Logical Form and Ontological Decisions

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The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 71, No. 17, Seventy-First Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division. (Oct. 10, 1974), pp. 599-600.

identify a thing of which 'F' will or will not be true. If 'a' is not associated with a predicate that has epistemically determinate identity conditions, we will not in general know how to distinguish that thing from other things, and hence we will not in general be able to know whether 'Fa' is true or false. Yesterday, Elmo killed Sarah; last night his body was unraveled and re-assembled, atom by atom; is the man now in front of us a murderer or not? Sam assents to 'George is a brother' but dissents from 'Anything that is not a brother is not George': does Sam (unknowingly) both believe and disbelieve the same proposition? As long as 'is the same person as' and 'is the same proposition as' remain epistemically indeterminate, we have no way of trying to answer these questions. And the same is equally true of sentences with predicates whose identity conditions are epistemically indeterminate; think of sentences of the form 'the F = the G' for example. What this discussion shows, in a rough and programmatic way, is that, unless predicates and singular terms meet the condition formulated at the beginning of this paragraph, sentences in which these terms occur will be unable to play a clear and stable role in the organization of our knowledge.

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The central claim in Gottlieb's paper is the following:

> The grounds on which we make an assignment of logical form and on which we believe the sentences receiving logical form do not suffice to settle ontological questions (590/1).

This claim is a most startling one, and is so not only to those determined to cleave to the objectual interpretation of the quantifiers. Surely our beliefs about nature, together with our beliefs about what entails what, cannot help but provide grounds for beliefs about what there is, and *this* conviction does not require, nor does Quine think it requires, that we interpret the quantifiers objectually. That is another matter.

The plausibility Gottlieb finds in the claim cited seems to derive from a failure to appreciate the comprehensive nature of the business of assigning logical form. Specifically, he takes what is merely

a necessary condition on the adequacy of such assignments to be a sufficient condition. The assignment of logical form to the sentences in a set S

> . . . can be supported or attacked by appeal to our judgments concerning logical implication over S. If the fit is satisfactory, it would seem that nothing more can be required of the assignment of logical form (590).

Nothing more? If S contains just two sentences, just one of which entails the other, the assignment of *any* two schemata such that one merely entails the other will suffice as adequate assignments on the criterion of adequacy proposed. Evidently it is our judgments concerning implication, not just over S, but rather over *all* sentences, that will determine our decision on the adequacy of specific assignments of logical form. And among the sentences of this comprehensive set will of course be sentences of the form 'there are F's'. *Ceteris paribus*, if the assignment of some form to P, which we believe, counts it as entailing Q, which we disbelieve, that fact counts against that assignment. Since our judgments about what entails what will not be independent of our beliefs about what is true and what is false, the assignment of logical form is therefore not independent of what we believe there is in the world. Perhaps now the complaint will be: why should empirical facts have so much impact on logic?

If, having adopted a referential semantics, one finds surprising ontological "commitments" in the course of regimenting one's beliefs, there are some ways of coping short of throwing in the towel and going substitutional. One may quash the surprise by finding for the sentences in question paraphrases in the vernacular which submit to regimentation more benignly, or one may embrace the surprise as a discovery. The decision here is not arbitrary. That part of the Quinean approach to logical form which establishes parsing strategies for mapping sentences in the vernacular onto sentences in canonical notation is built up piecemeal, with a continual and reflective eye on science, broadly conceived. In no case would Quine allow that the decision is made through consultation of a logical intuition innocent of the empirical, at least for the reason Quine has been trying to teach us these many years: that logical intuition, so far from being empirically innocent, is every bit the painted tart.

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