

## GEORGE J. BOWDERY (1916–1945)

George Bowdery was killed in action on April 5, 1945. Though a young man, he was already doing first-rate work in philosophy of science. He left behind an unfinished book on “The Role of Conventions in Scientific Inquiry, with special reference to Clerk Maxwell’s electrical theories” which would have been an outstanding contribution to the subject. An introductory chapter was published under the title of “Conventions and Norms” in this Journal (Vol. 8, No. 4, October 1941, Pages 493–505). The remainder of the manuscript, consisting of sections on “The Concept of ‘Field’”, and “The Background of Maxwell’s Theory”, will be bound and deposited in the Library of the University of Illinois, where it will be available for consultation by students\*.

George Bowdery was born in Brooklyn, N. Y. on February 25, 1916. He graduated from Columbia College in 1937 with honors in philosophy. After holding a graduate scholarship at Columbia University, he became a fellow in philosophy at the University of Illinois (1940–1). Enlisting in the army in August 1941, he was commissioned a lieutenant in August 1942, being for a time attached to the Aberdeen Proving Ground. Eventually he went to France as one of a team of civil affairs personnel and at the time of the Von Runstedt offensive was working in Luxemburg. Captured on Dec. 19, after three days spent in a surrounded village, he was finally transferred to the Hammelburg prison camp. An unsuccessful American attempt to liberate the camp led to the prisoners being marched a hundred miles across Germany. The prisoners were resting on the outskirts of Nuremberg, when two heavy bombs hit the column.

I remember George as kindly, unassuming, sincere, the least militaristic of men. It is hard to accept the fact that he will be unable to finish the work he began so well.

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\* The following brief description may be helpful to students. The sections mentioned were almost ready, and would need comparatively little revision before publication. The guiding purpose of the book was to trace in a concrete and important historical instance the considerations which lead a scientist to adopt conventions. A logical analysis of the notions associated with the classical notion of electrical ‘field’ leads Bowdery to formulate eight conclusions with respect to the role of definitions and fictions in the theory. The subsequent discussion of “The Background of Maxwell’s Theory” is both analytic and historically descriptive. It brings together interesting and relatively unknown materials for this significant episode in the history of science.