

(DRAFT)

**Working from within: The Nature and Development of Quine's Naturalism**, by Sander Verhaegh. New York, US: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xi + 218. \$66.60

Verhaegh's rich and stimulating book on the evolution of Quine's naturalism in his works consists of eight chapters which together form two general parts: Part one concerns the nature and part two concentrates on the development and reception of Quine's naturalism. After a very informative Introduction, Verhaegh, in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively discusses Quine's Naturalizing Epistemology and Naturalizing Metaphysics.

Chapter 2 starts by questioning the Standard Conception of Quine's argument against first philosophy, the *argument from despair* presented especially in "Epistemology Naturalized". According to this argument, naturalized epistemology can emerge only when we "stop dreaming of deducing science from sense data" and "despair of being able to define theoretical terms generally in terms of phenomena" (16). Verhaegh argues that this conception ignores Quine's stronger argument, i.e., that the project of traditional epistemology "is demonstrably flawed from the beginning" (17) since no science-independent, self-sufficient perspective is available. We are bound to *work from within* our best scientific theory of the world (see 18-31). Verhaegh later characterizes Quine's naturalism as consisting of two main theses: rejecting any detached science-independent perspective on reality (*No Transcendence*) and "the prima facie acceptance of our inherited scientific theories and methods" (*Scientific Immanence*) (54).

Chapter 3 then covers Quine's view of Carnap's despairing of existence claims and the practical-theoretical distinction he drew between questions about reality. Quine not only blurs the Carnapean distinction between scientific sense and metaphysical nonsense, but he, in some respects, rejects Carnap's distinction between questions internal to a linguistic framework and the (external) questions about which framework is to be adopted (see 36-49). However, Quine,

unlike Carnap, does not dismiss metaphysical existence claims as *meaningless* because “he does not subscribe to a philosophical criterion of significance at all” (51). For Quine, such claims seen from a scientific point of view are merely *useless* (see 51-53).

In Chapter 4, Verhaegh is largely concerned with the nature and philosophical consequences of three commitments supporting Quine’s naturalism: empiricism, holism, and realism (see 56-62). For Verhaegh, once we realize that Quine’s model of inquiry consists of two basic elements, i.e., “(1) we all start in the middle ... and (2) we work from within this inherited system as we go along, modifying the system while relying on its best theories and methods” (63), we can realize why Quine’s naïve realism, his rejection of instrumentalism, and his deflationary view of truth, reality and justification are all supported by this model: There is no transcendental, extra-scientific perspective on reality, truth and justification (see 63-76).

The “*genesis, the development, and the reception of Quine’s ideas [on naturalism]*” (79) is the focus of the second part of the book. By relying on a variety of resources – including Quine’s unpublished drafts, lecture notes, letters, and grant proposals (see the Appendix for some of these documents) – Chapter 5 offers a detailed survey of the connection between the development of Quine’s naturalism and the evolution of his views on metaphysics and epistemology. This chapter contains interesting remarks on Quine’s attempt to write his first monograph, *Sign and Object*, in the early 1940s and the reasons why he gave up on the project. For Verhaegh, although *Sign and Object* was naturalistic in many respects (see 83-84), Quine “really struggled to find a satisfying behavioristic explication of synonymy” (94), as well as “a satisfying epistemology” (94). For similar reasons, he was not satisfied with his “Two Dogmas” too (see 96-100). Quine’s endeavor to tackle with these problems leads to Chapter 6 where Verhaegh explores the relation between Quine’s naturalism and his dissatisfaction with the analytic-synthetic distinction and his acceptance of a wide-scoped holism. Quine presents two arguments against the analytic-synthetic distinction in “Two Dogmas”: (1) There is no

behavioristically acceptable definition of analyticity and (2) if the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science, there would be no need for a boundary between analytic and synthetic statements (see 103). The way Verhaegh presents Quine's view here, however, is a bit puzzling. For Verhaegh, "Although Quine's *demand* for such a [behavioristically acceptable] definition [of analyticity] reveals a [actually 'the'] substantial difference between him and Carnap ..., his argument *against* Carnap's epistemological use of the distinction did not require him to proclaim that no such explication of analyticity can be found" (125). Nonetheless, Quine apparently *required* this latter argument in order to repudiate Carnap's analytic-synthetic distinction. As Verhaegh argued earlier, "Quine's second argument [from holism] does not suffice to decide the Carnap-Quine debate. It merely shows that, epistemologically, there is no *need* for an analytic-synthetic distinction, not that there *is* no such distinction" (114). With the second argument at hand alone, Carnap could grant Quine's holism and "still maintain an analytic-synthetic distinction; he could simply acknowledge that although no statement is immune to revision, there are two *kinds of revisions*: changes of theory and changes of meaning" (114). Quine hence appears to have no decisive argument against the distinction. They seem to merely offer two competing pictures of inquiry deciding between which would depend on pragmatic matters (see 115). Verhaegh, however, complains that to conclude this "is to ignore Quine's first argument" (115). The substantial difference between Quine and Carnap, therefore, lies behind Quine's success in arguing that there *is* no behavioristically adequate definition of analyticity. However, this seems to be in conflict with Verhaegh's later claim that in order to resist Carnap's epistemological use of the distinction Quine does not need "to proclaim that no such explication of analyticity can be found" (125).

The rest of Chapter 6 is dedicated to the distinction Verhaegh draws between three varieties of wide-scoped holism: (1) maximal inclusion (127, 136-139), (2) universal revisability (128, 132-136), and (3) maximal integration (129-132). Verhaegh argues that while Quine defends

all the three theses in “Two Dogmas”, he never changed his mind about them afterwards (see 127-132). Finally, Chapter 7 examines Quine’s evolving views on the science-philosophy distinction by focusing on the development and reception of Quine’s metaphilosophy between 1953, when he wrote the first draft of *Word and Object*, and 1968, when he explicitly called his philosophy “naturalist” (see 147-151). Having dissatisfied with the conflicting responses to *Word and Object* (see 151-155), Quine came to the conclusion that “what was missing was a catch phrase or a distinctive ‘ism’ to summarize his core philosophical perspective” (154). These considerations apparently led Quine in the late 1960s to adopt the term “Naturalism” to describe his view. However, the reader of the book may remain a bit dissatisfied with Chapter 7 in which we are promised discussions of the *reception* of Quine’s naturalism. Instead of considering how Quine’s naturalism is received in contemporary works or influences at least the works of those philosophers in the late twentieth century whose views were guided by Quine, such as Davidson, this part surprisingly ends with three pages of examples of some responses to *Word and Object* mostly published in 1960s (see 151-154). Additionally, Verhaegh rarely employs his interpretation of Quine’s naturalism to shed new light on other significant and interconnected doctrines of Quine, especially those of physicalism, behaviourism, the underdetermination of theories and the indeterminacy of translation.

These worries, however, do not affect the merits of Verhaegh’s book, which is an excellent attempt to provide a very delicate historical as well as systematic investigation of the evolution of naturalism in Quine’s works.

*Ali Hossein Khani*

*Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM), Tehran*