

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