

The Paradoxical Text 'On the Heart'

And that point, indeed, underlines the paradox of such attempts at dating: the apparently fixed points by which we initially attempt to locate a particular work may themselves become changed in the process. But we may also reasonably hope that their contours will become clearer. Thus the question of date offers a convenient approach to other, more fruitful, problems. The treatise 'On the Heart', apart from its intrinsic value, also has the value of a surveying instrument. It serves to give bearings, and to bring into sharper focus a number of problems in Alexandrian medical science: for example the distinction between veins and arteries in Herophilean anatomy, the nature of Erasistratus' discovery of the valves, the meanings of 'mechanism' in Greek science, and the effect of teleological assumptions upon the accuracy of anatomical observation. All these are matters worth pursuing for their own sake.

NEW FILMS ON THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Two short films in the history of medicine have recently been produced by Dr. Thomas R. Forbes. *John Hunter—Enlightened Empiricist* (11 minutes), shown on 5 May 1972, at the meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine in Montreal, presents Hunter as an anatomist and surgeon. His application of his knowledge of collateral circulation for the successful surgical relief of a coachman's popliteal aneurysm is portrayed as an example of his ability to reject dogma and to apply in a clinical situation lessons learned at the dissecting table.

Vesalius, Founder of Modern Anatomy (12 minutes), reveals the colourful Belgian's progress from Galenism to a new and more accurate knowledge of anatomy through his own labours as a dissector. Examples of his scientific thinking are drawn from the text and illustrations of the *Fabrica*.

The 16 mm. films in sound and colour were specially designed to interest medical and nursing students, members of the health professions, biologists, and historians, and were made by Miss Susan Wheeler and Mr. William Guth of the Communications Media Group of the Yale School of Medicine. Costs were met from a grant from the National Fund for Medical Education. Prints at \$40.00 each may be ordered by writing to Mr. William Guth, Communications Media Group, School of Medicine, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. 06510, U.S.A.