

Is there any sense in which metaphysical beliefs may be said to provide the foundation for other kinds of beliefs?

If metaphysics is justified in its claim to explicate the basic beliefs that all of our other beliefs—basic as well as nonbasic—necessarily presuppose, then there is at least this sense in which metaphysical beliefs may be said to provide the foundation for all other kinds of beliefs.

But just as there can never be a valid inference from the universal to the particular, so there cannot be a valid inference from metaphysical beliefs to other more particular kinds of beliefs. Therefore, metaphysical beliefs may not be said to be foundational for other kinds of beliefs in *this* sense. From the truth of metaphysical beliefs as such, one cannot validly infer the truth of any other more particular kinds of beliefs, save in conjunction with other true beliefs comparably particular.

This means that the distinction between narrower and broader senses of "foundationalism," helpful as it may be in other connections, is irrelevant here. Metaphysical beliefs do not provide the basis for all other kinds of beliefs in the sense that they explicate the basic beliefs from which all other nonbasic beliefs may somehow be derived by rational inference. Moreover, it lies in the nature of the case that no properly metaphysical belief can be, in principle, any more or any less basic than any other. If a whole system of metaphysical beliefs can be derived from the premise, "Something exists," clear-headed theists contend that the same is true if one argues instead from the premise, "God exists."

In sum: with respect to all other, nonmetaphysical kinds of beliefs, the only foundation metaphysics is in a position to provide, though necessary, is insufficient. On the other hand, with respect to other beliefs of a metaphysical kind, no metaphysical belief is any more (if also not any less) sufficient than any other to be singled out as properly "foundational" for metaphysical beliefs.

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