

Book Reviews

JON WYNNE-TYSON, *Food for a future; the ecological priority of a humane diet*, London, Davis-Poynter, 1975, 8vo, pp. 183, £3.50.

The author is a writer, publisher, anti-militarist and vegetarian. His book is the usual attack on meat-eating, but a new argument is now added: the ecological and economic necessities for giving up breeding, slaughtering and eating animals, and for turning to an exclusively plant-based diet. The old ones are trotted out: man was not made to eat meat as evidenced by our biochemistry and teeth, a humane diet is commensurate with a more responsible way of life and is a means of preventing the seemingly terrible suffering we inflict on animals and of atoning for the enormity of crimes against animals.

It is interesting that laymen are willing to enter a highly complex field like nutrition and digestion, and it is equally curious that medical men rarely write about vegetarianism. Necessary or not, the cult is of considerable interest from the historical point of view and especially from the general cultural and societal standpoint. Only the last chapter deals with this, but very briefly.

Clearly a deep analysis of this topic would be of the greatest interest, and one of the revelations would probably be that, like phrenologists in the nineteenth century, vegetarians in this belong to other fringe activities, thus providing society with useful and necessary gad-flies.

JANET BARKAS, *The vegetable passion. A history of the vegetarian state of mind*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, 8vo, pp. xi, 224, illus., £3.95 (£1.95 paperback).

The author is an American, a writer, a publisher, a woman's libber, and a vegetarian. She claims there is no comprehensive or modern history of vegetarianism, and may well be correct. However, there is Joseph Ritson's *An essay on abstinence from animal food, as a moral duty* (London, R. Phillips, 1802), which contains a good deal of historical material as well as many of the arguments put forward by both Wynne-Tyson and Ms. Barkas. No doubt there are others.

Ms. Barkas presents a chatty account mainly of famous vegetarians, and scampers from prehistory to the twentieth century with jarring phraseology, occasional errors, an inadequate grasp of historical principles and deep issues, and with little reference to the vitally important dietary aspects of therapy in early medicine. Nevertheless she has read widely and records her lengthy bibliography and in addition "... quotes from age-old tracts extolling the joys and virtues of the vegetarian life ...". She also gives a formidable list of experts she has consulted, although presenting most of them with little or no comment is of debatable value, and approximates to name-dropping.

A history of vegetarianism, preferably by a non-devotee, is still awaited.

NICHOLAS H. STENECK (editor), *Science and society. Past, present, and future*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. viii, 412, illus., \$15.00.

To commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Nicholas Copernicus a symposium was held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the present book, divided into the three sections as indicated by its title, contains the papers presented and the commentaries on them. Whilst there is a good deal about Copernicus here, the basic

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theme is the anxiety experienced by many that science, although contributing immensely to the advancement of man, has at the same time brought about a change in his relationship with nature and his understanding of it. It is the purpose of this interdisciplinary discussion to examine the problem and to propose ways of avoiding the ecological crisis by seeking a better comprehension of the interaction of science and society and thus to improve their relationships. The group included scientists, historians, philosophers and sociologists; all but two were from North America.

They considered that scientific methodology is basically at fault, especially the variety that pursues a narrow authoritarian path. New approaches are needed, but few are suggested. Technology advancing without adequate control and a lack of regard for nature are other factors. Nevertheless a decreasing role of science and technology in society is not necessarily advocated. Political control would appear to be the prime necessity, with the modification of present-day social institutions.

There is no doubt that the issues discussed here are of an urgent nature and this book provides an excellent forum for their discussion. It should be read by a wide variety of individuals, wider than the disciplines represented by the symposium contributors.

DEREK DENNY-BROWN (editor), *Centennial anniversary volume of the American Neurological Association 1875–1975*, New York, Springer, 1975, 8vo, pp. xii, 610, illus., \$30.00.

Dr. Houston Merritt opens this commemorative volume with a history of American neurology in the past fifty years. It is, however, much too brief. It surely would have been preferable to have surveyed the last one hundred years, and to have traced in more detail the origins of the “neuropsychiatrist” and the reasons why clinical neurology did not flourish in the U.S.A. until after World War II, with comparative data concerning events in other countries. Admittedly the first half-century of the Association was also celebrated by an anniversary volume published in 1924, but the centenary offered an excellent opportunity of surveying and analysing the whole history of American neurology, for its corporate existence and development dates back to the foundation of the Society in 1875.

Most of the book (pp 57–375) is made up of ninety-seven useful biographies of the Association’s presidents (twenty-eight from the semi-centennial volume), but there are also reprinted papers on its foundation and early meetings. There is a regional history of neurology in the U.S.A. and Canada and a discussion of governmental contributions to neurological research and the contributions of neurology to the military services.

The main use of this book will be for reference and as such it will be most valuable. Unfortunately no real attempt has been made to discuss in depth and detail the way that neurology has fared under the aegis of the American Neurological Association, and there is no mention of neurology elsewhere in the world. It is purely domestic and parochial so that apart from information on individuals and places little else comes through. Despite the advances made in medical historiography in the last fifty years, there is little difference between this and the 1924 publication.