

# Dependent Grounds

(public talk)

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Institute of Philosophy SAS, v. v. i.

Room 94 (4th floor)

Klemensova 19

811 09 Bratislava 1

Slovak Republic

Speaker:

**Adam Murray**

(University of Manitoba)

*Adam Murray is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Manitoba. His research focuses on topics at the intersection of logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. Before joining the faculty at the University of Manitoba, Murray served as Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, where he also completed his PhD in Philosophy. In 2025, he serves as Acting Graduate Chair in Philosophy at the University of Manitoba.*

**Abstract:**

*I'm interested in whether there could be cases of dependent grounding. These are cases with the following structure, for appropriately-typed  $\varphi$  and  $\psi$ :*

*(a)  $\varphi$ 's being the case helps ground  $\psi$ 's being the case.*

*(b) It is essential to  $\varphi$ 's being the case that  $\psi$ .*

*The pattern is prima facie intelligible. As a concrete example, consider the state or condition of being crimson. On standard views in the grounding literature, a thing's being crimson grounds its being red (Rosen 2010). But since being crimson is essentially a way, or mode, of being red, it is at least somewhat plausible that being red is essential (in a generic sense) to a thing's being crimson. Assembling: a thing's being crimson appears to both ground and essentially depend upon its being red. Further reflection suggests that this is no isolated case; on the contrary, diverse positions in general metaphysics appear to exhibit an exactly parallel structure. Dependent grounding seems commonplace. However, an argument due to Correia and Skiles (2017) purports to show that dependent grounding is impossible. I call this the inheritance argument against dependent ground. While variants of the inheritance argument have received some attention in the recent literature (Vogt 2026, Romero 2026), extant replies target premises that are highly-specific to Correia and Skiles's particular views on the nature of both grounding and essence. Such discussions therefore overlook a natural generalization of the inheritance argument that is far more theoretically-neutral with respect to the underlying "metaphysics" of grounding and essence. I call this generalized version of Correia and Skiles's argument the equivalence argument against dependent ground. I explain the equivalence argument, and why it fails. In broad relief, the argument relies on a pair of assumptions about grounding that are individually coherent but jointly inconsistent. The first concerns the conditions under which (distinct) statements are to be regarded as ground-theoretically equivalent, and ought to be rejected by proponents of a structural (or "representational") conception of grounding. And the second—which concerns the acceptability of certain structural principles derivable in Fine's (2012) "pure" logic of ground—ought to be rejected by proponents of a worldly (or "algebraic") conception of grounding. Since proponents of both the worldly and structural approaches are free to reject either assumption (as appropriate), patterns of dependent grounding turn out to be intelligible from either theoretical perspective.*

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