

Advanced Metaphysics
Philosophy 5700, Winter Spring 2013

General information

Instructor: Ben Caplan
Time: T Th 2:20 PM – 3:40 PM
Location: 2150 Smith Lab
Office: 372 University Hall
Office hours: M 2:00 PM – 2:45 PM, Th 3:45 PM – 4:30 PM, or by appointment
Phone: 292.2235
Email: caplan.16@osu.edu

Description

This course is on grounding and related notions such as fundamentality and dependence. Our stalking horse throughout the semester will be Jonathan Schaffer's view, *priority monism*, according to which the cosmos—the biggest thing there is—is the most fundamental of all.

As much as possible, we will (i) ignore skepticism about grounding, (ii) shy away from the technical or formal stuff, and (iii) connect up metametaphysical questions (e.g. what is grounding?) with first-order metaphysical questions (e.g. is priority monism true?). How much material we will cover depends on the pace of class discussion, not vice versa. So, especially as we're getting used to semesters, it's hard to predict exactly how much material we'll cover.

We'll begin by looking at Schaffer's views about grounding (in his influential "On What Grounds What") and his arguments for priority monism in "Monism: The Priority of the Whole." This will take us into other first-order metaphysical questions about quantum entanglement and emergence, and about the possibility of *gunk* (roughly, proper parts all the way down) and *junk* (roughly, proper parts all the way up). This will probably be the longest part of the course.

We'll finish by returning to priority monism and looking at another argument of Schaffer's for the view, this time a neo-Hegelian one about the interdependence of all things. (Seriously.)

What we do in between depends on how much time we think we'll have. But here's a sketch of what we can do if we have the time. In the second part of the course, we can look at alternative views about grounding due to Gideon Rosen and Kit Fine, and at Ted Sider's criticisms of Schaffer and Fine. (This part will be especially hard.) And, in the third part of the course, we can pick up a question that will probably come up in the second part of the course: namely, whether grounding is itself grounded. But we'll see how much of this we'll get to.

Course requirements

Your final grade will be based on two short assignments (30% each) and a final paper (40%). Each short assignment will be either a problem set or a short paper (3-5 pages). The final paper should be about 5-10 pages.

Readings

Readings will be available on Carmen. In addition to the readings, here are some helpful background pieces.

Michael J. Clark and David Liggins, "Recent Work on Grounding," *Analysis* 72.4 (Oct. 2012): 812-823.

Kelly Trogdon, "An Introduction to Grounding," in *Dependence*, ed. Miguel Hoeltje, Benjamin Schnieder, and Alexander Steinberg, Basic Philosophical Concepts (Munich: Philosophia, forthcoming).

Schedule

A detailed schedule will be updated on Carmen. There will be no class on 12 or 14 March 2013 (spring break). In addition, I will be out of town on 7 and 28 March 2013, and there is a good chance I will cancel class on 26 March 2013 (Passover). Details about what will happen on those days will be provided later.

Disabilities

Students who might need accommodations are encouraged to contact me and the Office for Disability Services (<http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>).

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is a serious offense. You are responsible for knowing what counts as academic misconduct. In accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-5-487, all suspected cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the university's Committee on Academic Misconduct. For further details, see the Code of Student Conduct at http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp.

Tentative outline

1. Priority monism

Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What," in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009), 347-383.

Jonathan Schaffer, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole," *Philosophical Review* 119.1 (Jan. 2010): 31-76.

1.1. Quantum entanglement and emergence

Matteo Morganti, "Ontological Priority, Fundamentality, and Monism," *dialectica* 63.3 (Sept. 2009): 271-288, esp. 276-280.

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "Monism, Emergence, and Plural Logic," *Erkenntnis* 76.2 (March 2012): 211-223, esp. pp. 217-220.

1.2. Gunk and junk

Gunk

Jonathan Schaffer, "Is There a Fundamental Level?," *Noûs* 37.3 (Sept. 2003), 498-517.

Theodore Sider, "Van Inwagen and the Possibility of Gunk," *Analysis* 53.4 (Oct. 1993): 285-289.

Theodore Sider, "Against Parthood," *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* 8 (2013), Section 9.

Junk

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "An Argument against the Necessity of Unrestricted Composition," *Analysis* 69.1 (Jan. 2009): 25-29.

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "Must There Be a Top Level?," *Philosophical Quarterly* 59.235 (April 2009): pp. 193-201.

Duncan Watson, "An Argument against an Argument against the Necessity of Universal Mereological Composition," *Analysis* 70.1 (Jan. 2010): 78-82.

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "The Necessity of Universalism vs. the Possibility of Junky Worlds: A Rejoinder," *Analysis* 70.2 (April 2010): 296-298.

Matteo Morganti, "Ontological Priority, Fundamentality, and Monism," *dialectica* 63.3 (Sept. 2009): 271-288, esp. 280-283.

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "Monism, Emergence, and Plural Logic," *Erkenntnis* 76.2 (March 2012): 211-223, esp. pp. 214-217.

Einar Duenger Bøhn, "Against a Particular Instance of Ontological Dependence," ms.

2. Rosen, Fine, Sider

Gideon Rosen, "Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction," in *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*, ed. Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109-135.

Kit Fine, "The Question of Realism," *Philosophers' Imprint* 1.1 (June 2001): 1-30.

Kit Fine, "A Guide to Ground," in *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, ed. Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Theodore Sider, *Writing the Book of the World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), Chapter 8.

3. Is grounding grounded?

Karen Bennett, "By Our Bootstraps," *Philosophical Perspectives* 25 (2011): 27-41.

Louis deRosset, "Grounding Explanations," *Philosophers' Imprint* (forthcoming).

Shamik Dasgupta, "The Status of Ground," ms.

4. Neo-Hegelianism

Jonathan Schaffer, "The Internal Relatedness of All Things," *Mind* 119.474 (April 2010), 341-376.

Dean Zimmerman, "A Recent Defense of Monism Based Upon the Internal Relatedness of All Things," ms.