

Vagueness, lecture 12: Supervaluationism and higher-order vagueness.

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1. Global and local validity

- Local validity preserves local truth, but local truth does not allow failures of bivalence.
- Global validity preserves global truth, i.e. truth under all precisifications, and allows for failure of bivalence.
 - Global validity makes D -introduction valid, but local validity does not.
- Fara [2004]’s argument shows that one cannot consistently endorse all higher-order gap principles, if one uses a global notion of validity.

2. Regional validity

Recall that an interpretation for a language with the definiteness operator ‘ D ’ is a triple (W, R, v) where W is a non-empty set of admissible precisifications (or points), R is an accessibility relation on W that is at least reflexive (xRx for all $x \in W$), and v is a function assigning truth values to sentences at precisifications.

Definition 3 (Regional validity) A sentence φ is a *regional consequence* of a set of sentences Γ , written $\Gamma \models_r \varphi$, iff for every interpretation and any point w in that interpretation: if all the $\gamma \in \Gamma$ take value 1 in every w -admitted point then φ takes value 1 in every w -admitted point.

- Unlike local truth, regional truth allows for failures of bivalence.
- Unlike global truth, regional truth does not rule out higher-order vagueness.
 - φ might be regionally true at a point w_1 but not regionally true at a different point w_2 in the same interpretation.
- Cobreros [2011] argues that if the supervaluationist is really committed to global validity, then Fara’s argument shows they cannot accommodate higher-order vagueness.
- But perhaps the supervaluationist can commit to regional validity instead, and see if that will avoid the force of Fara’s argument.

3. Logic with regional validity

- Factivity ($D\varphi \rightarrow \varphi$) is usually taken for granted.
 - This corresponds to reflexivity (xRx for all $x \in W$).
 - Regional consequence is stronger than local consequence if we assume that admissibility is reflexive.
- Without additional constraints on admissibility, regional validity is weaker than global validity.
 - In particular, φ can be true at some precisification w_1 while $D\varphi$ is not.

- This is ruled out if R is transitive.
- In fact, if R is reflexive and transitive, regional and global validity collapse [Cobreros 2008].
- What do you think of Cobreros’s argument for rejecting transitivity?
 - Fine [1975] and Fara [2004] hold that the supervaluationist should accept transitivity.

4. Gap principles and regional validity

- Reconstruct Cobreros’s argument concerning absolute definiteness. Why should this be an additional constraint for an acceptable supervaluationist solution?
- How does Cobreros’s consistency proof work?
- Why does Fara’s intuitive explanation of her argument no longer work if we assume regional rather than global validity?
- The consistency proof shows that regional validity allows Cobreros to overcome Fara’s argument. But is his solution really acceptable for the supervaluationist?
- What about other kinds of gap theorist, like Tye [1990, 1994]? Can they also employ an approach like Cobreros’s, or is it peculiar to supervaluationism?

References

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