



## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

*Word and Object* was published 50 years ago. In the middle years of the last century Willard van Orman Quine was one of the most influential philosophers in the analytic tradition. He represented a view of philosophy according to which it was the handmaiden of the sciences. In this he had much in common with the logical positivists. And yet he differed from them in a number of ways — not least by his rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction, coupled with his distrust of modal notions and of anything which smacked of intensionality. Quine was never afraid to follow the argument where it led. Although philosophically unhappy with such abstract entities as sets and classes, yet he followed the demands of mathematics in admitting them into his ontology. And when it appeared that the analytic/synthetic distinction might be supported by certain views about synonymy, translation, and even meaning itself, he was not afraid to call these into question. The single-mindedness with which he pursued his vision of philosophical truth makes him one of the leading philosophers of his century, and indeed of all time.

The papers in the present volume comment on many aspects of Quine's work. Some are principally historical, while others react in different ways to Quine's views. This is as it should be. We need to remember the work of the greats of the past, even if the questions they were struggling with are different from our own. But we must also pay them the respect of taking their views seriously, even if that should mean disagreeing with them. You will find here articles of both types in what we hope is a tribute both to the man and his ideas.

The editors acknowledge a grant from the New Zealand Government's Marsden Fund, administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand, which has supported the editorial work in making this issue possible. We are also grateful for support from the Centre for Advanced Studies of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts (VLAC). And, as always, we would like to thank everyone at *Logique et Analyse*, in particular its editor, Jean Paul Van Bendegem, for the way in which they make our task both easy and a pleasure.

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