

Book Reviews

STUART F. SPICKER (editor), *Organism, medicine and metaphysics. Essays in honor of Hans Jonas on his seventy-fifth birthday (10 May 1978)*, Dordrecht and Boston, Reidel, 1978, 8vo, pp. xxvii, 330, Dfl.65.00/\$24.50.

The seventh volume of the monograph series in Philosophy and Medicine honours Hans Jonas, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Although much of Jonas's own scholarship has been devoted to gnosticism and other aspects of philosophical theology, in recent years he has written widely on the ethical and philosophical dimensions of modern medicine, technology, and biology. This collection of essays, by friends and former students of Jonas, addresses this latter cluster of issues.

The book is divided into three sections, each roughly concerned with one of the themes identified by the title. Historians of medicine will be most interested in the first section, labelled 'Humanity, history, and medicine'. Some of the papers, such as Stuart Spicker's discussion of euthanasia, or Otto Guttentag's reflections on physicians' attitudes towards their patients, use historical examples to illuminate contemporary problems. Eric Cassell's engaging piece presents an actual case history in analysing the conflict which physicians frequently face when deciding between the competing demands of knowledge and patient care. Paul Oskar Kristeller's essay is wholly historical. He looks at the relationship between philosophy (especially Aristotelianism) and medicine in medieval and renaissance Italian universities. As Kristeller points out, Bologna University was unusual in having a single faculty of arts, philosophy, and medicine.

The essays of the second section, 'Philosophy of organism', use Jonas's work as lynchpins for developing holistic approaches to the life sciences. Aristotle, Kant, and Whitehead are three names which recur in the essays of Marjorie Grene, Charles Hartshorne, and Strachan Donnelley. The discussion of teleology and Darwin by Leon Kass is an attractively clear summary of a large literature, though Kass cannot be said to have added much that is original.

The final section, 'Science, infirmity, and metaphysics', is more strictly rigorous in the narrow philosophical sense. Most of the essays are expositions of phenomenological positions of mind, body, life, and death. However, Richard Kennington's essay on 'Descartes and the mastery of nature' is historically illuminating in linking the familiar Baconian notion of man as the master of nature with Descartes' own thought. An epilogue by the late Hannah Arendt (reprinted from her recent *Life of the mind*) rounds out this volume, which is an impressive testimony of the loyalty which Jonas has inspired during half a century's teaching and writing.

JOSEPH KASTNER, *A world of naturalists*, London, Murray, 1978, 8vo, pp. xiv, 350, illus., £7.95.

Mr. Kastner's book deals with American naturalists and their achievements, beginning with John Banister, who visited Virginia in 1678 to study and record its natural history. In the eighteenth century, when botany as a science and as an adjunct to medicine was in its heyday, experts were amazed and gratified by the variety of previously unknown plants and animals that they encountered. But it is the individuals who dominate this excellent book; their remarkable personalities and industry, their

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skill at collecting and chronicling, and the hardships they were exposed to, even death on occasion, are told in graphic style in a beautifully produced and illustrated volume. But as well as surveying the flora and fauna of a new and exciting land, Mr. Kastner also depicts the exploration of the North American continent.

From the medical historian's point of view, a number of the pioneers described were physicians, and the contribution of new plant remedies to medicine is a fascinating story still not fully explored. The only criticism of Mr. Kastner's writing is that he has no documentation of his text, although a rich and useful appendix of 'Bibliographic notes' is included. But at the price asked this is a give-away!

B. H. KEAN, KENNETH E. MOTT and ADAIR J. RUSSELL, *Tropical medicine and parasitology. Classic investigations*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1978, 2 vols., 4to, pp. xxiii, 677, illus., \$50.00.

The editors have collected together about 200 pieces representing literary contributions made to the advancement of tropical medicine and medical parasitology selected from the world's literature. As these include parts of articles published in a variety of periodicals, some of them now rare, and, like the books chosen, in a wide variety of languages, the collection is exceedingly valuable. The book covers 300 years of medicine, and the material is arranged in thirty-seven chapters grouped in three sections: 'Scientific beginnings'; 'Protozoa – protozoal infections'; 'Helminths–helminthic infections'. Each selection is prefaced by a brief biographical note on the author, but there is no connecting or explanatory narrative, and only a four-page introduction. This means that the book is merely an organized anthology of classic passages, translated, where necessary, and elegantly printed and illustrated. One learns little from it of the evolution of tropical medicine or medical parasitology *per se*, and there is no attempt to relate the events selected to the history of medicine in general. There are no references in the text to the secondary literature, and the bibliography is limited to twenty-eight entries, all but one being in English. Moreover, for a book that will only be used for reference purposes, the index is pathetically inadequate.

WALTER H. LEWIS and MEMORY P. F. ELVIN-LEWIS, *Medical botany. Plants affecting man's health*, New York and London, John Wiley, 1977, 4to, pp. xviii, 515, illus., £19.35.

Books on plants affecting man are usually arranged according to their botanical characteristics, but in this one the grouping of material is based on their effects: "injurious", "remedial", or "psychoactive". Moreover, the book is clinically orientated, and where necessary anatomical and physiological explanations are given. It will, therefore, be of great value to several different groups of readers seeking information on the action of plants. For the historian of medicine and pharmacy there is a considerable amount of historical data, although references to it could have been more plentiful. The book has excellent illustrations, old and new; it is well written, and the documentation is full and accurate. The farther we go back in history the more botanical therapy becomes, so that a source-book of this quality is most welcome for reference purposes.