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MENTIONING EXPRESSIONS

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In order to mention an expression one must use (the same or another) expression. Among the devices available for mentioning expressions there are:

- 1) definite descriptions
- 2) proper names
- 3) italics
- 4) quotation marks (')

It is the purpose of this paper to contribute to the investigation of the way these devices work. I shall be arguing, specifically, that the standard view of quotation marks is mistaken, and that it gives rise to difficulties which a more adequate view of quotation readily dispels.

1. *Definite descriptions*

Since expressions have distinctive features, a definite description can be devised which uniquely denotes a given expression.

Some definite descriptions denote in virtue of contingent features of the expression to which they refer, features such as, for instance, the location of those expressions. Examples would be:

The last sentence of John's speech.

The longest word in *Principia Mathematica*.

Other definite descriptions work rather differently, by exploit-

ing the structure of the expressions to which they refer. Examples would be:

The wff consisting of a left-hand bracket, a sentence letter, an implication sign, a sentence letter equiform to the first sentence letter, a right-hand bracket, in that order.

The sentence consisting of the words consisting of the 12th, 9th, 15th, 14th, 19th, 1st, 18th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 5th, 18th, 3rd, 5th letters of the English alphabet, in that order

I shall refer to these, following Tarski, as *structural descriptions*. Given a structural description, it is a straightforward matter to discover what expression it denotes. This virtue of structural descriptions I shall refer to as the *recoverability* of their denotata.

It might be supposed that structural descriptions could be used only to refer to expression types, not to expression tokens, since all tokens of a given type will share the structure which a structural description exploits. Further reflection reveals, however, that the reference of a structural description will be ambiguous as between a type expression and a token expression.

What is said about the expression referred to may of course resolve the ambiguity. Examples would be:

The word consisting of the 18th, 5th, 4th letters of the English alphabet, in that order, occurs six times on this page.

and

The word consisting of the 18th, 5th, 4th letters of the English alphabet, in that order, was the first uttered by John.

Tarski, who finds difficulty in the use of quotational meta-languages, favours structural description as the optimal device for mentioning expressions.

2. *Proper names*

Proper names are commonly used to refer to certain kinds of non-linguistic items, especially people and places. Expressions are not ordinarily given names. (Exceptions would be books, poems, prayers.) However, it would be possible, and has sometimes been thought to be desirable, that we should refer to expressions by 'christening' them, and then, to mention them, use their names.

There are conventions about the use of personal names. Some, for instance, are usually given to males, others to females. Nevertheless, even given these conventions, an important feature of the ordinary uses of proper names is that there is no systematic way of discovering whom a proper name denotes. Thus, proper names, if used as a device for mentioning expressions, would lack the virtue of recoverability. This seems, on the face of it, a disadvantage. But those who recommend the use of proper names for mentioning expressions tend to take the opposite view. For it is common to find in the literature the thesis that reference to expressions by means of quotation marks is closely comparable to reference to expressions by means of proper names, specifically in that the denotata are no more recoverable from quotation expressions than from proper names. It is therefore thought to be prudent to employ proper names rather than quotation marks, since the failure of recoverability is more apparent with proper names.

3. *Italics*

Another way of forming an expression denoting an expression is to write the denoted expression in italics. For example:

Horses have four legs. (use)

Horses has six letters (mention)

If one thinks of italics as a specific kind of script, then there

will be some languages for which the notion of italicisation has not been given sense. On the other hand, if one treats as a kind of italicisation any typographical device which performs the function which italic script performs for languages in the Roman alphabet (as one thinks of several typographically distinct devices, such as ' ' ' ' , ' < > ' , ' ' , ' , as all quotation devices) then one can give a sense to the idea of italicisation for any language.

Italicisation, like structural description but unlike proper names, has the virtue of recoverability. The denotation of an italicised expression is the unitalicised expression. Italicisation has, however, the disadvantage that it is not *iterable*. If one wishes to refer to an italicised expression, one will have to employ some other device than italicisation — structural description, perhaps, or quotation. Since one might very well need a means of referring to expressions which themselves refer to expressions, for example in the kind of investigation in which I am now engaged, this seems a serious drawback.

4. *Quotation marks*

By putting quotation marks around an expression one forms another expression which denotes the original expression. In what follows, I shall call the denoted expression the 'quoted expression', and the denoting expression 'the quotation expression'. Quotation, unlike italicisation, is iterable. And quotation seems, on the face of it, also to have the virtue of recoverability: the denotation of a quotation expression is the quoted expression.

The standard view

However, a common — indeed, one might say, the standard — view denies quotation this virtue. The thesis is variously put as follows: the result of enclosing an expression in quotation marks is 'a new, unitary expression' of which the original

expression is not (in any interesting sense) a part; it is 'improper to read under quotation marks'; no expression can be, at the same time, mentioned and used.

For example:

A quotation is not a *description*, but a hieroglyph; it designates its object not by describing it in terms of other objects, but by picturing it. The meaning of the whole does not depend upon the meaning of the constituent words. The personal name buried within the first word of the statement.

(11) 'Cicero' has six letters

e.g. is logically no more germane to the statement than the verb 'let' which is buried in the last word.

(Quine, [1940], p. 26) (?)

Quotation-mark names may be treated like single words of a language, and thus like syntactically simple expressions... Every quotation-mark name is then a constant individual name of definite expression of the same nature as the proper name of a man...

(Tarski, [1931], p. 159)

I shall argue that the doctrine of quotation characterised above, to which I shall sometimes refer, for obvious reasons, as the 'logical block' theory, is mistaken. I shall begin by arguing that it *is* proper to read under quotation marks. By this I mean that it is permissible, and may in some cases be essential, to take note of syntactic or semantic features of the quoted expression in order to understand, or to determine the truth or falsity of, a sentence in which a quotation expression appears. I shall then argue that, in view of this, it must be admitted that the quoted expression *is*, in an interesting sense, part of the quotation ex-

pression, and hence, that the quoted expression, in its occurrence as part of the quotation expression, is at once mentioned and used.

Against the standard view

Routley and Goddard, in [1966], allow that, *in certain cases*, reading under quotation marks is permissible. But they distinguish *two* kinds of mention, syntactic and semantic, and allow reading under quotation marks only in the latter case. As I shall show, however, their distinction between syntactic and semantic mention is shaky, and their argument for reading under quotation marks in the case of semantic mention can be extended.

The distinction between syntactic and semantic mention turns on the fact that sometimes we refer to an expression as a preliminary to attributing a syntactic predicate to it, and sometimes we refer to an expression as a preliminary to attributing a semantic predicate to it. This is, indeed, a fact. But it is also a fact that sometimes we refer to an object as a preliminary to attributing a shape predicate to it, and sometimes we refer to an expression as a preliminary to attributing a colour predicate to it; but no-one supposes that this fact shows that there are two kinds of mention, shape mention and colour mention. In view of the inadequacy of their explicit reason, one suspects that Routley and Goddard's conviction of the necessity to distinguish two kinds of mention springs from their further belief that semantic mention is 'impure', since in cases of semantic mention reading under quotation marks is allowed, and so in such cases the quotation expression is used as well as mentioned.

Their argument for the propriety of reading under quotation marks in the case of semantic mention is that to understand, or determine the truth of, a sentence in which the quotation expression occurs it may be necessary to 'read (with understanding)' the quoted expression. Among their examples is the order:

Give a synonym for 'brother'.

which, as they say, cannot be obeyed unless one understands the word 'brother'. But attention to features of the quoted expression is sometimes, equally, called for in cases when the predicate applied to the mentioned expression is syntactic rather than semantic. Consider the following sentence, which Routley and Goddard offer as an example of syntactic mention:

Arrange 'dog', 'cat' and 'animal' in alphabetical order.

Unless one reads under the quotation marks and pays attention to the first letter in the quoted expression, one cannot obey this order; for all the quotation expressions begin with a quotation mark. However, one has to read the second letters whenever one is asked to arrange in alphabetical order expressions which all begin with the same letter; and this does not show that, say 'ristotle' is part of 'Aristotle', or 'quinus' of 'Aquinus' in any sense more interesting than that they are physically parts of the larger expressions; and in this sense it is conceded, even on the 'logical block' view, that quoted expressions are part of quotation expressions. And it might be objected that although reading under the quotation marks *is* required, reading *with understanding* is not. But other cases can be constructed when more than mere scanning of the shape of the quoted expression is called for.

For example, to verify:

Water Boards pipe water to all homes in this area

is a grammatical English sentence, it is presumably necessary to read the quoted expression with at least such understanding as is required to recognise that 'pipe' occurs as a verb rather than a noun. It has to be admitted that there is some unclarity as to the force of 'read with understanding' as opposed to 'read'. Is it necessary, for example, to 'read with understanding' under the quotation marks in

There are six words in the sentence 'This red is darker than that red' ?

This unclarity contributes to the plausibility of the hypothesis that there is no clear distinction, but rather a continuum

of cases, from bare scanning of the shapes to 'full understanding'. Of course it must be conceded that attention to *semantic* features of the quoted expression can hardly be essential to determination of the truth-value of ascriptions to it of *syntactic* predicates; if by 'read with understanding' Routley and Goddard meant 'attend to semantic features' their thesis would be trivially true — but, by the same token, also relatively uninteresting. And this, trivial, thesis, would not show that attention (variously to syntactic or semantic) features of the quoted expression could be essential to determination of the truth-value of sentences containing the quotation expression. This is my thesis.

It may be necessary to emphasise that I am not maintaining that it is always necessary to read under quotation marks, but only that it is always proper, and sometimes necessary. An example of a sentence where it is not necessary would be:

"'Cicero' has six letters' contains a quotation expression.

If reading under quotation marks, when 'reading' means more than mere attention to the physical shape of the quoted expression, is proper, it seems to follow that the quoted expression is in an interesting sense part of the quotation expression. For not only is the quoted expression physically a part of the quotation expression, but also, its syntactic or semantic properties may be necessary to the understanding or verification of sentences in which the quotation expression occurs. And, when this is the case, then, one could say, the quoted expression is being used as well as mentioned.

Some applications

It has perhaps been insufficiently stressed, so far, how counterintuitive the standard doctrine is. The commonsense view is, surely, that one can readily discern the denotation of a quotation expression, and that one does so precisely by reading under the quotation marks.

The oddity of the standard view will become more apparent if one considers some of the unnecessary difficulties it generates.

(i) One such difficulty appears as an *Analysis* 'puzzle'. Professor Anscombe invites comments on the following problem:

It is impossible to be told anyone's name. For if I am told 'That man's name is 'Smith'' his name is mentioned, not used, and I hear the name of his name but not his name.

([1957])

On the standard doctrine of quotation, there is indeed a severe problem. To say what someone's name is, one must mention his name; and, since no expression can be at once mentioned and used, not use it. The quotation expression denoting the name is a unitary expression, of which the name itself is not a proper part. Using the quotation expression "Smith" to denote the name 'Smith' is comparable to giving the name 'Smith' a proper name, say 'Mary'. So it would be no more apparent from

That man's name is 'Smith'

than from

That man's name is Mary

what that man's name is.

When the standard doctrine is rejected the puzzle vanishes. The quotation expression "Smith" is not a unitary expression; 'Smith' is part of it. And so it is apparent from 'His name is 'Smith'', as it is not from 'His name is Mary', what his name is.

It may be worth pointing out that one way of referring to an expression, which has not been mentioned so far, is simply to use that very expression. (Carnap calls this the 'autonomous use' of the expression.) One way of giving the man's name is simply to say:

That man's name is Smith.

I used 'Mary' as the name of the name 'Smith', above, to try to avoid the confusion which might have arisen had the name 'Smith' been given the name, say, 'Robinson', with the case of autonomous use.

(ii) The standard doctrine also gives rise to complications in the theory of quotation which, once that doctrine is rejected, seem simply unnecessary. For example, Garver, in [1965], argues that a special, new quotation device is needed if one is to have a device for mentioning the meaning of expressions. What lies behind this seems to be the idea that, if the meaning of an expression mentioned is in question, then the expression must be being mentioned in a special way. In a similar way, Alston argues, in [1963], that we must write meaning statements in the form

'Procrastinate' means *put people off*

using italics rather than quotation marks on the right because 'we are neither using 'put people off' nor referring to it in a way that could be done by enclosing it in quotes 'for' 'procrastinate' means the phrase 'put people off' is ungrammatical'. (*) Here it is more than ever clear that the complications arise from the exclusivity of the distinction made, in the standard account, between use and mention. But when the standard account is dropped, one can see that ordinary quotation is perfectly suitable for reference to the meaning of an expression. One can refer to the meaning of an expression by using a definite description which includes a quotation expression denoting that expression, e.g.

'The meaning of 'procrastinate'.

(iii) the problems mentioned so far have been, so to speak, local to the theory of quotation. But the standard account is also implicated in the generation of imaginary difficulties in other areas.

Church in [1950], presents, specifically against Carnap's ana-

lysis, an argument, the translation argument, which, if correct, would show that no analysis of sentences of the form:

x believes that man is a rational animal

in which quotation expressions appear, could possibly be correct. The argument goes as follows. If one translates the *'analysandum* and Carnap's *analysans*:

x is disposed to respond affirmatively to some sentence in some language L which is intensionally isomorphic to 'Man is a rational animal' in English

into another language, say German, then, while the translation of the *analysandum* is entirely in German, the translation of the *analysans* contains a quoted English sentence. Hence the translation of the *analysandum* is comprehensible to someone who speaks only German, while the translation of the *analysans* is not; and so the *analysandum* and the *analysans* cannot mean the same.

Now one (of the numerous) faults of this argument (*) is that at one point the standard doctrine of quotation is required, whereas at another point it is discarded. The thesis that one must not *read* under quotation marks is presumably what supports the, otherwise surprising, assumption that one must not *translate* under quotation marks, an assumption which is crucial to the premiss that any correct translation of the *analysans* will contain a quoted English sentence. However, the view of quotation is not even consistently maintained for the duration of the argument. For if it is not proper to read under quotation marks a German speaker can presumably understand the translation of the *analysans* in spite of not understanding English; for on the standard view the quoted English sentence is no part of the *analysans* anyway.

Towards an alternative account

The commonsense view, which the standard account rejects and which I have favoured, that the *denotatum* of a quotation expression is straightforwardly recoverable, suggests an alternative account: that quotation may be treated as a function.

A function is a relation such that

$$(x) (y) (z) (x Ry \ \& \ xRz \rightarrow y = z)$$

The suggestion is this. The quotation function, the result of writing an expression in quotation marks, has as value the quoted expression. If the result of enclosing each of two expressions in quotation marks is the same, the two expressions must be the same.

Quine objects to this suggestion that the truth of

$$\text{Tully} = \text{Cicero}$$

does not entail the truth of

$$\text{'Tully'} = \text{'Cicero'}$$

But this objection is beside the point, since although the man Tully is indeed identical with the man Cicero, the name 'Tully' is not identical with the name 'Cicero', so one should not expect the result of enclosing the name 'Tully' in quotation marks to be the same as the result of enclosing the name 'Cicero' in quotation marks.

Kaplan [1969] is also inclined to deny that quotation can be treated as a function, since, he argues, the rule, that the result of enclosing an expression in quotation marks is a standard name of that expression, is unlike rules for true functional expressions, such as '+√' in not being single-valued. But this is not the relevant rule, which is, rather, that the value of the result of enclosing an expression in quotation marks, is that expression. This rule *is* single-valued.

A sustained discussion of the propriety of the treatment of quotation as a function is to be found in Tarski's [1931]. It is essential, therefore, to consider Tarski's arguments in detail. He offers four:

- (1) The sense of quotation functions is insufficiently clear.
- (2) Quotation functions would not be extensional.
- (3) On the functional account a quotation expression such as "p" will be ambiguous as between a function of a variable argument, and the name of a letter of the alphabet.
- (4) With the help of quotation functions, semantic paradoxes may be formulated even without the use of the predicates 'true' or 'false'.

To the first objection one could reply, *ad hominem*, that the formulations of the standard account leave a good deal to be desired. Furthermore, and more seriously, I have attempted above to give a reasonably precise indication of what the function account involves. And a more detailed, and perfectly precise, account can now be found in Belnap and Grover [1973].

In reply to the second objection, one must concede that quotation functions are, indeed, not extensional, since it is not the case that, if two sentences are materially equivalent, then the result of enclosing the first in quotation marks will necessarily be the same as the result of enclosing the second in quotation marks. And it *may* be desirable, as Tarski thinks, for the logician to concentrate on extensional functions. But this surely provides, at most, grounds for a refusal to deal with quotation *at all*, not a reason for refusing to deal with quotation as a function. Tarski offers no alternative account of quotation which will enable him to treat it extensionally, but resorts instead to the use of structural descriptions. One might add that that two sentences are materially equivalent is, equally, no guarantee that a structural description of the first will be the same as a structural description of the second.

The third objection seems to be no more than a consequence

of, and no more serious than, the fact that the letter 'p' could be either the 16th letter of the alphabet, or a propositional variable.

The fourth objection is, clearly, the most serious. Tarski offers a proof of the Liar paradox using only quotation functions and negation (and not 'true' or 'false'). However, he nowhere attempts to show that the possibility of deriving the contradiction depends upon the treatment of quotation as a function. And it can be shown, in fact, that a contradiction can be derived on the assumption of the existence of any means of denoting all expressions. The proof stems from Reach [1936]:

'Nm [x] (y)' is read 'x has the name y' or 'y denotes x'.

'p_y^x' is read 'the result of substituting y throughout for x in p'.

1	(1) T ≡ (p) (Nm [p] (x) ⊃ ~ p)	df of T
2	(2) ((∃ z) (Nm [x] (z) & Nm [y] (z))) ⊃ (p ⊃ p _y ^x)	Ass.
2	(3) ((∃ x) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x))) ⊃ (p ≡ q)	2, p x, q y, x z, 2, q x, f y, x z, and df '≡'
4	(4) Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x)	Ass.
4	(5) (∃ x) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x))	4, ∃ introd.
2, 4	(6) p ≡ q	2, 5, Mpp.
2	(7) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x)) ⊃ p ≡ q	4, 6, Cp.
2	(8) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x)) ⊃ ~ p ≡ ~ q	7, substitution of equivalents.
2	(9) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x)) ⊃ ((~ p ⊃ ~ q) & (~ q ⊃ ~ p))	8, substitution. of equivalents.
2, 4	(10) ((~ p ⊃ ~ q) & (~ q ⊃ ~ p))	4, 9, Mpp.
2, 4	(11) ~ q ⊃ ~ p	10, elim.
2	(12) (Nm [p] (x) & Nm [q] (x)) ⊃ (~ q ⊃ ~ p)	4, 11, Cp.
2	(13) (Nm [q] (x) & Nm [p] (x)) ⊃ (~ q ⊃ ~ p)	12, substitution of equivalents
2	(14) (Nm [q] (x) ⊃	13, (q ⊃ p) ⊃ r

	$(\sim q \supset (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p))$	$\vdash q \supset (p \supset r)$
15 (15)	$Nm [q] (x)$	Ass.
2, 15 (16)	$\sim q \supset (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p)$	14, 15, Mpp.
17 (17)	$\sim q$	Ass.
2, 15, 17 (18)	$Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p$	16, 17, Mpp.
2, 15, 17 (19)	$(p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p)$	18, () intro.
2, 15 (20)	$\sim q \supset (p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p)$	17, 19, Cp.
2 (21)	$Nm [q] (x) \supset$ $(\sim q \supset ((p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p)))$	15, 20, Cp.
1, 2 (22)	$Nm [q] (x) \supset (\sim q \supset T)$	1, 21
1, 2 (23)	$Nm [T] (x) \supset (\sim T \supset T)$	22, T/q
1 (24)	$(T \supset (p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p)) \ \&$ $((p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p) \supset T)$	1, df '≡'
1 (25)	$(T \supset (p) (Nm [p] (x) \supset \sim p))$	24, elim.
1 (26)	$T \supset (Nm [T] (x) \supset \sim T)$	Instance of 25
1 (27)	$Nm [T] (x) \supset (T \supset \sim T)$	26, $p \supset (q \supset r)$ $\vdash q \supset (p \supset r)$
1, 2 (28)	$Nm [T] (x) \supset ((T \supset \sim T) \ \&$ $(\sim T \supset T))$	23, 27, $p \supset q,$ $p \supset r \vdash p \supset$ $(q \supset r)$
1, 2 (29)	$Nm [T] (x) \supset (T \equiv \sim T)$	28, df '≡'.
30 (30)	$Nm [T] (x)$	Ass.
1, 2, 30 (31)	$T \equiv \sim T$	29, 30, Mpp.

Now, the only special assumptions which this proof employs, besides the definition of 'T', are certain principles of the extended propositional calculus (at line (2) and in the use of universal generalisation at line (19)), and the assumption (at line (30)) that, for any expression, there is some expression which denotes that expression. The proof does *not* require the assumption that for every expression, there is a *quotation expression* which denotes that expression, *nor*, *a fortiori*, does it require the assumption that quotation be treated as a function. (It may be worth noting that Tarski himself, in another part of the paper, attributes the generation of the paradoxes to semantic closure, and in consequence embodies a restriction to semantically open languages in his formal adequacy conditions. There is a relevant discussion in Grover [1973].)

Tarski's rejection of quotation functions is of some impor-

tance to his argument for his definition of truth. The objective is to provide a definition which will entail all instances of the T-schema:

$$S \text{ is true} \equiv p$$

(where the referring expression on the left-hand side denotes the sentence which appears on the right). Since one way of referring to a sentence is to enclose it in quotation marks, it might look tempting to offer as a definition.

$$(1) \quad (p) ('p' \text{ is true} \equiv p)$$

Tarski rejects this kind of definition, because he regards quantification into quotation contexts as nonsense. And he regards quantification into quotation contexts as nonsense because he rejects the function account of quotation in favour of the 'logical block' theory. If, as that theory has it, 'p' is no more part of "p" than 'x' is of 'Texas', then (1) is no more intelligible than

$$(2) \quad (x) (\text{Texas is large})$$

But if, as I have argued, the 'logical block' view of quotation is untenable, and if Tarski's arguments against the function view are inconclusive, then Tarski's reasons for rejecting (1) are inadequate. It does not follow, of course, that (1) is acceptable as a definition of truth, only that, if it is not, this is not for the reasons Tarski gives.

Routley and Goddard find (1) unacceptable because they object to the predication of truth of sentences. (This would, of course, be an objection, equally, to Tarski's definition.) But since I see nothing objectionable in attributing truth to sentences, I should reject this argument.

(1) employs propositional quantifiers. It might therefore be argued that the 'p' on the right-hand side of the biconditional has to be construed as the *name* of a sentence, not as a sentence. Such a construal would, of course, make (1) ungrammatical.

However, it could be suggested, in reply, that the grammaticality of (1) can be maintained if the propositional quantifier is read, not objectually, but substitutionally, where the appropriate substituends would be, not names of sentences, but sentences. This suggestion, if it could be worked out, might also provide some relief to the ontological difficulties which Quine, in [1934], finds in the interpretation of protothetic (extended propositional calculus).

Summary

My object has been to support a commonsense, function view of quotation over the standard, 'logical block' theory. I have argued, first, that the central tenets of the standard view are false; second, that the standard view gives rise to puzzles and difficulties which the function view avoids; third, that the usual objections to the function view are groundless; and fourth, that adoption of the function view promises to provide a new perspective on the theory of truth (*).

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(¹) These devices have other uses than mentioning expressions, of course. But I need not consider them here.

(²) This passage has some puzzling features. The claim that a quotation expression is rather a hieroglyph than a description seems to support the thesis which Quine goes on to deny, that the quoted expression is part of the quotation expression. And it is curious to find Quine apparently allowing that the verb 'let' is buried in 'letters'. The main drift of the passage however, is clear; it is to deny the recoverability of quotation.

(³) Alston's use of italics is thus deliberately distinguished from the use of quotation marks. I, of course, have treated italics and quotation marks as simply different means of doing the same thing.

(⁴) for a discussion of its other faults, see Haack R.J., [1973].

(⁵) An early version of this paper was read in 1969 to a seminar in Cambridge, where I benefited especially from comments from Prof. Williams and Dr. Smiley. I was also helped, particularly with the assessment of (1), by a discussion with Mr. Fox of the University of La Trobe.