

**INFERENCE COMMITMENTS AND ABSOLUTE GENERALITY:  
A DOMAIN-FREE MODEL OF UNIVERSAL QUANTIFICATION**

Abstract

The paper critically discusses the distinction between *schematic generality* and *quantificational generality* proposed in [Lavine 1994, 2006], and defends an understanding of the concept of universal quantification according to which Lavine's distinction is to be rejected. According to my view, quantificational generality is to be rendered essentially as semantically unconstrained generality, in the sense that the inference rules that constitute the very *concept* of universal quantification (and our understanding of the concept in full abstraction from specific contexts of use) do not provide, or fix, or presuppose any reference to, a *domain* of quantification. I thus defend the possibility of absolutely unrestricted quantification on grounds that are ultimately incompatible with those presented in e.g. [McGee 2000, 2006] and [Williamson 2003, 2006].

The core of my proposal consists in two contentions. First: we have good reasons for rejecting the standard model-theoretic treatment of generality in terms of the specification of a domain to which such generality is semantically restricted, if our aim is to define what the very *concept* of universal quantification consists in. That is: model theory should have no say when the analysis of the concept concerns its *inferential role*. A better account is one that makes use of the notion, that I present and explore, of an *inferential commitment*. Second: given the first contention, we should take quantificational generality *not to be distinct from schematic generality*, provided that by 'quantificational generality' we intend to refer to what the concept of universal quantification consists in at the level of its non-interpreted inferential role.

The view of universal quantification that I defend thus accepts Lavine's skepticism about model-theoretic treatments of full generality, but rejects the consequences that he draws from this skepticism with respect to the epistemic possibility of absolutely unrestricted quantification.

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