Bennett on grounding ground

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Ground seminar

1. Two arguments that grounding must be grounded

One: purity. Two: recombination argument (Schaffer):

> …whatever the fundamental elements of the world are, they are open
> to free modal recombination. So if grounding is fundamental, there is a
> possible world just like this one in the distribution of all the rest of the
> fundamental entities, but in which nothing grounds anything else. In that
> world, no actually grounded entity is grounded—each either fails to exist,
> or is fundamental. Since neither option is plausible, grounding is not
> amenable to free recombination, and thus is not fundamental. (Bennett,
> 2011, p. 27)

Recombination All logically possible combinations of fundamental elements
are metaphysically possible

Individual recombination Each fundamental element is such that all logi-
cally possible combinations of it (with respect to all other entities) are
metaphysically possible

Collective recombination The class of all the fundamental elements is such
that all logically possible combination of its elements with one another
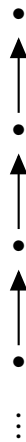are metaphysically possible

The stated argument needs individual recombination; but an analogous argu-
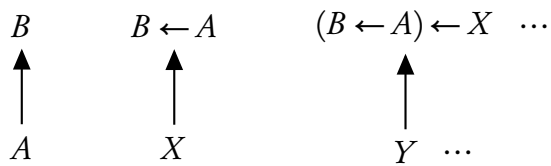ment could appeal to collective recombination.

2. The fact regress

> Suppose that A grounds B. …it is a fact that A grounds B. By the starting
> assumption [that grounding facts are always grounded], that fact must be
> grounded; there is something in virtue of which A grounds B. Call it X.
> X grounds the fact that A grounds B. But the fact that X grounds the fact
> that A grounds B is another grounding fact, itself in need of grounding.
> Call its ground Y. Y grounds the fact that X grounds the fact that A
> grounds B. At this point, parentheses will be handy: …Y grounds [(X
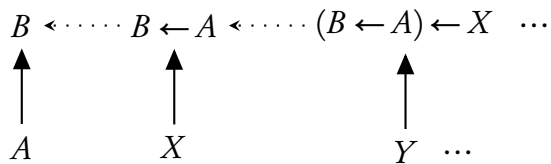> grounds (A grounds B)]. Bennett (2011, p. 30)

$$B \quad\overset{\nwarrow}{}\quad \left.\begin{array}{c} Y \\ \downarrow \\ \end{array}\right\} \leftarrow Z\ldots$$

$$A \uparrow \Big\} \leftarrow X$$
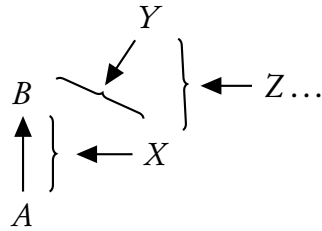
A picture of non-well-foundedness:

$$\bullet \uparrow \bullet \uparrow \bullet \uparrow \bullet \;\vdots$$

Whereas what we've got is:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} B & B \leftarrow A & (B \leftarrow A) \leftarrow X \;\cdots \\ \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow \\ A & X & Y \;\cdots \end{array}$$

The crucial point: the diagram does *not* contain these dotted arrows…

$$\begin{array}{ccc} B \dashleftarrow B \leftarrow A \dashleftarrow (B \leftarrow A) \leftarrow X \;\cdots \\ \uparrow \qquad\quad \uparrow \qquad\qquad\quad \uparrow \\ A \qquad\quad X \qquad\qquad\quad Y \;\cdots \end{array}$$

…despite the fact that these identities hold (Karen's Lewis Carroll point):

$$B \quad\quad B \leftarrow A \quad\quad (B \leftarrow A) \leftarrow X \;\cdots$$

$$\uparrow \Bigg) \;=\; \uparrow \quad\quad\quad \uparrow$$

$$A \quad\quad\quad X \quad\quad\quad Y \;\cdots$$
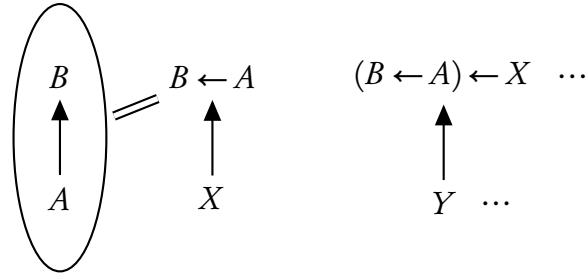
3. The ground grounds grounding

The ground grounds grounding The fact that A grounds B is grounded in A

Given this, the regress becomes unproblematic:

$$B \quad\quad B \leftarrow A \quad\quad (B \leftarrow A) \leftarrow A \;\cdots$$

$$\uparrow \quad\quad\quad \uparrow \quad\quad\quad\quad \uparrow$$

$$A \quad\quad\quad A \quad\quad\quad\quad A \;\cdots$$
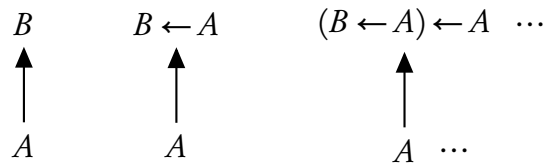
Karen infers The ground grounds grounding from a further claim:

Left-superinternality The fact that A grounds B is grounded in the intrinsic nature of A

If you think facts lack nontrivial intrinsic natures, replace with:

Left-superessentiality The fact that A grounds B is grounded in the essential properties of A

If you also think that facts can exist without obtaining, replace with:

Left-superessentiality* The fact that A grounds B is grounded in (A, the essential properties of A)

No physicalist is going to say that the grounding relation holds between the physical and the mental in virtue of the intrinsic nature of *both* relata, because they are not going to say that the intrinsic nature of the mental facts is part of what makes it the case that the physical facts ground them. Rather, physicalists will say that the physical facts make it the case that the mental facts are what they are, have the intrinsic natures they do. They will say that *it all unfolds 'upwards' from the physical*. Both the less fundamental facts and the relation that generates them derive from the more fundamental facts. (Bennett, 2011, p. 33)

The ground plus the grounded's essence grounds grounding The fact that
    A grounds *B* is grounded in (*A*, the essential properties of *B*)

(Compare Fine (2012, §1.11).)

4. Is the proposal explanatory?

References

Bennett, Karen (2011). "By Our Bootstraps." *Philosophical Perspectives* 25: 27–41.

Fine, Kit (2012). "Guide to Ground." In Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (eds.), *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.