

PHIL 4233: Philosophy of Language  
Prof. Funkhouser  
Quine, “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes”

I.

- The following are inappropriate translations:

“Ernest is hunting lions”:

$\exists x(x \text{ is a lion and Ernest is hunting } x)$

“I want a sloop:

$\exists x(x \text{ is a sloop and I want } x)$

Why? Because Ernest can be hunting lions without there being any particular lions he’s hunting, and I can want a sloop without there being any particular sloop I want. The translations give us the *relational sense* (of “lion-hunting” and “sloop-wanting”), but the *notional sense* was probably intended.

- To understand this distinction, contrast Quine’s (4) and (6) (or (3) and (5)).
- The distinction between the relational and notional senses might be easiest to see in certain belief-reports. Quine, for example, considers two disambiguations of “Ralph believes that someone is a spy”.
- Note that the differences between these senses is captured by the scope of the quantifier. But Quine is skeptical of quantifying into propositional attitudes-his example involving Bernard J. Ortcutt is intended to illustrate this.
- This is an example of *referential opacity*. The key symptom for referential opacity is when truth is not preserved by substituting in co-referential terms.
- Note the two senses of belief that Quine distinguishes at the end of this section. These distinctions should sound familiar to you if you know of the *de re/de dicto* distinction.

## II.

- Perhaps we can get out of this mess, and the multiplication of “belief” relations, by establishing that belief is a relation to an *intension* (or proposition).

Now intensions named thus by “that”-clauses, without free variables, I shall speak of more specifically as intensions of degree 0, or propositions. In addition I shall (for the moment) recognize intensions of degree 1, or attributes. These are to be named by prefixing a variable to a sentence in which it occurs free; thus  $z(z$  is a spy) is spyhood.

- Using these intensions we can admit two-place (believer and proposition) and three-place (believer, object, and attribute) relations.
- Using this suggestion to the problem at hand (the Ortcutt example), examine (14)–(23) and the “near-contraries” that it engenders. To see Quine’s reaction to all of this, study the second to last paragraph of this section. Q: Is it really acceptable that (15) and (22) both come out as true?

## III.

- This same procedure can be extended to other propositional attitudes, as well as to cases of quantification of the subject of the propositional attitude (e.g., “*someone* hunts lions”).

## IV.

- In the first two paragraphs, Quine expresses his well-known skepticism concerning intensional entities.

The intensions are at best a pretty obscure lot.

- “But there is a way of dodging the intensions which merits serious consideration. Instead of speaking of intensions we can speak of sentences, naming these by quotation.”

- This is to replace “believes that” talk with “believes-true” talk (relative to a language, of course). Although, Quine does conclude with some skeptical remarks about individuating languages.