

# Why explanations can't explain themselves

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## A common assumption

“Why can't there be a self-explanatory explanation? Because there cannot be.”  
Are all instances of (i) false?

(i)  $p$  because of  $p$

## Reasons given for irreflexivity

1. Triviality
2. Circularity
3. Regress
4. Well-foundedness
5. Asymmetry by *fiat*.

## (Apparent?) examples of self-explanations

1. Synonyms:
  - (2) He lives next to a bachelor because he lives next to an unmarried man
2. Singular propositions
  - (3) Lois Lane loves Clark Kent because she loves Superman
  - (4) I am the messy shopper because Philipp is the messy shopper
3. Metaphysically loaded propositions:
  - (5)  $a$  falls under the concept of an  $F$  because  $a$  is  $F$ .
  - (6)  $a$  is a member of the set of all  $F$  because  $a$  is  $F$ .
  - (7) It is a fact that  $a$  is  $F$  because  $a$  is  $F$ .
  - (8)  $a$  participates in the universal  $F$ -ness because  $a$  is  $F$ .
  - (9) A trope inheres in  $a$  that instantiates the type  $F$ -NESS because  $a$  is  $F$ .
  - (10)  $a$  exemplifies *being*  $F$  because  $a$  is  $F$ .
4. Conceptual connections:
  - (11) This is triangular because this is trilateral.
  - (12) This is trilateral because this is triangular.

(13) Socrates is a widow because Socrates' wife died.

(14) It is not possible that Socrates is immortal because it is necessary that Socrates is mortal.

5. Formal concepts:

(15) "p" is true because p

(16) the n. of F = the n. of G because there is a 1-1 c. between F's and G's

6. Philosophical analyses:

Humphrey might have won.  $\iff \exists x(x \text{ is a counterpart of Humphrey} \wedge x \text{ wins})$

$A \subset B \iff A \text{ is a part of } B$

$a \text{ is white} \iff \exists x(x \text{ is a whiteness trope} \wedge x \text{ inheres in } a)$

$a \text{ exists} \iff a \text{ is present}$

$a \text{ knows that } p \iff a \text{ has the true justified belief that } p$

$a \text{ is free in doing } \phi \iff a \text{ could have done otherwise than doing } \phi$

7. circular definitions

$x \text{ is a sibling}_1 \text{ of } y \iff x \text{ has the same parents as } y$

$x \text{ is a sister of } y \iff x \text{ is a sibling}_1 \text{ of } y \wedge x \text{ is female}$

$x \text{ is a brother of } y \iff x \text{ is a sibling}_1 \text{ of } y \wedge x \text{ is male}$

$x \text{ is a sibling}_2 \text{ of } y \iff x \text{ is a sister of } y \vee x \text{ is a brother of } y$