In addition to characterizing fundamentality itself, a theory of fundamentality must also account for the connection between fundamental and nonfundamental. The fundamental “underlies” everything else, but in what sense exactly? According to Jonathan Schaffer’s kind yet deeply challenging critique, my account of the connection—metaphysical semantics—cannot handle multiply realizable nonfundamental facts. This is an important criticism, and I’ll discuss it in a moment, but first I want to resist Schaffer’s description of my account as being “radically eliminativist” and implying that the nonfundamental is “mere talk”.

Like many others recently, I reject modal accounts of the connection. (Even though mathematics trivially supervenes on anything at all, there remains a nontrivial question of what underlies mathematical truth.) Closer to the truth, I think, is the view that fundamental truths ground fundamental ones, where grounding is understood as a relation, not definable in modal terms, that underwrites (or is) a distinctively metaphysical sort of explanation.¹

My own account of the connection is best regarded as a linguistic variant on the notion of ground. Rather than saying that each truth is grounded in fundamental truths, I say that each language has a “metaphysical semantics”. Like a linguistic semantics, a metaphysical semantics is an explanatory theory of certain facts involving linguistic communication. A metaphysical semantics can take the same form as a linguistic semantics: it may assign truth-conditions to sentences of the language in question, for instance. But unlike a linguistic semantics, a metaphysical semantics has the goal of explaining how the use of the language in question fits into fundamental reality. This results in two main differences. First, truth-conditions assigned by a metaphysical semantics (“metaphysical truth conditions”) must be stated in perfectly fundamental (joint-carving) terms. So unlike a linguistic semantics, a metaphysical semantics could not include the biconditional “‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white”; doing so would assign ‘snow is white’ as a metaphysical truth condition, and that sentence contains the nonfundamental terms ‘snow’ and ‘white’. Second, a metaphysical semantics does not aspire to explain as many

¹Thanks to Jonathan Schaffer for helpful discussion.  
facts about linguistic communication as does a linguistic semantics. For instance, when a linguistic semantics assigns a certain truth condition to a given sentence, the truth condition is normally supposed to in some sense encode what the speaker understands by the sentence. But metaphysical truth conditions are claims about fundamental reality—about fundamental physics, perhaps—that in no sense encode what is going on in an ordinary speaker’s mind.\(^2\)

Imagine, just for a moment, that fundamentally speaking, the only entities that exist are subatomic particles. (This is not in fact my own view.) Are English sentences that quantify over further entities, such as atoms of hydrogen, then false? Not necessarily, I said. For a metaphysical semantics might assign metaphysical truth conditions that count such sentences as true, even though there are no atoms of hydrogen at the fundamental level. It might, for instance, assign ‘there exist an electron and a proton bonded to each other’ as the metaphysical truth condition for the English sentence ‘there exists an atom of hydrogen’ (section 7.7).

Thus I allow ‘There exists an atom of hydrogen’ to be a true sentence of English even if there are no atoms of hydrogen at the fundamental level. It is for this and related reasons that Schaffer calls my account eliminativist, and says that it renders quantification over atoms of hydrogen, for instance, as being mere talk. But what I say about atoms of hydrogen is closely parallel to what grounding theorists (such as Schaffer himself) say. I say that the metaphysical truth condition of ‘There exists an atom of hydrogen’ is ‘there exist an electron and a proton bonded to each other’; they say that the fact that there exists an atom of hydrogen is grounded in the fact that there exist an electron and a proton bonded to each other. Although there are important differences between our accounts, they don’t amount to mine being more eliminativist.

My account isn’t eliminativist in the most straightforward sense, anyway: it says that there are atoms of hydrogen! On my view, the English sentence ‘There are atoms of hydrogen’ is true (since it has a true metaphysical truth condition), and so, disquoting, there are atoms of hydrogen. (This paragraph is written in English, remember; its quantifiers are the English ones, not the joint-carving ones.)\(^3\)

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\(^2\)Exactly what, then, must a metaphysical semantics explain? This is a pressing question, and alas, my book does not contain an adequate answer. The grounding theorists have a counterpart lacuna: what is this “distinctively metaphysical sort of explanation”?

\(^3\)Similarly, since the best metaphysical semantics for English presumably includes metaphysical truth conditions for fact-talk, my account allows that there are nonfundamental facts, such as the fact that there are atoms of hydrogen.
Schaffer might object that the account implies that there aren’t really atoms of hydrogen. But what would that mean? If ‘really’ is just a term of emphasis then the account implies no such thing. The account isn’t saying that when an ordinary speaker utters ‘there exists an atom of hydrogen’, “all she really means” is that some electron is bonded to some proton—metaphysical truth conditions are no more an account of what one ordinarily means than grounds are. No, she means—really, no joking—that there is an atom of hydrogen. And there is.

If, on the other hand, ‘really’ means something like ‘fundamentally’, then my account does indeed imply that there aren’t really atoms of hydrogen (on the current supposition about what exists at the fundamental level). But the grounding theorists agree! To be sure, there are subtle differences on how we understand “there fundamentally exists an F”. On my account, this amounts (roughly) to saying that Fs are in the range of a joint-carving quantifier; according to a grounding theorist like Kit Fine, it amounts to saying that facts about Fs hold “in reality”, by which he means roughly that they are fundamental facts; and according to a grounding theorist like Schaffer, it amounts to saying that Fs are not grounded in further entities. The differences between these three approaches are important in other contexts (see chapter 8), but in the present context all three seem like variations on a single theme. I did include the grounding approach in a chapter on my “rivals”, but my discussion there primarily argued against the view that facts about ground are fundamental facts. (In short because fundamental facts such as that So-and-so grounds the fact that someone smirked would involve the property of smirking, and surely no fact about smirking, not even a fact about what grounds it, is fundamental.) This argument doesn’t touch grounding itself, so long as such facts about ground are nonfundamental. And if grounding theorists concede this (as I think they should⁶), then the grounding and metaphysical semantics approaches remain pretty close. Indeed, one can view metaphysical semantics as a linguistic account of ground. I do argue that certain subtle (though important) differences between the accounts favor mine, but these differences don’t add up to a different “amount of reality” accorded to nonfundamental entities or discourse.⁷

⁴I will suppress certain concerns about this and related formulations in what follows.
⁵This is an approximation; see Fine (2001, 2009) for details.
⁶See Bennett (2011) on this issue.
⁷The subtle differences I discuss in my book (section 7.9) involve nonfactual discourse. There are other differences, which I hope to explore in future work. For instance, metaphysical
Moving on: Schaffer’s main criticism is that my account cannot handle multiple realizability. He points out that many of my examples of metaphysical truth conditions are cast in terms of a particular physical theory (often, a toy particle physics). While this may not be a problem for sentences involving natural kind terms (such as ‘hydrogen’), it is a problem for multiply realizable sentences. For instance, the metaphysical truth condition for:

(M) Moore has hands

cannot be tied to any particular physics, Schaffer argues, since Moore could have had hands even if physics had been different; and he goes on to argue against various ways I might attempt to construct a metaphysical truth condition, such as disjoining all the possible realizers.

There are indeed serious challenges here, though I don’t quite agree with Schaffer on their exact nature.

For the remainder, let’s assume the supersubstantivalist and set-theoretic worldview discussed in the final chapter of my book. The fundamental ontology of this view consists of points of spacetime and sets; and the joint-carving notions include a predicate for set membership, predicates of physical geometry, and predicates for physical magnitudes—perhaps charge and mass (construed as applying to points of spacetime). Given this worldview it is natural to identify a persisting material object with the set of points in its world tube, in which case a metaphysical truth condition for (M) will have the form: \[ M \text{ has subsets that are } H \]
where ‘$M$’ names the set of spacetime points identified with Moore, and $H$ is to be filled in by a “metaphysical definition” of ‘is a hand’. The question then becomes how to fill in $H$. Or better: whether there are in-principle obstacles to doing so—I argue in section 7.6 that actually coming up with metaphysical truth conditions for macro language is neither attainable nor necessary.

$H$ should not be replaced by a completely specific description, in microphysical terms, of the spacetime points that actually make up Moore’s hands. Since each person’s hands are a little different, this approach would treat different occurrences of the predicate ‘hand’ differently, leading to a poor metaphysical semantics, by which I mean one that fails badly as an explanatory theory, by anyone’s standard of good explanation. For similar reasons, $H$ should not be replaced by a disjunction of all possible specific arrangements of spacetime points that would count as hands: even if the logical ideology of our fundamental theory included infinitary notions (which I assume it does not), this sort of massive disjunctiveness would undermine the explanatory value of the theory.

A better approach is to give a functional definition of ‘is a hand’—to fill in $H$ with something of this form: \[ \text{FR: has some property } P \text{ that plays functional role } R \]

Now, all the words in a metaphysical truth condition must carve at the joints. So the next question is whether FR can be filled in consistently with this requirement.

Schaffer considers the possibility of a functional definition, and says that “multiple realizability rearises: [FR] is itself multiply realizable.” But on the face of it, there is a hope that the multiple realizability problem can be solved in the case of FR. FR involves the notion of property, and presumably some causal or nomic notions, given plausible approaches to spelling out ‘functional role $R$’. But these notions, it seems at first anyway, are not multiply realizable. Causal and nomic notions can be handled in the Lewisian way: causation reduces to lawhood plus possible worlds. Laws are regularities in the simplest and most powerful system in a language with predicates for natural properties. Worlds I could identify with maximal and modally consistent sets of propositions, and ‘modally consistent’ can be reduced using the “Humean” account of necessity from chapter 12. For ‘proposition’ and ‘property’ I propose a set-theoretic reduction. Define a simple property to be a set, and a simple relation to be a set of tuples. Then, in order to obtain a fine-grained space of abstract

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*I suggest something like this approach on pp. 130–1 and 294–5.*
entities, define structured properties, relations, and propositions in an iterative way, with the simple properties and relations as the basis (compare Lewis (1986, pp. 56–7)). For example, the conjunction of properties $P$ and $Q$ might be defined as the ordered triple $\langle \text{‘and’}, P, Q \rangle$, and the structured proposition that is the existential generalization of property $P$ might be defined as the ordered pair $\langle \text{‘there is’}, P \rangle$. Define other property- and proposition-theoretic notions accordingly (for instance, $x$ instantiates a simple property iff $x$ is a member of it; $x$ instantiates $\langle \text{‘and’}, P, Q \rangle$ iff $x$ instantiates $P$ and $x$ instantiates $Q$; the proposition $\langle \text{‘there is’}, P \rangle$ is true iff something instantiates $P$). These iterative constructions can include definitions of higher-order properties and propositions, of the sort needed for specifying functional roles. (A simple definition of this sort would identify the property of being a property such that so-and-so with the set of sets such that so-and-so.)

But there remains a challenge of multiple realizability. Lewis’s account of lawhood uses the notion of a natural property. This might seem unproblematic since my notion of structure is very much in the spirit of Lewisian naturalness, and since I hold that “structure is structural” (section 7.13), making the notion of structure acceptable for use in metaphysical truth conditions. However, my official notion for talking about structure is not something that can be predicated of properties, or anything else for that matter. It is rather an operator, $\mathcal{S}$, that attaches directly to predicates (and other expressions). If my official account were more platonist, employing, say, an ontology of universals and a primitive predicate ‘is a fundamental universal’, then I could say that a simple property $P$ is fundamental if and only if for some fundamental universal, $U$, the members of $P$ are exactly those things that instantiate $U$. But given my more nominalist account I cannot say this or anything like it. All I can apparently offer is something of the form:

(1) Simple property $P$ is fundamental iff: $P$’s members are all and only the charged things, or $P$’s members are all and only the massive things, or...

(where ‘charged’, ‘massive’, etc. are the joint-carving predicates). But here there is a multiple realizability problem, since (1) does not allow for the possibility of fundamental properties other than the actual ones.

The problem cannot be solved by adopting this instead:

(2) Simple property $P$ is fundamental iff: some joint-carving predicate $F$ applies to all and only the members of $P$
For then we would need to construct a metaphysical truth-condition for the semantic notion ‘applies to’. As we know from Hartry Field (1972), there would be a choice: will this metaphysical truth-condition be list-like (“\(F\) applies to \(x\) iff \(F = \text{‘is charged’} \text{ and } x\) is charged, or \(F = \text{‘is a dog’} \text{ and } x\) is a dog, or…”), or will it be “substantive”? The former would reinstate the multiple realizability problem, and the latter would be circular in the present context since a substantive metaphysical truth-condition would presumably need to bring in causal relations, perhaps between the linguistic population in question and its environment.

There is another, separate, problem. Can functional role metaphysical truth conditions be constructed “neutrally” so as to accommodate all possible realizers? The worry we’ve been discussing so far is that no variation in the fundamental properties can be accommodated, since the only available definition of ‘fundamental simple property’ is list-like. But a further worry is whether quite radical variation in the possible realizers can be accommodated. This is central to Schaffer’s concern:

...the truth that Moore has hands can presumably be grounded in many different distributions of fundamental fields, arrangements of point particles, vibrations of strings, or whatnot.

A fairly wide variety of metaphysical underpinnings can be accommodated (provided the first problem—the one with defining ‘fundamental simple property’—can be solved), since few assumptions about the nature of fundamental reality were built into the functional-role metaphysical truth conditions I suggested above. The main notions in such truth conditions, as we saw, are the notion of property and causal/nomic notions. Properties were constructed from sets, and the definitions did not specify what goes into the sets. The definitions allow the members of these sets to be fields, particles, points of spacetime, points of configuration space, or whatever. The Lewisian definition of a law of nature as a regularity in the simplest and strongest system is similarly neutral, since the simplest and strongest system might turn out to be field-theoretic, particle-theoretic, or even based on configuration space rather than spacetime. Causation then inherits this neutrality. So as far as these key notions in functional-role metaphysical truth conditions are concerned, none of a wide range of possibilities is ruled out.

Nevertheless, there are concerns in the area. Initially I suggested that the metaphysical truth condition for (M) should take the form “\(M\) has subsets that are \(H\)”. This choice was based on the identification of persisting things with
their world-tubes, and thus is not neutral in a crucial way. If the fundamental physical space were configuration space rather than spacetime, for instance, as some “configuration space realists” suppose,\(^\text{10}\) then physical objects could not be identified with their world-tubes. Indeed, it is unlikely that particular physical objects could be identified with particular parts of configuration space: physical-object talk would depend on fundamental reality in a more holistic way, as Alyssa Ney (2012) argues. Thus the metaphysical truth condition of (M) cannot have the form “\(M\) has subsets that are \(H\)” if it is to accommodate this possibility. Relatedly, my suggested metaphysical truth-conditions quantify over sets, and thus cannot accommodate the possibility that sets do not exist. Relatedly, though more far-fetchedly, these truth-conditions employ “thing-talk”, and thus apparently cannot accommodate the possibility that the notion of a thing is not applicable (a world of “stuff”, say).

Some such concerns can be answered by formulating metaphysical truth conditions more “abstractly”. One might answer the concern about configuration space, for instance, in the following (highly schematic) way. Define the notion of a “fundamental description of the world”. Next define the notion of a given fundamental description “inducing” various sentences in the language of substantivalism. When the fundamental description is itself substantivalist then the induced sentences are just true fundamental sentences; but when the fundamental description is not substantivalist, the idea is for induced sentences to be nevertheless “appropriate” ones. The world is “as if” the induced sentences are true, except for the fact that the ultimate metaphysical story is not substantivalist. Leibnizian relationalists, for instance, are familiar with showing how substantivalist sentences are in some sense close to the truth—close enough to be legitimately used in physics—even if not fully accurate; in my terminology these sentences are induced by the relationalist’s fundamental description. But I want also to include inducing by fundamental descriptions that differ more drastically from spacetime substantivalism—for instance, by the fundamental description of the configuration space realist. I’m optimistic that a metaphysical semantics for ‘inducing’ can be constructed in highly abstract terms—terms that don’t presuppose much about which fundamental description is actually true—that will apply to a wide range of fundamental descriptions (especially if we’re willing to live with some indeterminacy and arbitrariness). We ourselves seem to have the ability to read off, in many cases anyway, the spacetime upshot of non-spacetime theories. We can do this, for instance, with  

\(^{10}\)See Albert (1996).
relationalist fundamental theories, and with presentist fundamental theories. This ability presumably involves the application of some sort of algorithm, which algorithm could be encoded in a metaphysical semantics. The algorithm presumably employs such tricks as looking for “natural embeddings” of models of one description in those of another, and “reverse-engineering”: defining the induced theory as the one that would “generate” (or be generated by) the given fundamental description by certain rules.\(^\text{11}\) Finally, given the notion of inducing, we can say that the metaphysical truth condition for (M) is that ‘M has subsets that are H’ is induced by the fundamental description of the world.

There are limits to this approach. The more fundamental theories one tries to accommodate, the more abstract the definition of inducing must become; but the definition must nevertheless continue to have enough content to actually work. Eventually these two pressures will conflict too much. It’s hard to see how to make the approach so abstract that it could handle the possibility of there being no sets, for instance, or of thing-talk not applying.

So: what to say about these problems? Their source is two elements of my account; and some may wish to give up one or both of those elements. The first element is the one on which Schaffer focuses: my metaphysical semantics approach to the connection between fundamental and nonfundamental. Now, Schaffer says in his concluding section that the problem is with the eliminativist nature of metaphysical semantics; but as I explained above, metaphysical semantics is no more eliminativist than grounding. Schaffer expands on this charge by saying:

> If Sider would countenance nonfundamental entities (plus a metaphysical relation of grounding to connect these entities to the fundamental), he could then offer a unified, relevant, and general semantic explanation for why we tend to say things like ‘Moore has hands’ in English. The explanation is: *because Moore has hands*.

Here Schaffer construes the issue as being whether “the explanation” of a certain fact \(F\) (the fact that we tend to say that Moore has hands) is *Moore has hands*, or whether it is instead some claim about fundamental reality. But I doubt that there is any such thing as *the* explanation of anything; what counts as a good explanation depends on one’s explanatory goals. Given the explanatory goals of linguists, cognitive scientists, or ordinary people, the best explanation

\(^{11}\)See Sider (2008) for an instance of the latter trick. Inducing is of course a special case of ground.
of $F$ is indeed that Moore has hands. Metaphysical semantics by definition has a distinctive explanatory goal: fitting communication into fundamental reality in a certain way. Moreover, when Schaffer himself takes up something like this explanatory goal, part of what he will do is cite grounds; and he won’t cite the fact that Moore has hands as an “ultimate ground”.

The feature of metaphysical semantics that makes multiple realizability problematic has nothing to do with eliminativism; it is rather its “biconditional” nature. Roughly speaking, the metaphysical semantics approach demands fundamental necessary and sufficient conditions for nonfundamental sentences, whereas the usual approaches to ground are instead “conditional”, demanding mere sufficient conditions. For instance, Fine’s notion of ground obeys the rule that “$p$ grounds $q$” implies “$\square(p \rightarrow q)$”; a biconditional sort of Finean ground would obey instead the rule that “$p$ grounds $q$” implies “$\square(p \leftrightarrow q)$”.

My account is biconditional because my metaphysical truth conditions are biconditionals. Schaffer and Fine face no multiple realizability problem because the grounds they demand for nonfundamental facts are conditional in nature: they can say that the ground of (M) is the actual realizer—some fact specific to actual-world physics. One solution to the problem, then, would be retreat from my demand for biconditional grounds. But I am loathe to do this. Ground is supposed to constitute or underwrite metaphysical explanation, and merely conditional ground, it seems to me, does not do this.

My account’s biconditional nature is not the sole source of the problems, since functional role metaphysical truth conditions may be constructed. But their construction requires a metaphysical truth-condition for ‘is a fundamental simple property’, and that was problematic because my basic locution for talking about structure is an operator rather than a predicate. Thus the second source of the problems is my account’s nominalistic nature. As we saw, if one adopted a more platonist approach—employing universals, say, at the fundamental level—then the problem would immediately be solved. I discussed two reservations about the platonist approach in my book. First, I said, abstracta don’t generally enhance explanations. But some may regard the very issues we are discussing as answering this. Second, the platonist approach makes it hard to achieve one of the central ambitions of my book, namely to “go beyond the predicate”—to speak of joint-carving for, e.g., quantifiers and sentential connectives such as

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12 In neither case does the modal statement imply the statement of ground.
13 Given my arguments in section 7.9 for the superiority of a linguistic approach, the best retreat might be a linguistic form of merely conditional ground.
14 I say a bit more about this in Sider (2014), and hope to say more in future work.
‘necessarily’, ‘or’, and ‘not’ (chapter 6). But the platonist approach doesn’t strictly require stopping at the predicate, since a platonist could regard various nonpredicates as standing for abstract entities, and could regiment talk of structure using a predicate ‘carves at the joints’ applied to these entities. For instance, despite its apparent artificiality (p. 90), a platonist could regard the existential quantifier as standing for an abstract entity, the property of being a property that has at least one instance, and could regard the question of whether reality has quantificational structure as turning on whether this abstract entity carves at the joints.

Though each of these retreats is possible, I myself prefer a different form of damage control. I want to argue that the multiple realizability problem is primarily a problem for my account of modality, and not for my account of metaphysical truth conditions per se, and thus that it can be solved by modifying my theory of modality (though I will not here attempt this modification).

The multiple realizability problem is generated by the assumption that metaphysical truth conditions must obey a principle of “Fitting”, as Schaffer calls it—that they “must fit with intuitive usage by holding in most conceivable circumstances”. Now, something like Fitting is indeed implied by my Humean theory of necessity: I say that the “axioms” of a theory of metaphysical truth conditions are ipso facto necessarily true (section 12.9) (and it’s likely that the metaphysical truth conditions we have been discussing would count as axioms). But I don’t think that Fitting is required by my theory of metaphysical truth conditions itself.

A metaphysical semantics is supposed to explain certain linguistic phenomena, and these phenomena do include our intuitions about the circumstances in which sentences would be true, which is presumably why Schaffer assumes that the principle of Fitting should be obeyed (he says: “An approach that failed to fit with intuitive usage in most conceivable circumstances could hardly claim to characterize the meaning of what we say”). But intuitions about nonactual possibilities—especially ones very distant from ordinary thought—is not particularly central to the phenomenon of linguistic communication. Moreover, there are conflicting goals in explanation. Although some goals would be best served by attempting to characterize meaning in terms abstract enough to apply in most possible or conceivable circumstances, others are best served by sticking closer to what is actually going on in linguistic populations and their relations to their environments, which in turn is best achieved by not attempting to have metaphysical truth conditions apply so widely. (In fact, an actual-physics metaphysical semantics would satisfy the latter goals better than
a functional-role one. We need not choose, once and for all, between the two. Since there is not always a best answer to “what best explains such-and-such?”, there is not always a best answer to “what in fundamental reality underlies such-and-such?”

We still need the functional role approach even if Fitting is denied. (The arguments given above against (M)’s metaphysical truth-conditions specifying the actual physical nature of Moore’s hands or disjoining such specifications for all actual hands had nothing to do with Fitting.) Thus the problem of finding a metaphysical truth-condition for ‘P is a fundamental simple property’ remains.

It may seem that (1) could now stand as the truth-condition. For the objection to (1) given above was that it doesn’t allow for the possibility of modal variation in the fundamental properties, and that objection presupposes Fitting. But there is a further problem with (1): its disjunctive nature threatens the explanatory value of any metaphysical semantics containing it.

Instead of (1) I propose:

(3) Simple property P is fundamental iff: $\mathcal{S}$ (charge) and P’s members are all and only the charged things, or $\mathcal{S}$ (mass) and P’s members are all and only the massive things, or…

(3) is in a sense intermediate between the two proposals considered above, (1) and (2). (1) defines ‘fundamental’ in a purely disjunctive way, without saying anything to unify the disjuncts. (2) attempts to eliminate the disjunctiveness by semantic ascent, but requires the notion ‘applies to’. (3) retains the disjunctiveness, but in a sense unifies the disjuncts by adding a claim about joint-carving to each disjunct—the claim that consists of attaching the operator for joint-carving ‘$\mathcal{S}$’ to the very predicate used in that disjunct. In my nominalist terms this is the closest I can get to (2).

The intent in (3) is to have a disjunct for each joint-carving predicate; but explicitly specifying the list of disjuncts would require the use of the predicate ‘is a joint-carving predicate’, which raises the very questions with which we are currently wrestling. But the problem here concerns only my ability to articulate (3) (since I do not know what the disjuncts are). As mentioned earlier, I argue

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15Schaffer worries in note 11 that given my assumption of “completeness”, pluralism about metaphysical semantics would lead to pluralism about what is fundamental. But this doesn’t follow. Equally good metaphysical semantic theories that agree on what fundamental reality is like could differ over which portion of that fundamental reality is to be assigned to a given sentence, or over whether that sentence is true—one might regard it as true while another regards it as false albeit useful.
that we do not need ourselves to come up with metaphysical truth conditions; the only question is whether such truth-conditions in principle can be given.

Thus my retreat could take the following form. Offer a functional-role metaphysical semantics of (M). Accept (3) as the metaphysical truth condition for ‘Simple property $P$ is fundamental’. Concede that it does not apply in all conceivable or possible circumstances, and argue that this does not undermine the explanatory status of a metaphysical semantics containing it. Modify the Humean account of necessity in some way, so as not to count all axioms from a metaphysical truth theory as being necessarily true.

References


