

Book Reviews

Although the author attacks the teleological view of history of science, he does not escape the temptation of describing the development of science—and medicine—as the history of scientific discoveries. He pays very little interest to the broader intellectual milieu of scientific and medical activities.

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A. RUPERT HALL, *Henry More: magic, religion and experiment*, Blackwell Science Biographies, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. xii, 304, £30.00 (0-631-17295-5).

Henry More was to a large extent a peripheral figure in the history of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. As a Platonist and a theologian, his main field of concern was with metaphysics and the relationship between man, nature, and the deity. Consequently, he produced no original work of scientific investigation, nor did he labour in the laboratory to produce experimental evidence to support his scientific speculations. Nonetheless, as this timely and full-length biography shows, More is a figure central to our understanding of the complex origins of the scientific revolution in seventeenth-century England. The first half of the book is devoted to an extremely useful introduction to the Platonic philosophy which so clearly helped to shape More's intellectual preoccupations from the 1640s onwards. In the second half, Hall guides the reader through the far murkier waters of the questionable influence of More upon the subsequent development of the new science in England, with particular emphasis on the role played by More in the dissemination of Cartesian mechanism in post-Civil War England. The most original chapters here are probably those which deal with the extent of More's influence upon Isaac Newton (less, perhaps, than previously understood), though all of them provide novel insights into More's relationship with the burgeoning scientific movements of the period. The most disappointing aspect of Hall's biography for many readers, however, is surely its typically "internalist" rejection of a non-scientific dimension to More's life and thought. Thus, no reference is made to the religious and political background against which More composed his re-assessment of Cartesian mechanism in the 1650s. Even more worrying, however, is Hall's treatment of More's views on witchcraft and the supernatural, which, though not totally discredited as the thoughts of an eccentric, are nonetheless held up as evidence of More's "naivety" and "illogicality". The fact that More lived in a world devoid of "modern" standards of rational or logical enquiry is conveniently overlooked, and no attempt is made to integrate More's views on ghosts and witches with the wider scientific concerns of his age. This lack of appreciation for another dimension to More's thought beyond the purely "scientific" or "rational" is a cause of disappointment and unfortunately detracts from what is otherwise an impeccably learned biography of a key figure in the intellectual history of seventeenth-century England.

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THOMAS LAQUEUR, *Making sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. xiv, 313, illus., £19.95.

This book caused excitement among publishers at the 1990 Frankfurt Book Fair—and not just for its clever title. It is a substantial, original and interesting book about the history of ideas about sex differences.

Formerly these were regarded as biological or fixed, proving that woman is either imperfect man or his opposite. Laqueur shows how even basic anatomical discoveries and observations are not free from social influences; how alleged "differences" have changed over the centuries; how the views on the subject in any society have been used and exploited for personal and political ends; and how almost everything that might be said about sex—however sex is understood—already has in it a claim about gender and power. In Laqueur's view, "Sometime