

## Book Reviews

MAINE DE BIRAN, *Oeuvres*: Tome V, *Discours à la Société médicale de Bergerac*, edited by François Azouvi, Paris, Vrin, 1984, pp. xv, 199, Fr.129.00; Tome VI, *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, edited by F. C. T. Moore, Paris, Vrin, 1984, pp. xvi, 207, Fr.120.00.

These meticulously produced volumes will be of great interest to medical historians working on France and also to those concerned with theories of mind-body interaction. Each book has a short introduction explaining the origins and main contents of the work that follows. The texts themselves, prepared from manuscripts, show all relevant variants. The editors have provided explanatory footnotes which for the most part contain further information about the sources Maine de Biran (1766–1824) used. These are then conveniently gathered together in the bibliography. Both author and subject indexes are provided. The detailed subject index is particularly useful since it enables the reader to dip into Biran's writings in search of his ideas on specific themes.

Although there is some overlap in subject matter between these two volumes, they deal with somewhat different texts. Volume V contains papers read to the short-lived medical society of his native town, Bergerac, between 1807 and 1810. Their historical interest is two-fold. First, they reveal rather nicely some of the concerns of provincial medical societies of the period, from medical topography to phrenology, from the senses to somnambulism. Second, they offer further material on Biran's interest in medico-philosophical problems.

Volume VI contains the memoir that Biran submitted to the Royal Academy at Copenhagen in 1810 and for which he won a prize in 1811. It is a response to a question about the explanation of mental phenomena in physical terms. In fact, no complete copy of this has survived; the editor has pieced it together from various fragments. Entitled *Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, it clearly invites comparison with Cabanis' work of the same name.

Maine de Biran is probably best known to historians of science and medicine for his memoirs on habit and on "the decomposition of thought". He occupies an important place in the early history of "psychology", for which his movement away from the *idéologues'* naturalistic approach to mind and towards an affirmation of free will is particularly significant. It was accompanied by an assertion of the value of introspection as a psychological method. Both these volumes shed light on his critique of other approaches to mental phenomena, such as phrenology, and on his own epistemological presuppositions.

L.J. Jordanova  
Department of History  
University of Essex

ANTJE KRUG, *Heilkunst und Heilkult. Medizin in der Antike*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1985, 8vo, pp. 244, illus., DM.38.00 (paperback).

This cogent account of Greco-Roman medicine spans the critical millennium c. 500 BC—AD 500. A judicious selection from the prodigious and diverse sources of evidence has resulted in a succinct synthesis straightforwardly written and not without a touch of humour. While the subtitle indicates the broad scope of the book, the main title underlines the approach to the subject: an examination of the respective roles of on the one hand rational and scientific medicine—*Heilkunst*—and on the other hand irrational medicine, superstition and magic—*Heilkult*. The almost parallel development and intermingling of these two very different healing systems is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Greco-Roman medicine and one which makes it a fascinating area of study. Superstition permeated all levels of society and few were immune to it, even among the learned. "The most effective protection against snakes is the spittle of a fasting person." Thus wrote the Elder Pliny who, almost in the same breath, both condemned magicians and those who believed in them and yet recorded alongside sober and commonsense medical advice such "cures" rooted firmly in magic. Antje Krug demonstrates the extent to which *Heilkunst* and *Heilkult* were attuned to the needs, both physical and spiritual, of the society that spawned them.