

Problèmes de Métaphysique : Ontological Dependence

Semestre d'automne 2008

November 5, 2008

Philipp Keller
philipp.keller@lettres.unige.ch

Conceptual Questions

What relations are there between the following concepts :

1. grounding ;
2. ontological dependence ;
3. existential dependence ;
4. identity dependence ;
5. essential dependence ;
6. the ontological correlate of true 'because' claims of a certain kind ;
7. being ontologically 'light' (a "free lunch") ;
8. a fact's obtaining in virtue of another fact ;
9. God's creating one thing by creating another thing ;
10. constitution

Grounding of things vs. grounding of properties of things :

What is a 'level of explanation'? Do levels of explanations correlate to levels of reality?

1. Morally wrong facts are thus in virtue of non-moral facts.
2. Normative facts are grounded in natural facts.
3. Determinable-exemplification is grounded in determinate-exemplification.

Does the grounded thing inherit properties from its ground? If so, which ones?

How does grounding interact with the essences of the ground and of what is grounded? Rosen says that necessary truths are grounded in the essences of some things.

The Grounding Relation

1. well-founded?
2. transitive?
3. asymmetric?
4. irreflexive?
5. factive?
6. necessary?

What Grounds What

Are the following claims plausible? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. Rosen : Disjunctive facts are grounded in their disjuncts.
2. Rosen : Conjunctive facts are grounded in both their conjuncts.
3. Rosen : Existential facts are grounded in their instances.

4. Rosen : Determinable facts are grounded in (their) determinate facts.
5. Schaffer : The ontic commitments are to the fundamental grounds plus grounding relations and what is grounded.
6. Schaffer : There are substantive grounding questions for necessary entities.

How to distinguish between (i) the set that is grounded / partially grounded in its members and (ii) the whole that is grounded in its parts? How does structure enter into the picture?

If we don't know what to talk about

Two senses of explanatory priority

"*a* is explanatorily prior to *b*" is ambiguous between :

1. 'explanation by reconstruction' : 'given' *a*, we can understand why *b* exists. Cf. : "...the anti-gunk worry is that composition could never have got off the ground." (?: 6) This is the kind of explanation the ontological correlate is truthmaking : propositions about *b* are made true by facts 'about' *a*.¹
2. 'explanation by metaphysical analysis' : the question what *b* REALLY is, is answered by facts about *a*. Cf. : knowledge is REALLY justified true belief. This is the kind of explanation the ontological correlate is ontological dependence.

Applications to truth and exemplification

Consider

- (1) "*p*" is true.
- (2) It is true that *p*.
- (3) *p*.

and

- (1') *a* exemplifies *F*.
- (2') *a* has the property *F*.
- (3') *Fa*.

I claim

- (a) (3) because (2), (2) because (1).
- (b) (3') because (2'), (2') because (1').
- (c) (1) grounds (2), (2) grounds (3).
- (d) (1') grounds (2'), (2') grounds (3').

1. ? : 3 misrepresents Armstrong's "regress of truths, but not of truthmakers" answer to Bradley's regress : Armstrong is a truthmaker maximalist but accepts that there are truths without *minimal* truthmakers. Hence, he does not identify grounds with minimal truthmakers, but rather just with truthmakers. His answer to Bradley's regress is not that he says that the exemplification relation is not fundamental, but rather rejecting the exemplification relation and taking states of affairs to be undecomposable.