

## Book Reviews

MAINE DE BIRAN, *Oeuvres*: Tome V, *Discours à la Société médicale de Bergerac*, edited by François Azouvi, Paris, Vrin, 1984, pp. xv, 199, Fr.129.00; Tome VI, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, edited by F. C. T. Moore, Paris, Vrin, 1984, pp. xvi, 207, Fr.120.00.

These meticulously produced volumes will be of great interest to medical historians working on France and also to those concerned with theories of mind-body interaction. Each book has a short introduction explaining the origins and main contents of the work that follows. The texts themselves, prepared from manuscripts, show all relevant variants. The editors have provided explanatory footnotes which for the most part contain further information about the sources Maine de Biran (1766–1824) used. These are then conveniently gathered together in the bibliography. Both author and subject indexes are provided. The detailed subject index is particularly useful since it enables the reader to dip into Biran's writings in search of his ideas on specific themes.

Although there is some overlap in subject matter between these two volumes, they deal with somewhat different texts. Volume V contains papers read to the short-lived medical society of his native town, Bergerac, between 1807 and 1810. Their historical interest is two-fold. First, they reveal rather nicely some of the concerns of provincial medical societies of the period, from medical topography to phrenology, from the senses to somnambulism. Second, they offer further material on Biran's interest in medico-philosophical problems.

Volume VI contains the memoir that Biran submitted to the Royal Academy at Copenhagen in 1810 and for which he won a prize in 1811. It is a response to a question about the explanation of mental phenomena in physical terms. In fact, no complete copy of this has survived; the editor has pieced it together from various fragments. Entitled *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, it clearly invites comparison with Cabanis' work of the same name.

Maine de Biran is probably best known to historians of science and medicine for his memoirs on habit and on "the decomposition of thought". He occupies an important place in the early history of "psychology", for which his movement away from the *idéologues'* naturalistic approach to mind and towards an affirmation of free will is particularly significant. It was accompanied by an assertion of the value of introspection as a psychological method. Both these volumes shed light on his critique of other approaches to mental phenomena, such as phrenology, and on his own epistemological presuppositions.

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ANTJE KRUG, *Heilkunst und Heilkult. Medizin in der Antike*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1985, 8vo, pp. 244, illus., DM.38.00 (paperback).

This cogent account of Greco-Roman medicine spans the critical millennium c. 500 BC—AD 500. A judicious selection from the prodigious and diverse sources of evidence has resulted in a succinct synthesis straightforwardly written and not without a touch of humour. While the subtitle indicates the broad scope of the book, the main title underlines the approach to the subject: an examination of the respective roles of on the one hand rational and scientific medicine—*Heilkunst*—and on the other hand irrational medicine, superstition and magic—*Heilkult*. The almost parallel development and intermingling of these two very different healing systems is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Greco-Roman medicine and one which makes it a fascinating area of study. Superstition permeated all levels of society and few were immune to it, even among the learned. "The most effective protection against snakes is the spittle of a fasting person." Thus wrote the Elder Pliny who, almost in the same breath, both condemned magicians and those who believed in them and yet recorded alongside sober and commonsense medical advice such "cures" rooted firmly in magic. Antje Krug demonstrates the extent to which *Heilkunst* and *Heilkult* were attuned to the needs, both physical and spiritual, of the society that spawned them.

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The book has six main sections: 'Anfänge der Medizin', 'Hippokrates', 'Instrumente und Medikamente', 'Asklepios', 'Der Arzt als Stand und Beruf', 'Ende und Weiterleben der antiken Medizin'. Within each of these chapters are numerous headed subsections which help to spotlight subjects in the absence of an index. If the result is occasionally a little like reading through a card index, then it is one which is both well-ordered and comprehensive. Inevitably, there is some overlap and repetition, most noticeable in the Asklepios section, but in the main the arrangement is a good one. It is strengthened by the use of numerous well-chosen in-text illustrations which have been skilfully integrated so that they almost invariably lie adjacent to the corresponding text. A good balance has also been reached with the footnotes which, without overloading the text, give access to a considerable number of references in addition to those of the general bibliography.

This reviewer would have liked to have seen a little more space devoted to disease and its treatment with perhaps rather fewer or briefer descriptions of healing sanctuaries, but these are minor points which do not detract from the overall excellence of the book. Antje Krug is to be congratulated on providing us with a book that will undoubtedly be long and widely used.

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LEENDERT G. WESTERINK, (editor and translator), *Stephanus of Athens, Commentary on Hippocrates' Aphorisms, Sections 1–2, Corpus Medicorum Graecorum XI 1,3,1*, Berlin DDR, Akademie Verlag, 1985, 8vo, pp. 257, M.78.00

Professor Westerink, who has over many years edited philosophical and educational texts from late Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire, now turns his attention to medicine. His publication of the first part of a lecture course delivered in sixth-century Alexandria on the major medical text in the Hippocratic Corpus can be warmly welcomed, not least because it comes equipped with an accurate English translation. But the editor's services go further, for he has made available for the first time large parts of the commentary as well as clarifying their relationship to the other pieces of exegesis printed alongside them by the only previous editor, F. R. Dietz, in 1834. It is now possible at last to read the text as a whole and to appreciate some of the complex problems of dating, text, and indeed authorship.

The work survives in three different versions, as well as in later citations by Theophilus, who lived c. 870. The passages here printed represent an abridgement and a revision of a text which survives in its entirety for books III and IV in a Madrid MS. The same codex also contains, ascribed to Asclepius, a third version of the lectures on Books V and VI. With characteristic learning, the editor argues that either the lectures on books III–IV and V–VI were taken down by two different students, probably at two different times, and a later copyist wrongly attributed the second set to Asclepius, on whom Stephanus avowedly depends for some of his ideas; or the ascriptions are correct and the citations from Theophilus, who knew the whole of Stephanus' lectures, show that Stephanus was, in Books V–VI at least, content merely to repeat the words of his predecessor. A decision is difficult—compare the similar confusion of authorship of the commentary on Galen's *On sects*—but, ultimately, of relatively little importance, for, in either case, we are dealing with reports of teaching in the mid or late sixth century.

These commentaries show no sterile Galenism. Galen is often behind many of the interpretations, but his opinion is not slavishly followed, and he is usually cited from memory. It is interesting to see that Stephanus was still lecturing on Galen's anatomical texts (p. 37), although not, of course, dissecting. The lectures are full of useful examples drawn from practice, and some effort is made to explain to the audience some of the phrases that refer to social or medical situations now past (cf. p. 63 on athletics). The lectures are punctuated with references to the sort of patients the students might treat (cf. p. 45, "You must be a tyrant, if necessary in the face of disease and not allow the art to yield to person or rank."), and, p. 257, with a classroom reminiscence of Professor Gesius. Stephanus' aim is to imbue his pupils with proper method, and he contrasts the Hippocratic physician often with the "idiot" physician,