

### Book Reviews

PAOLA MANULI, and MARIO VEGETTI, *Cuore, sangue e cervello: biologia e antropologia nel pensiero antico*, Milan, Episteme Editrice, 1977, 8vo, pp. 248, L.12,000.

*Reviewed by Vivian Nutton, M.A., Ph.D., Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BP.*

This interesting and provocative book tries to set Greek ideas down to Aristotle on the heart, blood, and brain as the source of life within their general social and philosophical context, and to provide them with an anthropology. To do this, the authors employ a series of theoretical antinomies—e.g. heart/brain, technician/prophet, democrat/oligarch, experience/intuition, sensation/intellect—some of which are more convincing than others. However, the traditional and unsatisfactory dichotomy between Coan and Cnidian medicine still lingers on, and there is little attempt to see whether there is any development over time in any of the ideas in the Hippocratic Corpus. Where a Corpus text is discussed in detail, it is the singular and puzzling ‘On the heart’, given in Littré’s Greek and an Italian translation, and dated c. 340 B.C., just before Aristotle: contrast *Medical History*, 1973, 17: 1–15, 136–153, for stronger arguments in favour of a date c. 300–250 B.C.

The most valuable portion is the long and lucid appendix on Galen, which, as well as trying to set him in his intellectual milieu, points out many of the difficulties and inconsistencies in his marriage of Plato and Hippocrates and in his reconciliation of their theories with the anatomical data provided by his own researches and those of Herophilus and Erasistratus. But while rightly insisting on the varied purposes of his treatises, the authors miss the opportunity of investigating the chronological development of his thought. His last work, ‘On my own opinions’, which I am in process of editing, provides an authentic summary of his views at the end of his life, which do not always correspond to those of his youth and middle age.

Not all the ideas of the authors are convincing. The “Hippocratic” tract ‘De alimento’ is dated, p. 165, to the first century A.D.: this raises many problems, and, following Joly, I prefer to place it c. 250 B.C. or slightly earlier. On p. 174 Galen’s post as doctor to the gladiators is connected with the shrine of Asclepius at Pergamum: wrongly, for the highpriest who appointed him was in charge of another cult, that of the Roman emperors.

This challenging book is valuable as an attempt to set ancient medical thought in its context, and, although it is not everywhere convincing, its methodology and its willingness to consider wider issues make a refreshing change from conventional continental approaches to the achievements of Classical Greece.

MACDONALD CRITCHLEY (editor-in-chief), *Butterworth’s medical dictionary*, 2nd ed., London, Butterworth, 1978, 4to, pp. xxxii, 1942, £45.00.

The first edition of this famous dictionary appeared in 1961 with the title, *British medical dictionary*, and under the editorship of the late Sir Arthur MacNalty. Since then it has won a well-deserved reputation, and it is now republished with about eight thousand new entries. Extensive revision has also been carried out, and the

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whole book reset in a modern style. Each word has a guide to pronunciation, a succinct definition, and an explanation of its derivation.

Historical material is limited to eponymous surnames, with a two- or three-word biographical note and, for reasons that are not clear, only the date of birth. Historians will, therefore, wish to use other source-books for this type of information. Nevertheless, the Dictionary will be of inestimable value to them, especially to those who lack medical training. Without doubt it will continue to be one of the most outstanding dictionaries of medical terms in the world.

P. LAIN ENTRALGO, *Historia de la medicina*, Barcelona, Salvat Editores, 1978, 8vo, pp. xxxi, 722, [no price stated], (paperback).

*Reviewed by Christopher Lawrence, M.B., Ch.B., M.Sc., Medical Historian to the Wellcome Museum at the Science Museum, South Kensington, London SW7 2DD.*

P. Lain Entralgo is one of the elder statesmen of the history of medicine. A gifted scholar and a sensitive writer, he is known to English readers through translations of his works, *Doctor and patient* and *Mind and body*. The present book is his comprehensive vision of the history of medicine and his statement of how he believes it to have shaped society and historical change, and, more pointedly, how that history demonstrates in the concrete a particular vision of human nature. History for Lain Entralgo is indeed philosophy teaching by example. Refusing allegiance to any formal ideology, he takes an idiosyncratic, eclectic and non-teleological view of history which he sees primarily as a series of active creations on the part of human beings "more or less conditioned" by the intellectual, social, and economic boundaries of the age. He appeals in this context to the work of Thomas Kuhn to explain the coherence and revolutions of medical thought.

Though he believes medical practice to have certain universal features, he clearly holds that there was a profound caesura in medical life in sixth-century Greece. Primitive medicine along with healing in the ancient civilizations gets short but scholarly shrift, his rather slighting view of magical medicine sits oddly with his obvious grasp of the material. There is an extended analysis of Greek medicine, divided into theory and practice and pervaded by a deep respect for the Hippocratic authors. This, of course, is fully consonant with Lain Entralgo's Platonic vision of the doctor-patient relationship which he sees as contaminated in various ways by the failures of men and society, least so among the Greeks. Each subsequent period receives similar treatment commencing with a neat précis of the dominant philosophy of the age, followed by an analysis first of the theory and then of the practice of medicine. Various areas usually neglected in general histories, such as Byzantine medicine, are given generous weight. Alchemy and mysticism, not surprisingly, find little space and fit awkwardly into the account of the birth of modern science. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the comprehensive approach tends to collapse the narrative form under the sheer weight of names.

The work is a history of medical ideas rather than institutions, idealist in its vision of historical change and suffused with a sympathy for the difficulties encountered by man in his role as healer. In both respects it reaffirms a view of history more generous