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Quine's Naturalism:

Language, Theory and the Knowing Subject.

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W. V. Quine's naturalized conception of knowledge has been famously criticized as a circular, radical changing of the subject that fails to address the normative concerns of traditional epistemology. The central aim of this volume is to defend Quine's naturalized epistemology against these criticisms, while further arguing that it is both radical and philosophically significant. Gregory is unusually sensitive to the way this debate raises profound meta-epistemological issues concerning what counts as a legitimate conception of epistemology and what its proper aims should be. He presents a useful exploration of the commitments underlying both Quine's and his critics' contrasting perspectives on human knowledge, and he notes how they shape their divergent epistemological motives. A central element of Gregory's interpretation highlights Quine's radical conception of the 'knowing subject' as a Darwinian creature adapting to its natural environment and how this is related to his further views concerning meaningfulness, the connections between language and theory, and the normative elements of epistemology. The result is an insightful interpretation and defense of Quine's naturalized epistemology.

Gregory begins with a careful exegesis of Quine's programmatic remarks in his 'Epistemology Naturalized', showing how they have led critics to conclude that naturalized epistemology is circular, and nonnormative (6-18). These criticisms are interrelated: if Quine is interested in only describing scientific practice rather than evaluating it, then his use of scientific results in his account seems unproblematic. This further encourages the so-called 'replacement interpretation', where Quine's naturalized epistemology is seen as rejecting normative concerns in favor of a descriptive account of the links between stimulation and theory (22). Gregory first addresses why Quine is unmoved by the complaint that his view is circular. Here he discusses a central but frequently misunderstood theme in Quine's work: his view that philosophical and scientific inquiries always begin from within an ongoing set of theoretical commitments. This view is a consequence of Quine's well-known dismantling of the analytic-synthetic distinction, here characterized as a distinction between language as a neutral structure of expression and theoretical commitment to sentences of that structure (39). Quine's indifference to the circularity charge stems from the collapse of such a language-theory distinction. The result is that speaking a meaningful language comes with rudimentary, if still substantial, theoretic commitments, thus giving his position an admittedly circular structure.

Gregory further argues that the circularity criticism rests on the linear propositional support (LPS) norm, where justification of a theory or claim

must be non-circular and involve linear inferences from premise to conclusion (66-7). Quine's view that we must begin from within some theory involves an implicit rejection of the LPS requirement. From his perspective, the demand that we must avoid circularity is then based on a mistaken understanding of the relationship between language and theory. Gregory next addresses the replacement interpretation and its emphasis on the normative and descriptive as inferentially isolated categories (90-91). While Quine's epistemology does not seek a grounding of science, it remains concerned with describing procedures that best promote theories with successful predictions. Once we have accepted Quine's criterion that prediction is the test of theory, these descriptions yield further normative claims. Epistemic norms emerge as hypotheses concerning the effectiveness of methods in meeting the criterion of successful prediction, and these norms then permit the critical evaluation of epistemic practices (96-7). Quine then offers us an instrumental view of normativity emphasizing continual test, refutation and subsequent modification of theory. Gregory also addresses the worry that without an independent grounding for our theories, we cannot be sure if they correctly capture the objective truth (108-17). He explains how Quine's pragmatic stance emphasizes that all we can reasonably ask of our theories is that they be structured so to yield successful predictions. It is only with such a structure that we gain our sense of objects and objectivity.

Gregory concludes by responding to the claim that Quine's view is a philosophically uninteresting and irrelevant change of the subject (122-32). He argues that underlying the criticisms of Quine's epistemology is an interconnected group of presuppositions consisting of the LPS requirement, a language-theory distinction, and a view of the knower as an isolated intellect. By rejecting this group of presuppositions Gregory claims that Quine is radically changing the subject, but that this remains philosophically important because of its challenge to traditional epistemology. Interestingly, this does not, in his opinion, result in a stalemate between conflicting intuitions (130). Rather, it reveals the traditional view as resting on theoretical presuppositions that make it, like Quine's view, also circular. Given this broadly shared naturalist backdrop, Gregory suggests that we evaluate which view better conforms to our understanding of our ourselves and our relation to our environment — hinting, perhaps, that when seen in this light Quine's view has the upper hand. It remains unclear how far this analysis extends, and which critics are implicitly committed to these 'traditional' presuppositions. Take Carnap, for example, Quine's main critical target. While of course he accepts some version of a language-theory distinction, he would further reject the LPS requirement — he too accepts holism — and the view of the knower as isolated intellect (see Alan Richardson, *Carnap's Construction of the World*, CUP 1998). Nevertheless, he would remain critical of Quine's naturalized conception of epistemology.

Gregory's emphasis on Quine's view of the knowing subject as an adaptive creature is important, since it tends to be understated within Quine's work. In light of the assumptions found within the history of modern philosophy,

it is perhaps correct to further emphasize its radical nature. But, contrary to Gregory's claim, this view is not new (123). Dewey, James, and Peirce each in their own distinctive way stress that we view human knowers from this Darwinian perspective. Quine's view of the subject as 'an adaptive organism and the language/theory complex as a tool facilitating the organism's interaction with the environment' (129) highlights affinities with Dewey's instrumentalism, further suggesting that Quine should not be so reluctant in his pragmatism. But from the perspective of these classical pragmatists, Quine's view may not be radical enough. Gregory explains that, for Quine, adaptive pressure is exerted by the environment on individuals and theory (128), where this is achieved through sensory stimulation (or neural input) at our surfaces (107, 118). But as active agents in a Darwinian world, it is the interaction with the surrounding 'worldly' environment that provides the adaptive friction for attempts at problem solving. One might have thought that a truly radical empiricism would focus on this interactive environmental context of human inquiry.

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Ulrich Haase

Starting with Nietzsche.

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Haase has written a short, direct, and solid prose account of Nietzsche's writing which exposes Nietzsche's radical and historically essential ideas, and which thereby raises the possibility that his ideas will be properly understood by a new audience with the help of a compass which the works do not themselves offer.

At a point in history in which European humanity had lost its ground without having chosen to do so (4), Nietzsche saw himself as revealing the nature of that moment of history. The openness and clarity of Nietzsche's writing (10), the way his words are addressed to a wide audience, is a lure, however; he intends, as he says, only those who are strong enough, after understanding these ideas, and recognising the truth of our times in them, to afterward escape. Haase presents a Nietzsche who looked at history and