**", and the founded thing an "aspect" of its foundation. Sometimes, transparency comes about because the connection is conceptual: the (primary) concept of the founded thing already characterises it as founded in a certain way on something else. Maria's smile (the one only Maria can have) is such a manifestation: knowing it fully tells you everything about its foundation.

Founding that is both a basing and a manifestation gives rise to self-revealing aspects, aspects that manifest their basis and nothing else, that allow for a 'road back' to the thing they are founded in.

Both full foundation and transparent foundation may hold between different things, and between a thing and itself. Full self-foundation is the mark of well-constructed foundations: they hold themselves up and do not need further propping to stand. Such self-foundation need not be transparent: something may be a foundation, even a full foundation, of itself, but only accidentally so; sometimes foundations may be, and even need to be, further founded by other foundations. Transparent self-foundation is the mark of the obvious cases of foundation: the truth that $p \wedge p$ is founded in the truth that p , and obviously so, by conjunction-elimination and conjunction-introduction. But neither full nor transparent foundation are reflexive: the building is not its foundation, even though it is both fully and transparently founded in it.

Foundation and production may occur together, of course. A certain disease, a biological condition of my body or a virus, may both found and produce the rash spreading over it: it underlies the rash because the rash is a symptom of it, and produces it – both causally and metaphysically, perhaps even spontaneously so and without further ingredients. Even when they coincide together, one of the generative relations may wear more of the trousers: Some foundations are also productions: the soil, including the seed, founds and also produces the plant. Some productions are also foundations: the scandal was not just produced by Weinstein's behaviour, but also founded on it.

Conceptually, being-built-out-of (production) and being-built-on (foundation) are two very different things: you can, of course, be built out of (produced by) something that is entirely in the past, but you cannot be built on and stand on something that is no longer there; you can be built on (founded in) something that cannot be itself be input to some building, because, for example, it is unchangeable or even immutable. There are other important differences: foundation, but not production can be backwards, logically and temporally. The amorality of a certain act may be founded in, due to, explainable in terms of its consequences, even if these are not even simultaneous, but perhaps much later than the act.

Even when something is both founded and produced, it may stand to different things in these two relations. Take the aesthetic properties of some painting, say its beauty. The beauty of the painting is founded on its visible features: because it is a painting (rather than e.g. a symphony), its beauty is there to be seen. It

is, however, produced by many other things besides, inter alia the way it represents Jesus quite differently than is normally done in the Caravagesque tradition. That this is a one-franc piece is founded in its having the right material properties and its being accepted as currency, but it is produced by the national bank that had the legal title to issue it.

Sometimes, it seems to me, foundation and production may even hold between the same relata, but in converse directions. The intrinsic profile of my body is produced (and ‘grounded’), in part, by the intrinsic profile of my hand, at least as long as my hand is part of me. Suppose that it is intrinsic to my right hand that it is alive. The intrinsic profile of my body then includes the property of having a living right hand, hence necessitates the fact that my hand is alive. Plausibly, foundation holds in the other direction, top-down, from my body to my hand: my hand is alive in virtue of being appropriately connected to my body, it is alive insofar as it is my hand, i.e. one of the hands of my body.

Sometimes, perhaps always, questions of production and of founding are difficult, and often also philosophically tricky. We may suppose, e.g., that Maria’s smile was miraculously painted over her face by her sense of amusement and hence produced by it. Suppose that she was rightly amused, in context, and that Sam’s joke, in context, was objectively funny (if there is such a thing). Is the smile then also produced by the joke? Is the smile not just produced by, but also founded in her sense of amusement (as well as founded in her temperament, her bodily constitution, her sense of humour)? Such questions may depend on our theory of smiles: are they outer signs, manifestations, of inner conditions and states or are they (perhaps unconscious) actions or (perhaps uncontrollable) reflexes? The pure theories of production and of foundation will not decide such questions.

A number of important features of all relations discussed – of production, generation, emanation, foundation, basing and manifestation – should be noted.

All six relations hold between existents: the non-existent does not need to be and cannot be produced or founded. It cannot be generally the case that what is produced or founded has less reality than what produces or founds it, because both relations may hold between a thing and itself. In general, we certainly cannot say that what is produced or founded is ‘nothing over and above’ what produces or founds it. What foundation and production ‘add’ are very different things: production explains present existence by showing where it comes from, both logically and temporally and also in the order of dependence; foundation explains present existence by showing what it consists in, what its present preconditions are. There may be cases where no such things are added: cases where something is produced out of and by nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) and cases where something is founded upon nothing. In addition to self-production and self-foundation, we may allow for such zero-production (not *null*) and zero-foundation. Clearly, then the ‘nothing but’ and ‘nothing over and above’ locutions are inappropiate. As has been said *ad nauseam*, there are no free lunches to be had.

All six relations are contingent. Clearly, even if x has been produced by y , it is possible, at least in principle, that it be produced by some z , different from y . This holds even if the production was spontaneous (generation) and out of y itself (emanation). In the same way, x ’s being founded upon y does not exclude the possibility that there be some z different from y that founds x , even when y already is a full foundation and thus a base. Not even transparent foundations allows for a “route back”: when x is the manifestation of y , knowledge of x will give us some knowledge of y , but only of a general sort, as knowledge of things (relevantly) like x .

At least without further restrictions, all six relations are left-side monotonous: if y produces / generates / emanates / founds / bases or manifests x , everything containing y will do as well. Further elements may be redundant (though only in the case of basing are they guaranteed to be), but redundancy does not undo

what has already been achieved.³ You do not make buildings crumble just by adding to their foundations, you do not undo your thought just by having more C-fibre firing going on concurrently.

What is more: At least logically, all six relations are not also many-one. Nothing in the nature of the relations makes it impossible that something could be produced by, generated out of, emanating from, founded in, based upon or manifesting more than one thing, concurrently and separately. This has the important consequence that none of the relations discussed is a relation of dependence, even when it itself holds with necessity. As many have noted, the confusion of determination and dependence is endemic in the grounding literature. It seems that people just cannot help thinking that, if y is the ground of x , then x ‘needs’ y , ‘relies’ on y or is in some other way dependent on y . The discussion of multiple realisability should have taught us already fifty years ago how wrong this thought is, and that the fact that $p \vee q$ is fully grounded in either disjunct may remind us of this.⁴

It is a natural and attractive thought to explain the confusing of determination with dependence as a sub-type of the also endemic confusing of sufficient with necessary conditions. If he does ϕ in order to ψ , then certainly, if he ψ s, he must have ϕ ed! Determination, on this picture, provides for sufficiency, dependence accounts for necessity. If we think of ‘grounding’ generally (production and foundation) on the model of providing sufficient conditions, then it is natural to look for the dual: what provides necessary conditions? the answer, it has seemed to many, is: essence.

Essence: What is it to be x ?

Asking about some thing’s essence is asking about which ones, among the many properties it has, make it the thing it is, determine its identity or nature. The essential properties of a thing are those that matter, esp. when it comes to that thing’s existence, identity, nature or being. The question has to be further refined, however: in one sense, *each one* of its properties makes the thing the thing it is (i.e. the thing with these properties). We need not only to restrict, however, but also to broaden: what makes the thing the thing it is does not have to be a property. Intuitively, at least, it could come from a wide range of ontological categories: what makes Socrates the thing (or man) he is, we may think, is his humanity, that he taught Plato, the fertilised egg that grow into him, his very particular method of questioning, his Socratising or his death of hemlock in 399 BC at the hand of the Athenian democrats.

It is difficult to satisfy both desiderata at the same time:

- If we restrict the range of properties by requiring them to be had necessarily, or to be had necessarily if had at all, we make a thing’s existence, identity, nature or being necessary to it, turn relational essences (essential relations of Socrates to Plato, e.g., or to the egg that became him) into necessary connections between distinct existences and make counter-essential counterfactuals vacuously true. Furthermore, we have to decide whether essential properties are to be necessary just for the things they are essential to, or for everyone that has them. In the first case, we face an explanatory regress (the necessity of their exemplification is not explainable in terms of the property, nor of the thing by themselves, but by their belonging to the essence, something which was supposed to be explained in part by their being exemplified necessarily); in the second, we rule out that some properties may be contingently had by some things, and still be essential to others.
- If we restrict the range of properties by requiring them to be part of a real definition, we either need to assume (and make plausible) that there can be only one real definition of any thing that has an

3. Certainly more controversially, the same seems to me true of explanation in general: if you have given an explanation (a sufficiently good, or acceptable one, in context or depending on the type of explanation), why should you undo what is achieved by just continuing to talk? I do know, however, that my intuition is not widely shared and I will not press this point further.

4. Co-production and co-foundation are not just logical possibilities, but theoretically interesting concepts: two shooting may co-produce one death, and be singularly sufficient for it, and two Siamese organisms can co-found a smile, and be singularly sufficient for it.

essence or else accept things with two, perhaps mutually incompatible identities, natures and beings. Furthermore, we have to say much more about what real definitions are: could they ‘include’ (and if so, in what sense) non-predicative entities, such as facts or even entirely distinct individuals (Plato, the egg)?

I think it is worthwhile to explore the possibility that essences are not to be identified with essentially exemplified properties. Essences are not (sets, pluralities, conjunctions of) properties at all, but answers to the Aristotelian question what it is to be a certain thing (*to ti en einai*). Such answers exhibit a wide variety, both of content and of form, and there is no unified account to be had of what ‘the’ essence of a certain thing is.

As we will see below, statements of essence will quite often be partial, and not just for reasons of ignorance. It is certainly metaphysically possible that even *bona fide* things, kinds, properties fail to have individuating essences. This is a common drawback of both supposedly unifying accounts of ground and essence that have recently been proposed: they both very closely tie essence to identity.⁵

One problem about Fine’s sententialist account of essence is thus that it answers the wrong question. The question is what it is to be the set $\{a, \text{the morning star}, \dots\}$ and not what it is to be identical to this set. The answer to the latter question, when asked of e.g. $\{a, \text{the evening star}, \dots\}$ will concern what it is for the morning star to be (identical to) the evening star, but the answer to the first will not. Also, the picture he gives us is not symmetric: what the essence explains is the identity, but what is grounded is the existence.

One problem about generalised identity statements is that many of them are neither statements of grounding nor of essence: to be red is to be of my favourite colour, suppose, but colour-preferences and colours do not share grounds nor are involved in each others’ essences.⁶

Statements of generalised identity are symmetric – if to ϕ is to ψ then to ψ is to ϕ –, but statements of essence are not: even if F includes all and only the essential properties of x and we may say that to be x is to be the F , the converse, that to be the F is to be x does not follow: even objectual essences, as we will see below, do not need to be individuating.

What is it to be Socrates? A difficult question, but here is a start: to be a human being. What else? To be a man? Perhaps not, not even in the sex sense, if he could have survived a certain type of operation. To have a certain body, or a body at all? Perhaps not, if it really is Socrates who populates Dante’s limbo. Different conceptions of Socrates will answer questions about his essence very differently, not just in content, but in form as well.

Will the answer to the question what it is to be Socrates be different from the answer to the question what it is to be Plato? It may or it may not. In any case, however, the answer to this question is very different from the answer to the question what is it to be Socrates rather than Plato? This latter question may be readily answered: it is to be married to Xanthippe rather than to be a bachelor, for example. Even the latter question is not always answerable, however: there is no good answer to the question what it is to be this rather than that electron in the orbit of a helium atom, for example.

What is it to be a human being, a set, a British royal, a work of art? Here again, answers may be very diverse: to be a rational animal, to have members or being the empty set, to have a certain ancestry. Note that these answers are very imperfect: the first is intrinsically vague (human vegetables, human angels, humanoid

5. So do Lowe and many others. Lowe (2008: 35) even says, quite incredibly, that “the essence of something, X is *what X is*, or *what it is to be X* ” is just “another locution” for the claim that “ X ’s essence is the very *identity* of X ” (his italics).

6. I should stress that the question I take to be definitive of inquiry into essences – “what is it to be x ” – is *not* just an instance of the supposedly more general question “what is it to F ”. Even if perhaps “many Aristot[e]lian-minded philosophers who hold that the essence of men consists in their being rational animals arguably intend their claim to provide an answer to a question of the type [“what is it to F ?”]” (Correia 2006: 754), they should not. “What is it to (be rational)?” admits of irrelevant answers (“sometimes quite hard”, “to be what Aristotle thinks defines us”, “to be a member of a certain set”), which are excluded by the different parsing “what is it to be (rational)?”.

robots?), the second uninformative because “set” reoccurs both in “empty set” and in “standing in the set-membership relation”, the third is objectively indeterminate, because there is no fact of the matter who is a royal and who is not and the fourth is dis-unified: what it is to be a work of art is a possibly open-ended list, containing items at best related by some kind of family resemblance. Here, as in the objectual case, it is not to be expected that the best possible answer to essence questions will narrow down the range of candidates instantiating the kinds in question, or even those instantiating them essentially, to just one single member. Perhaps what it is to be a state of knowledge that p really is just what it is to be a justified true belief that p (and nothing else), but they are still not identical, as the paradox of analysis shows.

What is it to be white, walking, surprising? Here we may be asking about the nature, or real definition of a property (though we will probably have to ask back: phenomenal white or reflectance white? white for a surface or for a light beam?), for an account of an activity performable only under certain circumstances and by certain actors (if someone else moves your limbs, you are not walking, even though robots walk; you may be walking on a treadmill, without changing place, but you are not walking at the moment where you stand still to change direction), or an explanation of why some events have the features they have (this b-flat is surprising within this melody, but would not be so in another; it is surprising to classically habituated ears, but perhaps not to atonalists). Again, individuating essences are not to be expected: even if to be white is to reflect, or to be disposed to reflect, light of a certain type of wave-lengths, it seems possible for colours to be differently realised – in light or on surfaces, for example.

The question what it is to know that p , what it is to be a knower that p is thus different from the question what it is to be a state of knowledge, as [Correia \(2006\)](#) and [Fine \(2015: 298\)](#) have urged (the latter’s answers being “to believe that p on the basis of its truth” and “a mental state” respectively), and we may even, if we want, take the first to be equivalent to the question what it is *for an arbitrary individual* to know that p , though I do not see why the extra qualification would be needed or helpful.

What is it to be the fact that p , the fact that $q \wedge q$ and the fact that there is a fact? As long as not more is said about what facts are, there is no good answer to these questions. If facts are true propositions, the answer is simple and unhelpful: to be a proposition (perhaps a possible object of belief?) that so-and-so and to be true. If facts are states of affairs, predicationally and logically complex ‘combinations’ of particulars and universals, then they presumably have their intrinsic structure essentially. If facts are requirements on reality, answers will depend on the ‘fact-content’, i.e. on the requirement imposed. Perhaps what it is to be the fact that p will then be what it is to make it true that p , and what it is to be the fact that p will be the very same thing as what it is to be the fact that $p \wedge p$ and also be the very same thing as what it is to be the fact that $p \vee p$.

Essence and existence

“What is it to be x ” questions often contain an indexical or demonstrative element in the way they pick out x or the X s about the essence of which they inquire. In these cases, even a full answer will not provide us with a ‘blueprint’ of, or a recipe for, either x or the X s: essences are not ideas in God’s mind, or slots in a fully determinate matrix of possibilities, which only have to be realised or filled for the things to exist. It is in this sense that my notion of essence is existentialist in Prior’s and Plantinga’s sense: existence is prior to essence, because existence is presupposed in the very project of determining essence. To ask what it is to be a is a way of asking what a is and we cannot ask such a question about a if a does not exist. We may, of course, ask what it is to be something like a which is a way of asking what a is like and this question can be answered even in a ’s utter absence. But it is not the question about a ’s existence.

[Kit Fine \(1995, 2005\)](#) and [E.J. Lowe \(2008\)](#) have argued, to the contrary, that essence precedes existence. Fine’s motivation, as far as I see, stems from his concern with ontological dependence and his early claim that questions about what things exist in virtue of other things are questions about whether these things

essentially stand in relations. Such a conception of ontological dependence, it seems to me, confounds production with foundation. Ontologically dependent ‘lesser’ things such as shadows and holes may be founded, and even essentially so, but still maintain their identity across different ways of being produced: a given hole in a bit of cheese is ontologically dependent on the bit of cheese within which it is a hole, but it may be produced by all of a series of successively bigger portions of cheese including the original bit.

Lowe’s argument is roughly as follows: existence is quantificational, a matter of being identical to some thing; identity judgments are applications of identity criteria; identity criteria are essentialist; hence, to say of something that it exists is to say of it what it is to be identical to that thing, i.e. to some claim about its essence. The weakest, albeit implicit, premise is in my view the first one. It may well be that singular existence claims are best expressed in terms of the identity relation, i.e. as $\exists x(x = \dots)$, where “...” stands for a singular term; it is quite another thing to say that in order to make existence judgements we have to judge identity claims. Quite plainly, we do not.⁷

Even if existence presupposed essence, this would be a synthetic a priori truth, if a truth at all. It may also be an a posteriori falsehood if among the really elementary particles we find things which do not have essences at all. That essence presupposes existence, on the other hand, is analytic: if *a* does not exist, there just *is* nothing, and could not be anything it is to be *a* (there could be, of course, but there is not). That essence and existence come apart does not mean that we cannot learn about the one from the other. Here are some connections:

impossibility: if there is no answer to the question what it is to be an *F*, we may reasonably conclude that there are no *F*s and that there could not be any: round squares are impossible *because* there is no answer what it is to be a round square;

category mistakes: if there is no answer to the question what it is, for an *F*, to be a *G*, we may reasonably conclude that no *F*s are, or could be *G*: coloured things cannot be unextended and Caesar is neither odd nor even *because* there is no way for unextended things to be coloured, there is no way for Caesar to be odd and there is no way for him to be even;

non-existence: if every answer to the question what it is to be an *F* is incompatible with the existence of *F*s, we may reasonably conclude that there are no *F*s: Pegasus does not exist and there are no unicorn *because* part of what it is to be Pegasus or a unicorn is to be a mythical creature.

existence-entailment: if every answer to the question what it is to be an *F* gives rise to the question what it is to be a *G*, then nothing could be *F* without something being *G*: stars depend for their existence on some public *because* part of what it is to be a star is to be popular and part of what it is to be popular is to be well-liked by some public.

Bringing them together

Existentialism, in our sense, provides for an interesting and in my view theoretically fruitful conceptual possibility: to individuate essences more fine-grainedly than existents. It has often been noted that, on a certain conception of essence at least, answers to the question what it is to be the morning star may not themselves answer the question what it is to be the evening star, that what it is to be water may be taken to diverge from what it is to be H₂O, that the question what it is to be the tallest person in the room is not even addressed by pointing out what it is to be Sam and that what it is to be the (conjunctive) fact that $p \wedge p$ is richer than what it is to be just the fact that *p*. The usual theoretical moves have been made: modes of presentations have been introduced (first case), properties individuated hyperintensionally (second), non-rigid designators banned from essence questions (third), essence (and grounding) statements interpreted as distinguishing between ‘factually equivalent’ propositions (fourth).

7. Moreover, even if we granted that point, it would not suffice to make Lowe’s point, as it established only an epistemic, perhaps anthropological, order of dependence, and nothing of the metaphysical sort.

Once we abandon the property-cluster model of essence, however, a more unified and satisfying answer is possible: there is no presumption that the question what it is to be an F should receive the same answer than the question what it is to be a G , even if the F is the G , or all and only F s are G s or F and G are the same property. What it is to be an F is a question about what it takes to qualify as an F , either in context or absolutely, what conditions something must satisfy to be an F , what forms the satisfaction of such conditions can take. Such conditions may differ between necessarily coextensive properties and different rigid designators for the very same thing.

For at least some x , inquiries into its production, its foundation and its essence respectively ask different questions:

- how does x come about? what is x due to? where does x come from?
- how is it that x is? in virtue of what is x ? what does x 's existence require of the world?
- what is x ? what is it to be x ?

These being different questions, they may receive different answers. Take an occurrent episode of fear. Different questions may characterise it quite differently:

- as a negative appraisal of a perceptually given lion (asking about its production);
- as an emotional (rather than cognitive or behavioural) reaction to a feeling of danger (asking about its foundation);
- as a representation, in the emotion mode, of the lion as dangerous (asking about its essence).

That the three questions are different does not, of course, mean that their answers are not connected and that answering one cannot help answering any of the others.

Foundation, in some, but of course not all respects, is similar to parthood, or rather to some species of parthood, if we accept [Fine \(2010\)](#)'s pluralism. The dependency we get from the relation between a set and its members is due much more to its being a relation of foundation than to its being a relation of production. The production side of set-membership is trivial, so to say: the members produce the set without further input, and pure sets are *null*-produced. That the identity and existence of the set is determined by the members is not itself a result of the way in which the set is produced from them.

Foundation thus explains 'mereological' (and set-theoretical) essentialism, in those cases where the latter is true. Production may also explain, to some extent, some essential truths: if colours really are essentially response-dependent, then this is because they are produced, in part, by how they are seen. This does not, however, entail that they are founded upon our responses: they may still be properties of objectively existing visibles, and entirely founded in their dispositions to reflect light of certain wave-lengths, but, being 'out there', they are still co-produced by us.

The explanatory potential of essence for questions of production and foundation is perhaps best brought out by considering a question that has received some attention in the grounding literature. If the fact that p grounds the fact that q , it has been asked, what grounds this grounding fact? Different answers have been proposed: the fact that p , the fact that q , none, both, and sometimes the one and sometimes the other. How should we go about answering this question? Here is a start.

Suppose you find it intuitive to claim that the fact that y grounds x is grounded in y . You may then think of the first-order grounding as a type of emanation: y , all by itself, not only grounds x but grounds its grounding of x as well. Emanation of this type may be grounded in y 's essence: it may be part of what it is to be y to produce not just x but its production as well. It does not have to be this way, however: y 's power to self-produce x may also be bestowed on it, by something else, and even accidentally so.

Suppose you find it intuitive to claim that the fact that y grounds x is grounded in x . You may then think of the first-order grounding as a type of manifestation: x , all by itself, provides for its own grounding. Manifestation of this type may be grounded in x 's essence: it may be part of what it is to be x that it is a

manifestation of the precise ground it is grounded in, and of nothing else. It does not have to be this way, however: x 's power to provide for its own grounding may be unspecific as to what particular ground is required.

Applications

The question of reality

In his seminal 2001 article “The Question of Realism”, Kit Fine distinguishes two notions of metaphysical reality:

what is factual : “...metaphysical reality is to be identified with what is “objective” or “factual”. The antirealist, on this conception, denies that there are any facts “out there” in virtue of which the propositions of a given domain might be true. The propositions of the domain are not in the “business” of stating such facts; they serve merely to indicate our engagement with the world without stating, in objective fashion, how the world is. As familiar examples of such a position, we have expressivism in ethics, according to which ethical judgements are mere expressions of attitude; formalism in mathematics, according to which mathematical statements are mere moves within a system of formal rules; and instrumentalism in science, according to which scientific theories are mere devices for the prediction and control of our environment.”

what is fundamental : “...metaphysical reality is to be identified with what is “irreducible” or “fundamental”. On this view, reality is constituted by certain irreducible or fundamental facts; and in denying reality to a given domain, the antirealist is claiming that its facts are all reducible to facts of some other sort. Thus the ethical naturalist will claim that every ethical fact is reducible to naturalistic facts, the logicist that every mathematical fact is reducible to facts of logic, and the phenomenalist that every fact about the external world is reducible to facts about our sense-data.”

The realist of the first type is concerned with what there is “in Wahrheit”, the realist of the second type with what there is “in Wirklichkeit”. The physicalist is anti-realist about the mental in the second sense, the eliminativist in the first, the expressivist is anti-realist about the moral in the first sense and the buck-passer in the second sense.

It may be thought, and I have thought for a long time, that production aligns with fundamentality and foundation with factuality. I now think this is a mistake, due to an essentialist conception of foundation. Foundation need not be an essential relation, not even for the thing that is founded: it may be accidental to x to be founded in y , as it may be accidental to y to found x . That a founded thing x is not self-standing, that it needs something else to be, does not mean that it needs something else to be what it is. ‘Going generic’ does not really help to restore this connection: we may be tempted to say that even though the parasite does not need any particular host, it generically depends on having a host, and read that as its being generically founded. But this would be a mistake: that the parasite essentially needs to be hosted is compatible with it being specifically founded on just the host it has for now. The parasite’s essence may make it a dependent entity, but it need not be specific enough to carve out a range of entities on which it could depend.

The foundation physicalist need not be an expressivist, at least not in the strict sense of this slippery word. She is not committed to any claim about the cognitive status of mentalist discourse, nor to the claim that mental ascriptions are not fact-stating, or less fact-stating as physiological descriptions. She is claiming that the state of believing that p is not self-standing, in need of a foundation, a manifestation of something else and that this foundation chain will bottom out in some physiological or more generally ‘material’ state. The difference between the production physicalist remains: the production, but not the foundation physicalist

is committed to the mental in some way ‘arising out of’ or ‘emerging from’ the physical; the foundation physicalist, by contrast, can be a behaviourist without being an emergentist in any way.⁸

No need for reinterpretation

This last point perhaps bears emphasis. It is often said that straightforwardly ‘realist’ claims about ‘lesser’ (in my terminology: founded) entities such as holes need reinterpretation, because they are not true, but only “nearly as good as true” (Merricks 2001: 162–190), “quasi true” (Sider 1999) or “appropriate to assert as if they were true”. But what makes them quasi-true? The elementary particles. They make it quasi-true that there are holes even though it is not true that there are holes. But in what way is making quasi-true different from making true? In view of the difficulty of this question, one may be tempted to go for the full monty: perhaps there is no making true at all, but only making quasi-true, and it is only quasi-true that there are tables, and molecules, and supernovae? But then it will only be quasi-true that there are elementary particles and so the supposedly radical and distinctive feature of the view is lost: it’s just adding “quasi-” to “true”, a merely terminological change.

There is no ‘quasi’, ‘almost’ or ‘approximate’ way of being true: statements are true or false and, if false, not just not ‘strictly speaking’ true but not true at all.

The reality of the non-fundamental

There have been a number of attempts to make sense of the apparent desideratum that we are not, or not really, or a little bit less, committed to the existence of non-fundamental entities. I do not think such attempts succeed, because I do not think that there is such a desideratum. Let us look at some of the details.

Cameron (2008b: 4) holds that some x is ontological free lunch iff the proposition $\langle x \text{ exists} \rangle$ is true, but we are not ontologically committed to x , or – as he also puts it – iff x exists, but does not really exist. On the face of it, this distinction is obscure. In a later paper, Cameron tries to clarify it. He observes that there are three main claims that we associate with the term “ontological commitment” and claims that the third is the theoretically most fruitful one (these policemen again...):

- (i) “the ontological commitments of a theory are what must exist if it is true”
- (ii) “the ontological commitments of a theory are what counts against it when judging it for ontological parsimony”
- (iii) “the ontological commitments of a theory are those things whose existence its truth entails that have real being” Cameron (2010b)

There is an obvious problem with (iii), of course: it rules out the case that a theory is false because it is committed to the ‘real being’ of things that do not exist (unless, of course, non-existents can have real being!). But never mind. In Cameron (2008a), he formulates the distinction in terms of two languages: x is an ontological free lunch iff “ x exists” is true in ordinary English, but false in Ontogese (“the language we use to describe how the world is at its fundamental level”, (Cameron 2008a: 300f)). This is non-sense: why should we accept a translation scheme into Ontogese that translates a truth by a falsehood? And anyway: what *is* Ontogese? If it is supposed to be a language that can only describe (or better: only be used to describe; or: only correctly be used to describe) the “fundamental level” (if there is such a thing), then there is no translation of existence claims about non-fundamental things into Ontogese; if it can describe non-fundamental things as well, then why should it describe them *differently* than English does?

8. Such a reconception of Fine’s factual vs. fundamental distinction also repairs a to my mind unappealing asymmetry in his treatment of both: Fine is certainly right in treating questions of fundamentality as non-linguistic, non-conceptual, but ontological questions. But why should we follow him in treating factuality, in this respect, so differently, as the factuality of *some discourse*? It is not the discourse that is factual or not, but the statements made in it, or rather what makes them true: some discourse is non-factual *because* the facts stated are less than fully objective, not the other way round.

Cameron (2010a: 185) gives yet another criterion for ontological commitment:

X is ontologically dependent on the Y s iff the Y s, and not X itself, are truthmakers for $\langle X$ exists \rangle . The idea is that what there is fundamentally are just those things that are needed to make true the true sentences of our best theory. Other things might exist; but these things will be merely derivative entities: they will be ontologically dependent on some of the fundamental entities, which is to say that they exist in virtue of the fundamental entities, which is to say that the fact that they exist is made true by some of the fundamental entities

There are a number of problems with this: (i) if you take as Y s all the things there are, you get Schafferian monism; and we only get to qualify an entity x as ontologically dependent or a free lunch if it is not *also* a truthmaker – but why should it fail to be?

Contingency

All three relations – production, foundation and what-it-is-to-be – are contingent, in the following sense. Suppose (sequentially) that y produces x , y founds x and y is what it is to be x . On just this basis, we cannot exclude, for some $z \neq x$, the possibility of any of the following:

- (i) x and y exist, z produces x , z founds x and z is what it is to be x
- (ii) x and y exist, y does not produce x , y does not found x and y is not what it is to be x
- (iii) x and y exist, x is not produced, not founded and there is nothing it is to be x

(i) follows from the relations being many-one, (ii) is the denial of necessitarianism, and (iii) is the more radical view that metaphysical structure itself is possibly contingent. It is important to add “possibly” as an epistemic modality here, for there may be special cases (instances of x and y) where we can confidently exclude these possibilities, and there may be extraneous metaphysical considerations (e.g. there being a God who necessarily chooses the best possible world) that rule out some, or even all of these possibilities. But just the ‘logic’ of the relations themselves (if there even is such a thing) does not exclude them.

It seems to me that the contingency of essence carries over quite naturally to talk about what is constitutive of what. Many would disagree,⁹ but this is perhaps due to them being too much concerned with the essence of { Socrates }.¹⁰ It may well be that things such as { Socrates } have their essences necessarily (indeed, it is difficult to see how they could have any properties contingently, even assuming they are not necessary existents). It does not follow, obviously, that what is true of { Socrates } is true of essences generally. What constitutes pain is the same in us as it is in madmen, so there is no contextual variation, the question being an ontological one about *human* pain, but it may be different from what constitutes pain in some Martians.

9. Cf. e.g. Fine (2015: 296): “Being a set whose sole member is Socrates is somehow *constitutive* of what [singleton?] Socrates is, and Socrates’ existing is somehow *constitutive* of the existence of singleton Socrates. It is perhaps hard to say in general what constitutes a constitutive explanation, but it is at least required, in any case of a constitutive explanation, that there should be [a] metaphysically necessary connection between explanandum and explanans.” “What constitutes a [...] explanation” does not, in my view, only express a difficult question, but also one that may receive different answers in different possible worlds (this much is true about explanation, even of the ontological kind, being contrastive).

10. The focus on singletons is distorting for other reasons as well: do we really “think that [...] the existence of singleton Socrates is to be explained in terms of the existence of Socrates”, as Fine (2015: 297) seems to think? Explaining the existence of Socrates, I would have thought, involves explaining why there are humans, why there is a specific individual, why there are contingent beings at all etc. Why should we think that some part of the explanation of why Socrates exists will also give us the material to explain why he has a singleton? Explaining the existence of the singleton is a matter of explaining why there are sets at all, and how they are built, i.e. what, in Lewis’ terms, the ‘singleton-building’ operation is.

The connection with explanation

All three relations – production, foundation and what-it-is-to-be – are explanatory in the sui generis metaphysical sense so cherished by metaphysicians. The connections, however, are complicated and often indirect.

The case of conjunctive facts is a good illustration: While [Fine \(2001: 15\)](#) says someone claiming that conjunctive facts are grounded in their conjuncts may be adopting “a metaphysically neutral stand on whether there really are conjunctive facts”, he says one page later that “we are not inclined to think of the truth of a grounded proposition as a *further fact* over and above its grounds, even though it may be distinct from its grounds and even though it may itself be a real fact”. So is the conjunctive fact a fact *over and above* the facts that are its conjuncts? Fine does not clearly say. He does say at least this:

It is not implied that the explanandum just *is* the explanans (indeed, in the case that there are a number of explanantia, it is clear that this requirement cannot be met). Nor need it be implied that the explanandum is unreal and must somehow give way to the explanantia. In certain cases, one might wish to draw these further conclusions. But all that is properly implied by the statement of (metaphysical) ground itself is that there is no stricter or fuller account of that in virtue of which the explanandum holds. [...] [footnote:] My remarks on this point in [Fine \(\[2001\], p. 16\)](#) have been over-interpreted by a number of authors. ([Fine 2012: 39](#))

In my picture, the reality of conjunctive facts will entirely depend on our metaphysics of facts: if facts are logically structured entities and conjunctive facts somehow ‘contain’ conjunction, then it seems plausible to hold that they are produced by conjunction introduction: they arise as the product of a logical operation, done by us, the Genie, or the world itself. If facts, on the other hand, are requirements on reality, then the conjunctive requirement may be said to be founded in its component requirements and “it is a fact that p and p ” is just a complicated way of saying that the world is such that p .

Back to grounding: Extrinsic entities

Extrinsic entities are entities that exist extrinsically, i.e. that it is either extrinsically true of them that they exist or that they exemplify the property *existence* extrinsically. Some, but not all, essentially dependent entities (entities x such that it is essential to x to be R -related to at least some other entity) are extrinsic; some may also be the intrinsic grounds of their essential relations: God, e.g., may be intrinsically such that it is of His essence to create the world (or the best of all possible worlds), but He is not an extrinsic entity. Some, but not all, grounded entities are extrinsic; some may also be the intrinsic grounds of the grounding relation they stand in. A disposition may be intrinsically such that it grounds its being manifested, where this itself is a grounding relation. But manifestations are not extrinsic entities.

Can we say that all *other* essentially dependent entities, and all *other* grounded entities are extrinsic? This would be:

ont dep $\forall x(\exists y(\Box_x xRy \wedge \Diamond(\exists z(Dupl(z, x) \wedge \neg\Box_z zRy)) \rightarrow x \text{ is extrinsic})$: extrinsically essentially related entities are extrinsic.

grounded $\forall x(\exists y(Gr(Ey, Ex) \wedge \neg Gr(Ex, Gr(Ey, Ex)) \rightarrow x \text{ is extrinsic})$: extrinsically grounded entities are extrinsic.

To get sufficient conditions, we have to combine the two: x is extrinsic iff it is true in virtue of the essence of x that there is some distinct thing, y , in which the existence of x is grounded. Extrinsic entities cannot exist lonely and they cannot exist without being grounded. In this sense, they do not have “their entire existential fundament in themselves” and are what [Ingarden \(1964-1965: §12\)](#) calls “heteronomous”

(*seinsheteronom, heteronomiczny*). They are also “derivative” (*seinsabgeleitet, pochodny*) insofar as they “by [their] essence, can exist only by being created by another object”.¹¹

The grounding relation between the extrinsic entity and its base may be contingent, *ceteris paribus* and *ceteris absentibus*. It may well be that the existence of the base by itself is not sufficient for the extrinsic entity to exist. Extrinsic entities are essentially grounded in their grounds. They are grounded, i.e. non-fundamental, and they have an extrinsic essence, as it is part of their nature to be so grounded. Their essence, however, may still be non-relational, if they include their ground as a part, as many, or perhaps all of them do. Is everything that extrinsically has some of its essential properties an extrinsic entity or could there be fundamental (ungrounded) or only accidentally grounded entities that also has some of its essential properties extrinsically? I do not see how this could be possible, but I have no argument. **Ideas?**

If everything that has an extrinsic essence is an extrinsic thing, then perhaps we could say that things that are not extrinsic (i.e. things that have an intrinsic essence) are substances. We would then have a dichotomy between extrinsic things and substances, relative to whether they exemplify some of their essential properties extrinsically or not.

Substances have intrinsic essences

Such a dichotomy does not exclude non-fundamental substances, but it does require that their are grounded holds not in virtue of them. What does it then hold in virtue of? Non-fundamental substances are grounded either in other substances or in extrinsic things.

- In the first case, they are so grounded in virtue of their ground, of which they are the ‘metaphysical effects’: all by itself, the substantial ground is able to bring about, by some type of metaphysical super-causation, its substantial effect. The properties in virtue of which the ground grounds the grounding may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic grounding of grounding relations by their grounds is not excluded. *a* may be extrinsically the ground of the grounding of *b* by *a*.
- Is the second case, some substance grounded in an extrinsic thing, possible at all? I do not see why not. **But perhaps you do?**

Fundamental entities must be substances, but again they may be extrinsic grounds, as long as this is only accidental to them. This follows from the argument below. The argument below also shows that nothing that has an extrinsic essence can be a substance, i.e., assuming the dichotomy, that everything that has an extrinsic essence is an extrinsic thing, i.e. extrinsically grounded.

Suppose that *a* grounds *b*. In what is this grounded?

- If both *a* and *b* are substances, then *a* is the ground. That it is grounded in *a* cannot be essential to *b* in this case: it must be compatible with *b*’s nature that it be grounded in something else or not grounded at all.
- If only *a*, but not *b* is a substance, then *b* is the ground. It only follows that *b* is an extrinsic entity if *b* essentially is the ground.
- If neither *a* nor *b* is a substance, then it is also grounded in *b*. Again, it only follows that *b* is an extrinsic entity if *b* essentially is the ground.
- If *a* is not a substance, but *b* is, then
 - if *a* is the ground, then *a* is an extrinsic thing only if *a* essentially is the ground. But how could a non-substance be essentially such that it grounds a substance? **Perhaps you see how.**
 - if *b* is the ground, then it cannot be essential to *b* to be so grounded. But can it be accidental to a substance to be grounded in some non-substance? (This was the second query above).

11. Chrudzinski (2015: 215-216) claims that Ingarden thinks derivativeness is entailed by heteronomy because he identifies the external existential fundament of some thing with its creator.

- Fortunately, a third option is available. The ground in virtue of which a substance is grounded in a non-substance is the form of the substance: b is a hylomorphic compound, and the grounding relation between it and its non-substantial ground a is grounded in bs form.

Suppose y is a substance that is essentially F and F is extrinsic to y . This means that there is an intrinsic duplicate y' of y that is not F . Because y' is not F and y is essentially F , what it is to be y' and what it is to be y are two different (sets, conjunctions of) properties: the latter but not the first entails F . But the change from the first to the second is, by definition, a Cambridge change: y could become what it is to be y' simply in virtue of a change in something else. Ultimately, this has to be a change in the intrinsic property of something (because all Cambridge change piggy-backs on intrinsic change) and this change has to be excluded by every real definition of y .

Thus all real definitions of y mention something x numerically different from y . They do so (i) by ascribing to this x some property F intrinsic to x such that it is in virtue of x being F that y is what it is and (ii) by ascribing to x and y some relation R . So y is what it is partly in virtue of some x having the intrinsic property F . I distinguish three cases in descending order of personal conviction:

- If all real definitions mention the same x , then y is essentially dependent (identity dependent) on x and cannot be what it is unless x exists (for x has to exist to be F , if F is intrinsic to x).
 - On the standard non-modal conception of essence, essential properties are *de re* necessary. So essential dependence implies ontological dependence. On the standard conception, an essentially dependent thing cannot be a substance.
 - If we allow for contingent essences, y could still exist if x would not exist, or not be F . But y would not then be what it is. So suppose y has its extrinsic essence contingently. It would still not be a substance, because something else z , of which it is a proper part, has a better claim to be a substance. ‘Construct’ z by recursion. If x has an intrinsic essence, $z = x + y$. If x has an extrinsic essence in virtue of being essentially dependent on w , then $z = x + y + w$. If x has an extrinsic essence in virtue of being generically essentially dependent on some G , then z is the sum of x , of y and of the disjunctive sum of all G s. z has its essence intrinsically, because everything it depends on is included among its parts. Nothing is a substance if it is a proper part of something that has a better claim to be a substance.
- If different real definitions mention different things, y is only generically essentially dependent on there being F s: it is essential to y that there is an x such that Fx and Rxy . If F is an intrinsic property, then it is an intrinsic property of the world that there are F s (for intrinsic properties of parts are intrinsic to the whole). If y is a substance, then it could be a world and have the same intrinsic properties than it actually has, for a substance is a combinatorial unit and could exist alone. So y could have the property of being such that there are F s intrinsically. If it had it intrinsically, it would also intrinsically be such that it stands in relation R to some F . Otherwise, it would have a duplicate which does not stand in relation R to any F , even though every duplicate is accompanied by F s. It is, however, hard to see why it could fail to stand in relation R to any of the F s. So if y were a world, then it would have its essence intrinsically. It would also be a duplicate, so y has its generically dependent essence intrinsically.

So if y has an extrinsic essence, y is not a substance. Substances have their essential properties intrinsically.¹²

12. Perhaps there is a more direct way: To be a substance is to be ontologically independent, ie to be able to exist alone, be a world. If essential properties are *de re* necessary, and every extrinsic property is relational, then it would not just be a world but also have the same essential properties it actually has. So one of this property would be relational but it could be relational only with respect to some of its parts. But then it would still be intrinsic. So it is intrinsic also in the actual world. If we allow for contingent essential properties, we have to assume that being a substance is an essential property but not among them. So in the world where the substance exists alone it is perhaps no longer the thing it actually is, but it is still a substance. If we in addition allow for non-relational extrinsic properties, we also have to assume that being a substance is not just an essential, but also an intrinsic property of things.

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