

Apart from the author's specific observations, two broader themes seem to emerge. First, the modern medical *fatwās* demonstrate a clear continuity from medieval times. Companions of the prophet Muḥammad and classical legal compendia are cited as easily—and as cogently—in the twentieth century as in the tenth, the mode of argument is often identical, and the classical terminology of classical Islamic jurisprudence is in evidence on all sides, although the specific issues have of course changed. One can hardly doubt that the scholars whose work informs this book consider themselves as falling squarely within the tradition of their illustrious medieval predecessors, and the author's conviction that "modern" medical ethics are at issue here thus bears important qualification. Second, in most medical-ethical matters the tenets of Islam serve to set broadly construed bounds for discussion rather than to define normative positions. The *fatwā* literature is thus characterized by a spirit of lively debate legitimating many shades of opinion.

Certain problematic aspects of the book merit comment here. Rispler-Chaim's sources are entirely Arab, and mostly Egyptian: eighteen of twenty-two cited newspapers are Egyptian, and there are none from Turkey, Iran, or North Africa. Shī'ī Islam is entirely omitted, and within Sunnī Islam the views set forth are essentially those of Egyptian fundamentalist groups. What is represented, then, is not the views of "the Muslims", but only of a limited segment of Muslim thinking.

In her introduction the author asserts that *fatwās* presume a dialogue between lay people and scholars (p. 4), but it is well known that often they represent conundrums posed by scholars for the benefit of other scholars, and so are abstractions that have nothing to do with the genuine medical-ethical concerns of Muslim societies. Rispler-Chaim has in fact taken up some of this material in her book. An Egyptian *mufīī*, for example, puts the question of whether a woman is guilty of adultery if she finds some semen and, supposing it to be that of her husband, inserts it into her vagina, only to discover later that it was not his after all (pp. 20–1). Several scholars argue over whether a doctor may use the skin of a pig (an unclean animal whose meat is forbidden to Muslims by the Qur'ān) for skin grafts to a badly burned patient if no other alternative is available (p. 38). If a dying person swallows a large amount of someone else's money, may his body be cut open after his death in order to retrieve the money (pp. 76–7)? Should a Muslim ruler go to war against a city where Muslims do not circumcise their sons (p. 85)? In some such cases the real point appears to be that no problem—however vexed or esoteric—lies beyond solution in terms of the Sacred Law; in others, the actual dispute is over the role and authority of competing personalities and groups, again, especially in fundamentalist circles in Egypt.

Finally, if the author wishes to argue that contemporary Islamic medical ethics differ in essential ways from medieval Islamic ethics (pp. 2–3, but what are these differences? See above), then a clear distinction needs to be drawn between modern and medieval authorities. A non-Islamist may well suppose that the oft-cited views of 'Abd al-Razzāq, al-Nasā'ī, and al-Tirmidhī represent modern thinking, as they are quoted in such contexts, but in fact these are all renowned authorities of the ninth and tenth centuries AD.

While one must for these reasons view with caution some of the author's judgments on the extent to which the *fatwās* she has collected represent generally prevailing Muslim attitudes toward issues in medical ethics, the fact remains that her book is one of considerable interest and value. Indeed, in view of the vast amount of material reviewed in order to locate the relevant documents, the collection of the medical-ethical corpus is in itself a major achievement. Rispler-Chaim's work commendably fulfils the task of introducing the main issues currently under discussion and laying a foundation for further work. It also serves to illustrate the richness and breadth of research potential outside the range of traditionally consulted medical-historical source materials.

Lawrence I. Conrad, Wellcome Institute

MAGDA WHITROW, *Julius Wagner-Jauregg (1857–1940)*, London, Smith-Gordon and Nishimura, 1993, pp. xxiv, 221, illus., £20.00, \$40.00 (1-85463-012-1).

Has a psychiatrist ever won the Nobel Prize? In 1927 the great Austrian psychiatrist Wagner-Jauregg won the accolade which had been denied him by the Swedish assessor Gadelius for some years. It sounds odd to us that he was so honoured for his treatment of *giving* patients malaria to treat the common and dreaded disease of neurosyphilis.

Book Reviews

Magda Whitrow emphasizes Wagner's other significant contribution to medicine. He discovered that cretinism was caused by malfunction of the thyroid gland. Why is he not given the credit for this discovery? Whitrow carefully shows that it was because Kocher, the man usually cited as the originator of this theory, published his version in a more prestigious journal. Indeed this raises the question: why is Wagner-Jauregg not better known today? Few psychiatrists can have contributed as much as he did in his eighty-three years. Born within a year of the three psychiatric luminaries Freud, Kraepelin and Bleuler, yet he is now virtually unheard of. Whitrow hints that his personality was not conducive to making a name for himself and that his ideas are now taken for granted as part of Austrian law.

Whitrow manages to give us an impressive amount of detail on Wagner's career and one is struck by other paradoxes. Here was a man whose juniors were devoted to him, but he seemed to have few close friends. He was objective about his work but married an ex-patient of his and regretted it for the rest of his life. He was dedicated to the alleviation of suffering—he spent his free time every Sunday trudging up the Austrian Alps seeking out cretinous children to give thyroid tablets to; he did not see private patients; he gave faradism to himself before administering it to patients; Whitrow rightly claims that his greatest achievement was to counter the widespread therapeutic nihilism. Yet he embraced the theory of eugenics and he became a member of the Nazi party. Whitrow wisely eschews a psychological approach to Wagner-Jauregg's biography. This is not her background and she leaves such matters to some future writer.

Her work is notable for its unearthing and impressive marshalling of original material, out of which she has written a coherent and highly accurate account—there are no misprints and the occasional errors are ones of style and not of medical or historical fact. It is to be recommended. Magda Whitrow has filled a gap in psychiatric historiography and provided us with a scholarly biography of a great psychiatrist.

Dominic Beer, Bexley Hospital, Kent

DAVID CAHAN, (ed.), *Letters of Hermann von Helmholtz to his parents 1837–1846, Boethius*, vol. 31, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1993, pp. x, 133, illus., DM 68.00 (3-515-06225-4).

Following the edition by Richard L. Kremer of *Letters of Hermann von Helmholtz to his wife 1847–1859* (Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1990), our sparse knowledge of the previous decade of Helmholtz's life, when he was a medical student in Berlin, is now enriched by Cahan's meticulous transcription of forty-three letters to his parents at Potsdam. This interesting one-way correspondence was discovered by Cahan in the Siemens Museum in Munich, Helmholtz's daughter Anna, by his second marriage, having married Arnold von Siemens. Although the letters were used by Helmholtz's first biographer, Leo Koenigsberger, Cahan restores the full texts where Koenigsberger truncated or edited his selection of quotations. Cahan transcribes the letters from *deutsche Schrift* and annotates them with detailed footnotes which themselves alone provide a rich social history of the period.

In contrast to the rather stern physiologist, physicist, philosopher of science and director of Germany's research efforts of later life, we here meet with a warm and loving son and brother. Although Helmholtz's father, a schoolteacher at the Potsdam Gymnasium, was not wealthy, Helmholtz was able to lead a comfortable life as a student at the military medical school, the Friedrich-Wilhelms Institut. Indeed, family connections appear to have counted for more than his brilliant scholarship in gaining Helmholtz entry to the Institut in 1837. The medical training he received was far from the Humboldtian vision of *Lernfreiheit*, consisting of a gruelling schedule of classes from 7.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. for four years, during which time he somehow managed to continue a full social and cultural life. Following a doctoral dissertation in 1842, Helmholtz worked the wards of the Charité for a year, finding time there to begin work on the phenomenon of fermentation that was to lead him to an anti-vitalist position. When on leave to prepare for the Staatsexamen in the autumn of 1845, he joined the young turks who had gathered around Heinrich Magnus to form the Berlin Physikalische Gesellschaft. It was to this body that, now a qualified doctor, he read the important paper on force in 1847. In effect, this announced his decision to practise physics rather than medicine.