

## Book Reviews

CHARLES MARX (editor), *Médecine, science et technique: recueil d'études rédigées à l'occasion du centenaire de la mort de Claude Bernard (1813-1878)*, Paris, Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984, 8vo, pp. 130, Fr.60.00.

The five papers collected in this small volume were first presented to the Seminar on the Foundations of the Sciences at the University of Strasbourg in 1978, to mark the centenary of the death of Claude Bernard. The focus of the seminar was not, however, the work of Bernard but the development of medicine, and its relationship with science and technology, in the hundred years since 1878. Thus only the first paper, by Yvette Conry ('Le "point de vue" de la médecine expérimentale selon Claude Bernard: une utopie positive?'), is concerned in any detail with Bernard himself. Conry characterizes Bernard's philosophy of science as a positive variant of utopianism, and she argues the shortcomings of this philosophy by setting out Bernard's views on bacteriology, statistics, clinical medicine, and cellular pathology, and then juxtaposing them with the subsequent development of each of these disciplines after his death.

The next three papers range very widely indeed. Jean Schwartz ('Pharmacologie, médecine et expérimentation clinique') discusses the problems encountered in contemporary pharmacological research and in clinical trials of new drugs. François Gremy and Jean-Claude Pages ('Médecine informatique: bilan et perspectives') report on recent developments in the areas of computer-assisted decision-making in medicine and in computer-assisted medical education. (This paper in fact dates from 1983, but an earlier version by Gremy alone was presented to the Strasbourg seminar in 1978.) And Lucien Israel ('Le résidu Psy') considers the question of psychosomatic illness and, more broadly, the effects of unconscious mental processes in all therapeutic relations and indeed in all aspects of human life.

The final paper, by Georges Canguilhem ('Puissance et limites de la rationalité en médecine'), takes up the theme, championed by Bernard, of scientific experimentation as the basis of rationality in medicine. Echoing some of the points raised in the papers of Conry and Israel, Canguilhem discusses the nature of the limits within which medical rationality must operate. But he also goes on to develop a strong polemic against the irrationalist elements in Illich's *Medical nemesis* and the "expropriation of health" thesis generally. Both the breadth of this topic and the thoughtfulness of Canguilhem's approach make his paper easily the most interesting contribution to the volume.

Like most published conference proceedings, this one presents the reader with a very heterogeneous collection of papers. The editor attempts, in his introduction, to provide a structure for the whole but succeeds only nominally. If, instead of attempting to cover the last hundred years of medical development in five short papers, the volume had taken a more restricted topic as its theme, then no doubt it would have been easier to present the result with some sense of unity.

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JEAN-CHARLES SOURNIA, *Histoire de l'alcoolisme*, Paris, Flammarion, 1986, 8vo, pp. 323, Fr.125.00 (paperback).

Given its importance, past and present, it is quite peculiar how little has been written on the history of alcoholism—or, to speak less anachronistically, about the interface between alcohol-related problems and medicine. Doctors were, of course, deeply involved with the properties of alcohol—both therapeutic and pathological—long before the deleterious effects of hard and habitual drinking were elevated to official disease status during the course of the nineteenth century. But wide-ranging English-language books in this area have concentrated their attention principally on the temperance movement in England and on prohibition in the United States (and have rightly pointed out that the medical profession's involvement with both these movements was, at most, ambivalent).

In the light of this neglect, Professor Sournia's history of alcoholism is particularly welcome. Like Sournia's other forays into medical history, this is a survey based upon extensive familiarity with secondary scholarship rather than archival delvings. It is modest in its goals, and unsophisticated in