

**Nigel Warburton**

*Philosophy: Basic Readings*. Third Edition.

New York: Routledge 1999.

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*Philosophy: Basic Readings* is a collection of essays and selections from larger works that cover a wide range of contemporary philosophical issues. As may be expected, most readers who have studied philosophy would have already been exposed to most of the writings that are included. The audience, however, is the students who are taking an introductory course in philosophy. More accurately, the immediate audience is the teachers who are searching for an edited work to include in such a course.

And so the reviewer ought to be primarily concerned with the question: Is this a good book for introducing students to philosophy? The book begins well, with a series of contemporary answers to the basic question: what is philosophy? Warburton includes answers given by Bertrand Russell, A.J. Ayer, Mary Warnock and D.H. Mellor. While these responses would engage with the question and encourage discussion, there are many other important and varied responses to this question that could have made this section of the book more interesting, beginning with the Socratic dialogues and including some of the better-known passages from Wittgenstein's notebooks.

The remaining selections in the book focus on some of the core problems of contemporary philosophy. These problems are organized into general sections: god, politics, mind, art, and so on. As with the first section, these selections could encourage significant engagements with some of the key contemporary debates but could also have been more varied.

There are very few pre-twentieth-century selections, except short selections from earlier philosophers who happen to fit into contemporary debates. Thus Berlin's 'Two Concepts of Liberty' is included, while a selection from Hobbes's *Leviathan* is the only selection in the 'Politics' section from before the twentieth century. In Warburton's defense, even if he did not include extensive selections from pre-twentieth-century philosophers, many of the people that he did include discuss many earlier thinkers. Berlin, for instance, discusses Locke and Rousseau, and could be used to point students in these directions.

The general character of the selections is clearly in favor of analytical philosophy (from Hume to Russell). Beyond short selections from Descartes, Kant, and Pascal, the writings are almost completely Anglo-American. In part, the character of the selections arises from the obvious decision to organize these selections without a concern for the history of philosophy. But another result of these selections is that a wide variety of issues and thinkers are not given a place in the 'basic readings'. Where, for instance, is Nietzsche? or the Existentialists? or the Marxists?

From another direction, however, a concern for the organization of the selections raises important questions concerning how 'the problems of philosophy' ought to be classified. It is interesting to note, for instance, that while Warburton includes a section on 'politics,' he has not included a section on 'ethics'. There is a section labelled 'right and wrong', which contains many of the selections that people would expect to find in the section dealing with 'ethics'. But there is a key philosophical debate that is being obscured here. Warburton assumes that philosophical ethics is primarily about right and wrong, which means that the so-called 'virtue-ethics' of writers such as Aristotle simply do not fit. The section begins, quite expectedly, with Kant's 'Categorical Imperative'.

Another series of issues that the organization of the selections raises is how the different classes of problems can be related. How, for instance, do the selections in 'Politics' relate to those in 'Right and Wrong'? Or those in 'Science' relate to those in 'Art'? These are not obvious issues in the book. Rather, students are encouraged to pass from one set of issues to another, as if from one study component to the next.

But do these criticisms mean that the book is not a good book for an introductory course in philosophy? As with most teachers who decide which books to use as textbooks, there are some selections that I would not use, others that I would have included, and complaints that I would raise in class. I would encourage students to worry about the way that the book classifies problems and the way that various important people and issues are absent or marginal. But I would do that with any introductory text book; in part because these concerns are also an important aspect of philosophy.

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**Fred Wilson**

*The Logic And Methodology of  
Science in Early Modern Thought.*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1999.

Pp. xxiv + 608.

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There has been a growing tendency among historians of science to adopt a continuity thesis between Aristotelian and medieval science on the one hand and modern (post-Galilean) science on the other. Wilson's impressive book is a systematic attempt to reverse this tide by showing that there was a real break between the two in the characterisation of both the cognitive end which science aims to achieve *and* the method by which it is best achievable. Put

in a tiny nutshell, Wilson claims that the cognitive goal of the new science is knowledge of general and exceptionless matter-of-fact regularities and the new method by which this goal is best achieved is eliminative induction. Contrast to these the aim and method of Aristotelianism: to achieve rational insight into the metaphysical natures or essences of things by the method of abstraction from particulars. The break was so deep, according to Wilson, that the philosophy of science itself had to be revolutionised in order to make space for the new science. Humean empiricism, we are told, is the product of this revolution and — at the same time — the philosophical foundation of the new science.

All this sounds basically right to me, and Wilson argues thoroughly for it and documents it masterfully, citing and analysing the views of both the defenders of the new science and its detractors. However, there is a residual worry that his argument is set up in a way that renders Carnap's and Hempel's view of science the, almost inevitably, correct philosophical companion of modern science. Even the infamous Hempelian symmetry between explanation and prediction is given a constitutive place in the post-Aristotelian science (64). The book consists of seven interconnected studies. It is somewhat wordy and with quite a number of almost *verbatim* repetitions of the same material. It would have certainly benefited from a better editing. But the studies can be read — and used in courses — independently of each other. One of them, study 5 — “Rules by Which to Judge of Causes” before Hume’ — offers a rather nice summary of the basic argument of the entire book. It also makes a very strong case for the thesis that, despite the fact that some versions of the famous principles of agreement and difference for finding causes had been around before Hume, it was Hume who first articulated them properly and connected them with the method of elimination as well as with the cognitive aim of the new science. There is also a neat discussion of Hume's account of causation in study 4. Wilson distances himself from the naive regularity-theory interpretation of Hume (308), but also points out that, unlike both the Aristotelians and the Cartesians, all necessity that Hume finds in causation is purely psychological: a matter of having a ‘law-asserting attitude’ (321) towards some regularities but not others. But the central study of the book is the first. There Wilson presents the Aristotelian view of science and knowledge in some detail and outlines the empiricist and rationalist reactions to it. His main point is that both rationalists and empiricists defended the new aim and the new method of the post-Galilean science, but it was the empiricists who really broke with the Aristotelian philosophical framework of substances, natures, essences and necessary connections. And they, Locke and Hume in particular, did this by repudiating the metaphysics of essences and the epistemology of rational intuition, innate ideas and infallible knowledge. Here, however, Wilson should have been clearer in his argument. For if we take the cognitive aim of science to be the discovery of matter-of-fact regularities, the Cartesians did break with the Aristotelians. But if we take the cognitive aim to be the establishment of infallible knowledge, then there is no such break. Which of

the two aims should we prioritise in our analysis of the new science? It seems that Wilson wavers. He does want to put Descartes and the like on the side of the new science, but he also wants to stress that they didn't break with the basic Aristotelian framework (cf. 86 and 111). Another problem might be his interpretation of Locke. He tends to present Locke more as an eliminativist about real essences (108) than as a sceptic about them. He attributes to Locke an ontological version of the basic empiricist ‘Principle of Acquaintance’ (249 and 335), whereas it seems that he was more after an epistemic version of this principle. However, later on (336), Wilson pictures Locke as an agnostic by noting his argument that we can, after all, form the abstract idea of real essences based on the immediate comprehension of the power of the will to bring about actions. Study 3, on logic, is very impressive. Wilson shows how both the rationalists and the empiricists distinguished the logic of consistency from the logic of truth — the two having been brought together by Aristotle. Here again, however, he seems to waver. For he says that for empiricists logic was simply the logic of consistency (214), but he then goes on to show how they after all tried to articulate a logic of truth — eliminative induction (cf. 255-61 and 340). To his credit, Wilson makes abundantly clear that any account of the new scientific method — eliminative induction — should rest on some substantive assumptions about the world: that there are causes to be found and that there is a limited variety of these causes. Rationalists and empiricists differ in the justification they offer for these assumptions. The former make them a priori true, whereas the latter treat them as empirical hypotheses — to be justified only a posteriori.

*The Logic and Methodology of Science in Early Modern Thought* is an impressive book that casts new light on many issues in the history of modern philosophy. It is full of rigorous scholarship and detailed examination of both more and less well-known works by many modern thinkers. But it also makes a couple of insightful contributions to still outstanding problems in the philosophy of science, e.g., the nature of laws of nature (231-53).

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