AG lit. review questions: week 6

The objection from ineffability

(Q1) Williamson surveys various attempts to formulate the relativist's thesis that no quantifier's domain is absolutely comprehensive (E, 427–30):

(5) It is impossible to quantify over everything.

(13) For any context C0, there is a context C1 such that not everything that is quantified over in C1 is quantified over in C0.

(15) For every context C0, there is a context C1 such that 'Not everything is quantified over in C0' is true as uttered in C1 (where 'C0' as uttered in C1 refers to C0).

Do any of these succeed?

(Q2) Does the following succeed in capturing quantifier-absolutism?

($\neg$5) It is possible to quantify over everything.

(Q3) Is absolutism a theorem of plural logic?

(Q4) Can we cleanly distinguish between the ontological/metaphysical question of whether there is an absolutely comprehensive domain and the linguistic/availability issue of whether we can quantify over it?

(Q5) McGee argues:

> The lesser worry is that the universal quantifier is a monkey wrench that cannot be opened wide enough to fit reality... the range [of quantified variables] is always limited. The reason [relativism] is not a serious worry is that the thesis that, for any discussion, there are things that lie outside the universe of discourse of that discussion is a position that cannot be coherently maintained. Consider the discussion we are having right now. We cannot coherently claim that there are things that lie outside the universe of our discussion, for any witness to the truth of that claim would have to lie outside the claim's universe of discourse.
>
> Of course, the fact that a thesis cannot be coherently maintained does not strictly entail that the thesis is false. Even so, the fact that we cannot coherently hold the theory is surely reason enough not to embrace it. (McGee, 'Everything', 55)

Is this reason enough not to embrace relativism?

Schemas

(Q6) What does it mean to say that a theory is *finitely axiomatizable*?

(Q7) What are some examples? What about non-examples?

(Q8) What is the best way to think of e.g. the Separation Schema?

(Q9) Boolos argues:

> we accept [first-order Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory] because we accept a stronger theory consisting of a *finite* number of principles, among them some for whose complete expression second-order formulas are required. (Boolos, LLL, 65)

Why think this? Does the stronger theory avoid schemas altogether?

(Q10) I write:

> This still leaves a residual epistemic issue. Even if both sides of the absolutism–relativism debate need to make sense of maintaining a schema, we still need to explain how finite beings like us are able to maintain theories with infinitely many (logical or non-logic) axiom-instances. (EMoL, 128)

How might this challenge be met?

Expressivity

(Q11) Can relativism be captured with a suitable schema?

(Q12) To what extent do schemas provide a relativist-friendly substitute for absolutely general quantifiers?

(Q13) What is the objection from side-conditions? Can the relativist frame a side-condition that is both semantically adequate and conceptually licit?