

1. *Beers all the way down*

“Now what exactly is the basis for infiniphobia?”
 (Klein 2003)

“For common sense, it must be confessed, this is a most unfortunate state of things.”
 (Russell 1903)

2. *Structure of IV Regresses*

Ruling out brute **H**-ers:

(IVA) For all entities, an entity x_1 has a property **H** only in virtue of, amongst other possible necessary conditions, some entity x_2 having the property **H**; and x_2 is **H** only in virtue of some entity x_3 being **H**, and so on to infinity (i.e. there is no last entity in the chain which is **H** but not in virtue of some further entity being **H**).

Ruling out loops (roughly):

(IVB) For all entities, if entity x_1 has the property **H** only in virtue of, amongst other possible necessary conditions, some entity x_2 having the property **H**, then x_2 does not have **H** in virtue of x_1 being **H**.

$\mathbf{H}x_1$ (partly)¹ in virtue of $\mathbf{H}x_2$; $\mathbf{H}x_2$ in virtue of $\mathbf{H}x_3$; etc. $\mathbf{H}x_n$ in virtue of $\mathbf{H}x_{n+1}$

Klein (p. 720) reads this as:

$\mathbf{H}x_1$ is (partly) explained by $\mathbf{H}x_2$; $\mathbf{H}x_2$ is explained by $\mathbf{H}x_3$; etc. $\mathbf{H}x_n$ is explained by $\mathbf{H}x_{n+1}$

3. *Some examples*

H	domain > x_1	IV Regresses
being supported	turtles	Turtle Regress
being justified	beliefs	Justification Regress
making a rational decision	decisions	Decision Regress
being inferable	hypotheticals	Modes Ponens Regress
come into existence	causes	Causal Regress
forming a unity	binding relations	Bradley’s Regress
having a property whatever	paradigms	Resemblance Regress
having differential application	co-mannered completion	Anti-Positionalism’s Regress

4. *Gillett’s Structural Objection*

“The question consequently arises how it could ever come to pass that any member of the chain has the property **H**? For it appears that whatever entity, or structure of entities, is added to the chain of prior entities, consistent with the governing principles (IVA) and (IVB), this addition will not be sufficient for

¹ For simplicity, we shall omit the wholly/partly qualification.

the dependent property **H** to feed back to any member of the regress. Adding more entities one by one, or even as structured groups, will still not suffice, for once again these additional entities will only have **H** in virtue of some still further entity that is **H**. [...] Let us call this the ‘Structural Objection’, since it argues that the structure of an IV Regress means that it cannot produce any of its dependent properties.” (p. 713)

No member of an IV Regress is able to “feed back” the property **H** to an earlier member in the chain. Hence, no member of whatever IV Regress will be **H**. To block this unfortunate consequence, drop either IVA or IVB, i.e. accept either brute **H**-ers or loops.

5. Klein’s response

By Klein’s take on justification, the Justification Regress is no IV Regress:

H_{*n*} in virtue of **H**_{*n*+1} vs.
H_{*n*} only if **H**_{*n*+1}

However, even if the Justification Regress were an IV Regress, there’s nothing wrong with IV Regresses per se:

“Put another way, Gillett is correct that “the question consequently arises how it could ever come to pass that *any* [Klein’s emphasis] member of the chain has the property **H**?” But the IV Regress is not designed to answer *that* question. It is designed to answer the quite different question “How does it come to pass that each member of the chain – taken individually – has property **H**?” The answer is that there is always another (as yet unmentioned) member of the chain in virtue of which each member has **H**.” (p. 729)

Criterion of viciousness:

“[An IV Regress] would be vicious if we ran out of objects of the appropriate type!” (p. 728)

5. Enforcing Gillett

“What [IV Regresses] bring out is that the [IV theorist] does not in fact solve his problem, he simply shifts it. He is like a man who presses down the bulge in a carpet only to have it reappear elsewhere.” (Armstrong 1978)

The Carpet Constraint: “No candidate of solution to a philosophical problem should raise another problem which appears just as intractable and which requires the resolution of an issue similar to that which made the original problem so intractable.” (Noordhof 1998)

&

Adding transitivity:

(IVC) For all entities, if entity *x*₁ has the property **H** in virtue of some entity *x*₂ being **H**, and if *x*₂ has the property **H** in virtue of some entity *x*₃ being **H**, then *x*₁ has the property **H** in virtue of *x*₃ being **H**.

So that:

H_{*x*1} partly in virtue of **H**_{*x*2}

H_{*x*1} partly in virtue of **H**_{*x*3}

...

H_{*x*1} wholly in virtue of [**H**_{*x*2} & **H**_{*x*3} & **H**_{*x*4} & etc. to infinity]

Can something be **H** wholly in virtue of an infinity of other things being **H**?

Alternatively:

H₁ is explained by [**H**₂ & **H**₃ & **H**₄ & etc. to infinity]

Isn't this explanatory task impossible?

Cf. Rodriguez-Pereyra (2002):

“Thus, if the regress is vicious, it is vicious because it prevents Resemblance Nominalism from accomplishing its explanatory project of accounting for all properties in terms of resembling particulars: such a project remains forever incomplete.”

6. *Intermezzo*

According to Maurin (2007), viciousness can be located at three places:

- (i) in a feature of the whole chain;
- (ii) in the relation between the regress and other beliefs you hold;
- (iii) the relation between the steps of the regress.

A map of what's going on.

7. *Enforcing Klein*

“Tristram Shandy, as we know, took two years writing the history of the first two days of his life, and lamented that, if he had lived for ever, at this rate, material would accumulate faster than he could deal with it, so that he could never come to an end. Now I maintain that, if he had lived for ever, and not wearied of his task, then, even if his life continued as eventfully as it began, no part of his biography would have remained unwritten.”

(Russell 1903: §340)

The unwritten days of Tristram's life (i.e. years of work) multiply explosively, but if all reported days and years of work can be paired off against one another, no day will remain unwritten:

reported days	0	1	2	3	...
years of work	0	1	2	3	...

8. *My claim*

The Klein/Gillett controversy reduces to a dispute about Standards of Explanation:

- (ES-1) Don't violate the Carpet Constraint.
- (ES-2) Explanations should terminate at a certain point.
- (ES-3) Neither ES-1 nor ES-2.

ES-3 makes possible a whole range of theoretical possibilities which avoid both brute **H**-ers and loops.