ALBERT WIFSTRAND

Epochs and Styles

Edited by LARS RYDBECK and STANLEY E. PORTER

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Mohr Siebeck

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Epochs and Styles

Selected Writings on the New Testament, Greek Language and Greek Culture in the Post-Classical Era

Edited by
Lars Rydbeck and Stanley E. Porter
Translated from the Swedish Originals by
Denis Searby

Mohr Siebeck

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ALBERT WIFSTRAND, 1901-1964; 1935-1964 Professor of Greek at the University of Lund.

Editorial Foreword

Habent sua fata libelli. The story of how this book originated is told in the introduction (pp. 1–2). Here I will limit myself to mentioning those friends and colleagues who, each in his or her own way, have helped to realize the idea of publishing a selection of essays and writings of Albert Wifstrand originally written in Swedish and dealing with both the New Testament and the language and cultural history of late antiquity.

Professor Stanley E. Porter, Hamilton (Ontario), spent the Fall Term of 1999 in Lund as a visiting professor in New Testament exegesis and Greek. It was then that we started discussing collaboration on the present book. In the years that followed, Professor Porter, as co-editor, along with his assistants Andrew Gabriel and Virginia Wolfe, has given me invaluable assistance in regard to getting the publication ready for printing. Academics born in the 1930s, like myself, are not quick to tackle such a task, spoiled as we are by once having had all such work taken care of by the printers. Times really have changed in that respect. (Up to his death in 1964, Wifstrand was allowed to deliver handwritten texts to the Berlingska Tryckeriet, his printers in Lund. He was probably the only scholar with permission to do so, doubtless due to his clear handwriting and the attractive style of his Greek letters.)

The translator, Dr. Denis Searby, Uppsala-Stockholm, had a very difficult task. Wifstrand's style in Swedish is idiosyncratic and, moreover, several of the essays published here retain features of oral style, based as they are on public lectures. It requires a good deal of imagination on the part of a translator to capture even such personal stylistic features in English. I especially thank him for having been so open to my suggested changes.

Rural Dean Mailice Wifstrand, Lund, who owns the copyright to Wifstrand's *oeuvre*, has given constant support to the project in many ways, particularly by generously lending off-prints.

Two of Wifstrand's children, Marianne Wifstrand-Schiebe, Associate Professor of Latin at Uppsala University, and Sven Wifstrand, BA in Latin and Greek, Stockholm, have read and commented on various parts of the typescript. Sven Wifstrand also helped to produce the indices.

Four other colleagues have also, in different ways, supported the project. An essay by Professor Marius Reiser in Mainz more or less supplied the initial impulse for my work as editor (see Introduction pp. 1–

2). At a later stage he also suggested the translation of the noteworthy Festschrift essay, "Lyckans son och plågans son" (Son of Fortune, Son of Affliction). Jerker Blomqvist, Professor Emeritus of Greek in Lund, provided a thoughtful answer to the question of which of Wifstrand's essays he would like to see translated from Swedish. Samuel Byrskog, professor of New Testament exegesis in Göteborg, helped me with transcribing Hebrew letters, once it was decided that transliteration would be used. In Wifstrand's day it was the custom to render even single words or short phrases in Hebrew with Hebrew characters. Greg Horsley, Professor of Classics in the University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W., Australia, gave very valuable help by reading the whole manuscript. Many of his important suggestions could be incorporated into the final proofs.

At the meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas in Durham 2002, essays by Wifstrand were presented in their new English dress for discussion and comments at the Hellenistic seminar (The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament: Language, Culture, Ideas). At this seminar, Professor Loveday Alexander, Sheffield, offered her remarks on "Luke and Greek Classicism" and "Luke and the Septuagint". Her comments are now published in "Septuaginta, Fachprosa, Imitatio: Albert Wifstrand and the Language of Luke-Acts" (in Die Apostelgeschichte und die hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung: Festschrift für Eckhard Plümacher zu seinem 65 Geburtstag, ed. C. Breytenbach, J. Schröter, and D. S. Du Toit, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 57, Leiden, 2004, pp. 1–26). At the meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas in Bonn 2003, Professor Marius Reiser presented a paper to the same Hellenistic seminar, in which Wifstrand's views on the nature of the Greek of the New Testament played a crucial role. The paper will be published in the Biblische Zeitschrift, no. 1, 2005, under the title "Die Quellen des neutestamentlichen Griechisch und die Frage des Judengriechischen in der Forschungsgeschichte von 1689-1989". Professor Alexander and Professor Reiser certainly helped to dispel the notion that scholarly, humanistic work in our brave new world is a perishable good that swiftly ages.

Finally, the economic support so generously given by the Birgit and Sven Håkan Ohlsson Foundation (Lund, Sweden) has been absolutely crucial for the publishing of this book.

To all whose contributions have been mentioned above I extend my warmest thanks.

Lars Rydbeck November 2004

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T

There will be no attempt made in this introduction to describe the character of Albert Wifstrand. That was done some months after Wifstrand's death in June 1964 by one of his oldest pupils, Jonas Palm, who had been appointed professor of Greek in Uppsala just two years earlier. He brought the image of our teacher before the eyes of all of us who had been Wifstrand's students, and we were all grateful for Palm's perceptive description of Wifstrand's life and work (Nachruf in *Gnomon* 36, 1964, translated for the present anthology from the German by Denis Searby; see p. 9).

Four years after Wifstrand's death, in 1968, the year of student rebellions, the late Professor G. D. Kilpatrick, New Testament exegete from Oxford, visited Lund. We exchanged recollections about Wifstrand, whom Kilpatrick only knew through writings published in German and English. There were especially three articles published in English by Wifstrand (Chapters 3, 4 and 8 in this volume) that had impressed Kilpatrick. In addition, he had also read "Fornkyrkan och den grekiska bildningen" (Early Church and Greek Culture), which was published in French in 1962 ("L'Église Ancienne et la Culture Grecque") and in German in 1966 ("Die alte Kirche und die griechische Bildung"). On his return to Oxford, Kilpatrick wrote to me and suggested that the articles Wifstrand had written in Swedish on the New Testament be translated. Changed circumstances in my life resulted in this proposal never being realized – until now.

In connection with the preparations for the centennial celebration of Wifstrand's birth on 3 March 1901, a rather remarkable coincidence occurred. An article appeared in Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft (90 [1999], pp. 1–27) written by Marius Reiser, New Testament exegete in Mainz. It had a very Wifstrandian title: "Die Stellung der Evangelien in der antiken Literaturgeschichte". In a footnote Reiser suggests that Wifstrand's "schwedisch geschriebene Arbeiten zum NT dringend übersetzt werden sollten".

I contacted Reiser and invited him to lecture at the Wifstrand Centenary Symposium. He offered to speak on the style of Paul (lecture published in Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok 66 [2001], pp. 151–165, under the title "Paulus als Stilist").

At the Centenary Symposium, which, in addition to Reiser's lecture, also featured a lecture by myself on the Greeks' discovery of conscience (published in Aigis 2/1 http://aigis.igl.ku.dk), fifteen former students of Wifstrand shared with us their memories of their teacher covering a period from the 1940s to the early 1960s. Wifstrand was appointed professor in Lund in 1935 at the age of 34; the oldest selection in this volume is in fact his Inaugural Lecture, "Greek and Modern Prose Style".

Marius Reiser provided the greatest surprise at the symposium by bringing along with him the first copies of his book *Sprache und literarische Formen des Neuen Testaments* (Schöningh-Paderborn, 2001, 257 pages), with a dedication to Wifstrand: "Dem Andenken Albert Wifstrands (1901–1964) gewidmet". At the end of the book's foreword, Reiser writes: "Die Widmung gilt einem Klassischen Philologen, der ein feines Gespür für stilistische Dinge hatte und Septuaginta, Neues Testament und Kirchenväter ganz selbstverständlich zu seinem Arbeitsfeld rechnete".

Η

In his writings, Wifstrand spends relatively little time reasoning about the work and opinions of other scholars. He used to remark that you should know what others think but first work with the ancient texts themselves.

Discussions of method also occur only rarely. Naturally, this does not mean that his work was unmethodical. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, his method is concealed beneath all the work he did. Bilde Künstler. rede nicht!

His point of departure is often a remark on language or style, or else the observation that something is not quite what one would expect it to be. It may be the question of a single word or expression or some idea that stands out in one way or another. A characteristic instance may be found in the essay "Medelpunkten" ("The Centre"; Chapter 13). Wifstrand had noticed that *kentron* in Greek could not be used metaphorically in the way it is today (e.g. "she was the centre of attention"), even though this was in an age when people believed the earth to be the centre of the universe. Only after Copernicus, when the earth was removed to the periphery, could the word "centre" begin to be used metaphorically as we use it now.

In his Inaugural Lecture from 1935 ("Greek and Modern Prose Style"; Chapter 7), there are several examples of the same method of approaching problems by means of the close reading of a text. Let me just mention here one such result: modern prose style uses images and metaphors to a much greater extent than Greek prose did. Wifstrand exemplifies this observation in various ways from Greek and modern texts and brings the Old and New Testaments into the discussion as well, something which was certainly not typical for classical philologists in the 1930s.

3

Ш

It was clear from the start that this anthology would contain examples of three categories of Wifstrand's essays: 1. Studies on the New Testament. 2. General studies on the history of the Greek language. 3. Studies concerning the history of culture and ideas in late antiquity.

Section I. Essays about grammatical and stylistic problems in New Testament texts (Chapters 1-4) head the anthology. It also seemed appropriate to include an assessment of New Testament Greek in its entirety (Chapter 5: "Language and Style of the New Testament").

Chapters 1 and 2 ("Luke and Greek Classicism" and "Luke and the Septuagint") treat the style and language of Luke. Luke takes the LXX as his stylistic and grammatical model, sometimes in such a way that he quite originally develops tendencies and types of expressions which one can not exemplify from the LXX itself.

Regarding the so-called classicism of Luke, Wifstrand shows in a mild polemic against Eduard Norden (fortiter in re, suaviter in modo) that "in the same way as Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom borrowed embellishments. nuances and devices from Attic literature, so too Luke sought to borrow the atmosphere and dignity of his own classics, which were not, however, Plato and Thucydides, but Isaiah and Jeremiah, Moses and David, as they came to him in the Greek attire given them by the Hellenistic Jews in Egypt" (quotation from Chapter 2).

Chapter 3 ("Stylistic Problems in the Epistles of James and Peter") discusses the stylistic origins of these texts. We are here dealing with normal koine Greek that acquires a Semitic colouring whenever the authors feel the need to raise their discourse to a higher stylistic sphere. Elements of what has been called Greek rhetoric or diatribe style may have their origin in late Jewish texts (e.g. Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon, 1 Enoch and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs). The stylistic home of James and Peter is probably the edifying language of the Hellenized synagogue, not popular philosophical diatribe or artificial classicizing prose. In a way we are back to the concept of biblical (or judaizing) Greek. However, it is a question of a normal koine prose which in some authors is coloured by direct Semitisms, in others by influences and analogies from the LXX. Peter, James (and Hebrews) represent a sort of Christian koine style and become the natural starting point and model for the theological discourse of the early Empire.

Chapter 4 ("A Problem Concerning Word Order in the New Testament") deals with the position of enclitic personal pronouns. It is not simply the case that these pronouns in the Gospels are placed after their referent, for Hebrew and Aramaic do so with their personal suffixes. Rather, the question is more subtle. We are given instances of this problem

of word order in classical Greek, late popular Greek and the more literary Greek of the Empire. Wifstrand gets into the contents of the texts, something necessary in all studies of Greek word order. Close connection to an emphatic referent always favours direct postposition. This entire essay is as exciting as a detective story. From the pedagogical point of view, it is extraordinarily skilful.

The study of this word order problem in the New Testament required an investigation of the evidence from the LXX. Wifstrand delivered it a year later in a study published in German, which unfortunately could not be included in this volume ("Die Stellung der enklitischen Personalpronomina bei den Septuaginta", Kungl Hum Vetenskapssamfundets i Lund Årsberättelse 1949–1959, II, pp. 44–70).

The translators of the LXX mostly follow the Semitic original's mechanical postposition. In some later, more strictly Greek texts, e.g. in Wisdom of Solomon, we find that approximately 25% of the enclitic personal pronouns have a freer pre-position. A very emphatic word or phrase (an emphatic interrogative pronoun, an emphatic negation, an accentuated predicate) often attracts the enclitic to itself even in the LXX. In such cases the Greek usage was so settled that some of the translators were forced to depart slightly from the usual postposition.

Greek word order has always been elusive. Wifstrand's two studies on the position of enclitic personal pronouns are *Kabinettstücke* which should be taken into account by those few Greek philologists and New Testament scholars who work on questions of word order today.

Section II. Here are included essays and studies dealing with questions of style and grammar that are important for a deeper understanding of the history of classical and post-classical Greek (especially Chapter 6, "Greek Prose Style: An Historical Survey"). Chapter 7 ("Greek and Modern Prose Style") adopts a comparative method in order to show the differences between Greek and modern prose style. Chapter 8 ("The Homily of Melito on the Passion"), which might also have been placed in section I, contains so many interesting remarks on style in pagan and Christian homilies that it was placed here. It also contains remarks on the term un-Greek or un-Hellenic, which is all too often and unthinkingly used to characterize the linguistic and educational environment of Christian culture.

In his recent history of the Greek language (Geschichte der griechischen Sprache. Von den Anfängen bis heute, Tübingen and Basel, 2001), F. R. Adrados makes no mention at all of Wifstrand's contributions. The explanation lies partially in the fact that much of what Adrados would probably have found important was unavailable to him, since it had only been published in Swedish. In fact, Adrados mentions ten of Wifstrand's students, from Urban Ursing's dissertation in 1930 to my own dissertation

in 1967, a time span of 38 years. A little more curiosity might have led Adrados to Wifstrand, especially as he cites Radermacher's article "Koine" from 1947 (Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philologisch-historische Klasse 224/5, Vienna, 1947, pp. 1–74), where the Nestor of New Testament grammar let fall the noteworthy remark that "die Führung liegt wohl jetzt bei den Schweden", thanks not least to the contributions of Wifstrand and his students.

Section III. Six essays and lectures on the history of ideas and culture are collected in this section. In one way or another they all touch on issues in the cultural and intellectual world of Hellenistic and Imperial times. The discussion often begins with the situation in the classical period; in several of the studies, the lines of development are traced down to our own time, i.e. down to the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 9 ("Classical and Post-Classical Greeks") offers a standpoint on how we should assess the post-classical period. Wifstrand dismisses what he calls "the dreams about Hellas", i.e. the enormous overrating of pre-Christian classical culture. This makes us resemble the classicists of the Imperial Age who wanted to turn the clock back 500 years. Wifstrand, on the contrary, saw that much of what we value the most today had its origins in the post-classical period, not least through the birth of Christianity and the creation of the New Testament corpus.

Chapter 10 ("The Roman Empire from the Greek Perspective") takes up a problem of assimilation, still important for Europeans today in a world dominated by the USA. How did the politically but not culturally defeated Greeks react to the Romans? When did the Greeks begin to conceive of themselves as Romans? Romaios originally meant, of course, "Roman", but it gradually became the name for the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the Roman Empire as well. This investigation was later brought to completion by one of Wifstrand's students, Jonas Palm, in his work Rom, Römertum und Imperium in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit (Lund, 1959). Wifstrand's study was first published in 1961 in the essay collection Bakgrunder. Uppsatser om tider och tänkesätt ([Backgrounds: Essays on Times and Ways of Thinking] Lund, 1961); however, the work had already been done in the middle of the 1950s.

Chapter 11 ("Focus on the Child") deals with the image of the child among the Greeks, especially the post-classical Greeks, and the discussion of it is traced down to our own day and age, as so often in Wifstrand's cultural aperçus. The seed of the idea of the child as an individual in its own right is shown to be found in the Fathers of the Church. Especially important for the positive and optimistic view of the nature of children is a passage in Severian from Gabala. In general one can state that the originality and intensity in Wifstrand's observations are the result of his having

read Greek texts that had earlier been ignored, and that he discovered details in these texts that cast light on important cultural contexts.¹

It seems that the time has passed when classical philologists used to read large portions of ancient literature in their entirety and had leisure to ponder what they read. It may well be that this personal perspective is Wifstrand's most important legacy to us latecomers who like to think that the digital *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* will open up entirely new contexts for us.

Chapter 12 ("Son of Fortune, Son of Affliction") has as its point of departure the remarkable phrase *hyios odynes* as found in Menander's *Dyskolos* (the only extant complete Menander comedy, published first in 1958). This type of expression was earlier known only from biblical contexts. Wifstrand gives us a magisterial survey of this type of expression first in Greek, then in European literature up to and including the Romantic period. It is through Christianity that this kind of phrase (with "son" + an abstract substantive in the genitive) created a special niche for itself in European prose and poetry.

Chapter 13 ("The Centre") has already been mentioned above (p. 2). As a study of the history of ideas in the genre of "history of a concept", it is a good example of how studies of Western mentality can be carried out. Wifstrand had read the relevant texts himself, collecting and putting together significant examples. Then, as the good lecturer and teacher he was, he placed his collection of evidence into an effective didactic framework.

Chapter 14 ("Sidelights on Greek Culture from a Greek Medical Writer") is entirely based on several years' industrious reading of the complete corpus of Galen's works. During my early years as a student, I used to see Wifstrand sitting several hours each morning at his desk in the University Library with Kühn's edition in front of him. Emendations and interpretations of Galen's text (especially the commentaries on Hippocrates) were collected and published in German in the *Eikota* series no. 6–8 (see Bibliographic Note, p. 7 below). However, during the course of his intellectual journey, Wifstrand had come across so many culturally interesting details in the medical writings of Galen that he collected the material for a volume in the series known as Det svenska humanistiska förbundets Skriftserie. On reading this long essay, one can clearly see that the author was enjoying himself while writing it. The desire to *docere et delectare* was still strong in the mature scholar.

¹ The latest fascicle of the *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* contains a long article on "Kind" written by Marc Kleijwegt (Griechisch-Römisch, Jüdisch, Christlich) and Rita Amedick (Ikonographie). See *RAC* Lieferung 159 (Stuttgart, 2004), cols. 865–947. It is a pity that Wifstrand's "Focus on the Child" was not yet available to the authors.

When cancer struck Wifstrand in early 1964, he had already announced the reading of Aristotle's *Politics* for the graduate seminar during the Spring Term. Of that, only an introductory seminar in January could be given. On his agenda for the Spring Term was also the writing of a work he had been planning for many years which had to do with the history of Hellenistic and Imperial prose (the working title was: *From Koine to Byzantinism*). It was to be written in German, Wifstrand's second language. The material had already been collected. The mental conception of it was complete. This had ever been his method of working. However, his death in June of 1964 prevented the actual writing of it.

News of Wifstrand's death reached me in Hamburg where I had gone to study under the direction of Hartmut Erbse and Bruno Snell. Earlier during the spring I had visited Wifstrand at the surgery wing in the hospital at Lund. On the first occasion, I brought with me a pocketsize edition of the poetry of Walter von der Vogelweide from Fischer Bücherei. Wifstrand was then reading for pleasure Lobeck's edition of Phrynichus in a copy from the University Library. When I came for a second visit, I ventured to ask if he liked Walter's poetry. "Yes", he answered in his characteristic dialect, "and I have been amusing myself by translating him into Sapphic verse". He did not have to tell me that he had tried to translate him into Greek Sapphics.

Lars Rydbeck

Bibliographic Note

In 1971 Wifstrand's complete bibliography was published in the acts of a scholarly society in Lund along with a German translation of his last public talk in Swedish ("Laonikos Chalkokondyles, der letzte Athener", pp. 5–20 and Sven G. Sjöberg, "Die gedruckten Schriften von Professor Albert Wifstrand 1923–1971", pp. 23–41, in *Scripta minora Regiae Societatis humaniorum litterarum Lundensis*, 1971–1972:2, Lund, 1971).

In Jonas Palm's Eulogy (p. 9 below), the most important works of Wifstrand are mentioned and described. Among the Swedish works that deserve to be translated can be mentioned his *Grekisk Metrik* (Greek Metre) from 1935 (Lund, 107 pages) and his history of Greek literature from 1959 ("Den grekiska litteraturen", in *Bonniers allmänna litteraturhistoria*, ed. E. N. Tigerstedt, Del 1, Stockholm, 1959, pp. 87–258). His history of Greek literature has the same scope as Wilamowitz's *Die Griechische Literatur des Altertums* from 1925 (in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart* 1:8, Berlin, pp. 1–236) and bears comparison with it.

A number of studies with the subtitle "Emendationen und Interpretationen zu griechischen Prosaikern der Kaiserzeit" began to be published as early as 1931. Wifstrand had given the series the ingenious title *Eikota*, which works with both Greek and Latin letters and means "probabilities". The first instalment deals with the works of Dio of Prusa. Wifstrand published eight instalments altogether in the *Eikota* series. The eighth and final issue from 1964 deals with Galen, as do numbers 6 and 7. These eight *Eikota* treatises, which reflect Wifstrand's lifelong interest in the Greek literature of the Imperial Age, are mentioned by Albert Lesky in his *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (Bern and Munich, 2nd ed., 1963, p. 953), and deserve to be published together in a single volume.

Eulogy for Albert Wifstrand*

The death of Albert Wifstrand has plunged his friends, students and colleagues into deep sorrow. An illness, against which medical science proved powerless, snatched him away at the age of 63, when he had already given so much of himself and still had so much more to give. In him classical philology has lost one of its most outstanding representatives, his country one of its cultural leaders, his students an incomparable teacher and fatherly friend.

The course of his life was clear and consistent. A shopkeeper's son, he was born on 3 March 1901 in the small town of Mörrum in Blekinge, a province of southern Sweden. In 1918 he enrolled in the University of Lund to which he would remain faithful as a student and teacher until his death. He devoted himself to the study of antiquity and Semitic languages, his teachers being Einar Löfstedt, Claes Lindskog, Martin P. Nilsson and Axel Moberg, but he had already from the start settled on Greek philology as his future field. He received his doctorate at the age of 25, unusually early for a Swedish student in the humanities; his dissertation, Studien zur griechischen Anthologie, immediately gave him the title of Docent (lecturer). Since the holder of the chair of Greek, Lindskog, as a Member of Parliament and also for a while as Minister of Cultural Affairs, was obliged to be absent from the university, the young lecturer had to take over the professor's teaching responsibilities for a number of years. Considering the increased workload brought about by these circumstances, his scholarly achievement during this period as lecturer was amazing; it was probably only possible for someone blessed with his gift of concentration. In 1935 he was appointed professor of Greek language and literature in Lund. In addition to his teaching duties, he was later entrusted with numerous other assignments; I would here only mention that he participated in the scholarly advisory committee for the appointment of professors not only within Greek philology, but also for the history of ideas (Oslo 1960) and ecclesiastical history (Åbo 1962). The two latter assignments witness to the reputation he had acquired outside the borders of his own country. In 1950 his university awarded him the title of Doctor honoris causa in Theology.

^{*}Originally published in German in Gnomon 36 (1964), pp. 730-733.

Already from the start of his career Wifstrand seems to have worked with a rare sense of independence and self-confidence, and it would certainly be mistaken to look to earlier scholars for any significant influences on him. He kept following his own way as time went on. Hellenistic poetry, epigrammatic poetry to be specific, was his first field of research. In the above-mentioned dissertation, he deals with this genre from different perspectives: the probable sequence of epigrams in the Garland of Meleager and the work methods of the anthologist are discussed; stylistic analyses, textual criticism and interpretation, and analyses of papyrus fragments are carried out. It is all put forth clearly and concisely: Wifstrand was not a man to write long books. Already in this work we encounter much of what would later characterize his production; his versatility and familiarity with the various methods of philology, his fine feel for style, his sharp intellect, his superior discernment leading him to deal only with essentials and avoid wandering off into speculations. He shows himself here as elsewhere to be a full-blown and completely mature scholar: his development consisted in turning his attention to other fields. His style is also already recognizable here for that intense and pure objectivity that was always to characterize it. He always put things clearly and calmly, with no unnecessary flourishes, never making any issue more remote or difficult than it actually was. Vigorous vitality and genuinely classical charis were from the outset the hallmark of his writing style.

Even if epigrams captured and held his interest by their elegant brevity – he liked lecturing on epigrams and even composed his own as occasional verse – nevertheless his most comprehensive and in-depth studies were devoted to late epic poetry. *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos* (Lund, 1933), a work where metrical and stylistic analysis stands at the centre, is remarkable for its command of the large range of sources, its wealth of perspectives and sensitivity to the subtlest nuances of style and metre. A number of discoveries concerning the caesura rule of late epic was one of its important results; another consisted in the general observations about the gradually increasing changes in epic diction. Ever active as a teacher, Wifstrand gave students the benefit of his knowledge of metre in the clear but, as regards its contents, all too brief book *Grekisk Metrik* (Lund, 1935).

In his works on poetry, there are already indications that he early on acquired a command not "only" of all of Greek poetry but of the prose literature as well. The first in the long series of his *Eikota* publications came out in 1930 with the subtitle *Emendations and Interpretations of Greek Prose Authors of the Imperial Period*. Thanks to his linguistic proficiency acquired through indefatigable reading and excerpting, his strict accuracy and flair for criticism, he was able to offer innumerable examples of his skill in emending corruptions by means of slight changes

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