

there is a sharp distinction between the method of choosing a good ontology and that of choosing a good scientific theory. The trick of making the right answer to the question "Do universals exist?" analytic and the right answer to the question "Do unicorns exist?" synthetic will not help, for I think that the distinction between analytic and synthetic, if it can be made clear, will turn out to be a matter of degree. The most plausible course, I think, is to regard ontologies and scientific theories as both of them justified on pragmatic grounds. But some of us have lived long enough with pragmatism to realize that it is difficult to justify anything "pragmatically" with the degree of clarity we would like to use in philosophy. Now that pragmatism has to house so many new friends among the ontologists, we ought to start draining its swampy foundations and blocking its metaphors — with the help of the guests.

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PHILOSOPHIE DER LEBENSZIELE. By ALEXANDER PFÄNDER. Gottingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948. Pp. 188. DM 12.

This book, edited by Wolfgang Trillhaas, is a complete copy of Pfänder's lectures given during the fall term of 1921-1922. The lectures were taken down by Dr. Ernst Heller and Miss Anna Dietz. Pfänder himself corrected the copies and provided additional remarks. He authorized them furthermore by incorporating them into his own papers which were left in two boxes in the safe of a Munich bank.

Pfänder was a poor writer; he complained frequently about the clumsy form which his thoughts assumed when he tried to communicate them in writing. It is therefore rather an advantage that this book brings to us Pfänder's philosophy in the lively direct form in which Pfänder tried to express himself orally.

But it should be added here that Pfänder's clumsiness is not entirely an external matter of style and wording; it has something to do with the contents. Pfänder started his career not as a philosopher, not even as a psychologist, but as a student in mechanics. It was a very painful accident — his arm was caught in a machine — which converted him to philosophy. He never got rid of thinking in mechanical pattern. Of course, he is in every way radically opposed to any mechanistic psychology and philosophy. But while trying to describe a psychical or spiritual phenomenon, he is driven to a machinery of movements, centrifugal and centripetal, up and down, away and back. He hates vagueness and playing with words and pictures. He wants always to see and make visible what he is speaking about. But in this attempt he slips down to clumsy primitivities far from the point he

wants to express. Nevertheless, the reader is impressed by the classic simplicity of Pfänder's work, for it shows absolute sincerity and insights saturated with genuine experience. But there is something Pfänder failed to see just because of his insistence on distinct facts as clearly distinguishable contents. He did not experience factuality or existence as such and thereby missed real access to metaphysics. He accepts the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality and actuality as different modes of being. But he looks at them as merely biological phenomena which he tries to assimilate to Platonism by taking potentiality as ideality, while considering actuality as a more or less imperfect evolution of the seed to its actual being. In this way, however, the value character of actuality as actuality (*ens et bonum convertuntur*) is beyond Pfänder's sight. Values are to Pfänder, just as to Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann, only distinct forms or ideas distinguished from another kind of forms or ideas rather by a difference of knowledge than by being themselves; they are felt and not perceived.

Furthermore, the ideal forms or essences are not coeternal with God as His own eternal thoughts, as Philo, St. Augustine, and many others after them tried to explain their absolutely necessary relationship with each other beyond even God's omnipotence to change. Even God cannot make two and two other than four. Nor could He create a circular square. Nor could He change the laws of geometry. To Pfänder, however, the ideas also are created. The absolute goal of life, *Lebensziel*, is to be helpful in developing the ideas to actuality, the ideas of everything. First of all, we have to be active to develop our own idea or essence. But this we cannot do without also helping other men in their self-development; for we are essentially social beings. The basic difference between human and subhuman essences is that human essences develop by natural necessity, that is, automatically, while human beings develop essentially by spiritual self-determination. Here Pfänder refers even to Schelling and Hegel as forerunners of his view about spirit as a being in itself and for itself, "ein in sich und für sich seiendes Wesen" (p. 119). But in so doing he neglects the fundamentally quidditive peculiarity of spirit as subject of consciousness. By implication he accepts thereby the basic thesis of German idealism, strictly contrary to his own realistic view, namely, that all reality is basically consciousness, even the unspiritual physical and biological one. Unconscious nature — mountains, stars, planets, and the like — is then only structurally different from consciousness; it is consciousness not yet reflected in itself, *noch nicht zu sich selbst gekommener Geist*. This obvious self-contradiction is hidden by Bergson's biological monism which is the modern transcription of the idealistic monism of the German philosophy. Bergson, possibly indirectly, is strongly influenced by Schelling, and Pfänder is influenced by both. In spite of all

his hostility to merely constructive or speculative thinking, Pfänder relaxes his phenomenological caution and guidance by purely genuine experience.

More than that: Pfänder has blinded himself to the basic metaphysical intuition of the absolute goodness and meaning of existence as such, irrespective of the specific essences participating in existence. Although Plato put the value principle in definite ideas, he was nevertheless open to that insight which shines in Homer's report about the experience of Ulysses in the realm of ghosts: rather a porter here in this real material world than a king in the world of shadows. And overflowing with goodness, out of kindness Plato's demiurgos shapes this material world with all its imperfections, in spite of them. And Pfänder himself cannot avoid considering the actualization of essences or ideas as the goal of life. But not because actuality as such is good but because the value lies in the essences; these, since created by God, manifest God's will in the form of ideal postulates or imperatives (pp. 160-161, 164-165). The primarily voluntaristic aspect of Pfänder's thinking would have put him on the side of those medieval thinkers who derived the validity of moral imperatives from the will of God, instead of deriving God's will from His insight in the absolute validity of the contents of those imperatives. Murder is immoral, not because as Pfänder would say, God forbids it, but God forbids it because it is bad in itself since it is destruction of existence. Not all ideas or essences are considered by Pfänder to be good but there are also bad ideas and their actualization is bad; there are beautiful *and* ugly forms. Consequently Pfänder arrives at the condemnation of definite parts of reality, speaking of them, on page 82, as the philistine who opposes pathetically the Beautiful and the Sublime to the "paltry, dirty, feeble, unarranged, soberly despicable." But this is the language of all the annoying opponents of the great spiritual conquerors of new realms of beauty. I repeat, Pfänder lacks the metaphysical intuition of existence as the principle of value. He ignores the sentence of the Bible "God saw that it [referring to the creation] was good." He emphasizes the inequality of the values of essences and reduces the creator to a kind of despot by explaining the ideal postulates as particular assignments flowing from those essences of unequal value. (The essential inequality of men is emphasized by Pfänder frequently; on page 162 he admits that all men are brothers but he adds that this does not mean that all men are created by God in an equal way.)

Great was Pfänder's gift of observing genuinely real experiences and keeping apart what commonly has been confused. And great was his courage in sticking imperturbably to real experiences and distinctions, even if they contradicted the most inveterate and generally accepted doctrines. His boldness in facing and acknowledging phenome-

na, even if they cannot as yet be explained and do not fit into any preconceived system, made him more than anyone else of the entire phenomenological school, including Husserl, the true representative of a really phenomenological attitude.

But, unfortunately, just as Husserl's phenomenological attitude and strength became weak when, unable to resist metaphysical temptations, he tried to go deeper than the phenomenological method permitted him to go, so it was with Pfänder when he tried to touch at random, as he did in the book under review here, the basic problems of metaphysics, such as God and the ultimate goal of human existence and morality. This is a new proof for the impossibility of approaching metaphysics by a new method. We shall never outgrow metaphysical speculation in spite of the sincerest efforts to confine ourselves to strict experience.

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RETREAT FROM LIKENESS IN THE THEORY OF PAINTING. 2d ed. By FRANCES BRADSHAW BLANSHARD. New York, Columbia University Press, 1949. Pp. xiv, 178. 8 illustrations. \$3.50.

This is a revised edition of a volume by the same title published under the imprint of the King's Crown Press in 1945. Mrs. Blanshard's main thesis has not changed substantially, but the new edition incorporates, along with an improved format and several illustrations, much reworking and reorganizing of old materials and the addition of considerable new materials, especially in the sections on the heritage and theory of abstract painting.

Mrs. Blanshard's thesis is two-edged. First, she wishes to show that abstract painting in its current manifestation is based on a theory of art that is not at all revolutionary, but simply the ultimate stage in a movement away from representative painting that had its beginnings in ancient Greece. Second, she hopes to prove that an understanding of the history and theory of abstract painting can throw light, not only on its own potentialities and limitations, but on the aesthetics of representative painting as well.

Pursuant to these objectives, she devotes the first half of her book to the history of the abandonment of the "copy theory" of art, a movement which she calls "a retreat from likeness." That the abandonment of the copy theory should be referred to as a "movement" or a "retreat" is somewhat puzzling, since, on Mrs. Blanshard's own showing, the changes rung on the theory were various and disconnected and by no means ordered in terms of a progressive (or regressive?) succession of stages. Thus, Aristotle is lumped together with Sir Joshua