

Beyond Fundamentality

By Jonathan Schaffer

I aim to articulate a framework for metaphysics that can explain the structure of reality. Explanation generally involves three components:

- Starting conditions that are the source of what is to be explained.
- Concluding results to be explained.
- Connecting links from the source to the results.

So a metaphysical framework that can explain the structure of reality must posit:

- Ultimate grounds as the starting conditions (this might be something like: the quantum mechanical state of the cosmos)
- Derivative states as the concluding results to be explained (these might include various chemical, biological, psychological and other “higher level” states)
- And also, root principles as the connecting links (these might include principles codifying the ways in which the physical grounds the chemical).

The resulting picture goes beyond the simple two-part division between the fundamental and the derivative, bringing in a third element (root principles) to explain the structure of reality.