

## INTRODUCTION

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There is a growing interest in the topic of explanation among metaphysicians. Not the least because they themselves make explanatory claims, i.e. claims that certain facts exist *because* others exist. Here is a famous example (cf. Correia 2008: 1023):

- The singleton {Socrates} exists because its faithful member exists. (Classes exist because their members do.)

Variations of this claim include: that {Socrates} exists *is grounded in* the fact that Socrates exists; and {Socrates} exists *in virtue of* the fact that Socrates exists. There are many more of such claims:

- Socrates thinks about himself because his brain is in a physical state which is such and such. (Mental facts exist because neurophysiological facts do.)
- It is possible that Socrates has no shadow because one of his counterparts has none. (Modal facts exist because non-modal facts do.)
- <Socrates exists> is true because Socrates exists. (Propositions are true because their truthmakers exist.)
- Socrates' shadow is longer than himself because he is two meters and his shadow is six meters (Relational facts exist because facts about relata do.)

Claims like these are not obviously causal explanations (which are widely discussed among philosophers of science), and so the question arises: what do they amount to? What do “because”, “in virtue of” and “is grounded in” mean in metaphysical contexts? As David Liggins concluded his investigation of truthmaking explanations: “The topic of non-causal explanation is poorly understood at present; more work in this area is needed.” (2008: 191)

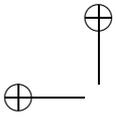
This collection intends to shed light on this underexplored topic from four different angles. Fabrice Correia's *Grounding and Truth-Functions* deals with formal issues pertaining to the notion of grounding. His focus is the propositional logic of grounding, i.e. the logic of the interaction between the

notion of grounding and the truth-functions. Arianna Betti's *Explanation in Metaphysics and Bolzano's Theory of Ground and Consequence* takes up a historical perspective. She delves into Bolzano's notion of grounding and puts it to work in the recent debate about truthmaking. Benjamin Schnieder's *A Puzzle About 'Because'* focuses on the semantics of the 'because' connective. He generates a puzzle from some plausible assumptions about this connective plus a common view on conceptual analysis, and surveys four solutions. Finally, *Metaphysical Explanatory Asymmetries* by Jan Willem Wieland and Erik Weber uses material from the philosophy of science. They investigate whether metaphysical explanation is asymmetric by comparing it with scientific explanation and evaluating whether the nature of the asymmetry can be the same.

This collection is one of the outputs of a research project entitled *Development and application of an integrated methodology for analytic metaphysics*. This project was a metaphilosophical one: its aim was to engage in debates concerning the aims and methods of analytic metaphysics. This collection fits into our attempts to clarify what analytic metaphysics is about: for metaphysicians it is important to have an opinion about whether and in which sense they are trying to explain things. Besides this collection and a series of papers in journals, the project resulted in two other collections of papers. The first is a special issue of the journal *Philosophica* (volume 81, 2008). The issue contains papers on the aims of metaphysics, on strategies for developing theories in the metaphysics of causation and on metaphysical argumentation in the domains of causation and of universals (see <http://logica.ugent.be/philosophica/> for details). The second is the book *Worldviews, Science and Us: Studies of Analytic Metaphysics* (ed. R. Vanderbeeken & B. D'Hooghe; Singapore: World Scientific Publishers, 2009). This book covers various topics in analytic metaphysics (causation, dispositions, emergence, mathematical entities, natural kinds, personal identity, structural realism, time, tropes) from a methodological perspective: the authors shed light on the origin and evolution of the problems, on underlying assumptions and on issues regarding argumentation.

The idea for this collection grew at a workshop in Ghent on 22–23 April 2009, which was attended by all the contributors and at which draft versions of some of the papers were presented. For that workshop we received the financial support of the FWO research community *Research on the Construction of Integrating Worldviews* (<http://www.vub.ac.be/CLEA/res/worldviews/>).

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