

Book Reviews

As a summary of the history of a subject of ever-increasing importance today, this book can be recommended. Dr. Coley brings his narrative up to date, with a terminal chapter on "some techniques of modern biochemistry" and a peep into the future. His book will, therefore, prove useful to the practising biochemist as well as to those more professionally concerned with the history of the subject. Another, and important, attraction to the student is the relatively modest price.

CARMEN BLACKER and MICHAEL LOWE (editors), *Ancient cosmologies*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1975, 8vo, pp. 270, illus., £5.95.

A great deal has been written on how individual ancient civilizations have imagined the universe was shaped, but never before have these early notions been collected together. In this excellent book nine outstanding scholars have contributed essays on the cosmological concepts of ancient peoples; eight of them are based on lectures delivered in Cambridge University in 1972. The names of the authors alone indicate the very high level of scholarship and authority achieved: J. M. Plumley on Ancient Egypt; W. G. Lambert on Sumer and Babylon; Louis Jacobs on Jewish cosmology; J. Needham on that of early China; R. F. Gombrich on Ancient Indian; Edith Jachimowicz on Islamic; H. R. Ellis Davidson on Scandinavian; G. E. R. Lloyd on Greek; and finally Philip Grierson discusses the double heritage medieval Europe derived from the Greek and Jewish cosmological traditions.

Each community was faced by the same questions. How were the earth and heavenly bodies located? What arrangements were made for the accommodation of the dead, in a heaven or hell? How were the gods and demons provided for? With very scanty knowledge of astronomy and geography they tackled these fundamental problems differently, and to be able in one book to compare and contrast the remarkable range of answers is one of the volume's several noteworthy attributes. Moreover, it is well produced with thirty-four illustrations altogether, and in view of this and the high quality of the text, the price is modest.

It is an essential work for all who are studying the history of medicine or science in the ancient world, and it can be recommended unhesitatingly. It helps to provide the background needed by the historian of special aspects of early civilizations, without which his studies and products are rendered shallow and worthless. No doubt, it will become a classic, enjoyable and informative to read, and full of accurate data and documentation for reference purposes.

RENÉE C. FOX and JUDITH P. SWAZEY, *The courage to fail. A social view of organ transplants and dialysis*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1974, 8vo, pp. xviii, 395, illus., £7.80.

Modern techniques of transplantation and dialysis have generated a series of social and ethical problems, and it is with these that the authors, a sociologist and an historian of science, are involved, using a case study and historical method of presentation and extending up to 1970. They bring to bear on their biological, clinical and social data a social scientific perspective which affords new insights into biomedical research. They examine the "gift-exchange" aspects of transplantation as it affects

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the donor, the recipient, and the doctors involved, the definitions of death, the uncertainty of recently evolved experimental techniques, and the problem of availability of organs and dialysis machines. Of a more fundamental nature are the scientific, social and religious repercussions and interactions which the authors suggest may lead to basic changes in attitudes to health and disease, life and death. Their book, which is very well written and fully documented, with a useful bibliography, is an important contribution and introduction to an area of medicine which is increasing in dimensions, dilemmas, complexities and social repercussions. It will be read widely by all those concerned with transplantation and dialysis, but the historian of medicine, who should preserve his contact with the modern medicine, must also know of its existence.

L. L. LANGLEY, *Contraception*, Stroudsburg, Penn., Dowden, Hutchinson & Ross, 1973, 8vo, pp. xiii, 500, illus., £14.70.

The series Benchmark Papers in Human Physiology, is providing useful compilations of important contributions to selected topics. Facsimile reprints of parts of journal articles and books are grouped in sections, each of which is introduced with brief editorial comments. In this book there are forty-three extracts, ranging in time from the Bible to recent papers on the "pill" and family planning. The various contraceptive methods are represented, but, as in other books in this series, there is a preponderance of American authors, and the one German article appears in its original state, whereas translation into English is usually expected. The one extract in Latin suffers from a number of errors in translation. On the whole, it is petty to cavil with the author's selection of extracts in this type of work, but it seems a pity that no reference is made here to a person who did as much as any one else in the field of contraception, Marie Stopes (1880–1958).

However, the editor offers students an excellent collection of primary sources, by means of which he can savour the works of pioneers as they actually appeared in print, rather than having to rely upon the historian who, for better or for worse, summarizes, cites and interprets data and opinions. It will provide greater accuracy in those using this material for further historical work, and it should induce them always to consult the original articles and books whenever they are available and not to accept on trust someone else's reference to it.

KEITH MICHAEL BAKER, *Condorcet. From natural philosophy to social mathematics*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xiv, 538, £13.10.

Professor Baker's intention is primarily to look at what he believes to be the central and unifying theme of Condorcet's thought and existence: his conception of social science. Its nature and origins in relationship to the Enlightenment, and its chronological development set against a background of eighteenth-century French social and political science are discussed, thus contributing to the new interpretation of this period. Condorcet provides an ideal model, for he was a central figure in applying scientific thinking to all aspects of social affairs. He was a scientific statesman, mathematician and permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences, as well as political