



BALKAN
ANALYTIC
FORUM

BAF₁: Normativity

BAF₊: Normativity
of Art

Belgrade, Serbia, 2023.

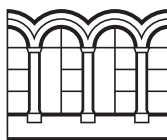
Balkan Analytic Forum

BAF1: Normativity

BAF+: Normativity of Art

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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ИНСТИТУТ ПО ФИЛОСОФИЈА И СОЦИОЛОГИЈА
INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIOLOGY



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МИНИСТАРСТВО НАУКЕ,
ТЕХНОЛОШКОГ РАЗВОЈА И ИНОВАЦИЈА

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Aleksandra Vučković

*Epistemic Normativity and Quine's Project
of Naturalized Epistemology*

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In his famous article “Epistemology Naturalized” (1969), Quine established a novel take on the position of epistemology in philosophical and scientific discourse. According to his views, epistemological questions are a subset of psychological questions, and psychology in itself is a branch of natural science. Thus, epistemology, as understood in the Quinean sense, threatens the very idea of its normative aspects, as natural science is empiristic and, as a result, relies on purely descriptive claims. Hence, the following question arises: Does the naturalized account of epistemology entail the rejection of epistemic norms?

Several philosophers have taken up the task of providing the answer to this question. Kornblith (1993) asserts that Quine's epistemic norms are merely an instrument in the specific field of natural science and, thus, that he gives up the requirement for epistemic justification of beliefs. However, Foley (1994) seems to paint Kornblith's interpretation of Quine's epistemology as somewhat reductionist and argues that Quine has never intended to reduce the whole of epistemology to psychology but only to convey the continuum between epistemology and the rest of the science. Roth (1999) claims that Quine's project of naturalized epistemology entails nothing short of explicit normativity insofar as the Quinean epistemologist relies on standards and norms of scientific inquiry. Houkes (2002) shifts the perspective of the discussion once again and claims that epistemological techniques cannot be understood independently of human nature and that Quine's understanding of them as a mere “technology” in the truth-seeking process is inherently misguided, as it would entail intentionality which Quine rejects.

I shall argue that the acceptance (and the rejection) of any of those answers will depend not only on the interpretation of this specific pro-

ject of epistemology naturalized but also on the variations in understanding Quine's take on naturalism in general. Quine (1986, 1990) did not seem particularly entertained by the idea that his project of naturalized epistemology would entail the complete abandonment of normativity. The problem is, however, that his takes on naturalism (and empiricism as well) have taken different forms in various writings throughout his lifetime, with some being inconsistent with the others. In one of my earlier papers (2016; reference omitted for anonymity), I discussed the distinction between naturalism in a methodological sense and naturalism in an ontological sense and argued that the former aligns better with the rest of Quine's views. In this research, I will explore whether Quinean acceptance of naturalism in a methodological sense withstands the criticism regarding the lack of normativity.

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