

CJI predavanje:

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Content Inscrutability of Generics

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Sažetak:

Generic expressions or generics (e.g. “Tigers have stripes” or “Mosquitos carry the West Nile virus”) are statements that express generalizations but do not specify how many members of the kind exactly have the property being expressed. To this date there has been no agreement about even fundamental features of generics. There is a disagreement on their underlying logical form; whether they involve referring expressions to kinds or whether they are generalizations about individual members of the kind; whether they involve a generic operator Gen, what would Gen quantify over, or whether it exists.

Furthermore, there is no agreement on the treatment of pernicious implicatures of certain generics such as “Muslims are theorists” or “Women are submissive”.

In this talk, I formulate and address the Hard Problem for Generics (HGP): How to provide a relatively simple and unified semantics for generics? My answer to HPG is twofold:

(i) Content Inscrutability of Generics

At this point, we lack a simple and unified semantics for generics because the content of generics is inscrutable.

(ii) Amelioration of Content Inscrutability of Generics

The concept of generics needs to be ameliorated.

First, I introduce and argue for a conceptual deficiency I call content inscrutability. In particular, I extend MacFarlane’s (2016) argument about context inscrutability to content inscrutability. Furthermore, I argue for the content inscrutability deficiency as a supplement to Cappelen (forthcoming) classification of conceptual deficiencies. Finally, I look at some possible amelioration strategies for content inscrutability of generics.