THE MATTER OF LIFE: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS OF BIOLOGY. By Michael A. Simon. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press. 1971. Pp. xi, 258. \$7.50.

It is a pleasure to recommend a new work devoted exclusively to the philosophy of biology, by an author who has obviously worked hard to make himself cognizant of important historical and contemporary aspects of his subject science. The Matter of Life can rightly take its place with its very few predecessors (such as T.A. Goudge's The Ascent of Life).

Simon's work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter, "Biology as Science," is concerned with the sense of the word "science" proper to biology. In particular, Simon asks whether biology is or can be a science in quite the manner that physics is a science. J. J.C. Smart maintains that biology cannot be such a science for the simple reason that it has no genuine laws of its own—so-called "biological laws" being not really biological if they are laws and not really laws if they are biological. Simon considers Smart's thesis and then, in his second chapter "Biological Explanation," he tackles the question whether biological explanations are always in some important sense explanations of the kind that one finds in the physical sciences (that is, so-called "covering-law" explanations, which are in principle capable of bearing predictions), or whether, as Goudge and M. Scriven have claimed, biology has its own distinctive forms of explanation—forms which are explanatory without being potentially predictive. Simon takes a moderate middle-of-the-road position: he disputes Smart's claim about the non-existence of biological laws and seems sympathetic to Scriven's claims about the distinctiveness of certain kinds of biological explanation.

Simon's third chapter, "Theories, Models, and the Concept of the Gene," traces in some detail the history of the gene-concept, from Mendel's factors to the modern molecular, DNA model. This historical discussion is used to justify certain philosophical conclusions as to the way in which scientific concepts change and the legitimacy of a hardline division between "theoretical" and "observational" concepts. The next chapter, "The Presuppositions of Biological Science," asks what is involved in treating organisms as machines, discusses the problem of emergence (How are we to account for the occurrence on higher levels of organization of properties which have never appeared on a lower level?), and raises various questions concerning the place of teleological thinking in biology. Finally, the fifth chapter—"The Extensions of Biological Thought'—deals with more metaphysical

Matter Of Life Philosophical Problems Of Biology

KJ Lindholm-Leary

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In a period characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its power to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "Matter Of Life Philosophical Problems Of Biology," a mesmerizing literary creation penned by way of a celebrated wordsmith, readers embark on an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring impact on our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book is central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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