

Book Reviews

MORRIS BERMAN, *Social change and scientific organization. The Royal Institution 1799–1844*, London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1978, 8vo, pp. xxv, 224, illus., £11.00.

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Morris Berman has written an important book. Instead of writing the history of an institution to show how it promoted the growth of science, he has attempted to discover what *sort* of science an institution enshrined and what social interests this science furthered. The Royal Institution and the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth century were an appropriate choice, since science and society were both in the process of major transition. Berman has successfully linked the two together.

The Royal Institution served as the focus of two major ideological changes. Berman suggests that at its founding in 1799 science was seen by the patrons as a means of controlling social unrest. The poor were to be relieved by “spreading practical scientific knowledge and introducing practical scientific improvements” (p. 11). In this context Berman gives Rumford’s reputation as philanthropist and founder a severe bruising. After its founding the Royal Institution soon shifted its gears and became the citadel of the agricultural improvers. Here the young Davy proved an ideal choice as lecturer. Because he was young and thus malleable, his interests were easily displaced from electricity to agriculture and tanning. By the mid 1820s the Royal Institution had changed direction again when the landed aristocracy were replaced by the nascent professional middle class and science had become the tool for the construction of an ordered society. In this period public health, street lighting, and mining disasters figured large in the Institution’s programme.

Berman’s case is a wholly convincing one. Yet his portraits of the almost tragic figure of Davy and the mystic Faraday seem unwittingly to suggest that, unmolested, they might have produced a science untainted by social interests: an inference, I think, judging by his polemical preface, Berman would not wish the reader to make. Berman also argues that the improved status of the medical profession after 1815 “could only be justified in terms of the mastery of scientific theory—even when that theory actually had very little to contribute to medical practice” (p. 103). But this can only be part of the answer, for what is interesting about the British medical profession in this period is how strongly resistant it was to the very sophisticated experimental physiology of the continent. British medicine remained to a great extent practical. What is most rewarding about Berman’s book is that, using a vast amount of detailed empirical material covering a limited area, he has been able to sustain some very general arguments. Equally refreshing, however, is that though thoroughly scholarly in its approach it remains highly readable and unpedantic.

FRANK McDOWELL (editor), *The source book of plastic surgery*, Baltimore, Md., Williams & Wilkins, 1977, 8vo, pp. xiv, 509, illus., \$54.00.

Many of the articles in this anthology have appeared in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, and they are grouped under the following headings: origins of free skin grafting; origins of rhinoplasty; origins of cleft lip repairs; origins of cleft palate

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repairs; cross-lip flaps; otoplasty; facial fractures; and papers on various subjects. There is also a section of essays on the main contributors and their work. Each extract has a commentary by an expert, a biographical sketch, and occasionally an editorial note. Many American collections of this kind have an abnormally large number of pieces by English-speaking authors, but in this book there is a fairer representation of French, German, and other nationalities. There are also a few secondary source contributions. The illustrations are numerous and of good quality.

In all this is a valuable reference work on the history of plastic surgery, and it can be warmly recommended.

The ambrosia heart tantra, translated by Jhampa Kelsang with annotations by Yeshi Dönden, vol. 1, Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1977, 8vo, pp. 126 [no price stated].

This translation of the First and half of the Second Treatise in the fundamental Tibetan work on medicine from about A.D.800 will be welcomed by those interested in traditional medicine. Out of the six chapters of the First Treatise, two have been translated by Dr. Elisabeth Finckh in her *Grundlagen tibetischer Heilkunde* of 1975. All the thirty-one chapters of the Second Treatise have been translated by Rechung Rinpoche in his *Tibetan medicine in original texts* (London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1973, pp. 29–97), except for chapter three which the translation under notice has also omitted for similar reasons. It is always good when the same ground is covered several times because it gives the reader the opportunity of comparison and assessment. The present translation benefits by the annotations of Dr. Yeshi Dönden, the personal physician of the Dalai Lama. The Rechung translation incorporated a certain amount of commentary from the *Vaidurya sNgon.po* or *Blue Beryl* of the seventeenth century because these passages formed part of the text in the blockprint used. The present translation has neatly separated the *rGyud.bzhi* or *Four Treatises* text from the annotations which are given in brackets. On the other hand, many of the annotations by Dr. Dönden are the same as the passages from the *Blue Beryl* in the Rechung translation. It would be helpful if in the next volume the annotations from older commentaries such as the *Blue Beryl* or the *Lhan.thabs* were separated from Dr. Dönden's own remarks which are the result of observations made in the twentieth century. The choice of title is striking. It translates the long original title rather than the short title *Four Treatises* usually given to the work. The translation "heart" rather than "essence" is literal and poetic. The use of the word "ambrosia" instead of the usual "nectar" is less literal because *bdud.rtsi* is definitely a juice and not solid food. But a regard for euphony may have dictated this choice, and quite rightly so.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM, *The shorter science and civilization in China: 1*, an abridgement by Colin A. Ronan, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. xi, 326, illus., £7.95.

After twenty-four years and eight volumes *Science and civilization in China* is still in production. Its very dimensions have repelled some, especially students, and the