

Book Reviews

ROBERT PHILMUS and DAVID Y. HUGHES (editors), *Early writings on science and science fiction by H. G. Wells*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xiv, 249, £10.00.

The editors' purpose is to bring together twenty-eight essays from H. G. Wells' hitherto unreprinted writings of the 1880s and 1890s, which are concerned with science and science fiction. There is also an annotated, selective bibliography of his science journalism, 1887 to 1901, which includes the selections. There is a useful introduction and explanatory footnotes to Wells' text. In view of the fact that these pieces, which are essays, reviews, and fiction, are scattered through a variety of publications and that some appeared anonymously or pseudonymously, this is a most valuable anthology. Together they provide an outline to Wells' intellectual development, for they are grouped according to relationships rather than in purely chronological sequence. They will, as the editors hope, clarify H. G. Wells' vision of "the poetry of science".

A. L. HODGKIN *et al.*, *The pursuit of nature. Informal essays on the history of physiology*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. [vi], 180, illus., £7.50.

These essays on the historical development of six fields of physiology were presented as part of the celebrations of the 1976 centenary of the Physiological Society. They are written by physiologists of great distinction, each of whom describes his personal experiences of research: Sir Alan Hodgkin (electrophysiology of nerve); Sir Andrew Huxley (muscle physiology); W. Feldberg (synaptic and neuro-muscular transmission by acetylcholine); W. A. H. Rushton (visual research); R. A. Gregory (gastro-intestinal hormones); and R. A. McCance (perinatal physiology). Each permits insights into the individual's personality and approach to research, as well as providing excellent surveys of advances in these fields of activity. All but one are fully documented, and there are excellent indices, often absent in this type of publication. The essays, therefore, also serve a bibliographical purpose in addition to their inherent worth.

As well as being of absorbing interest to the historian of medicine and science, this book will be widely attractive to physiologists and should be read by all those entering this area of research.

GORDON LEFF, *The dissolution of the medieval outlook. An essay on intellectual and spiritual change in the fourteenth century*, New York University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. vi, 154, \$7.95.

Professor Leff, the well-known authority on medieval philosophy, presents a concise and excellent exploration and individual interpretation of the ways in which the pluralistic medieval view of the world was changing in the fourteenth century. The philosophical and theological deviations consisted of non-rational tendencies and mysticism. The outcome was the gradual appearance of a new scientific and cosmological outlook, which led eventually to the Renaissance. Here the re-interpretation, in particular of Aristotle's teachings, began, but their complete downfall did not take place until the seventeenth century. As a brief interpretation of a complex historical period this book can be warmly recommended.