

Book Reviews

social setting and medical politics of late eighteenth-century Manchester and its Infirmary. With the late publication of his text, argues Pickstone, Percival tried to defend a, by then threatened, civico-medical virtue ethic, in the tradition of Bishop Joseph Butler. Robert Baker finally complements this with a detailed analysis of Percival's code as such. Arguing in particular against Ivan Waddington's interpretation that Percival intended primarily to preserve intra-professional hierarchies and divisions of labour by insisting on medical etiquette (*Med. Hist.*, 1975, 19: 36–51), Baker produces evidence from the text that *Medical ethics* basically represented a social contract between a profession and the public. It was obviously inspired by the Reverend Thomas Gisborne's concept of an "office", as developed in his *Enquiry into the duties of men in the higher and middle classes of society* (1794). As Gisborne saw it, those who enjoyed the privileges of a particular "office" or station in society, such as the magistrate, the lawyer, and the physician, had tacitly contracted to fulfill carefully their specific duties. An important new element of Percival's ethics was, according to Baker, the shift from individual to collective decision-making, necessitated by the structures of the hospital.

This collection of very original essays has clearly set the standard for future research on the history of medical ethics. The announced second volume on the codes and practice of the nineteenth century will thus be read with high expectations.

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ROLF WINAU (ed.), *Technik und Medizin*, Technik und Kultur vol. 4, Düsseldorf, VDI Verlag, 1993, pp. xviii, 340, DM 148.00 (3–18–400864–9).

Sponsored by the Georg Agricola Society in Düsseldorf, Germany, this book is part of a ten-volume series particularly aimed at the general reader and designed to examine broadly the relationships between technology and culture. In their brief introduction, the editors repeat Agricola's strong opinions expressed in his *De re metallica* (1556) about the essential role of technological know-how in securing human progress together with the contemporary imperative to understand better its effects on society.

Generously illustrated, the volume devoted to medicine constitutes a useful overview. Its main author, Rolf Winau, has divided the text into nine separate essays, beginning with a description of Western concepts of health and disease, and the gradual visualization of bodily organs and functions with the help of microscopy, endoscopy, and, recently, fibre optics. These chapters are followed by a summary of the road to organ replacement, from crude prostheses to the artificial heart, a discussion of medical electricity, occupational diseases, and the rise of a pharmaceutical industry.

Of special interest are Winau's last two chapters, in which he discusses the social consequences of our modern technical medicine and the ethical problems which arise from the application of specific techniques such as gene implants, extra-corporeal *in vitro* fertilization, organ transplantation, and the prolongation of life through the use of respirators and other devices. The author admits that technological breakthroughs such as the administration of anaesthesia and the methods of antiseptics and asepsis were largely responsible for the successes of the past 150 years together with advances in microscopy which led to the establishment of bacteriology and immunology. Yet, according to Winau, patients remain ambivalent and often fearful, aware of the beneficial effects of technology while scared of its dehumanizing side effects, all too obvious in the behaviour of healing personnel. The ethical discussion, in turn, centres on the contemporary relevance of the Hippocratic oath, normative and situational ethics, and the escalation of moral dilemmas as new techniques become available. Having raised the problematic nature of all oaths and exposed the relativism of the Hippocratic guidelines within the context of ancient Greek healing, Winau however returns to recommend a patient-centred ethic based on the old aphorism: *nil nocere*.

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