Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic
Volume 22, Number 3, July 1981

Quine on an Alleged Non Sequitur

ALEX BLUM

In articles by Wiredu [4] and, more recently, Merrill [1], Quine is taken to task for an alleged *non sequitur* in "The Problem of Interpreting Modal Logic" [2]. My object is to correct this misimpression.*

Quine argues that if we assume:

(ii) An existential quantification holds if there is a constant whose substitution for the variable of quantification would render the matrix true ([2], p. 271)

then given the truth of both:

(1) Morning Star C Evening Star $\cdot$ $\Box$(Morning Star C Morning Star)
(2) Evening Star C Evening Star $\cdot$ $\sim\Box$(Evening Star C Morning Star)

"where 'C' (for 'congruence') . . . is used to express the relation which Venus, the Evening Star and the Morning Star, e.g., bear to themselves and, . . . to one another" ([2], p. 272), it follows that both:

(3) $(\exists x)(x\ C$ Evening Star $\cdot$ $\Box(x\ C$ Morning Star$))$
(4) $(\exists x)(x\ C$ Evening Star $\cdot$ $\sim\Box(x\ C$ Morning Star$))$

are true. And given that the matrices quantified in (3) and (4) are contraries, "there must be at least two objects x such that $x\ C$ Evening Star" ([2], p. 272).

Wiredu contends that all that follows from (3) and (4) on the substitutional interpretation of quantification that Quine in (ii) is allegedly committed to, is that "there must be at least two constants such that their substitution in '$x\ C$ Evening Star' renders the matrix true" ([4], p. 188). And in a similar vein, Merrill writes: "What Quine is *entitled* to infer in the light of (ii) . . . is

(***) so there must be at least two objects (*names*) x such that the sentences $\ulcorner x\ C$ Evening Star$\urcorner$ is true". ([1], pp. 614-615)

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*I am indebted to David Widderker for helpful conversations on the issues in this paper, and to the referee of this *Journal* for his corrections.

Received April 30, 1980; revised July 28, 1980