

Metaphysical Grounding and Being's Incompleteness

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Abstract In order to argue that Being is incomplete, this article engages recent views which regard metaphysical grounding as a form of ontological dependence. In contrast to foundational versions of grounding, it argues that grounding is ubiquitous, multidirectional, and multilevel. Each thing partially grounds, generates, and constitutes every other thing. Grounding is never full. Since grounding is always partial, a thing is never fully real. This is a condition of possibility of its reality. If it were to be fully grounded, *per impossible*, it would be incapable of further development or change. It would be wholly static and frozen. This is true for each thing and for the universe itself. The monistic One is never fully one and reality is never completely real. This ontology is gunky, junky, and hunky: everything partly grounds and is grounded by everything else, so that everything has parts and also is a constituent in a greater whole. Whereas the Indian philosopher Nāgārjuna would assert that this means everything is empty and unreal, everything is partially real. However, things are never fully real because they are never fully grounded.

Keywords Grounding. Nāgārjuna. Non-Being. Rosenzweig. Schelling.

Summary 1 Metaphysical Grounding: Up, Down, Sideways, Looping, and Partial. – 2 Hunky but not Empty. – 3 Being's Incompleteness.



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1 Metaphysical Grounding: Up, Down, Sideways, Looping, and Partial

This article articulates its central claims by refiguring the concept of metaphysical grounding. “Contemporary figures don’t fully agree on the concept of grounding”, as (Bliss, Trogdon 2024) observe. It further develops certain aspects of that concept in dialogue with those figures, but in ways which do not fully agree with any of them. To anticipate several of the conclusions of this section, metaphysical grounding can be regarded as ontological dependence and frequently as constitution. Grounding as constitution does not require that a complex whole depend on its particular parts, but only on some parts or other. That is to say, grounding does not presuppose mereological essentialism, which maintains that objects have their parts necessarily, such that an object which gains or loses a part thereby ceases to exist. However, grounding encompasses not only ‘constituent dependence’, where a complex thing is grounded by its constituent parts, but also ‘feature dependence’, where a thing’s features are grounded by the thing which bears them. Grounding is also symmetric: a complex thing is both grounded by and grounded its constituents and features.

Grounding is ubiquitous, multidirectional and multilevel. It is similar to coherentism’s web of beliefs. Things at all levels each ground, generate, and constitute the other. Grounding is always partial, however, never full. No thing is fully grounded, even collectively, by everything else in the coherentist web. Things are never fully unified, nor is a thing ever fully itself. That a thing is never fully real is not a mere lack or incompleteness. As will be discussed below, a thing not being fully real is a condition of possibility of its reality. If it were to become fully real, *per impossible*, it would be incapable of further development or change. It would be wholly static and frozen. This is true for all things and for the universe itself. They are never fully real and they never completely exist.

Bliss and Trogdon (2024) propose three ways of typing cases of grounding, x grounds y . First, in metaphysical cases, the things that x concern are metaphysically linked with the things that y concerns. Metaphysical grounding considers cases where the ontological dependence of y on x is not one of identity, causality, or modality. Second, in logical cases, grounding claims correspond to logical inference rules, especially introduction rules. Finally, in conceptual cases, grounding claims correspond to conceptually necessary conditions.

Most of the proponents of metaphysical grounding assert that grounding relations are unidirectional: if y grounds x , then x cannot ground y . They are usually grounding monists, asserting that there is one core type. Grounding pluralists claim that there are several types. Most proponents further assert that grounding relations are

explanatory: if y grounds x , then y explains x . Raven (2015, 326) distinguishes unionists and separatists. Unionists regard ground as itself a form of explanation. Separatists hold that grounding supports explanation.

Infinetist or coherentist versions of grounding have not been developed, as most proponents accept foundationalism:

The prevailing view amongst contemporary analytic metaphysicians, of a certain stripe, is one according to which reality is hierarchically structured by chains of phenomena ordered by the grounding relation that terminate in something fundamental. (Bliss 2014, 245)

They generally believe that grounding's fundamental entities are the elementary particles of particle physics. However, priority monists (Schaffer 2010) maintain that only one basic concrete object exists, the universe, which is the mereological maximal element, and that grounding relations terminate in the universe. Bliss and Priest (2018) list four of "the core commitments of metaphysical foundationalism as commonly endorsed in the contemporary literature". These commitments are:

1. The hierarchy thesis: Reality is hierarchically structured by metaphysical dependence relations that are anti-symmetric, transitive, and anti-reflexive.
2. The fundamentality thesis: There is some thing(s) which is fundamental.
3. The contingency thesis: Whatever is fundamental is merely contingently existent.
4. The consistency thesis: The dependence structure has consistent structural properties. (Bliss, Priest 2018, 2)

As discussed below, this article rejects all four commitments. It also rejects infinitism and foundationalism. It instead advances a coherentist version of grounding, according to which grounding is transitive, multidirectional, symmetric, and reflexive.

As already suggested, the distinction between partial and full grounding is crucial:

Suppose $[P], [P'], \dots$ grounds $[Q]$. Speaking in unionist terms, for a preliminary characterization of the distinction we can say that $[P], [P'], \dots$ partially grounds $[Q]$ when the former facts contribute to explaining the latter; and $[P], [P'], \dots$ fully grounds $[Q]$ when nothing needs to be added to the former to get a fully adequate explanation of the latter fact. Separatists might instead initially characterize the distinction in terms of partial and full determination. Sticking with unionism for the moment, we can say that, as any ground contributes to explaining what it grounds, any ground is a

partial ground. But not all partial grounds provide fully adequate explanations of what they ground, so not all partial grounds are full grounds. A merely partial ground is a partial ground that isn't a full ground. (Bliss, Trogdon 2024)

According to this explication, all grounds are at least partial grounds, some partial grounds are full grounds, and all full grounds are also partial grounds. That all full grounds are partial grounds follows from all grounds being partial grounds. This departs from standard usage. That something is partial implies it is not full, in standard usage, and that something is full implies it is not partially full. Standard usage will be followed to avoid confusion.

There is never full grounding, only partial grounding. To speak here with the unionists – although this same point also holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the separatists – $[P], [P']$,... fully grounds $[Q]$ when the former facts suffice for a fully adequate explanation of the latter fact. However, the full range of $[P], [P']$,... cannot be specified, and so $[Q]$ cannot receive a 'fully adequate' explanation. Suppose that $[Q]$ is the presence of a snake in an office. If $[P]$ is that someone put the snake in the office, this would provide a partial grounding, a partial explanation. This might be sufficient, depending on an inquirer's cognitive interests, but it would not be a 'fully adequate' explanation.

More precisely, it would not be a fully adequate explanation unless whether an explanation is fully adequate depends on whether persons, given their interests, regard it as fully adequate. Here, whether a putative explanation actually is explanatory would be relative to an inquirer's interests. The same ground could be only a partial ground for some inquirers, but a full ground for others. Irrealist (Thompson 2018) and fictionalist (Thompson 2022) versions of grounding allow that whether an explanation is fully adequate is relative to the inquirers' interests. However, most proponents of grounding accept a realist version of grounding. They would agree with Fine's two conclusions:

First, that there is a primitive metaphysical concept of reality, one that cannot be understood in fundamentally different terms; and second, that questions of what is real are to be settled upon the basis of considerations of *ground*. (Fine 2001, 1)

This article accepts Fine's second conclusion, with the caveats already noted, but it rejects the first.

To return to the example of the snake in the office, a fully adequate explanation would need to incorporate full explanations of all aspects of the universe since the Big Bang that played any role in getting that snake into the office. And since cosmologists inquire about the universe's initial state and how it originated, a fully adequate

explanation of the snake in the office would need to fully explain that too. Further, a fully adequate explanation would exceed not only the life of any person but also the time of the existence of *Homo sapiens* to cognize those facts. It might be asserted that there is a full range of $[P]$, $[P']$,... which is sufficient for a fully adequate explanation of $[Q]$. Whether that assertion should be accepted depends on further metaphysical issues. The primary motivation for accepting that there exists a full range of $[P]$, $[P']$,... which provides a fully adequate explanation of $[Q]$ is the implicit assumption that reality is fully real, and so $[Q]$ must have a fully adequate explanation. This article rejects that assumption. In any case, a fully adequate explanation of $[Q]$ that cannot be cognized does not fully explain anything to anyone.

Not only did grounding's proponents converge on foundationalism, it has also seemed obvious to them that it is possible for x to fully ground y :

Intuitively, there is a distinction between full and mere partial grounding. One way to illustrate the distinction is by way of the following contrast: while, for some suitable p and q , $[p \ \& \ q]$ is merely partially grounded in $[p]$, $[p \ \vee \ q]$ is fully grounded in $[p]$. (Bliss, Trogdon 2016)

Although Bliss and Trogdon are correct that there is a notional distinction between full and partial grounding, grounding is always partial. Grounding relations are transitive. If A partially grounds B , and B partially grounds C , then A partially grounds C through the mediation of B . Further, if A partially grounds B , B cannot fully ground C , as B is not fully grounded. $[p \ \vee \ q]$ is partially grounded in $[p]$ and also partially grounded in a logic's axioms and rules of inference. That logic, in turn, is partially grounded through its relations to and differentiation from other logics, mathematics and symbolic systems, in social institutions and practices, and so on. No collection of relations, properties, objects, or facts, or the universe itself, fully grounds $[p \ \vee \ q]$ or anything else. In this way, metaphysical grounding is similar to explanation, which is also always partial. A full explanation of an object would require an explanation not only of anything that has ever affected that object, but also an explanation of everything that has ever affected anything that has affected that object since the Big Bang - and likely beyond that, as it seems that the Big Bang itself could be explained. What passes as a full explanation seems so only because, relative to the context and interests, persons have no reason to further investigate other explanatory factors.

At this point, fundamentalists will insist that full metaphysical grounding and complete explanations are provided by the fundamental constituents of reality. Even if full grounding and complete

explanations can never be comprehended by anyone, they are nevertheless embedded in the fabric of reality.

A definitive response to fundamentalism is not possible here. Yet, two considerations can be adduced which may determine the intellect to withhold its assent. First, the assertion that reality has fundamental constituents must appeal to intuition for its plausibility. Although quantum mechanics has been interpreted as supporting fundamentalism, nothing necessitates or compels such an interpretation. It is the prior commitment to fundamentalism that motivates that interpretation. Second, fundamentalism requires either reductionism or eliminativism, whereby macrolevel properties and objects are explained, or explained away, by appealing to fundamental constituents. However, reductionism and eliminativism are only promissory notes. Such philosophers of physics and scientific metaphysicians as Batterman (2021) and Dupré (1993) provide reasons to reject fundamentalism. Moreover, the amount of information required for a complete reductionism and eliminativism is physically impossible (Fritzman 2024). The bank on which those promissory notes are drawn is bankrupt.

According to grounding internalism, if x fully grounds y , then x fully grounds y in every possible world in which x and y obtain. Grounding internalism entails grounding necessitarianism. According to necessitarianism, necessitation is necessary for grounding, such that if x fully grounds y , then it is necessary that x necessitates y . Skiles (2015) rejects grounding necessitarianism and argues for grounding contingentism. He maintains that there can be full grounding without necessity. He claims that a fact, y , can obtain wholly in virtue of metaphysically more fundamental facts, x , such that x fully grounds y . Although x fully grounds y , he argues that there are possible worlds at which x obtains but y does not. If Skiles were correct, then his refutation of grounding necessitarianism would, by *modus tollens*, refute grounding internalism. However, Trogdon and Witmer (2021) respond that Skiles' argument does not succeed because his supposed example of a non-necessitating full ground is actually an example of a partial ground. This article accepts a version of grounding contingentism by maintaining that grounding is always only partial, never full, and so it rejects grounding internalism as well its entailment, grounding necessitarianism.

Trogdon and Witmer reject the standard way of defining partial grounding in terms of full grounding. According to the standard definition of partial grounding (Correia 2005; Rosen 2010), x partially grounds y if and only if x fully grounds y either on its own or together with some additional facts. However, they argue that there are cases where x partially grounds y , but x cannot be further complemented to fully ground y . Reversing the direction of the standard definition, Trogdon and Witmer define full grounding in terms of partial grounding together with other notions.

Leuenberger (2020) also reverses the direction of the standard account of partial grounding and maintains that some facts have only partial grounds which cannot be complemented to full grounds. Although this article maintains that all facts, all things, have only a partial grounds, he gives an example of what he regards as a full ground:

Let us suppose that Anna's being my niece is grounded in Martin's being my brother and Anna's being Martin's daughter. This is a case of full ground: the grounds fully account for what is grounded. (Leuenberger 2020, 2655)

This a case of only a partial ground, however, as the grounds to which Leuenberger refers only partially ground what is grounded. As noted above, grounding relations are transitive. That Martin is Leuenberger's brother and that Anna is Martin's daughter themselves have grounds, and so they cannot fully ground that Anna is Leuenberger's niece. Those grounding relations are partially ground in other facts. Even a genealogy of the Leuenberger family could not provide a complete account. It initially seems that Leuenberger's example is a case of full grounding because, relative to the context and cognitive interests, there is usually no motivation to further inquire about those other grounds.

Most proponents of grounding, such as Cameron (2008), Rosen (2010), Schaffer (2010), and Clark and Liggins (2012), regard it as transitive, irreflexive, and asymmetric. Paseau (2010) and Hiller (2013) recognize that grounding can be bidirectional, however, and reflexive self-grounding is countenanced by Jenkins (2011), Bliss (2014); Correia (2014), Wilson (2014), Rodriguez-Pereyra (2015), and Thompson (2016). Expanding on their insights, this article regards grounding as transitive, multidirectional, symmetric, and reflexive. Each thing affects every other at the macrolevel too, although each affects some things more than others. Hence, grounding is multidirectional and ubiquitous, producing an ontological web of relations, where each thing partial-grounds - and, reciprocally, is partially grounded in - every other.

This can be articulated in terms of quantum entanglement. According to quantum mechanics, entangled particles are perfectly anti-correlated with respect to their spin. The spin of one of the entangled particles cannot always be calculated independently of the other. As a result of quantum entanglement and the Big Bang, to speculate, each thing is entangled with every other at the quantum level.

This article agrees with Schaffer's first two sentences but disagrees with the third:

Metaphysics as I understand it is about what grounds what. It is about the structure of the world. It is about what is fundamental, and what derives from it. (Schaffer 2009, 379)

This article maintains that no thing or level is ontologically fundamental. In an ontological web of universal reciprocity, each thing grounds every other, they ground it, and each reflexively grounds itself. Of course, some levels will be more important than others, given the cognitive interests of the researchers. As various researchers have different interests, the levels that are deemed important vary too.

Dasgupta (2014) and Litland (2016; 2018) have plural, many-many, or bicolleative versions of grounding, according to which collections of facts can be non-distributivity grounded. Whereas many proponents of grounding proceeds as though only a single fact can ground, proponents of bicolleative grounding argue that a plurality of facts can be grounded by something more fundamental, even though none of those facts is grounded on its own: Dasgupta writes:

The literature uniformly assumes that what is grounded must be a single fact. Here I disagree and argue that what is grounded can be a plurality too: there can be cases in which they, the members of a plurality, are explained in more fundamental terms, even though none of them admits of explanation on its own.

He further explains:

My claim that ground is irreducibly plural is a claim about the logical form of ground. It is the claim [...] that, logically speaking, ground is a binary relation plural in both positions: *they* are grounded in *them*. Of course the limit case is a plurality of one, so it may turn out (as it happens) that in each actual case of ground a single fact is grounded on its own. Still, on my view the claim in each case would strictly speaking remain plural: that *they* (all one of them!) are grounded in *them*. (Dasgupta 2014, 1-2)

And he emphasizes that

certain collections of facts are grounded plurally in the world's underlying nature: *they* (the members of the collection) are grounded in *them* even though none of them admits of a ground of its own. (Dasgupta 2014, 27)

This article's version of grounding has some similarities to bicolleative grounding. It agrees that ground is irreducibly plural, as it maintains that each thing partially grounds, and is grounded by, every other thing. In this sense, it could be viewed as a further radicalization of bicolleative grounding. The versions differ, however, in that the versions of bicolleative grounding proposed by Dasgupta and Litland are foundationalist, one-directional, and irreflexive,

whereas this article's version is coherentist, multidirectional, reflexive, and symmetrical. Microlevel cognitions ground macrolevel cognitions, and vice versa. Microlevel cognitions also mutually ground each other, as do macrolevel cognitions. Since a cognition grounds other cognitions, which reciprocally ground it, it grounds itself. Persons are grounded by their memberships in groups, for example, and groups are reciprocally grounded by their members. Members and groups are co-determining, and both sometimes resist the ways in which they are grounded. Individuals have no ontological priority over groups, moreover, as individuals are always already members of, and grounded by, a variety of groups, which can be non-complementary, or conflicted.

Proponents of foundational versions of metaphysical grounding might charge that coherentist, multidirectional, reflexive, and symmetric grounding defeats the entire point of grounding. If grounding is metaphysically coherentist – to use an analogy from epistemological coherentism, where a belief is justified through its coherence with a set of beliefs – then there is nothing untoward about a web of reciprocal grounding. Since grounding is always partial, grounding is never full or complete, the coherence of grounding is also always partial. Its partial coherence is also a partial incoherence.

2 Hunky but not Empty

Ontology is hunky. But it is not empty. The parts of “atomless gunk” (Lewis 1991, 20) divide infinitely, such that every part of the whole has proper parts. If the world is gunky, then the parts of each whole all have proper parts, dividing forever into smaller parts. The converse of gunk is “junk” (Schaffer 2010, 64). If the world is junky, then each thing is a proper part of something, composing forever into greater wholes. The conjunct of gunk and junk is “hunk” (Bohn 2009, 29). If the world is hunky, then each thing has something as its proper part and each thing is a proper part of something.

This article refigures these notions. There is no thing that is not partially grounded by others. Each thing partially grounds, and is partially grounded by, every other thing, although a thing will be grounded more directly by some things than by others. No things or ontological levels are fundamental. There are no ultimates. Grounding does not bottom-out, it loops. If the proponents of grounding insist that the language of fundamentality must be retained, then it can be said that, paradoxically, each thing is fundamental, as each grounds, and is grounded by, every other thing.

This ontology substantially differs from that of the Indian philosopher Nāgārjuna. He holds that everything is ontologically unreal or empty (*śūnyatā*), lacking ontological reality or own-being (*svabhāva*;

also translated as 'essence', 'inherent existence', 'intrinsic nature', and 'substance'. He maintains that a thing would need to have *svabhāva* in order to be real. He denies that anything has *svabhāva*. Explicating his view in the language of grounding, Nāgārjuna claims that something could have *svabhāva*, and so be real, only if three conditions are met: to have *svabhāva*, something would need to be fully grounded, its full grounding would not depend on anything, and it would possess its full grounding intrinsically. Not only does he deny that anything has *svabhāva*, he more radically denies that anything has even partial grounding. Things are not even illusory, as illusions, *qua* illusions, require partial grounding. Everything is ontologically unreal, empty of own-being.

This article rejects Nāgārjuna's assertion that something must have *svabhāva* to be ontologically real. Maintaining that everything is partially grounded, it denies that things are wholly unreal or empty. This would be a consequence only if Nāgārjuna's claim that things must have *svabhāva* to be real is accepted.

McDaniel (2017) maintains that beings are fully real only if they do not exist by courtesy. "Being by courtesy" is a degenerate mode which is characterized by a low degree of being. Beings which exist by courtesy have a low degree of being, a low degree of naturalness, because there is no fundamental way in which those beings exist. However, all beings, without exception, exist by courtesy. There is no fundamental way in which any being exists. Rather, reality is an interdependent system, such that what a thing is is a function of its (constantly shifting) place within the network of relations. The network itself is never complete, however, it is always changing. Epistemological coherentism is an incoherentism; it is incoherent by its own criteria for coherence (Fritzman 1992). Metaphysical coherentism is an incoherentism too. The network is never complete and it never wholly coheres.

3 Being's Incompleteness

Grounding is always partial, reality is never complete, whole, or One: reality is not wholly real, and does not fully exist. Parmenides asserts that being is One and there is no nothingness. Although subsequent philosophers discussed nothingness (Sorensen 2023), few recognized that nothingness and being ground each other. It may be tempting to believe that, if grounding could be full, reality would be One. Were reality to be One, however, it would be none. Reality can be, only through its 'failure' to be One.

Insofar as the entire network of grounding is regarded as the Absolute, the One, the One can never be fully one, and reality is never completely real, as grounding is always partial. There is a constitutive

split within the One that prevents it from being one. That the One can never be one and that reality is not fully real are not reasons for regret. Rather, this split is constitutive, the condition of the possibility of there being anything. Although it cannot be argued for here, to be is to appear. Were the One fully one, it could not appear, not even to itself, and so it would not be. It would be less than nothing, having no ontological status. The One is never One. Although there is no other to the One, it is other to itself. Its otherness is intrinsic to it in the sense that it is always already dirempted. As grounding is always partial, everything is ontologically incomplete. Reality is never completely real, nothing ever wholly exists. Nothingness is "given in the heart of being" (Sartre 2018, 57) and "nothingness is this hole in being" (786). The nothingness that is a hole in being is consciousness, Sartre asserts, and for it alone does existence precede essence.

However, existence always precedes essence. Everything is holey. Nothingness is at the heart of being, its condition of possibility. Partial grounding is not no grounding, though. There is a hole in being, yet there is being with a hole. Because everything is partially grounded, everything has agency, the freedom to act and to not merely react. Things are finite; they cannot persist in their being. Yet, nothingness is another way in which being appears. When things go under, they do not cease to be; they become other than they were. Even the universal consciousness is always becoming other than itself, transfiguring itself.

Not only does this ontology differ from that of Nāgārjuna, as discussed above, it also differs from that of the Chinese Daoist text, the *Tao Te Ching*. For the *Tao Te Ching*, reality includes emptiness and that inclusion makes reality complete. The emptiness of a pot allows it to contain water. The emptiness at a wheel's hub allows it to attach to the axle. This emptiness is not nothing, as something is empty only relative to something else. The emptiness of the *Tao Te Ching* is actually a plenum, filled with water, air, or space. However, reality is ontologically incomplete.

This ontology also differs from the Platonic *erôs*, where all beings are driven to overcome their incompleteness, except for the highest being - the Beautiful or the Good - towards which they all strive. Even the highest being, however, is incomplete.

Yet, grounding is always partial, never full, and so nothing is ever wholly actual. Reality is not one. This is true for the whole, so-called, but also for each of its parts. Although in some logics it is a trivial truth that something is self-identical to itself, it is false in ontology. Nothing is ever itself. The self is never one. It is constitutionally incomplete. This is also true of the universal consciousness. It too is never complete, never one. Things are finite, they do not and cannot persist in the being that they have. However, nothing is not the opposite of being. Rather, nothing is a mode of being, another way

in which being appears. When things become nothing, then, they do not cease to be; they cease to be as the things that they were. This is why the universal consciousness is dynamic. It is always becoming other than it is, transcending itself. Grounding is never whole, it is always holey. There is one sense in which the universal consciousness is everlasting, indeed eternal, outside of time. There is another sense, though, in which it is temporal and finite, as it is always in the process of becoming other than it is. Even its eternal aspect is dynamic. Insofar as time is a measure of change, it would not be wrong to speak of the temporality of eternity, of the time outside of time.

Everything is partly grounded by everything else, and each thing in turn partly grounds all other things. Of course, some relations of grounding are stronger and more direct than others, and so grounding resembles gravity in this respect. Grounding also resembles gravity in that both are ubiquitous. Each thing grounds, and is grounded by, every other thing. Since each thing partly grounds all other things which in turn partly ground it, it - by virtue of the grounding relations it has with all other things, and the grounding relations they have with it - partly grounds itself.

Why believe, though, that grounding is always partial, never full? Even if each thing is partially grounded by all other things, why not believe that the concatenation of the totality of those partial groundings together constitute full grounding? Were things to be fully grounded, they would then not be susceptible to change, neither development nor decay. Not only would mereological essentialism obtain, but things would neither gain nor lose parts. Things would attain complete perfection, perfection in the sense of completion, rather than the high(est) good. That would be stasis, a block universe in which nothing happens.

This can be further articulated in a related discursive domain. Heidegger (2010) distinguishes Being from beings, things, the ontological from the ontic. This is his ontological difference, according to which Being is never a being. Casati (2022) interprets Heidegger as a dialetheist who maintains that Being both is and is not a thing. Being itself must be, as it makes things be. Thinking with Heidegger, there is an originary diremption within Being. Being that is whole with no split severing it from itself, Being that is not a being, is a retrospective projection, a fantasy of nostalgia. That retrospective Being never appears as such, it never is, it never exists. Being is always already a being. The ontological is always already ontic. Heidegger's metaphysics is oriented toward the future: what things will become in the future is now, in the present, what they might become, which is open-ended. Further, since the ownmost possibility of each thing is that it will not be - in the case of entities, that it will die - Being includes nothing. Nothing is the heart of Being, its very core.

Whereas Heidegger focuses attention on *Dasein's* moments of supposed authenticity - when *Dasein* is experientially confronted with the dread and anxiety of not existing, of dying - all modalities of existence reveal the character of Being. There are no privileged potentials or modes.

Thinking with Nisenbaum (2018), this ontology can be further explicated by Schelling (2000) and Rosenzweig (2005). In order for the human essence to be complete and fully real, they maintain, it must be in relation to both nature and God. The human must be in self-relation to the human too. No individual person can complete the human essence. The essence of the human is that of the species, not individuals. Only once the individual is in relation to nature and God, as well as to (ultimately all) other humans, can the human complete its essence and so be fully real.

Schelling and Rosenzweig must be further expanded. The human essence is not given in advance, constraining and bounding the possibilities of future development. Although it is the human essence that is discussed here, the points made regarding it hold for every other essence too, as well as for nature and God. Essence is rather a retrospective account of how it has so far developed. Hence, the human essence is never complete and never fully real. Not only because there is always the potential for future development, in which the essence becomes in new ways, but also because the relations to nature and God are never complete. This is the result of two factors that operate in conjunction. First, grounding is always partial, never complete, as has been discussed above, and so a thing is always constitutively incomplete. It is never fully real, it never fully exists. Second, essence itself is never complete, it is always open to the future, it is always developing. Although it is the human essence that is discussed here, the points made concerning it hold for every other essence too, as well as for nature and God.

The existence of the three fundamental kinds of beings - God, world, human - is not fully explicable, according to Schelling and Rosenzweig, and so on practical grounds they restrict the validity of the principle of sufficient reason, according to which everything must have a reason. They hold that the essence of each kind of being is constituted by, and hence explained by, its relations to the other two kinds of being. Human kind becomes real by entering into relation with the other two kinds of being, God and the world. Only in their relations to each other, to themselves, God, and world, do humans open themselves.

However, three points must be immediately added. First, what is true of the human is true of God and the world. In order to become real, each kind must enter into relations with the other two as well as into self-relation with itself. Second, no kind ever becomes fully real. Third, essence is a retrospective construction and so the distinctions

between kinds are not absolute or final. A kind permeates other kinds, and the boundaries between kinds overlap. The human is also natural, nature becomes human. God permeates nature, nature becomes divine. God becomes human. Humans participate and partake of the divine. What a kind is, is never fixed, finished, or final. Distinctions between kinds are primarily retrospective and always pragmatic.

That there is only partial grounding, that reality is not fully real, that reason contains a moment of unreason – all of this could be taken as a sign that creation, the Big Bang, is a mistake, that something has gone horribly wrong. The Kabbalah with its concept of the breaking of the vessels (*shevirat ha-kelim*), as interpreted by Isaac Luria, proposes this. Furthermore, the *Ṛg-Veda* and *Brāhmaṇas* teach that that things, by virtue of existing, owe an unpayable debt. The Sanskrit word that is translated as 'debt', *ṛṇá*, is etymologically and conceptually unanalyzable, as "the notion of debt is primary and autonomous, and does not allow a further analysis" (Malamoud 1996, 95). *Ṛṇá* is originary, and "so man's [*sic*] congenital debt, which explains everything, is not itself explained by anything, and has no origin" (95). The primordial human condition is that of owing a debt:

In the same way as the notion of debt is already there, fully formed, in the oldest texts, so does the fundamental debt affect man [*sic*] and define him [*sic*] from the moment he [*sic*] is born. (95)

The *Ṛg-Veda* and *Brāhmaṇas* "define man [*sic*] as debt" (108).

Rather than a catastrophe, the unpayable debt that things owe for existing is a source of thanksgiving and gratitude.

I used to think gratitude a heavy burden for one to carry. Now I know that it is something that makes the heart lighter. The ungrateful man [*sic*] seems to me to be one who walks with feet and heart of lead. But when one has learnt, however inadequately, what a lovely thing gratitude is, one's feet go lightly over sand or sea, and one finds a strange joy revealed to one, the joy of counting up, not what one possesses, but what one owes. I hoard my debts now in the treasury of my heart, and, piece of gold by piece of gold, I range them in order at dawn and at evening. (Wilde 1979, 276)

"The aim of philosophy is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term" (Sellars 1963, 1). However, philosophy must also aim to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term 'fail' to hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term, and to recognize the moments where those failures cannot be overcome because they are constitutive of the very possibilities of there being things and of their hanging together.

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