

Grounding and Analytic Explanations

A Plea for Antirealism

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Abstract

This paper puts forward an argument against realist views of grounding, which hinges on explanations based on so-called ‘real definitions’. I will provide some essential background, then phrase the argument, and show some anti-realist conclusions that can be drawn from it. Finally, I will deal with some potential objections, and I will discuss Correia’s [2017] view of real definitions, in order to show that despite appearances, the notion of grounding does not have any actual theoretical role within it.

Keywords

antirealism; definitions; grounding; metaphysical explanations; realism

1 Introduction: realism and antirealism about grounding and metaphysical explanation

As is widely acknowledged in the existing literature on the matter, grounding claims are a specific kind of explanatory claim which express non-causal, and in this sense metaphysical, explanations. Moreover, these claims can be formulated both in a non-relational form by sentences of the form ‘p because q’ as well as in a relational one, making use of the relational predicate ‘x grounds y’ (or ‘y is grounded in x’), as for instance in sentences of the form ‘The fact that p is grounded in the fact that q’. The following pairs of sentences are paradigmatical examples of grounding claims expressed in non-relational and relational form:

- 1) The singleton of Kevin exists because Kevin exists / The fact that the singleton of Kevin exists is grounded in the fact that Kevin exists.
- 2) Mental states exist because brain states exist / The existence of mental states is grounded in the existence of brain states.
- 3) This liquid is water because it is H_2O / The fact that this liquid is water is grounded in the fact that it is H_2O .
- 4) John is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man / The fact that John is a bachelor is grounded in the fact that he is an unmarried man.

A key divide among people involved in the research about grounding is between *realists* and *antirealists*. Grounding realists (such as Rosen [2010], Audi [2012a, 2012b] and Shaffer [2009, 2016]) claim that grounding is a mind-independent relation making metaphysical explanations true (in the same way that causation, according to realists concerning causal explanations, is a mind-independent relation making causal explanations true). Since metaphysical explanations such as (1)–(4) highlight a structure of ontological dependencies in reality, the grounding relation is responsible, according to the realist, for reality having structure. Since realism concerning grounding is actually the conjunction of three claims (the existence claim, the mind-independence claim and the truth-making claim), one can be an antirealist by denying one or more of such claims. So full-blooded antirealists about grounding deny the existence claim, thinking that there is no grounding relation at all;¹ more modest forms of antirealism instead only deny either the mind-independence or the truth-making claim.² It should be stressed that antirealism about grounding is consistent with a *realist* stance toward metaphysical explanations: realism concerning metaphysical explanations claims in fact these explanations are true just in virtue of some mind-independent feature of reality; but one (like Wilson [2014] and Koslicki [2014]) may consistently deny that there is any distinct mind-independent grounding relation that makes metaphysical explanations true and still claim these explanations are made true

¹ Thompson [2018] describes several forms of full-blooded antirealism and defends a non-eliminative/fictionalist variety of it.

² The truth-making claim is particularly important in the realism/antirealism debate since realists claim the grounding relation is indispensable to explain why some metaphysical explanations are true (Audi [2012a, 2012b], Shaffer [2016]). For an antirealist critique of this kind of argument, see Kovacs [2017], Wilson [2014] and Koslicki [2014, 2016].

by some *other* mind-independent feature of reality, some other structuring relation (such as constitution, set-membership or the part-whole relation). So, although realism about grounding entails realism about metaphysical explanations, the converse is not true.³ Like antirealism about grounding, antirealism about metaphysical explanations can also either be full-blooded or modest: according to the former, metaphysical explanations are massively false or are no explanations at all; according to the latter metaphysical explanations are true but not just in virtue of mind-independent features of reality: a representational, mind/language-dependent factor is needed in order to account for their truth.

The antirealist argument I intend to put forward, which I shall call the ‘Just One Entity’ argument (or JOE for short), aims to provide reasons in support of modest antirealism concerning metaphysical explanations and full-blooded antirealism about grounding. The antirealist position supported by the argument is a local one, that is to say, one limited to a specific kind of metaphysical explanation, leaving open the issue as to whether it might also be extensible to other metaphysical explanations. These are explanations such as (3)–(4) above, which are based on so-called real definitions, *i.e.* sentences of the form:

To be F =_{def} *to be G*

or

³ An anonymous referee pointed out that realism about grounding does not entail realism about metaphysical explanation since one can consistently believe both that there is a mind-independent relation of grounding that backs metaphysical explanations and that the truth-value of these explanations depends also on context-relative epistemic factors; moreover this mixed view of metaphysical explanation (‘mixed’ because it is neither a purely realist one, in so far as it denies that the truth-value of some explanations depends only on mind-independent facts, nor a purely antirealist one, since it denies that this truth-value is determined only by context-relative epistemic factors) seems actually to be held by some advocates of grounding such as DeRosset [2013], Audi [2012a] and Raven [2015]. I believe here all depends on how the truth-making claim (by which, together with the existence and mind-independence claim, I characterize full-blooded realism about grounding) is understood. If truthmaking is understood as involving necessitation of a truth by its truth-maker (as is standard in the literature on truth-makers) then the entailment between realism about grounding and realism about metaphysical explanation holds, since anyone who claims that the obtaining of the grounding relation is not sufficient (although necessary) for the truth of the corresponding explanation would not be a full-blooded realist about grounding. On the other hand, if the truth-making claim is weakened in the sense that the obtaining of the grounding relation only contributes to make the corresponding explanation true, such that it is a necessary but not sufficient condition for its truth, then realism about grounding is indeed consistent with a modest form of antirealism about metaphysical explanation. In any case, the anti-realist argument I am about to present is effective even if realism about grounding is characterized through the weaker version of the truth-making claim.

Being F consists in being G

where F and G are predicate expressions.⁴ Real definitions provide answers to questions of the form ‘What is it to be F?’, ‘What being F consists in?’; these are questions concerning the nature or essence of something, where this something is usually conceived, although not always (see Correia [2017]), as a *property*; in this latter perspective, real definitions are often taken to be sentences providing an *analysis* of a given property in its simpler constituents. For this reason (borrowing the term from Schnieder [2010]), I shall call these explanations ‘analytical explanations’ (AE).

JOE aims to show that realism about analytical explanations—and a fortiori realism about grounding when these explanations are involved—is mistaken.⁵

JOE relies on observations that have already been made in the contemporary debate on grounding (e.g. by Schnieder [2010], Jenkins [2011], Daly [2012], van Riel [2013], Correia [2017], Kovacs [2018] and Smithson [2020]). The main interest of what follows is therefore that some ideas that have been circulating for a while in the debate about grounding are combined in a compelling line of reasoning, that potential objections to this line of reasoning are discussed and that its import for the realism/antirealism debate is highlighted.

⁴ ‘Sentence’ here must be understood as ‘interpreted sentence’, that is to say a sentence together with its semantic interpretation. A non-interpreted sentence, conceived as a merely phonetical or syntactical entity, isn’t indeed a real definition, since it has no meaning at all.

⁵ An anonymous referee pointed out that the relation between analytical explanations and grounding is controversial: in fact the claim that analytic explanations are backed by the grounding relation is denied by prominent realist about grounding such as Audi [2012a/b], Schaffer [2016] and also by those like Glazier [2017], who deny that explanations in terms of essence are a kind of grounding explanations. My reply to this point is threefold: First, although some defenders of grounding deny that analytic explanations are instances of grounding, there are others (such as Rosen [2010, 2015] and, in a different way, Correia [2017]) for whom they are. Second, my argument makes explicit the reasons a grounding realist should have for not considering analytic explanations as a kind of grounding explanations. Third, the argument illustrates a broader, neutral strategy that should be adopted in the debate on grounding: starting from a general characterization of what distinguishes a certain type of metaphysical explanations, and then checking whether, in order to account for the truth of these explanations, it is necessary to admit the existence of the grounding relation or of some other metaphysical posit such as essences. In what follows I provide reasons against both these options.

2 Hey, JOE

If one grants that AE are indeed explanations, one should also grant that they have the property of asymmetry; this means that if it is true that *p* because *q*, it cannot be true that *q* because *p*. The reason for this is that between the *explanans* and the *explanandum* of an explanation there is some kind of priority (metaphysical, causal, informational) and priority is asymmetrical and irreflexive. Therefore, a good account of why a given explanation is true should at least not entail that this explanation is symmetrical.

According to the realist about grounding what makes metaphysical explanations true is the obtaining of a mind-independent relation, grounding, whose relata are represented by the *explanans* and the *explanandum*. However, the *explanans* and the *explanandum* of an AE represent the same entity since these explanations are identity-based, they explain *what it is*, the 'is' of identity, *to be so-and-so*, what *being so-and-so consists in*. Therefore, by the principle of indiscernibility of identicals, the grounding relation should hold reflexively and symmetrically in this case.⁶ So, the realist seems to be forced to admit the AE are symmetrical, since what he believes accounts for their truth turns out to be the exemplification of a symmetrical relation. Therefore, realism about AE should be rejected.

In order to properly assess JOE, it is useful to put it in explicit form.

Just One Entity Argument (JOE):

- 1) Explanations have the property of asymmetry (**assumption**).
- 2) AE are explanations (**assumption**).
- 3) Realism about grounding explains why metaphysical explanations (and therefore

⁶ An anonymous referee pointed out that the Leibniz Law, if applied in an unrestricted way in contexts like 'the fact that ...' or 'the property of ...' triggers the slingshot argument, which is unacceptable to anyone who admits the existence of things like facts and properties. I agree with this, but firstly, I think that, as is well known, a defender of properties and facts has a way to block the slingshot (as Neale [2001] has shown) by accepting a Russellian theory of definite descriptions; secondly, what is important for my argument is whether a realist about grounding should or should not accept the validity of Leibniz's law in the context of 'being F/the property of being F/the fact that *a* is F is grounded in being G/the property of being G/the fact that *a* is G' and I think he should. In fact, a realist thinks that grounding is a relation that is either exemplified or not, regardless of how we represent its relata, and thus he should consider contexts like 'x grounds y' as transparent with respect to identity.

also AE) are true by pointing to a mind-independent structuring relation, grounding, as what makes these explanations true (**assumption**).

- 4) If the *explanans* and the *explanandum* of an explanation represent the same entity, any feature of the entity represented by the former is also a feature of the entity represented by the latter (**assumption**).
- 5) The *explanans* and the *explanandum* of AE represent the same entity (**assumption**).
- 6) Whatever feature of the entity represented by the *explanans* of an AE is also a feature of the entity represented by its *explanandum* (from 4, 5).
- 7) The grounding relation holds reflexively and symmetrically between the entities represented by the *explanans* and *explanandum* of an AE (from 6).
- 8) The explanations provided by realists about grounding of why AE are true entail the reflexivity and symmetricity of these explanations (from 3, 7).⁷
- 9) An explanation of why an AE is true which entails that it is symmetrical is false (from 1, 2).
- 10) Explanations of why AE are true provided by realists are false (from 8, 9).
- 11) Realism about AE is mistaken (from 10).

JOE offers the antirealist not only an argument against the realist but also almost everything she needs to answer the questions ‘What makes AE true?’ and ‘What explains their asymmetry?’ While in fact no explanation of the asymmetry of AE can be provided by the

⁷ It could be pointed out that (8) follows from (7) and (3) only if (3) is interpreted as asserting that realists explain why AE are true *just* by pointing to the exemplification of the grounding relation, without any further consideration; in other words only if (3) is interpreted in light of the stronger version of the truth-making principle with which I have characterized realism about grounding. However, if the truth-making principle is understood in the weaker sense, according to which the exemplification of the grounding relation *helps* explaining why AE are true, but it is not sufficient for their truth, then the advocate of grounding could explain the asymmetry of the explanation not by relying on the grounding relation, which in these cases would have reflexive instances, but in terms of representational factors such as conceptual or linguistic modes of presentation. The problem with this strategy is that, as Kovacs [2018] has pointed out, in this case the grounding relation no longer has any explanatory role regarding the truth of the AE, since the worldly “backing” basis of it is provided by the identity relation itself.

worldly entities, represented by their *explananda* and *explanantia*, then—according to the antirealist—such an explanation can be provided by resorting to *representations* of the world. One and the same entity, as Frege taught us, can in fact be conceptually and linguistically represented in different ways: one fact can be represented by various Fregean propositions, one and the same property can be represented by different concepts and one and the same concept/proposition can be grasped under different linguistic guises. If, moreover, there are good reasons for claiming that entities like concepts, propositions, and languages are in some way mind-dependent, the antirealist has shown that AE are also true in virtue of mind-dependent facts.⁸ It is important here to stress the ‘also’ since it is not the case that AE are true *just* in virtue of facts concerning the ways we represent the world: they are true also in virtue of the *identity* of the fact/properties represented by their *explananda* and *explanantia* (see Correia [2017]).⁹

The antirealist will conclude that the alleged structure of reality—a hierarchy of entities connected by dependence relations which, according to realists, is disclosed by metaphysical explanations—is, at least sometimes, in a broad sense, in the mind and not out there. The feature of metaphysical explanations which manifests the alleged structure of reality is in fact the asymmetry of these explanations: what manifests the fact that Socrates is more fundamental than his singleton is the fact that the singleton exists because Socrates exists and not the other way around; what manifests the fact that being an unmarried man is, in some sense, more fundamental than being a bachelor is that someone is a bachelor because

⁸ Even were one to embrace the “Fregean” view that concepts, propositions and languages are abstract and mind-independent entities, the antirealist would still have a point: that the asymmetry of AE does not mirror any feature of the worldly entities represented by the explanations but depends on features of the conceptual/linguistic representations of these entities.

⁹ An anonymous referee pointed out that my argument here seems to overgeneralize: indeed, since *any* sentence is true also by virtue of the meaning it has, it might seem that I’m committed to the view that *any* sentence is true also by virtue of mind-dependent facts (such as linguistic conventions): in fact, if those facts had been different, the sentence would have had different truth conditions. Here the difference between interpreted and non-interpreted sentences (see fn 4) becomes crucial: since an interpreted sentence essentially has its meaning, it necessarily has its truth-conditions. For instance, the *interpreted* English sentence ‘Snow is white’ is true just in case snow is white, regardless of any linguistic or representational fact (*that* sentence would have been true at a counterfactual possible world where ‘Snow’ means ‘grass’ as long as snow were white in that world). In contrast, the truth-conditions of AE involve representational facts (facts concerning meanings, concepts or even linguistic expressions) since these facts are required to account for their asymmetry.

he is an unmarried man and not the other way around. But, according to the antirealist, what explains this feature of AE cannot be nothing but a mind-dependent, representational ingredient: what is structured is, at least sometimes, at least in case of AE, not reality itself but our ways of representing it.

Given this general framework, the antirealist may invoke various representational entities depending on the AE at stake. Consider, for instance, an AE based on an *a posteriori* identity such as:

- 3) This liquid is water because it is H₂O.

Since it may be reasonably argued that, although the substance water is identical to the substance H₂O (or the property of being water is identical to the property of being H₂O), the concept <WATER> is different from the concept <H₂O>, what explains the asymmetry of (3) are concepts and their features. The relevant feature here could be that the concept <H₂O> represents the inner structure of a certain liquid better than the concept <WATER> does, since the latter represents just some of its salient surface features.¹⁰ But consider an AE such as:

- 4) John is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man.

It may reasonably be argued that here not only identical properties, but also identical concepts are involved. Since the same concepts are involved in the *explanans* and *explanandum* of (4), it may be claimed that their asymmetry must be explained in terms of the differences between the linguistic expressions involved in them.¹¹ Here the relevant difference could be that the expression ‘unmarried man’ although having the same meaning as the expression ‘bachelor’ explicitly articulates how this meaning, and the corresponding property, is constituted from simpler meanings/properties (Schnieder [2010]); the antirealist might also point—provided she endorses an inferential theory of meaning—to the fact that ‘unmarried man’ figure in the canonical introduction/elimination rules that are constitutive

¹⁰ Van Riel [2013] stresses the importance of appealing to the meanings of expressions to explain the asymmetry of the predicate ‘X reduces to Y’, when ‘X’ and ‘Y’ are coreferential terms and at least some analytic explanations are the explanatory counterparts of reduction statements. This idea dates back to Ruben [1990: chs 5, 7] according to whom the *relata* of identity-based explanations (and explanations in general) are “epistemicized facts”, i.e. ordinary facts consisting of individuals and properties along with conceptual modes of presentations of them. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing out this reference.

¹¹ This is basically Schnieder’s [2010] solution to what he calls ‘the puzzle of because’.

for the meaning of ‘bachelor’ but not the other way around (Smithson [2020]); she might stress, moreover, that the competence on ‘bachelor’ is also parasitic on the competence on ‘unmarried man’ but not the other way round (Caputo [2013]).¹² In any case, the asymmetry of the explanation will be backed—to use an expression much loved by supporters of grounding—not by some structure in what is represented but by the structured ways by which we represent it.

The fact that AE are made true both by mind-independent facts (the identity between the properties involved) and mind / language-dependent ones is made clear by the following principle:

(AEX) *Something is F because_{AE} it is G iff to be F =_{id} to be G and the concept of being G/the expression ‘to be G’ has some representational priority over the concept of being F/the expression ‘to be F’.*¹³

If we recall that AE are grounded on real definitions and that real definitions are already characterized by an asymmetry between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, (AEX) may be seen as a consequence of:

A) something is F because_{AE} it is G iff to be F =_{def} to be G

and

B) to be F =_{def} to be G iff to be F =_{id} to be G & the concept of being G/the expression ‘being G’ has some representational priority over the concept of being F/the expression ‘being F’.

(A) says that AE are true when (and because) the corresponding real definitions hold; (B) specifies the conditions making real definitions true; these are the identity of the properties involved and some representational facts concerning the concepts/expressions involved in

¹² Smithson [2020] distinguishes between metaphysical and conceptual grounding, arguing that while the former concerns “the metaphysical structure of the world”, the latter “concerns the meanings of our sentences” (Smithson [2020]: 1504). If by this he means that AE are true (also) in virtue of facts concerning linguistic expressions and their meanings, I agree. However, if he means that AE are *about* linguistic expressions and their meanings, and not worldly facts, I disagree (see §3.1. below).

¹³ Here the symbol ‘=_{id}’ expresses generalized identity. As Correia [2017] stresses generalized identity is, differently from the *definiens/definiendum* relation, reflexive and symmetric. The subscript “AE” indicates that “because” conveys an analytic explanation, rather than, for instance, a causal one.

their *definienda* and *definiencia*. Since AE are grounded in real definitions and real definitions are true under certain conditions, it follows that AE also are grounded on these conditions.

Given the role it plays in my characterization of analytical explanations, it would be desirable to have a theory regarding the notion of ‘representational priority’.¹⁴ Unfortunately, I am not yet able to provide one, but I believe that, pending a full-fledged theory, the concept can at least in part be clarified through examples. The cases of ‘Water’/‘H₂O’ and ‘Bachelor’/‘Unmarried man’ illustrate that representational priority can be a matter of perspicuity (cf. Correia [2017]): the expressions ‘H₂O’/‘Unmarried male’ represent the same things represented by ‘Water’/‘Bachelor’ but do it in a more perspicuous way. The greater perspicuity of the *definiens* compared to the *definiendum*, however, must be understood differently in the two cases. The greater perspicuity of ‘H₂O’ compared to ‘Water’ seems to be related to its greater representational “depth”: ‘H₂O’ tells us how a certain substance is made up of certain elements which are taken to be responsible for its macroscopic features which are associated to ‘water’; on the other hand, the greater perspicuity of ‘unmarried man’ compared to ‘bachelor’ seems to be a matter of explicitness: the first expression makes explicit in its syntactic structure the content of the concept expressed by ‘bachelor’. I think that representational priority is also connected to the inferential role of expressions and to their role in the structure of linguistic competence: for instance, it seems reasonable to think that ‘x is an unmarried man’ figures in the canonical introduction rule for ‘x is a bachelor’ (but not the other way around) and that the competence on the latter depends on the competence on the former. This inferential dimension seems to me to be relevant also in some principles of the so-called ‘impure logic of ground’ (Fine [2012]) such as ‘(p and q) because p, q’, ‘(p or q) because p’, ‘There is an F because a is F’.¹⁵ here the ground provides a canonical reason to assert what is grounded (where a canonical reason is a reason embedded in the canonical introduction rules by which the term is endowed with its meaning). I think a similar type of representational priority is involved in non-logical cases like ‘This is red because it is scarlet’ and ‘It is true that p because p’: the representational priority of ‘Snow is white’ over ‘It is true that snow is white’ is that understanding of the latter depends on understanding of the former, but not vice versa, and the concept of truth can be implicitly

¹⁴ The concept of *representational priority* plays in my account of AE the same theoretical role as the concept of *a representation carving reality at its joint better than another one* in Correia’s [2017] account of real definitions. For a comparison between the two concepts, see fn 33.

¹⁵ These are, in fact, the ‘because’-sentences which are equivalent to the corresponding principles of the impure logic of ground.

defined by the Tarskian biconditionals starting from a fragment of language that lacks the truth predicate;¹⁶ similarly a determinable term like ‘Red’ is introduced in language acquisition through ostension of its determinates, the exemplification of one of its determinates provides the canonical reason to assert the exemplification of the determinable and (at least according to some) determinables can be defined as disjunctions of their determinates. One advantage of an account which incorporates the inferential dimension is that it provides an asymmetry between explanans and explanandum in AE and in real definitions which seems to mirror more directly the asymmetry in the explanatory relation in so far as both inference and explanation are, or point to, *consequential* relations (Jenkins [2008]) or *priority* relations (Schnieder [2010]) among facts or propositions.¹⁷

Finally, it should be noted that an antirealist who buys this picture is not forced to deny the existence of a grounding relation making AE true: suffice for her to claim that this relation does not hold between worldly entities but between *pairs* of entities, each of which has a worldly entity (a fact, a property) and a representational entity (a concept, an expression) as its members. In this case, she will accept the following characterization of AE, where ‘Repⁿ’ refers to the representation of the worldly entity which is the first member of the pair:

(AEX-GR) *Something is F because_{AE} it is G iff to be F =_{id} to be G & <To be G, Rep¹> grounds <to be F, Rep²>.*¹⁸

Since the two pairs have partly different constituents (the two different representational entities), conceiving grounding in this way blocks JOE; however, this does not cause trouble

¹⁶ This conceptualist view of so-called ‘truth-dependence’ is defended by Schnieder [2006], Caputo [2013], Dodd [2018]. For a criticism see Liggins [2016].

¹⁷ For a more detailed defense of this inferential and competence-based approach to analytical explanations see Caputo [2013].

¹⁸ Jenkins [2011] proposes an analysis of grounding as a four-place relation involving modes of presentations of two worldly entities X and Y: *X is grounded in Y relatively to aspect Z of X and aspect U of Y*. The four-place relation is both non-reflexive and non-irreflexive because reflexive (and irreflexive) relations are two-place relations. However, it should be noted that since, when X = Y, the asymmetry and non-reflexivity of the corresponding grounding-sentence is determined in Jenkins’ proposal by the two modes of presentation Z and U, the four-place relation she defines is equivalent to a two-place irreflexive relation holding between the pairs whose members are a worldly entity (X, Y) and a mode of presentation of it (Z, U). Moreover, the two-place relation view seems preferable since it is more faithful than the former to the grounding/explanatory discourse (which is two-place and irreflexive).

for the antirealist since the grounding relation is exemplified not by worldly entities but by mind/language-dependent ones: indeed, if an entity has a mind/language-dependent constituent is itself mind/language-dependent. Moreover, since, according to (AEX-GR), the worldly components of the two pairs are the same entity, the asymmetry and irreflexivity of the instances of the grounding-relation, in case of AE, is ensured solely by the representational components of the two pairs.¹⁹

3 Countering JOE

A supporter of realism about AE could try to counter JOE by denying either premise (2), or (5) of the argument. The first move, which might be labelled *Eliminativism*, amounts to claiming that AE are either not explanations at all or are not *metaphysical* explanations; the second amounts to claiming that the *explanans* and *explanandum* of an AE represent different worldly entities and, for this reason, could be called *Inflationism*.

3.1 Eliminativism²⁰

It seems difficult to deny that AE based on *a-posteriori* identities, such as ‘This is water because this is H₂O’, are metaphysical explanations; these sentences can indeed provide substantial information to a competent speaker concerning the nature of a certain natural substance. Eliminativism seems instead more plausible when it comes to explanations like

4) John is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man.

The reason is that since the *explanandum* and the *explanans* of (4) are synonyms, it can be said that (4) has the same meaning as

5) John is an unmarried man because he is an unmarried man,

which is no explanation at all, so neither is (4).²¹

¹⁹ On this point see Kovacs [2018].

²⁰ The topic of this paragraph is addressed in more detail in Caputo [2013].

²¹ This line of argument is found in Douven-Hindriks [2005], applied to explanations of the form ‘It is true that p because p’. It should be emphasized that even if the eliminativist were able to argue that explanations based on synonymy are not explanations at all, this would not affect JOE, since what is essential for it is that there are at least some identity-based explanations, such as those based on *a-posteriori* identities.

What the advocate of AE can reply to this argument is that explanatory sentences are sensitive not only to the semantic content of their constituents but also to the linguistic expressions through which those contents are presented.²²

The eliminativist might also point out that, in normal conversational contexts, answering ‘Because he is an unmarried man’ to a question such as ‘Why John is a bachelor?’ does not count as a good explanation.²³ The advocate of AE can reply that this remark confuses the pragmatic of providing explanations and the semantics of explanations. Explanatory acts are in fact subject to pragmatic constraints concerning the relevance and the novelty of the information provided by an explanation. Therefore, the reason why in normal contexts when someone asks ‘Why John is a bachelor’ the answer ‘Because he is an unmarried man’ is not considered a good one is the following: since the information provided by (4) is an information that any competent speaker is supposed to know, the person who asks why John is a bachelor is looking for a further explanation, *i.e.* an explanation of the fact that John is an unmarried man. The information provided by (4) will not therefore be, in such contexts, the relevant information since the relevant information was about John being an unmarried man. This is why asserting (4) to answer the question ‘Why is John a bachelor’ will be considered equivalent to asserting ‘John is an unmarried man because he is an unmarried man’, which is no explanation at all. However, the fact that the latter sentence is not an explanation does not entail that a different sentence, *i.e.* (4), is not an explanation either, even if trivial in normal conversational contexts: but a pragmatically trivial explanation can still express a true explanatory proposition.

The eliminativist could finally admit that sentences like (4) are explanations, and yet deny that they are *metaphysical* explanations that a theory of grounding should account for. Here the idea is that (4) is an explanation which concerns the meaning of the word ‘bachelor’ and not an extralinguistic reality, an explanation, in other words, that is based on a purely nominal definition and not on a real one. As venerable as it is, this sharp distinction between real and nominal explanations/definitions seems to me to be partly wrong: an explanation such as ‘John is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man’ is not about the meanings of words, but about a person, John, and a property of his (being a bachelor); it provides information about what it is for John to have a given property; therefore, as

²² For this kind of answer see Schnieder [2010] and Caputo [2013].

²³ This fact has been pointed out by Kunne [2003] and Douven-Hindriks [2005] concerning explanations of the form ‘It is true that p because p’.

far as their topic is concerned, there seems to be no substantial difference between this explanation and explanations based on theoretical reductions such as ‘This is water because it is H₂O’: in both cases what we learn is what having a certain property consists in. This is of course consistent with the fact that an explanation like (4) can indirectly convey semantic explanation concerning the meaning of a word.²⁴ The reason why explanations like this are correctly called conceptual/linguistic is instead that they are true in virtue of facts involving our mastery of language and concepts and that we are able to know them precisely in virtue of our linguistic competence.²⁵

3.2 Inflationism

Given that AE are the explanatory counterparts of real definitions, the most promising way to defend inflationism is to claim that in real definitions of the form

- 1) The property of being $F =_{\text{def}}$ the property of being Φ

(where Φ is a placeholder for a complex expression), the expressions ‘the property of being F ’ and ‘the property of being Φ ’ do not represent the same entity, *i.e.* the unique property that is being defined. This is equivalent to claiming that in an AE such as:

- 2) John is a bachelor because John is an unmarried man,

the *explanans* and the *explanandum* represent different facts conceived as Russellian true propositions, *i.e.* complexes made up of individuals and properties/relations.

An account of real definitions along these lines was put forward by Gideon Rosen [2010, 2015] according to whom defining a property F is “to specify some condition Φ such that it lies in F ’s nature that whenever a thing is F , or Φ , the fact that it is F is grounded in the fact that it is Φ ” (Rosen [2015]: 208). The important point, as

²⁴ Imagine a child hearing his mother speaking about a bachelor for the first time and asking her ‘Mum, what are bachelors?’. From the mother’s answer ‘Bachelor are unmarried man’ the child would learn something about both bachelorhood (what being a bachelor consists in) and the meaning of the word ‘bachelor’ (by learning a basic/constitutive regularity for its use).

²⁵ An anonymous referee pointed out that it cannot be true that a necessary truth such as (4) be true in virtue of facts concerning our mastery of language, since these facts are contingent, and a necessary truth cannot be true in virtue of something contingent. For an answer to this objection which is based on Einheuser’s [2006] distinction between counterfactual and ‘counterconventional’ worlds (see Caputo [2013], *cf.* also Sidelle [2009]).

far as JOE is concerned, is that in a definitional schema such as (1), the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, according to Rosen, have *different* semantic values. For instance, in a definition like:

- 3) The property of being a bachelor consists in the property of being an unmarried man,

the semantic value of the *definiendum* is the property of being a bachelor, while the semantic value of the *definiens* is a complex whose constituents are the function <the property of> and its arguments, *i.e.* the properties of being unmarried and being a man and, presumably, the conjunctive mode of composition. When it takes the latter arguments, this function takes the property of being a bachelor as *its value*. To identify the complex entity made up of the function and its arguments with the property would therefore be a mistake akin to that of identifying number 2 with the complex entity constituted by the successor function and the number 1, on the basis that $2 =_{\text{def}}$ the successor of 1. And, in the same way as number 2 does not have number 1 as its constituent, the property defined in a real definition is a *simple* entity which does not have the properties referred to by the *definiens* as its constituents.

Rosen's account is particularly relevant for the issue at stake here: on the one hand, it represents an example of the inflationist strategy, and on the other, at least *prima facie*, it is a *realist* account of real definitions (and therefore of AE based on them) which makes an essential use of the notion of grounding conceived by Rosen as a relation holding between worldly entities.

Yet I believe Rosen's account is flawed and that, moreover, its *realist* status is highly disputable. The claim that the defined properties are simple contributes to what it seems to me the more serious problem of Rosen's account of real definitions. The problem is that the account has difficulty satisfying what Correia [2017] calls the 'Identity Principle':

(IP) *If to be F =_{def} to be G then to be F =_{id} to be G*

Given that the (IP) is a condition of adequacy for real definitions (no one would say that a definition whose *definiens* and *definiendum* refer to different things is correct), a satisfactory account of real definitions should *entail* the identity principle, and this is indeed what Rosen [2015: 190] claims. Yet this claim seems to me disputable.²⁶

²⁶ That Rosen's account has problems with (IP) is also stressed by Correia [2017: 64–5]. Correia stresses that Fine's [2015] account of real definitions (according to which *being F =_{def} being G* when *being G* is essential to *being F* and *being G* grounds *being F*) also suffers from the same problem.

What Rosen's account entails is in fact that 'to be F' and 'to be G' are intensionally equivalent predicates and that, moreover, there is an explanatory relation between the fact that a thing is F and the fact that it is G. Why should this entail that being F and being G are one and the same property? That the two predicates refer to the same property would surely follow from an intensionalist conception of properties; however, intensionalism regarding entities like properties and facts is inconsistent with Rosen's theory of real definitions in so far as, according to it, the *definiendum* and the *definiens* in a real definition have different semantic values, while their intensions, conceived as functions from possible worlds to extensions are the same ('the property of being a bachelor' and 'the property of being an unmarried man' pick up the same property in every possible world). Moreover, it should be noted that intensionalism seems to be strongly in tension with the overall metaphysical project endorsed by advocates of grounding, and especially by realists. The reason is that the paradigmatical cases they put forward to argue for the theoretical indispensability of the notion of grounding are cases where there are strong intuitions concerning the metaphysical priority of a given fact compared to another one, although they are necessarily co-obtaining facts (e.g. the fact that Socrates exists and the fact that the singleton of Socrates exists, or the fact that it is true that snow is white and the fact that snow is white). But for the realist about grounding, these facts must be different, since he believes grounding to be an *irreflexive* relation established between worldly entities. Therefore, a realist about grounding seems to be committed to the *rejection* of intensionalism. In other words, an advocate of grounding cannot be an intensionalist and a realist at the same time: if he buys intensionalism and in the meantime wants to maintain the irreflexivity of grounding, he must embrace the view according to which the grounding relation does not hold between

worldly entities but between these entities under modes of presentations.²⁷

On the other hand, assuming a hyperintensional conception of properties and facts, the claim that being F and being G are the same property could be defended by saying that the properties in questions have the same constituents in the same mode of composition, but this answer is not open to Rosen since he claims that properties are simple.

Secondly, as Rosen himself stresses, the fact that ‘being F’ and ‘being G’ are necessarily coextensive, and thus, if intensionalism is accepted, refer to the same property, does not guarantee that ‘being G’ is the *definiens* of ‘being F’. Rosen stresses that this is just a specific case of the general phenomenon that an object can satisfy many descriptions which do not define it. So far so good. Still, one should expect something more by an account of what a real definition is: notably that it provides some explanation of why ‘being an unmarried man’, and not ‘being an unmarried man and identical or not identical to a table’, defines ‘being a bachelor’. However, as far as I can see, Rosen provides two equally unsatisfactory answers to this request for explanation. The first appeals to the *essence* of being a bachelor: although it is true both that necessarily someone is a bachelor *iff* he is *an unmarried man and a table or not a table* and that someone is a bachelor *iff* he is an unmarried man, just the

²⁷ Duncan, Miller and Norton [2017] claim that a relational conception of grounding, according to which grounding is a relation between facts, is consistent with the claim that ‘grounds’ creates intensional contexts, that is to say contexts where the principle of substitutability *salva veritate* of expressions with the same intension holds (they call the failure of such principle ‘hyperintensionality_{TRAD}’). What must instead be admitted by the proponent of a relational conception is what they call ‘hyperintensionality_{GRND}’, that is to say the non substitutability in ‘grounds’ contexts of expressions that have reference in the same possible worlds (such as s ‘the fact that Socrates exists’ and ‘the fact that the singleton of Socrates exists’ or ‘Socrates’ and ‘The singleton of Socrates’). But the metaphysical counterpart of this point is the claim that coexistence in the same possible worlds is not sufficient for the identity of facts, properties and entities in general and this is nothing but the negation of what I call ‘intensionalism’ about facts and properties. I think however that their claim that the supporter of a relational conception of grounding is not committed to hyperintensionalism in the standard sense of the term (their hyperintensionality_{TRAD}) is flawed, at least in so far as the *relata* of the grounding relation are taken to be facts. Indeed, if one accepts (as the vast majority of people involved in the debate do) that expressions of the form ‘the fact that p’ are names of facts, a sentence such as ‘The fact that Socrates exists grounds the fact that the singleton of Socrates exists’ is hyperintensional, since ‘Socrates exists’ cannot be substituted in it *salva veritate* with ‘The singleton of Socrates exists’ which has the same intension. In a footnote the authors reply to the same point made by a referee, but the reply seems to me *ad hoc*: in fact they just dismiss the use of that-clause as names for facts; but that clauses are the paradigmatic cases in which issues of hyperintensionality arise, and therefore one cannot conclude that a given linguistic context, where the use of this kind of expressions is perfectly customary, is intensional just by dismissing the use of such expressions.

latter proposition is true in virtue of the essence of being a bachelor. The second answer points to the grounding relation: if someone is a bachelor it is so in virtue of being an unmarried man and not in virtue of being an unmarried man and identical or not identical to a table. But these appeals to essence and grounding seem to me to be very poor, if not empty, in explanatory terms.

Concerning essence, we would like to know why it is part of the essence of being a bachelor to be an unmarried man and not to be an unmarried man and a table or not a table. A sensible answer to this question might be given by calling on Fine's [1995] distinction between the constitutive and consequential essence of a thing: only being an unmarried man (and not being an unmarried man and identical or not identical to a table), is part of the constitutive essence of being a bachelor. It should be noted, however, that a sensible way of characterizing constitutive and consequential essence is by saying that the truths belonging to the former concern the identity of a thing, what a thing is, whereas the truths belonging to the latter are the logical consequences of the former.²⁸ Nevertheless, Rosen has trouble justifying the claim that being an unmarried man is part of the identity of being a bachelor since, as we have just seen, he has serious trouble justifying the identity between the property of being a bachelor and the property of being an unmarried man. But if this link between essence and identity cannot be established, Rosen's appeal to essence becomes explanatorily void: stating that it is in virtue of the essence of being a bachelor that bachelors are unmarried men and that it is not in virtue of such an essence that bachelors are unmarried men and identical or not identical to tables seems just like saying with more emphasis 'being a bachelor consists in being an unmarried man and not in being an unmarried man and a table or not a table!' But emphasis is no explanation.

The same seems to me to be true of the appeal to grounding: why the fact that someone is a bachelor is grounded in the fact that someone is an unmarried man and not in the fact that someone is an unmarried man and identical or not identical to a table? Note again that a sensible answer to this question could be provided by stressing first that the fact that someone is a bachelor is identical to the fact that someone is an unmarried man and not to the fact that someone is an unmarried man and a table or not a table, and secondly, that 'being an unmarried man', unlike 'being an unmarried man and being identical or not identical to a table', represents the structure of the property of being a bachelor, *i.e.* how it

²⁸ Fine [1995] chooses the opposite view and provides a definition of constitutive essence in terms of consequential essence.

is made up of simpler properties. But none of the conjuncts of the preceding answer are open to Rosen: on the one hand it is hard for him to justify the identity claim; on the other hand, appealing to the various representational features of the expressions involved in the definition would turn his account to an antirealist one.²⁹

Finally, it is also doubtful whether Rosen's account might count as a realist one. Indeed, the distinction between entities and representations of them plays a central role in the realism/antirealism divide; but one of the marks which distinguishes entities and representations is that the same entity may be represented in different ways: one entity, many representations or, as Frege would say, many modes of presentation of it. Now, this one-to-many relation is precisely that holding, in Rosen's view, between a property and the structured complexes which are represented by the definientia in real definitions. One and the same property, such as the property of being a bachelor, can be picked up by various complexes, such as <the property of, being unmarried, being a man> and <the property of, being unmarried, being a man, being identical or not identical to a table>. Moreover, it seems also difficult to attribute the function/argument structure which characterizes Rosen's complexes to a worldly state of affairs, conceived as a complex constituted by individuals and properties/relations. For these reasons, these complexes are more naturally conceived as constituents of structured propositions which are more fine-grained entities

²⁹ An anonymous referee objected to this line of reasoning by suggesting that one could simply take the claims that it is part of the essence of being a bachelor to be an unmarried man (and not an unmarried man and a table or not a table), and that being a bachelor is grounded in being an unmarried man (and not in being an unmarried man and a table or not a table), as primitive truths given our understanding of things like being a bachelor, essence, and grounding. My reply to this point is that I do not believe that notions like essence and grounding are notions on which we have clear intuitions suitable for grounding primitive truths: we have intuitions about meanings (for example, that 'bachelor' means unmarried man), about identity (for example, that being a bachelor is being an unmarried man), and about explanatory statements (for example, that John is a bachelor because he is an unmarried man). Therefore, those notions should be clarified through these (for example, by saying that the essential truths about something are those that concern its identity, or by saying that 'the fact that p grounds the fact that q' means that the fact that p metaphysically explains the fact that q). But if this is not done, and one considers as primitive truths that the essence of being a bachelor is being an unmarried man, or that being a bachelor is grounded in being an unmarried man, and even wants to use these supposed primitive truths to explain why being a bachelor consists in being an unmarried man (and not an unmarried man and a table or not a table), such explanations can legitimately be suspected of having the same explanatory power as Molière's *virtus dormitiva*, that is, explanations in which the explanans merely repeats in more obscure terms what needs to be explained.

than worldly facts.³⁰

4 Representationalism without grounding

The kind of antirealist account of AE and real definitions I have put forward has two distinctive features: first of all, it is a representational/antirealist account according to which AE are true also in virtue of facts concerning representations of the world and not the world itself; secondly it is a grounding-free account, *i.e.* one which makes no use of the notion of grounding. While my account differs from Rosen's in both respects (since the latter is both realist and grounding-based), it parts ways with the account of real definitions put forward by Correia [2017] just for the second: indeed, while we share the idea that what ensures the asymmetry between *explanans* and *explanandum* (in AE) and between *analysans* and *analysandum* (in real definitions) are facts concerning representational entities and not worldly ones, we diverge when Correia uses the notion of grounding (albeit a representational one) to characterize real definitions. Below, I will try to show that the notion of grounding is theoretically dispensable from Correia's analysis.³¹

The characterization of real definitions put forward by Correia is the following:

(RD) *To be $F =_{def}$ to be G iff (i) to be $F =_{id}$ to be G , and (ii) being G is metaphysically prior to being F .*³²

According to Correia, the notion of metaphysical priority can, in turn, be clarified in two different ways: through the notion of grounding and through that of *carving reality at its joints*. Hence, in Correia's account the notion of grounding plays a central role insofar as

³⁰ It must be emphasized that the fact that Rosen's complexes are more fine-grained entities than worldly facts does not involve that they are mind-dependent entities. The fact that Rosen's conception of grounding seems to be a *representational* and not a *worldly* one is also stressed by Audi [2012a: 111], [2012b: 706–7], Wilson [2014: 574–5] and Correia [2017: 58].

³¹ When I say that the notion of grounding is “theoretically dispensable” from Correia's analysis I don't mean that the concept of representational grounding is analyzable by other concepts. As we shall shortly see, Correia himself in fact provides an analysis of the notion of representational grounding in terms of the notion of ‘*x* fittingly describes a state more perspicuously than *y*’. Instead, my point will be, in a nutshell, that there are no reasons to call ‘grounding’ this latter notion which does the real job in Correia's account of real definitions, unless by ‘grounds’ one simply means ‘explains’.

³² Correia thinks one should not view expressions of the form ‘to be *F*’ or ‘being *F*’ as denoting properties. But this is irrelevant for the issue at stake here.

it figures in the characterization of *metaphysical priority*, which is in itself central to the characterization of real definitions.

The theoretical role of the notions of grounding and *carving reality at its joints* is that of ensuring the asymmetry between the *definiens* and the *definiendum* in real definitions. The two notions are in fact opaque, *i.e.* the principle of substitutability *salva veritate* of coreferential terms fails when sentences containing such expressions are at stake. This is the reason why the notion of grounding which is here at stake is not a worldly one (*i.e.* whose relata are worldly entities such as facts or properties) but a *representational* one (whose relata are representational entities such as Fregean propositions or concepts) since, unlike the latter, the former allows for the substitution of coreferential terms *salva veritate*, and this is incompatible with the asymmetry between *definiens* and *definiendum* in real definitions.

Correia characterization of the notions of representational grounding and comparative joint-carvingness is provided by:

1. Factual Representational Grounding: *'Its being the case that A grounds (representationally) its being the case that B' is true iff every state that is fittingly described by A is also fittingly described by B, but less perspicuously*
and
2. Factual Comparative Joint-Carvingness: *'The proposition that A carves reality at its joints in a better way than the proposition that B' is true iff every state that is fittingly described by B is also fittingly described by A, but more perspicuously.*

It should be firstly noted that, apart their quantifying structure, (1) and (2) characterize factual representational grounding and factual comparative joint-carvingness in the same way: according to them when A representationally grounds B and A carves reality at its joints better than B and *s* is a state which is fittingly described by both of them, A describes *s* more perspicuously than B.

The only difference between (1) and (2) is therefore that whereas (1) requires that every state which is fittingly described by A (the grounding proposition) is also fittingly described by B (the grounded one), (2) requires the converse, *i.e.* that every state that is fittingly described by B is also fittingly described by A. This is why Correia can prove what he calls the 'Connecting assumption':

(CA) *If to be F =_{id} to be G, then being G grounds being F iff the concept of being G carves reality at its joint better than the concept of being F.*

For, when being F is identical to be G the concept of being F and the concept of being G have the same extensions, so they fittingly describe the same states.

However, the condition that ‘every state which is fittingly described by B is also fittingly described by A’ involves that, according to (2), a sentence such as ‘a is red’ *does not* carve reality at its joints better than the sentences ‘a is colored’ and ‘a is red or blue’, since there are states (such as the state of *a being blue*) that are fittingly described by the latter sentences and not by the former. But the cases of a determinate and its determinable and of a disjunct and its corresponding disjunction are usually considered in the philosophical literature that makes use of such or related notions (such as Lewis’ [1983] notion of naturalness of a property and Sider’s [2011] notion of structure) paradigmatic cases of things that carve reality at its joints better than others. Therefore, the characterization of factual comparative joint-carvingness doesn’t provide necessary conditions for a proposition’s carving reality at its joints in a better way than another one.

Moreover, it seems that all intuitive cases of comparative joint-carvingness that satisfy (2) are cases in which (1) is also satisfied: this is for instance what happens in definitions or in cases of logically complex sentences and their logically simple equivalents, such as ‘not not p’ and ‘p’. On the other hand, it is difficult to find intuitive cases of comparative joint-carvingness that are such just by virtue of satisfying (2). These should be cases where every state which is fittingly described by B (the less joint-carving statement) is fittingly described by A (the more joint-carving statement), there are states that are fittingly described by the latter and not by the former and, moreover, those states that are described both by A and B are described more perspicuously by A than by B. But these would be cases in which A is a more general statement than B and it seems difficult for a more general statement to describe a state in a more perspicuous way than a more specific one. This fact may give rise to the suspicion that the definition of factual comparative joint-carvingness provides sufficient conditions for the notion defined only vacuously, since the right-to-left direction of the biconditional is true only because its antecedent is false.

Not surprisingly, all intuitive cases of one predicate/concept/property that carves reality at its joints better than another are either cases of coextensive predicates/concepts/properties or cases in which the less joint-carving concept is more general than the more joint-carving one, and the extension of the latter is a proper subset of the extension of the former.

The upshot of all this is that (2) is an extensionally inadequate characterization of the notion of comparative joint-carvingness. This is true unless Correia conceives (2) as a purely stipulative definition, which would introduce an entirely new concept: however, he does

not seem to conceive it that way, since he recognizes the connection of his notion with those of Lewis and Sider.

A sensible move to obtain an adequate definition of comparative joint-carvingness would be to replace in (2) the condition that every state fittingly described by B is also fittingly described by A with its converse, i.e. that every state that is fittingly described by A is also fittingly described by B: when this is the case the extension of A is included in the extension of B and this is what one would expect when A is a more precise characterization of a state than B. But in this way the definition of comparative joint-carvingness becomes the same as that of representational grounding (given that A describes a state more perspicuously than B *iff* B describes it less perspicuously than A), so we end up with *one* notion with two different names.

Is it more correct to call this notion ‘grounding’ or ‘carving reality at its joints better than’?

It seems to me that the notion of ‘a state being fittingly described more perspicuously by a statement than by another one’ is more conceptually related to that of comparative joint-carvingness than to that of grounding. On the one hand, the notion of ‘joint-carvingness’ itself, since its Platonic origins and in the way it is taken up by Lewis with the distinction between abundant and sparse/natural properties, is related to the idea that there may be more or less perspicuous descriptions of reality and of its structure.

On the other hand, what Correia calls ‘representational grounding’, as characterized through the notion of ‘a state being fittingly described more perspicuously by A than by B’, is very far from the notion of worldly grounding as it is typically understood by its proponents: assuming that grounding is a relation, representational grounding and worldly grounding have different *relata* (the first involves propositions/concepts, the second involves facts); they also exhibit different logical behaviors regarding the substitutability of coreferential terms (the first notion is transparent, the second is opaque with respect to identity).³³ It therefore seems that the only thing the two notions have in common is that they are both connected to the idea of a non-causal/constitutive explanation (and this would explain why their logics partly coincide: they are both the logics of a specific sense of ‘because’): to say that the proposition that p (representationally) grounds the proposition that q is to

³³ The notion of worldly grounding as analyzed by Correia [2013] in terms of the notion of essence, and by Correia and Skiles [2017] in terms of that of generalized identity, would not be suitable for accounting for the asymmetry between *definiens* and *definiendum* in real definitions, as both notions are transparent with respect to identity.

say that the proposition that p non-causally explains the propositions that q in virtue of some (representational) features of them. This leaves open the question: 'By virtue of what representational features does the proposition that p non-causally explain the proposition that q ?' The notion of carving reality at its joints, which is in itself characterized in terms of a representation describing a portion of reality more perspicuously than another, provides the answer to this question.

If all this is true, Correia's characterization of real definitions should be reformulated, using only the amended joint-carvingness version of the notion of metaphysical priority:

(RD1) *To be $F =_{\text{def}}$ to be G iff (i) to be $F =_{\text{id}}$ to be G , and (ii) the concept of being G carves reality at its joints better than the concept of being F*

which turns out to be very similar to my (AEX):

(AEX) *Something is F because_{AE} it is G iff to be $F =_{\text{id}}$ to be G and the concept of being G /the expression 'to be G ' has some representational priority over the concept of being F /the expression 'to be F '.*

Both (RD1) and (AEX), in fact, have two components: the first one states the identity between *definiens* and *definiendum*, and the second one accounts for their asymmetry, drawing on certain features of their representations.³⁴

The moral that should be drawn from all this is that, once the notion of representational grounding has been expunged, Correia's account of real definitions appears more clearly to be an antirealist conception, very much akin to the account of AE that I advocate, in which the notion of grounding plays no real theoretical role. The only remnants of grounding in such an account are AE themselves, since we can rephrase them in terms of grounding, saying things like 'the fact that this is water is grounded in the fact that this is H_2O '. But, when it comes to figuring out what makes these explanations true, what we find are certain features of our representations whereby some of them have some representational priority

³⁴ Correia [2017] grants the possibility that the greater perspicuity of one representation over another may also depend on factors other than precision and directness. My notion of representational priority aims precisely to take these additional factors into account, such as inferential priority, greater explicitness, and greater depth of one representation over another. In this regard it should be noted that analytical explanations of the form 'it is true that p because p ' seem to make trouble for Correia's framework: indeed, 'it is true that p ' and ' p ', unless one accepts a redundancy theory of truth, do not describe the same state with different degrees of perspicuity, since they represent different facts. Nevertheless, an account of their explanatory asymmetry can be provided in the way sketched in §2.

over others, carve reality at its joints better than others. A friend of grounding may of course decide to *call* these features ‘grounding’, but you cannot turn something into something else simply by giving it a different name.³⁵

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³⁵ Many thanks to Andrea Iacona, the participants at the Lund (2020) *Metaphysical Explanation III* Conference, and the anonymous referees and editors of *Disputatio* for their very helpful comments.

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