

is owed to the essentially philosophical and phenomenological approach prevailing throughout the work of the author. It might have been added that phenomenology—whether of Husserl or of another kind—is concerned with the phenomena as they are given to immediate inspection and, therefore, has little to gain from studies of a genetic nature. The phenomenon tells us what there is but not whence it stems.

Although one may agree with Miss Graef that the attempt of Edith Stein at achieving a synthesis of traditional and modern philosophy may prove stimulating and be deserving of further consideration, it is not from this book that one will learn what the aim of this synthesis truly is. The book may well prove of value by its spiritual tendencies and as a contribution to educational theory; the philosopher, however, will have to turn to the original works.

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***Language and the Pursuit of Truth.* By John Wilson. Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1956. Pp. 105. \$1.75.**

It is an old scholastic custom to study linguistic communication and to analyze language from the standpoint of logic. Medieval treatises abound in the field, and one of the severe limitations unnecessarily imposed upon themselves by twentieth century semanticists is their lack of acquaintance with the literature of the middle ages devoted to the study of the arts of logic and language. For that matter, the ancient Greeks had a few words to say on the matter, especially Plato and Aristotle. Most contemporary semanticists, chiefly those of a positivistic persuasion, give the impression that careful analysis of signs and symbols arose only in contemporary times. The fact that many of the important medieval treatises are not readily available and are not translated is an extenuating circumstance; nevertheless, the widespread omission of reference to them is an appalling commentary on the provincial character of much of contemporary thought.

It might be unfair to say that Wilson is one of the typical twentieth century semanticist's who knows little or nothing of the extensive history of thought on the study of language and logic. His book aims "to present semantics, which is the study of linguistic communication, to the general public." There is no occasion for referring explicitly to the

contributions of other periods to achieve the immediate aim of the book, the laudable one of stirring the general public to the need of employing language carefully and skillfully in order to arrive at truth. It is not unreasonable to presume, however, that in writing a book even so restricted in aim, an author would draw upon the rich resources of semantic literature in all periods of thought. Wilson suffers from no embarrassment of riches in this respect, and the narrowness of his approach and outlook suggests that his background is scanty indeed.

There are, nevertheless, some highly commendable features of the book. First, and by no means least in importance, the book is written with clarity and precision. The reader and the author can come quickly to terms, for the author knows precisely what he wishes to establish and he uses economical means of expression to achieve his purpose of making a semantic analysis intelligible to non-professionals. Ironically, writers on semantics are not usually distinguished by clarity and a business-like style.

The ordering of the book is good. The reader moves from an analysis of words and their different types to a similar treatment of statements. Only when words and statements have been analyzed can the full problem of determining truth be faced and resolved, and the author makes this matter his concluding chapter. Throughout the middle and concluding chapters, the author's explanation of the method of verification and its use within a restricted area is clear and consistent.

The drawbacks of the book are many, but only a few can be indicated. (There are even errors: for example, errors of fact, such as, before Galileo it was held that the earth was flat; and errors of analysis, such as, metaphysics is supernatural). The most glaring defect of the book is the narrowness of the author's outlook, particularly in his wholly univocal and restricted approach to the meaning of verification and truth. The latter is confined to the procedure of experimental science, for although at times the author is willing to allow for differences in method of verification and in kinds of experience, he is clearly at a loss how to analyze and make intelligible the sort of verification and experience that would be pertinent in metaphysical, moral, or poetic discourse. He invariably slips back into viewing and judging all types of knowledge and communication from the standpoint of experiential scientific discourse, and herein lies the narrowness of his outlook and comprehension.

This defect seems to rest principally upon a basic ignorance of other

types of knowledge. Poetic communication, for example, reduces wholly to an arousal of feeling in so barren a fashion that groans and metaphors would have no distinguishable difference. Wilson seems to be completely unaware of the type of knowledge and truth that is proper to the poetic order. He remarks: "Pure poetry is one thing; nobody 'takes it seriously.' Pure prose, such as a scientific text-book is another; nobody feels inclined to read it in the sing-song, faintly mystical voice which we reserve for poetry" (p. 49). It may be safely concluded that the poetic order of knowledge is not an area in which Wilson speaks with competence.

The consideration of value statements is almost equally vapid. The same narrowness is present: ". . . only a scientific approach to our problems of value can help to solve them," where by "scientific approach" he means, first, the "absence of prejudice and open-mindedness which characterizes the work of a good scientist; and secondly, the operation of the scientific method of observation, experiment and hypothesis" (pp. 91-92). No one quarrels with the employment of the scientific approach so described wherever relevant, though it may be presumed that lack of prejudice and open-mindedness are characteristics not wholly alien to minds other than those of scientists. But the unrestricted application to every field of human endeavor of one meaning of scientific approach precludes any fruitful analysis of the semantic problems and type of experience proper to social and moral discourse. Apparently the author is quite unaware of the distinction between practical discourse and its appropriate methodology, as in moral science, and theoretical discourse with its appropriate methodology, as in mathematics or experimental science.

The shallowness of the author's approach shows up most of all in his treatment of metaphysical statements and metaphysical knowledge. In much too light an air, he defines metaphysical statements as those "about whose meaning and method of verification we are not agreed, or which (so far as we can see) seem to have no meaning or method of verification at all" (p. 70). What he means by metaphysics itself may be gathered from the following observation: "'Metaphysics' means literally 'post-physical': and the statements of metaphysics are supposed to inform us about a world which is not the ordinary physical world, but some supernatural region which exists above the world of nature" (p. 71). He offers the following as typical metaphysical statements: "There are men on Mars," and "God will save the righteous."

The foregoing quotations are sufficient to disqualify him unreservedly as competent to discuss meaning and truth in metaphysics. It is unfortunate that Wilson knows nothing of metaphysics, for I think it is evident that semantic problems are particularly acute in this area of knowledge. I think that a good case can be made for the point that metaphysicians have opened themselves up more than anyone else to the charge of semantic confusion. The intrinsic difficulty of the subject matter is undoubtedly an occasion for this frequent unhappy occurrence. But in dealing with this problem, one does have to know what metaphysics is all about and how it has developed in the history of thought from the time of the ancient Greeks. No solution can be found by one who writes about metaphysical discourse out of sheer ignorance as to what its subject matter is and who is unable even to cite typical metaphysical statements. Presuming some knowledge of metaphysics, the solution lies in recognizing that there is a methodology and type of verification proper to metaphysics distinct from, for example, experimental science, and then analyzing the semantic problems peculiar to metaphysics. Wilson throws no light on this important problem because he is unaware of its existence.

What value Wilson's book has lies in a restricted area of human knowledge and experience. It is clear that he does not understand or appreciate poetic, moral, and metaphysical discourse. This being the case, either he should have eliminated these considerations from his book or, for the sake of the general public for which he is writing, he should have become informed about the semantic dimensions of these areas of human knowledge and experience.

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***Philosophical Papers and Letters.* By Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. Translated and Edited by Leroy E. Loemker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956. Two volumes. Pp. x + 1228, with index. \$12.00.**

During the past fifty years, interest in the writings of Gottfried Leibniz has increased considerably, and even such diverse figures as Maurice Blondel and Bertrand Russell have found a peculiar fascination in the works of this strange figure of the late Renaissance whose restless