

And so on.
Two theories of regress arguments in philosophy

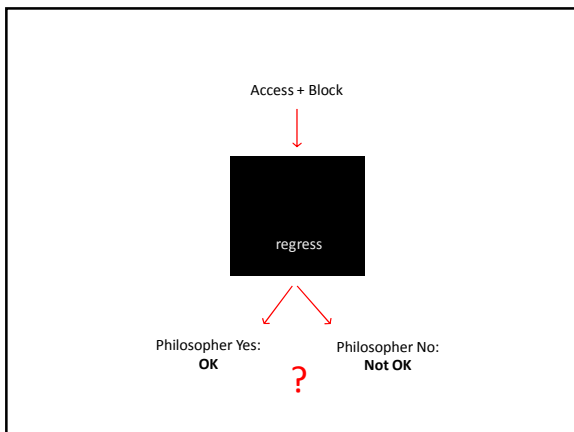
25/2/13

Norms

Access
We have an obligation only if we can know it.

Block
We shouldn't make our obligations unknowable.

SuperBlock
We shouldn't make Block unknowable.



Paradox idea

Regress arguments demonstrate that certain propositions are false because they have regressive consequences that conflict with independent considerations.

Failure idea

Regress arguments demonstrate that solutions to a given problem fail because they get stuck in a regress, namely of similar problems that have to be solved in order to solve the initial problem.

Paradox reconstruction

- (1) For all obligations x , I have x only if I can know I have x .
- (2) For all obligations x , I can know I have x only if I have the obligation y to refrain from making x unknowable.
- (3) I have at least one obligation.
- (4) I have an infinity of obligations. [1-3]
- (5) I don't have an infinity of obligations.

(C) (1) is false. [1-5]

Paradox schema

- (1) For all x in domain K , x is F only if x is G .
- (2) For all x in K , x is G only if a new item y in K is F .
- (3) At least one item in K is F .
- (4) An infinity of items in K are F . [1-3]
- (5) No infinity of items in K are F .

(C) (1) is false. [1-5]

Paradox regress

- I shouldn't buy the shoes;
 - I shouldn't make the first obligation unknowable;
 - I shouldn't make the second obligation unknowable;
- And so on.

Failure reconstruction

- (1) For all obligations x , if I have to make sure the shirker has x , then I appeal to her obligation to refrain from making x unknowable.
 - (2) For all obligations x , if I appeal to her obligation y to refrain from making x unknowable, then I first have to make sure she has y in order to make sure she has x .
 - (3) For all obligations x , if I have to make sure she has x , then I first have to make sure she has an infinity of obligations. [1-2]
 - (4) For all obligations x , I will never make sure she has x . [3]
- (C) If I appeal to a further obligation every time I have to make sure she has one, then I will never make sure the shirker has any obligation. [1-4]

Failure regress

- I have to make sure the shirker shouldn't buy the shoes;
 - I *first* have to make sure she shouldn't make the first obligation unknowable;
 - I *first* have to make sure she shouldn't make the second obligation unknowable;
- And so on.

Solutions

- (a)
She should refrain from making *any* of her obligations unknowable (including this one).
- (b)
She should learn *all* of her obligations (including this one).
- (c)
She should learn her obligation to refrain from buying the shoes.
&
She should refrain from making *any* of her obligations unknowable (including this one).

Failure schema

- (1) For all x in domain K , if S has to ϕ x , then S ψ -s x .
 - (2) For all x in K , if S ψ -s x , then there is a new item y in K and S first has to ϕ y in order to ϕ x .
 - (3) For all x in K , if S has to ϕ x , then S first has to ϕ an infinity of items in K in order to ϕ x . [1-2]
 - (4) For all x in K , S will never ϕ x . [3]
- (C) If S ψ -s any item in K that S has to ϕ , then S will never ϕ any item in K . [1-4]

