

AG lit. review questions: week 4

The argument

- (Q1) ‘Under the logical notion of object, it is impossible to give an exhaustive specification that encompasses the entirety of the logical notion’ (Q&R, p. 551). What is the logical notion of object? What is Glanzberg’s argument for this claim?
- (Q2) Glanzberg writes:

I think the most likely place to resist the conclusion is at the point where Russell’s paradox enters. There, one might try to argue that there is no such object at the one I used the paradox to identify... In the class-based version of Russell’s paradox, for instance, it might be tempting to say there is simply no such thing as the universal class. However, I think that the appeal to interpretation, and the more general version of Russell’s paradox, make it difficult to reject this part of the argument... I think we simply do have good reason to grant that there is such an object. After all, the process of interpretation itself shows us what the object is. Let us talk about this in class terms. We are looking at an object like $\{x : x = x\}$, where ‘ x ’ ranges over the elements of the domain specified by an interpretation. Insofar as we really have given a determinate specification, we have specified exactly what falls in this class. As classes are extensional, I see nothing else that could be required to convince ourselves that this object exists. (Q&R, p. 553)

How, if at all, does this differ from the usual relativist argument from the paradoxes?

- (Q3) Glanzberg writes:

The basic tension here, I believe, is between the evident ability of natural language to make extremely wide generalizations, and its evident ability to make what we might call ‘widespread nominalization’ (Q&R, p. 555)

What is the supposed tension here? How should the absolutist respond?

What can we say?

(Q4) Why, on Glanzberg's view, can we not achieve absolute generality simply by dropping any syntactic or contextual restrictions on our quantifiers?

(Q5) Glanzberg writes:

there are, no doubt, a few cases where we really strive to accomplish absolutely unrestricted quantification, and will not be satisfied with a quantifier ranging over even an artfully fixed but contextually restricted background domain. Examples include logical truths, such as 'all objects are self-identical' ($\forall x(x = x)$). For these, and some other cases, extraordinary measures may be required (Q&R, p. 559)

What is the proposed 'extraordinary measure'? Is this a satisfactory proxy for absolute generality?

(Q6) 'I have not said, for example, that we cannot quantify over all sets' (Q&R, p. 557). Can Glanzberg square this contention with his other views?

Objections

(Q7) 'Objection: In the case of unrestricted quantifiers, the rules governing the quantifiers themselves suffice for interpretation, and so no specification of a domain is needed.' (Q&R, p. 561) What is the character of this objection? Does Glanzberg have a convincing reply?

(Q8) Is relativism 'stable even under reflection on the semantics of a language fit simply for the expression of context-bound generality, a language of the sort that one might expect to be innocuous from the perspective of generality-relativism'? (E, p. 444)

(Q9) Can the relativist successfully capture kind generalizations such as 'No donkey talks'?