A NOTORIOUS AFFAIR CALLED EXPORTATION

ABSTRACT. In 'Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes', Quine held (a) that the rule of exportation is always admissible, and (b) that there is a significant distinction between 'a believes-true '(Ex)Fx' ' and '(Ex) a believes-true 'F' of x'. An argument of Hintikka's, also urged by Sleigh, persuaded him that these two intuitions are incompatible; and he consequently repudiated the rule of exportation. Hintikka and Kaplan propose to restrict exportation and quantifying in to favoured contexts — Hintikka to contexts where the believer knows who or what the person or thing in question is; Kaplan to contexts where the believer possesses a vivid name of the person or thing in question. The bulk of this paper is taken up with criticisms of these proposals. Its ultimate purpose, however, is to motivate an alternative approach, which imposes no restrictions on exportation or quantifying in, but repudiates Quine's other intuition: this is the approach taken in my 'A Logical Form for the Propositional Attitudes'.

INTRODUCTION

"A notorious affair called exportation", as Quine puts it, "began . . . with . . . 'Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes'".1 In that paper2 Quine held that the rule of exportation, from, say

Ralph believes-true ‘F(∃x) Gx)’

when there is a unique G, to

Ralph believes-true ‘F’ of (∃x) Gx

is "doubtless" generally acceptable. He also held that the difference between:

(Ex) Ralph believes-true ‘Spy (y)’ of x

and

Ralph believes-true ‘(Ex) (Spy (x))’

is "vast", for he comments, if Ralph is like most of us, the latter is true and the former false; or, as he puts it in Word and Object, in the former case Ralph has "urgent information", but in the latter he does not.3 Subsequently, however, in light of an argument of Hintikka's.4
later adapted to Quine's example by Sleigh, Quine came to appreciate that these two intuitions are incompatible. Suppose that Ralph believes-true '(Ex) (Spy (x))'. And suppose that Ralph believes that in any group of persons there is an oldest, and as a consequence, having a modicum of logical competence, believes-true 'Spy ((1x) Oldest spy (x))'. Then, by the rule of exportation, Ralph believes-true 'Spy (y)' of the oldest spy. And so, after all, (Ex) Ralph believes-true 'Spy (y)' of x. But it would hardly be plausible to suggest that in these circumstances Ralph has 'urgent information'. Recognising the incompatibility of his two intuitions, Quine repudiated the rule of exportation.

Hintikka, of course, had already appreciated the discrepancy, and proposed to resolve it by allowing exportation only when the believer knows who or what the person or thing in question is. Kaplan had also sought to distinguish cases in which exportation is, from cases in which it is not, permissible, proposing the requirement that the believer possess a vivid name of the person or thing in question.

But this was, I believe, the wrong direction to take. The intuition that exportation is generally permissible was correct; it is the other intuition that was mistaken.

In 'Intensions Revisited', after stressing the context-dependence of the notions of vivid name and of knowing wh-, Quine suggests that the "seemingly vital distinction between believing that there are spies and suspecting a specific person" after all makes sense only relative to a context. Rather than simply repudiate his second intuition and countenance exportation everywhere, however, he goes on to renounce all de re belief except relativised to a context:

our rejection must extend to all de re belief... We end up rejecting de re or quantified propositional attitudes generally, on a par with de re or quantified modal logic. Rejecting, that is, except as idioms relativized to the context or situation at hand.

But if quantification into propositional attitude expressions is banned, except in cases where the subject possesses important information, the ordinary functions of quantification, expressing cross-reference and existence, are lost. Surely it would be preferable to allow quantifying generally, with no relativisation to context, and with the quantifiers performing their ordinary functions, and to use other means to distinguish cases where the subject does from cases where he doesn't have important information.

The method proposed in 'A Logical Form for the Propositional Atti-