

Book Reviews

A. P. ELKIN and N. W. G. MACINTOSH (editors), *Grafton Elliot Smith. The man and his work*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. x, 232, illus., £5.25.

To commemorate the centenary of the birth of Sir Grafton Elliot Smith (1871–1937), the University of Sydney, his *alma mater*, held a celebratory symposium in 1972. The four addresses and fifteen papers given are published here under four headings: opening addresses; evolution of man; early man; diffusion of culture. Smith was remarkably versatile and the scientific contributions presented highlight his main interests, which were anatomy, human evolution, ethnology and physical anthropology. He was a world authority on topics ranging from the cortical layers of the brain, perhaps under-emphasized here, to Egyptian mummies.

Each paper is a scholarly work with full documentation, and most of them, whilst surveying Smith's studies, also discuss developments since his time, in the subject being dealt with. Thus, as well as providing details of Elliot Smith, they provide useful summaries of the current position in the subjects represented. This book can, therefore, be warmly recommended to a wide audience of anatomists, anthropologists and ethnologists. It will usefully supplement the more orthodox biography published by Warren Dawson in 1938.

M. L. RIGHINI BONELLI and WILLIAM R. SHEA (editors), *Reason, experiment, and mysticism in the Scientific Revolution*, London, Macmillan, 1975, 8vo, pp. vi, 320, illus., £13.00.

Seventeen renowned scholars present challenging essays which are reports of work in progress. They were read at a symposium held on the island of Capri in April 1974, and although several deal with the history of the physical sciences, Galileo in particular, a larger number are concerned with alchemy, biology, and medicine. There is therefore much of interest in this book for the historian of medicine, and discussions of historiography increase its value to him.

It seems that the new science of the seventeenth century was made up of four parts: mechanical philosophy deriving from Classical atomism; exact mathematical description of phenomena, traceable to the Pythagorean tradition; Aristotelean philosophy; and the hermetic tradition, relying on experiment, an appreciation of crafts and a utilitarian outlook on science. The last of these and alchemy are discussed here by several symposiasts, Fludd, van Helmont and Newton being the individuals to whom attention is directed. This is the mysticism referred to in the book's title, and it now seems that hermeticism and alchemy made a more significant contribution to the Scientific Revolution than was previously thought. It did this by favouring the experimental method and scientific observations, by dispelling inherited authority, by recognizing the crafts, and by emphasizing the utilitarian goal of science. This book is, therefore, a pioneer work in revealing a new aspect and interpretation of seventeenth-century science. The two papers on Malpighi are less original, but nevertheless well worth perusal.

There is no doubt that it will prove to be one of the most outstanding contributions to the history of science and of medicine made in recent years, and it is therefore a pity that its price relates directly to its excellence.