

## Book Reviews

publication (after seventeen years' work) though it is neither complete nor uniform in style. Other faults are perhaps less excusable on this basis. The descriptions of the earlier manuscripts are meagre, and we still have to look to de Ricci or, in the case of the Galen, to the notes of a previous librarian (*Transactions and Studies of the College . . . 1941–42*, 9: 187–190) for details such as width, binding, and provenance. Readers might willingly have sacrificed the alphabetical arrangement of the catalogue descriptions for a decent index. The two indexes which we are given are at times slipshod or eccentric (omitting, for instance, names of places). Anyone interested in the Paduan lecture notes, for example, should note that they are hidden in the text under the heading "Sixteenth century lecture notes", and cannot be found in the index under Padua or under the name of one of the two identified lecturers.

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MICHAEL HUNTER, *The Royal Society and its Fellows. The morphology of an early scientific institution*, Chalfont St Giles, British Society for the History of Science, 1982, 8vo, pp. v, 277, £5.90 (paperback).

Dr Hunter has made another solid contribution to our knowledge of the early Royal Society. The appendices, tables, notes, catalogue of Fellows, and index, which make up more than four-fifths of this book, provide more information than we have had before concerning the Fellows and the varying degrees of their participation in the Society. The author is to be especially commended for his diligence and imagination in compiling his lists and making the data so accessible for further study.

The remainder of the book sets about to provide an assessment of the data and to draw tentative conclusions. Hunter is the first to admit that much more information concerning the most active Fellows will have to be gathered if we are to go beyond "morphology" to a "more sophisticated sociology of knowledge". Even so, whatever he tells us is interesting and useful. He provides a statistical breakdown of membership by status and occupation and shows how the pattern of participation changed over time. He also sheds light upon the question of who joined and who did not. The variety of political and religious outlooks represented in the Society tells against those interpretations that suggest that the Society was ideologically homogeneous. Hunter calls attention to "accidental" factors at work in determining membership – the London location and the clubby nature of the enterprise. The dues structure also helped to define the membership, and in this regard the Society was more exclusive "than it liked to think of itself".

Rarely, however, does Hunter consider such matters as self-image, public image, shared ideals, and values. These are not covered by what he takes to be "morphology". He eschews hasty and unwarranted generalizations. But under his microscope the Royal Society emerges as a rather disparate collection of individuals and groups, and it is difficult, as a result, to understand what, if anything, held them together. As Hunter remarks, even the scientific interests of many Fellows were negligible. But the Society was more than the sum of its parts; it achieved coherence and was important. The reason for this – the glue – has been left out, perhaps intentionally, of Hunter's account. A morphology this may be, and a good one, but the histology remains unexplored.

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RICHARD OLSON, *Science deified and science defied. The historical significance of science in Western culture. From the Bronze Age to the beginnings of the modern era ca. 3500 BC to ca. AD 1640*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xv, 329, £27.50.

Every American university used to have – perhaps still has – a freshman course called "Western Civ" which covered "everything" from the beginnings of things to yesterday. Richard Olson has written a textbook for the first half of such a course with emphasis on a particular kind of intellectual history. Like many young Americans, he is worried about the ethical role of

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science in modern culture; while he professes to be neutral, he has laid his emphasis upon the beneficial influence of what he takes to be the scientific approach upon other intellectual (or quasi-intellectual) attitudes and developments from Mesopotamia to the European seventeenth century.

I say "what he takes to be the scientific approach" advisedly, for his view of science is idiosyncratic. He *defines* science as "a set of activities and habits of mind aimed at contributing to an organized, universally valid, and testable body of knowledge about phenomena," but, as he goes on to speak of science as "a search for order . . . underlying form . . . universally valid and testable knowledge" and as he applies these attributes to Mesopotamian and Greek society and thought, it becomes apparent that for him "science" is a word, used Humpty-Dumpty fashion, for any mode of organized logical thought. Hence Olson can happily find science setting the schema for religion, for example, in Mesopotamia, Greece, and even for some early Church Fathers.

Clearly, Olson is devoted to his subject and approaches it with enthusiasm, even love. The result is wide ranging. To anyone without any previous acquaintance with Greek thought, not brought up on Greek legends or stories from ancient history, this will be a lively and attractive introduction to such ancient times, with a good deal of history of science thrown in. To those familiar with ancient, and especially classical culture, it is all both alien and too familiar. Regrettably, this book contains much carelessness over minor facts and, annoyingly, about the spelling of proper names. There are notes, and many quotations from previous scholars in the text, but no bibliography.

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JAMES WATT, E. J. FREEMAN, and W. F. BYNUM (editors), *Starving sailors. The influence of nutrition upon naval and maritime history*, London, National Maritime Museum, 1981, 8vo, pp. xiv, 212, illus., £5.95 + postage (paperback).

This volume contains the proceedings of an international symposium on the influence of nutrition upon naval and maritime history, held at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, in Spring 1980. At the suggestion of Sir James Watt, maritime historians, nutritional scientists, and medical specialists from Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States gathered to review the experience of the past in the light of present-day knowledge of nutrition. There are sixteen papers of equally good quality: most of them present new research; a few relate known aspects which are, however, well placed in the unusual context of this symposium.

Since we can but infer the food actually consumed and its quality, it may sometimes seem difficult to extrapolate from modern experience in order to interpret historical phenomena. Nevertheless, the historian will draw useful conclusions from the modern papers on nutritional, environmental, and neurological subjects, as the doctor and scientist will from the historical contributions.

The impact of the present volume lies in stringently illustrating the old truth that it is one thing to make a discovery but another to get people to act on it – and if they do so, to act reasonably well. The case of the sailors' nutritional problems past and present makes it clear that the implementation of scientific discoveries for the benefit of mankind was hampered by many non-medical and medical obstacles. The latter have to do with what Bleuler in 1919 called the autistic-undisciplined way of thinking. Yet even when such hindrances are overcome, history shows that nutritional problems are not solved for ever, as cultural and behavioural patterns change. As a result, both medical and historical research are constantly needed, and this symposium shows that they can cross-pollinate each other. Thus the present volume aptly concludes with the suggestion of a number of topics for further research, arising from the discussions of the papers (which are also summarized). An index completes this nicely illustrated paperback, which, as a whole, might be called a plea for a pragmatic approach to, and use of, medical history in a particular field of study.

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