Applications of "Grounding"
Workshop: Trinity College Dublin

Organisers: Alex Moran & Anandi Hattiangadi
Location: TriSS seminar room 6th floor

Schedule

<u>Thursday 13th July</u>

09.00 – 09.30. Welcome & coffee

09.30 – 10.00. Opening remarks
(Alex Moran, John Divers)

10.00 – 11.30. "Finding Ground"
(Damian Aleksiev)

11.30 – 13.00. "Value Grounds Nature"
(Mohsen Moghri)

13.00 – 14.00. LUNCH

14.00 – 15.30. "What Grounding Tells Us About Causation"
(Sam Lee)

15.30 – 17.00. "Grounding Modality in Tense"
(Fatema Amijee & Dominic Alford-Duguid)

19.00 -- DINNER

<u>Friday 14th July</u>

10.00 – 11.30. "Ground Physicalism and Conceivability Arguments"
(Alex Moran)

11.30 – 13.00. "Grounding and the Unity-of-Consciousness Argument"
(Donnchadh O'Connail)

13.00 – 14.00. LUNCH

14.00 – 15.30. "No Guide to Ground: Good-making and Good-makers"
(Singa Behrens)

15.30 – 17.00. "The Normativity of Meaning and Content Revised"
(Anandi Hattiangadi)

19.00 -- DINNER

List of talks with abstracts (by order of appearance in the schedule above):

"Finding Ground" (Damian Aleksiev)

Grounding is at the heart of contemporary metaphysics. However, there currently is no well-developed method for evaluating what-grounds-what claims. In this talk, I propose and investigate three potential ways to evaluate what-grounds-what claims *a priori*. I will argue that given the nature of grounding, it is likely that there are *a priori* connections between grounds and groundees. Each of the three proposals I will investigate concerns a different kind of *a priori* connection between grounds and groundees. My first proposal concerns a priori entailment: the idea that grounds must a priori entail their groundees. My second proposal concerns metaphysically explanatory properties: the idea that groundees must contain the properties of their grounds that metaphysically explain them. My third and last proposal concerns ubiquitous properties: the idea that groundees contain the ubiquitous properties of their grounds.

"Value grounds Nature" (Mohsen Moghri)

Posing the famous question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?", Leibniz demanded an ultimate explanation for the existence of our world. The question was once deemed the "fundamental question of metaphysics" since a plausible answer may lead to discovering the nature of our world. However, Leibniz's question is often rejected as meaningless or impossible to answer; the main objection is that nothing can explain the obtaining of itself to offer an ultimate explanation. In this talk, I will argue that, if considered in terms of metaphysical grounding, some values inherent in our world can ultimately explain why anything exists. This is my plan: First, I show what Leibniz's question demands is a relation of constitutive metaphysical dependence. I next develop the Platonic idea that the Form of the Good bestows existence to the world in terms of metaphysical grounding. Finally, I show that the world's natural values (its simplicity and diversity) can ground the existence of our world and explain why those values obtain; the latter offers the sort of self-explanation in demand by Leibniz's question. The nature of our world is therefore its simple order of increasing diversity.

"What Grounding Tells Us About Causation" (Sam Lee)

Grounding is often introduced to the uninitiated by way of comparison with a more familiar relation: causation. Recent work due to Schaffer (2016) and Wilson (2018) mines this analogy for insights into the nature of grounding that can be gleaned from recent work in the causal modelling tradition. In this talk, I aim to reflect some of the illuminating light of this analogy back onto causation. I begin by showing how grounding and causation *interact* with one another in much the same way that causation interacts with itself. Then, with particular attention to two kinds of interactional structures—mixed causal-grounding *chains* and *forks*—I argue that these interactions reveal the following things (and more) about the causal relation: causation comes apart from manipulation in much the same way that it comes apart from correlation; high level causation is often more fundamental than low level causation; causes need not be proportional to their effects; causal exclusion

is a mirage; and the causal relation is not compositional. I close by pointing out that these interactional phenomena furnish us with the materials to construct a new and stronger case for the controversial claim that grounding is just another species of the causal genus.

"Grounding Modality in Tense" (Fatema Amijee & Dominic Alford-Duguid)

We consider the prospects for grounding modal facts in temporal facts, in part by developing a novel A-theoretic grounding story.

"Ground Physicalism and Conceivability Arguments" (Alex Moran)

In the recent mind-body literature there has been a great deal of interest in the thought that physicalism should be formulated as a grounding thesis. Quite separately, in the metaphysics literature there's been considerable discussion of the idea that grounding relations can hold contingently. Putting these two ideas together, we end up with a version of physicalism that can seemingly side-step traditional conceivability arguments with ease. The view would be committed to two claims:

(1) In the actual world: (when x has M) x has M in virtue of having P.

(2) In some possible world: there's an x with P but not with M.

The talk explores this view and highlights some of its main difficulties.

Grounding and the unity-of-consciousness argument (Donnchadh O'Connail)

In the *unity-of-consciousness argument*, William Hasker argues that the unity of conscious experiences cannot be explained by any account on which the subject of experiences is a complex entity (1999, 2010). In particular, he claims that a subject's having a unitary experience cannot be analysed by appeal to different parts of the person none of which itself has this unitary experience. Hasker applies this argument against materialism and panpsychism. A similar argument against the possibility of experiences had by no subjects is criticised by Eric Olson (2007).

I shall make explicit and critically assess the assumptions underlying this argument. In particular, I shall argue that Hasker fails to properly assess two possibilities. First, a complex subject could have the experience without either the subject or the experience being analysed into the parts of the subject, their properties or the relations holding between them. Second, a number of entities could collectively but not individually have the experience without composing a single subject of that experience (this second possibility is defended by Olson).

I shall then argue that there is reason to discount the second of these possibilities: that is, there is reason to think that a unitary experience must be had by a single subject. However, this leaves open the first possibility, that the experience could be had by a single complex subject. The unity-of-consciousness argument may work against certain reductive forms of materialism or panpsychism, but it seems to leave open non-reductive versions of these views.

"No Guide to Ground: Good-making and Good-makers" (Singa Behrens)

Talk about good-, bad-, right-, and wrong-making features is widespread in contemporary ethics and metaethics. But what exactly do claims like 'Part of what

makes the invasion of Ukraine wrong is that it contravenes international law' mean? In the recent debate, it is common to construe 'making'-talk in terms of ground. In this talk, I argue that purely ground-based accounts face important challenges. Intuitively plausible features of good-making do not fit well with features of ground. I present some refinements of the original account that employ ground-internal resources, and argue that none of them provides a fully satisfying solution. Instead, I defend what I call a reasons-guided ground-based account. On this account, good-makers (and their cousins) are grounds that ground in virtue of providing a normative reason. I show that this approach avoids the outlined objections and fits into a more general pattern of making relations.

"The Normativity of Meaning and Content Revised" (Anandi Hattiangadi)

According to materialism, the fact that an arbitrary representation has a certain meaning or content is fully grounded in the physical facts. In *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Kripke put forward an objection to materialism about meaning and content that turned on their assumed normativity. According to the orthodox reconstruction of this argument, the key claim is that meanings and contents are constituted by rules that are *robustly normative*, where a rule *R* is robustly normative just in case it has a normative authority over an agent that is wholly independent of the agent's own attitudes or interests, and wholly independent of the conventions prevalent in the agent's linguistic community. It is the independence of robust normativity from any potential non-normative grounds that seems to prevent it from being fully grounded in the physical. If meanings and contents are robustly normative, then they too resist full grounding in the physical. However, as I argued in *Oughts and Thoughts*, the rules that constitute meanings and contents are not robustly normative, but only weakly so. Thus, the orthodox reconstruction of Kripke's argument against materialism fails.

In this paper, I formulate an alternative argument against materialism that turns on the assumption that meanings and contents are constituted by rules that are merely *weakly normative*. A rule *R* is weakly normative just in case it has a normative authority over an agent that is *dependent* on the agent's own attitudes or interests, or on the conventions of the agent's linguistic community. I argue that it is precisely the *dependence* of weak normativity on endorsements, attitudes, interests or conventions that gives rise to a problem for materialism, since it sets up a 'circle of ground': On the one hand, meanings and contents are ineliminable from the grounds of weak normativity; on the other hand, weak normativity is ineliminable from the grounds of meaning and content. Since neither weak normativity nor meanings and contents can be fully grounded in the physical, materialism fails.