

ficulty of attributing omniscience to God, since God's creativity and omniscience run parallel.

The translation is faithful and well done. The book is an important one to have available in English, though, like all Marcel's books, it is not always easy to read. It would be good if we could raise a comparable study of Royce, or any other American philosopher for that matter, from our own ranks.

ROBERT F. HARVANEK, S. J.

West Baden College,
West Baden Springs, Ind.

***The Challenge of Existentialism.* By John Wild. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955. Pp. vii + 297, with index. \$6.00.**

In his latest work Wild has again shown the vitality of perennial philosophy. After an introduction in which he points out the weaknesses of modern thinking since the time of Descartes he goes on to a solid analysis of modern existentialist thinkers and their difficulties. Compared with attempts by others, this part of the work is outstanding. In the first six chapters Wild has given a relatively complete account of the basic ideas of existentialist thought along with clear delineations of its foremost exponents: Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Sartre, Marcel, and Heidegger. He demonstrates a very intimate acquaintance with their writings. Added to this is his very extensive knowledge of perennial philosophy. With the latter he is able to clarify somewhat the problem faced by the existentialist thinkers and to show us in much detail their contribution to its solution.

However, the impression is easily gained that perhaps Wild's immersion in existentialism goes too far. His failure to use classical terminology at many points where such use would be advantageous might give the reader the impression that he has accepted more of this philosophy than is necessary. On the other hand, it is obvious that he is not an existentialist. The explanation, I believe, is to be found in the fact that he is attempting to write so that he will be understood by those who do not possess or profess perennial philosophy. In this respect the title of the book is ambiguous. Is the "challenge" directed to "classical" philosophy or to modern philosophy? Since Wild himself

has professed a "realistic" philosophy which is at least close to "classical" thought, it might be presumed that he is challenging this. But then he must be aware of the convention that allows the party challenged the choice of weapons. It seems that his challenge is to "classical" philosophy in terms which would be acceptable to modern philosophy. This would in some way explain many of the difficulties encountered in the last three chapters of the book.

These difficulties seem to fall into two categories: 1) those which arise from a failure to use the solutions already existing in classical philosophy; and 2) those which arise from a too ready acceptance of modern "liberal" notions in philosophy.

One instance of the first might be Wild's discussion of the notion of time as found in existentialist philosophy (pp. 242 ff.). He gives a good analysis of the existentialist's notion of an "authentic" and an "unauthentic" way of existing through time. As he says, the unauthentic way does not succeed in holding "the three ecstasies of time (past, present, and future) together in an integrated structure." It would seem that Wild might here have made some reference to the discrete time of the angels. With this notion it is possible that some interesting comparisons might be made between the practical life of man and the speculative life of the separated substances. That he is thinking somewhat along these lines is indicated by the following passage (pp. 242 ff.):

The existentialists, in rebelling against this abstract intellectualism, have once again raised the fundamental problem of time, which is always the center of active attention when metaphysics is really alive. Different modes of being are characterized by different modes of time. We cannot deal with the one in a disciplined way without also dealing with the other.

If the term "time" be taken in the strict sense as the measure of motion, it will be difficult to explain how a question in metaphysics arises. On the other hand, if the term be taken in a wider sense for the measure of any duration, we shall have to distinguish the various kinds of duration: 1) an absolutely unchanging duration, whose measure is customarily termed eternity; 2) a duration which admits of accidental change but not substantial change, whose measure is usually termed aeviternity (the "time" of the angels); and 3) a duration which is subject to both accidental and substantial change, whose measure is strictly termed "time." Only in this way can the problem of "time" become a problem in metaphysics.

Another example of a difficulty in the first category mentioned above is to be found in Wild's failure to utilize the classical distinction between absolute being and absolute goodness in creatures. All through the book Wild has emphasized the thorough-going practicality of existentialist thought. He has repeatedly insisted that a place must be made for speculative thinking. It would seem that this error in existentialist thought could best be understood in the light of the difference between the notions of being and the good. As St. Thomas says:

Although goodness and being are the same really, nevertheless since they differ in thought, they are not predicated of a thing *absolutely* in the same way. Since being properly signifies that something actually is, and actuality properly correlates to potentiality; a thing is, in consequence, said simply to have being, accordingly as it is primarily distinguished from that which is only in potentiality; and this is precisely each thing's substantial being. Hence by its substantial being, everything is said to have being simply; but by any further actuality it is said to have being relatively. Thus to be white implies relative being, for to be white does not take a thing out of simply potential being; because only a thing that actually has being can receive this mode of being. But goodness signifies perfection which is desirable; and consequently of ultimate perfection. Hence that which has not the ultimate perfection it ought to have (although, insofar as it is at all actual, it has some perfection), is not said to be perfect simply nor good simply, but only relatively. In this way, therefore, viewed in its primal (i.e., substantial) being a thing is said to be simply, and to be good relatively (i.e., in so far as it has being), but viewed in its complete actuality, a thing is said to be relatively, and to be good simply. (*Summa Theol.*, I, 5, 1 ad 1.)

Thus if we regard man only from the point of view of his perfection, as the existentialists do, then it is certainly true that he does not "exist" until he is dead. However, it is hard to credit this discovery to the existentialists since Aristotle speaks of this paradox in the first book of the *Ethics* (ch. 10).

The difficulties in the second category arise from Wild's too ready acceptance of modern notions in philosophy. This is well illustrated in his comparison between existential ethics and classical ethics (pp. 252 ff.). He first distinguishes between an "essentialist view" and an "existentialist" ethics. If this is to be a fruitful distinction we might expect that some mention here would be made between ethics as a science (which is of little value for action) and the virtue of prudence. However, Wild actually seems to have more than this in mind, because he says later (pp. 262-263):

Freedom is not a natural but an existential norm. It is not an ordered set of determinate tendencies, but a way of realizing them in the concrete that is peculiar to man. It is grounded in the human act of existing, and its limits have now been described with great accuracy and penetration. As a result, we have been presented with the most lucid and profound analysis of the norm of freedom that has been developed in modern times. Because of essentialist trends of thought, this norm was not clearly focused in ancient times, and remained only implicit in classical thought. This neglect was reflected in the philosophical acceptance of the institution of slavery, with certain qualifications, and in the failure to see the danger of feudal autocracy and oppression.

From this passage it would seem that Wild agrees with the modern notions in political thought which reject the Aristotelian notion of the natural slave. Perhaps he has some explanation to show how this "most lucid and profound analysis of the norm of freedom that has been developed in modern times" has led to the development of such extensive and abject slavery as we see in most modern states.

Wild does give some argument on this point when he discusses the ethics of the future (pp. 266 ff.) He attempts to show that the future development of "many insights of the new phenomenology" will give us a "sound and disciplined answer to Marxism." In this same context, however, we find the following statement (p. 267):

But the classical analysis of man will certainly be retained, at least in its major divisions. We cannot escape from the fact that our nature is originally endowed with powers of theoretical apprehension, self-projection and choice, and capacities for sensory desires of many different kinds. A careful examination of these powers clearly indicates that natural order of subordination which is expressed in the conception of the cardinal virtues. Reason is clearly the most far-reaching and penetrating of our cognitive faculties. Hence wisdom has the first place amongst the virtues. Under its guidance, the choice-making power should render to each being its due with justice, and persist in its rationally charted course through every danger and obstacle with courage. The many drives and interests to which our nature is susceptible must be allowed their proper place, but under the deliberate control of temperance, which fits them into our rationally chosen projects.

The ambiguity of terms in this passage would seem to argue a confusion between prudence, which is human wisdom, and the speculative virtue of wisdom. How such a confusion, which is shared by Marxism, can give us a "disciplined answer to Marxism" is difficult to see.

Now it is entirely possible that many of the difficulties arise from the fact that the author is trying to write for a diverse audience. How-

ever, that still makes the task of the reader, be he modern or classical, a difficult one.

On the whole, I think, we can agree that Wild has stated a challenge. His own position in accepting the challenge is somewhat ambiguous. It would be more fruitful if it were accepted in the somewhat more strict terms of the classical philosophy.

R. A. KOCUREK

*College of St. Thomas,
St. Paul, Minnesota.*

***Beyond the Dreams of Avarice.* By Russell Kirk. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956. Pp. x + 339. \$4.50.**

Critical essays are difficult to review and *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* is a collection of critical essays. A critic of the stature of Russell Kirk deserves having the effort made to evaluate his work.

These essays examine rather intensely certain dimensions of man's relation to society. They are divided into two groups of which the first is entitled "American Observations" and the second "Notes from Abroad." The starting point of these essays is that civic social order has continued to be effective "only because the better minds and hearts, in every generation, have recognized the existence of an order more than social, more than human, which confers a little dignity upon such human beings as deserve it." This emphasis on the necessity for order—order understood by a balanced mind—is reflected throughout the essays. From this viewpoint, Kirk has analyzed many attitudes of mind with a refreshing vigor and, at times, a brilliant insight into their limitations.

Professional philosophers will find *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* a stimulating and refreshing bit of reading. Even though the author does not defend a position but, "with Newman," is content with "exposing a fallacy," he does offer challenging reconsiderations of certain viewpoints of specialized groups. Many points for serious reflection are raised by Kirk, for instance, in his essay on the journals of our time—especially those of the United States. Such an item could well arouse some intense class discussions, particularly among that great majority of our students who are not philosophy majors. In like manner does Kirk analyze such ideas as censorship, utopias, liberal learning, collectivism, social boredom, and many others just as thought-provoking.