

Book Reviews

'Philosophy and science in sixteenth century universities: some preliminary comments'. Each of these three papers, and others according to the reader's mathematical and philosophical capabilities, should be read and considered carefully by all those who are studying medieval and Renaissance history, but especially by students of science and medicine during these periods. The main contribution of this book is to highlight the social background of the history and philosophy of science; in other words, the external factors that mould their origin and development.

The book is elegantly produced with an excellent index, often missing from this type of work. It deserves the highest praise and the editors, in particular, are to be congratulated on their labours and the admirable end-product of them.

OTTO MAZAL, EVA IRBLICH and ISTVÁN NÉMETH, *Wissenschaft im Mittelalter: Ausstellung von Handschriften und Inkunabeln der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Vienna, 1975, pp. 296, illus., [no price stated].

Catalogues to exhibitions usually arouse no more than ephemeral interest. But there are exceptions, and this catalogue of medieval manuscripts drawn up by three members of the National Library in Vienna is one of them. Long after the exhibition closed (in October 1975), its value will remain undiminished, for, apart from its scrupulously detailed description of each manuscript, putting it into its historical context and explaining its importance in the development of a particular science, it provides a general introduction to the history of science in the Middle Ages. This introduction is due to Dr. Otto Mazal, head of the National Library, and constitutes something of a *tour de force*, containing within the compass of little more than fifty pages an outline history of the encyclopaedia, grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, law, theology, natural science, astronomy, music, geography and medicine. Readers of this journal will naturally turn to the section on medicine which, admirable and concise though it is, is blemished by one doubtful statement, namely, that the Benedictine monks had schools at Oxford, Cambridge and three other places, a thing impossible at the period referred to. In the catalogue itself some notable manuscripts appear, chief among them being the Juliana Anicia codex of Dioscorides, reproduced in facsimile by the Akademischer Druck of Graz in 1970. Then there is a copy of Celsus (Florence, 1471), a thirteenth-century collection of ancient medical texts from South Italy, also reproduced in facsimile, and a beautifully illustrated copy of Albucasis' *Surgery*. These and many others representing the various schools of medicine at Salerno, Montpellier and Paris are meticulously described by Eva Irbllich, ending suitably enough with an autograph of Paracelsus. The volume does great credit to all concerned in its publication.

KARL E. ROTHSCHUH (editor), *Was ist Krankheit? Erscheinung, Erklärung, Sinnegebung*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975, 8vo, pp. vii, 492, [no price stated].

Professor Rothschuh, the distinguished German historian of medicine, has collected together twenty-three essays dealing with the problem of disease as a natural phenomenon. They range in time from the Hippocratic writing, *The nature of man*, to 1973, but the majority are from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Several of them are well known: C. W. Hufeland's, 'Begriff und Wesen der Krankheit' (1975); Virchow's, 'Über die heutige Stellung der Pathologie' (1869); Ribbert's, 'Das Wesen der Krankheiten' (1909); Canguilhem's, 'Essai sur quelques problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique' (1950); Freud's, 'Die Arzt und der Kranke' (1927); Rather's, 'Zur Philosophie des Begriffs "Krankheit"' (1958); Engel's, 'A unified concept of health and disease' (1960); and the editor's, 'Der Krankheitsbegriff (was ist Krankheit?)' (1972). Each piece has its own references and there is a bibliography of selected titles, pp. 459–472, and useful indexes. All of the selections appeared originally in German, except for three, two French and one English chosen presumably because the book is aimed primarily at a German audience. On the other hand it is likely that the German contribution to this basic topic has been greater than that of other nations and therefore the choice is not a biased one.

There is no editorial comment to introduce the essays, but instead Professor Rothschild provides an excellent brief prelude; this does not, however, substitute satisfactorily for critical and explanatory introductions. He explains that his approach has been more from the point of view of cultural history, with its intellectual re-orientations and new concepts of the aims and methods of medicine. His selected authors therefore tend to be the young men attacking the old order, and whose comments have most relevance today. The author explains how each of his essayists fits into the pattern of advancement of ideas concerning the basis and etiology of disease and associated problems.

It is most valuable to have this anthology on a topic central to the history of medicine and it should be carefully examined by all medical historians, and also by medical practitioners who are in contact with disease daily.

ROWLAND RYDER, *Edith Cavell*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1975, 8vo, pp. x, 278, illus., £4.95.

The shooting of Edith Cavell (born 1865) in Brussels on 12 October 1915 by the Germans released an international furore, elements of which are still present seventy years later, remaining in the memories of those contemporary with the event and those who were brought up on the legend. She was an uncomplicated, selfless, Christian nurse whose first duty was to help others. It was only natural, therefore, that she should shelter British and Allied soldiers and help them to escape. This she carried out in an efficient and tireless fashion, having helped more than six hundred men before she was arrested.

The story has been told many times before but Mr. Ryder's is one of the best so far. He has carried out extensive research on his topic, and in this regard it is a pity that his references are not more extensive and more professionally presented. He is utterly fair in his narration and his style is captivating so that the book can be read rapidly and with much reward. His contribution is more to the earlier parts of Miss Cavell's life and he has used oral historical techniques extensively. To her tragic death and to the events leading up to it and beyond he has little new to say.

This is an important addition to the history of nursing, to medical biography and medical history. Quite apart from providing an accurate account of an episode in war medicine, it offers an absorbing and informative narrative.