

Sander Verhaegh. *Working from Within: The Nature and Development of Quine's Naturalism.* Oxford University Press 2018. 240 pp. \$74.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780190913151).

With *Working from Within: The Nature and Development of Quine's Naturalism* Sander Verhaegh has delivered a wonderful book. Although perhaps not very well known within non-professional philosophical circles (it is in this respect that Quine is sometimes called the philosophers' philosopher) Willard Van Orman Quine counts among the most influential philosophers in the analytic tradition of the last part of the 20th century, and his influence still can be found in the work of many contemporary philosophers. What Verhaegh gives us is a detailed and historically informed insight into not only the nature of Quine's naturalism but also the development of his thinking, from his earliest work into the completion of his naturalistic project. Verhaegh achieves this by engaging with Quine's published work and by meticulously studying the wealth of unpublished material, consisting of papers, letters, notes, book proposals, and the like found at Harvard University's Houghton Library. In doing this he has delivered a historically underpinned understanding not only of Quine's naturalism, but also the main themes within contemporary naturalism.

As the title suggests the book consist of two major parts. The first part, consisting of three chapters, is about the nature of Quine's naturalism, while the second part, also consisting of three chapters, is about the development of this naturalism in Quine's thinking. The wealth of material from the Quine Papers that is most important within the context of this book has been transcribed and collected in the appendix.

In the first chapter of part one Verhaegh discusses Quine's naturalized epistemology and shows, contrary to what is commonly thought, that Quine's thoughts on this are 'not based on despair, but on his rejection of transcendental vantage points, his dismissal of the idea of a science-independent perspective' (32). The traditional argument is that Quine is adopting a naturalized epistemology using an 'argument from despair' with regards to traditional epistemology. We have to abandon traditional epistemology and turn to a naturalized epistemology since all attempts of traditional epistemology to find a secure, external and transcendental foundation for knowledge have turned out to be dead ends. What Verhaegh, in a very convincing reconstruction of Quine's argument, shows in this chapter is that Quine had better and more positive arguments for adopting a naturalized epistemology than the negative 'argument from despair.' It is not because traditional epistemology has failed in its efforts that he adopts a naturalized epistemology, but because he believes that such an Archimedean point simply doesn't exist. As Verhaegh puts it: '[f]or Quine, the epistemologists' quest for foundations was misguided from the beginning; there is no prior sense-datum language, no transcendental science-independent perspective from which to validate science' (30). And so he can draw the conclusion that 'Quine's doubt about "epistemological" priority are not a consequence of his naturalism; they are the very reason he adopts a naturalized epistemology in the first place' (25).

In the second chapter of part one Verhaegh turns to the subject of metaphysics and the well-known Quine-Carnap debate. It is often argued that Quine saved metaphysics from the hands of Carnap who considered philosophical existence questions as meaningless. Verhaegh shows that things are not so simple. Again, making use of the loads of material he found at Houghton Library, he argues that it was never Quine's objective to restore the legitimacy of traditional metaphysical questions but rather to show that there is no sharp distinction to be made between theory and practice and between questions internal and external to a chosen framework. This does not mean however, that in blurring the boundary between scientific sense and metaphysical nonsense Quine restates traditional metaphysics in its former position. In Verhaegh's reconstruction Quine does not reject

metaphysical questions as meaningless but instead rejects them as useless from a scientific point of view. In this respect it seems fair that Verhaegh ends this chapter saying that 'Quine dealt with metaphysical existence claims as he dealt with all useless statements: he simply dismissed them from within' (53).

In the last chapter of part one Verhaegh introduces what he considers to be 'Quine's core commitment' (55) namely 'that to be a Quinean naturalist is to work from within' (75). Verhaegh argues that there are two main elements in Quine's naturalism: '(1) we all start in the middle, assimilating our "inherited world theory;" and (2) we work from within this inherited system as we go along, relying on our best theories and methods' (76). Furthermore, Quine's naturalism is supported by three commitments: empiricism, holism, and realism. Once we understand how these two main elements and three commitments work together we get a better understanding of Quine's rejection of instrumentalism and why he embraces deflationary views of truth, reality, and justification. His naturalism shows us that there simply are no transcendental perspectives and that we have to adopt a perspective that is immanent to our scientific conceptual scheme.

The second part of the book is devoted to what Verhaegh calls 'the genesis, the development, and the reception of Quine's ideas' (79).

In the first chapter of part two Verhaegh takes us back to the 1940s when Quine started to work on *Sign and Object*, a book project that was intended to deliver his first philosophical monograph. In a thorough reconstruction Verhaegh shows that, although it was already in many ways naturalistic, Quine was still struggling with two fundamental points. The first one, according to Verhaegh, is that at that time Quine had not yet developed 'a comprehensive view about language, meaning, and the nature of logical and mathematical knowledge' (93) making him struggle to find a satisfying alternative to Carnap's analytic-synthetic distinction. Quine also 'had not yet been able to develop a satisfying epistemology' (94). In the end, this made him abandon the project to first find a solution to these matters.

In the second chapter of part two the focus is on (the development of) Quine's views on Carnap's analytic-synthetic distinction. Culminating in a more or less stable position in 'Two Dogmas,' Verhaegh gives a careful reconstruction of the road Quine took to get to that point. In 'Two Dogmas' Quine argues against the analytic-synthetic distinction—as there is no behavioristically acceptable definition of analyticity and, taking into account Quine's holism, there is no need for such a distinction in the first place. Furthermore, Verhaegh shows that Quine's rejection of the distinction developed and matured over the years. 'Quine challenged Carnap's semantic version of the analytic-synthetic distinction in 1940,... became aware of the nature of their disagreement in 1943, and... adopted his wide-scope holism in 1948' (139-40).

The final chapter of part two deals with Quine's evolving views on the philosophy-science distinction by tracing his metaphilosophy "between 1953, when he wrote the first draft of *Word and Object*, and 1968, when he adopted the label "naturalism" for his philosophy' (141). The basic elements were already in place in the early 1950s: 'there are no transcendental, distinctively philosophical perspectives on science and we cannot draw a strict distinction between matters of fact and matters of language — between the analytic and the synthetic' (141). Being dissatisfied by the reception of *Word and Object* and the misunderstanding of his philosophical position led Quine in 1968 to adopt the label "Naturalism" for his philosophy.

As Verhaegh says in his introduction 'it is safe to say that naturalism's prominence is for a significant part due to the work of Willard Van Orman Quine' (3). Verhaegh's book is engaging and thought provoking. It is highly recommended to anyone working in philosophy in general and to

those interested in the work of Quine in particular. Verhaegh has provided us with a thorough investigation of the nature and evolution of Quine's naturalism. I hope that it receives the attention that it deserves.

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