

Book Reviews

LEONARD BARKAN, *Nature's work of art. The human body as image of the world*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. x, 291, £7.50.

A fundamental Renaissance concept was that man is a miniature cosmos, a microcosm, and that the world is a body, a macrocosm. It is Dr. Barkan's purpose to trace through various Renaissance authors this cosmology of the body image (a term not used in the medical sense) in particular, and also the analogy between the human body and the commonwealth. Such writers used imaginative thought in an attempt to bridge the gulf between man and his surroundings and to describe his relationships with them. One way of doing so was the microcosm idea, which is, in fact, a true inter-action as regards biology, behaviour, intellect, and spirit. Yet when man's behaviour, thought, feeling, and biological status are excluded, the physical body which remains has an imaginary oneness with the cosmos. Better to understand the world with man's place in it, writers in the Renaissance, and before and after, have distorted either man's body or the cosmos, or both for didactic or poetic purposes. Being concerned with abstract truths, and with neither anatomical nor cosmological reality, they could create a metaphor, and Dr. Barkan's book focuses upon the use of the body in a complete and systematic fashion, not devoted to structural details. His objective is the study of the presuppositions and literary practices of selected Renaissance poets, and to show that men at that time were not concerned only with man as multiple rather than single beings; the poet attempts to depict this complexity, which is analogous with that of the world.

To achieve this the author divides his book into three parts; body and cosmos, the domain of natural philosophy and science; the body and commonwealth, based on social and political philosophy; the body and man-made constructions, the domain of estheticians and architects. He then devotes his critical attention to two outstanding sixteenth-century poems: *Astrophil and Stella*, the human body as setting for the Petrarchan drama; and *The Fairie Queen*, allegory, iconography and the human body.

This fascinating and scholarly study should be read carefully by all those whose interests include Renaissance medicine. It not only gives new insight for example into contemporary ideas of human anatomy, but also provides part of the essential background needed for work in this period, and so allows a more complete comprehension of a difficult historical era.

ROBERT S. KINSMAN (editor), *The darker vision of the Renaissance. Beyond the fields of reason*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. [vi], 320, £6.50.

All historical periods have their hidden or less obvious aspects, and these are usually given less attention than the more orthodox features. This collection of nine essays explores the dark under-belly of the European Renaissance (taken here to be 1300–1670), the non-rational, irrational and supra-rational phenomena, and deals with certain political, literary, social, religious, musical, artistic and medical events of this nature. The medical piece, "Folly, melancholy, and madness: a study in the shifting styles of medical analysis, and treatment, 1450–1675", deals with shifts in social, psychological and medical concepts of the various kinds of irrational behaviour due to

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changing views of human nature, and is written by the editor, who is Professor of English in the University of California at Los Angeles.

Clearly, both sides of the coin are necessary for a balanced view of the Renaissance and Dr. Kinsman has done well to illuminate the reverse face.

SIR CYRIL BURT, *ESP and psychology*, edited by Anita Gregory, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975, 8vo, pp. vii, 179, £4.50.

Although Cyril Burt (1883–1971) is best known for his work on the application of psychology to education, to the development of children and to the assessment of mental qualities, he also contributed to ESP, as an obituarist had to point out (*The Times*, 15 October 1971). This book, stimulated by the same obituarist, contains eight carefully selected essays based on articles, lectures or reviews, all published except the last two. They range from 1935 to 1967, but most were written in the 1960s.

Burt believed that consciousness is a central feature of psychology, and that the application of mathematics to psychology is likewise essential. These two extremes arose out of his work in educational and developmental psychology, which closely resemble para-psychology because in each an amalgam of personal experience and impeccable experimental and statistical data is essential. Burt's attraction to ESP is therefore understandable, and in the brief but informative introduction the editor explains this and other background features of his interest in, and approach to, what in his day was an unorthodoxy. However, his statement that ESP is a natural phenomenon that should be part of psychology, although held as heretical when made, may now, in view of increasing data, be more acceptable.

The editor has chosen only papers intended for the general reader, and together they provide us with an excellent survey of Burt's work on ESP. Whether right or wrong, as may be judged in the future, there is no doubt that ESP forms an important part of the history of psychology in general.

WHITFIELD J. BELL, jr., *The colonial physician and other essays*, New York, Science History Publications, 1975, 8vo, pp. [2 11], 229, illus., paperback, [no price stated].

Since 1940 Whitfield Bell, a historian by training, has been publishing papers on the history of North American medicine. He now collects together sixteen of them, and as the title of the book, which is also the title of the first paper, suggests, they deal predominantly with the eighteenth century. All but three ('A portrait of the Colonial physician', 'Philadelphia medical students in Europe, 1750–1800', 'Body-snatching in Philadelphia') are centred on the activities of individuals, and amongst others there are John Redman, Benjamin Franklin, John Morgan and William Shippen. Each essay is a scholarly contribution with full documentation and written in a pleasing style. As a collection they present an excellent survey of eighteenth-century American medicine, together with vivid insights into the activities of particular physicians. Moreover, as most of this medicine stemmed from European practice, Dr. Bell's book should be studied carefully by all those engaged in any aspect of medicine in the eighteenth century, as well as students of American medicine. It can be warmly recommended, and it is to be hoped that Dr. Bell, the accepted authority on Colonial American medicine and science, will now provide an integrated history of this formative period.