

## Book Reviews

Southern Question is perhaps the weakest aspect of this book. In the conclusion, he not only condemns Giolitti's strategy during the epidemic but also links it to the persistent failure of government policy in the South throughout the Liberal period (1860 to 1922). However, this analysis of Southern politics is rooted firmly in a Gramscian-Marxist account of the Liberal state and treats southern "backwardness" and "corruption" as unproblematic concepts. It is a great pity that Snowden does not have more to say about recent revisionist approaches to the Southern Question, which have challenged such conceptual certainties.

The originality of *Naples in the time of cholera* lies in its documenting and comparing later epidemics (1884 with 1911). Yet the impression remains that the author could have done more with what he has found. Snowden's new evidence from Naples is used to add to, and occasionally chip away at, an established narrative. Although he discusses the international impact of the Naples epidemic, he fails to compare the ways different countries responded to the disease. It is also surprising to find so little exploration of popular images of the disease, particularly in a book which devotes so much space to urban poverty and protest. As a result, Snowden's study of Naples does not actually add a great deal to our general understanding of cholera epidemics. The capacity of cholera "to provide a revealing shaft of light by means of which to explore the structure and workings of European society" (p. 3) has already been conclusively demonstrated by Richard Evans for Hamburg (*Death in Hamburg*, Oxford, 1987). Snowden is simply able to confirm, in a colourful and often compelling narrative, that this is the case for Naples too.

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A C Crombie, *Science, art and nature in medieval and modern thought*, London and Rio Grande, Hambledon Press, 1996, pp. xvi, 516, £40.00 (1-85285-067-1).

This collection of twenty-three articles and reviews first published between 1956 and 1993 is a companion to *Science, optics and music in medieval and early modern thought*, which was published by Hambledon six years ago.

Appearing in the last year of his life, it is a fitting monument to Alistair Crombie's vision of Western science as an enduring tradition of rational argument and controlled experimental practice that is unique within the history of human civilization. Like a succession of geological strata exposed in a quarry, the articles presented here offer a means of reconstructing the principal lines of development in Crombie's *oeuvre* during his lifetime. It also includes a 'Further Bibliography' of his writings intended to supplement that already provided in his 1990 collection. Framing the work are six historiographical pieces—including Chapter 21 on 'Some historiographical questions about disease'—all of which reiterate his claim for an essentially Western scientific form of life. Among its attributes, for those unfamiliar with Crombie's thesis, are "specific commitments to conceptions of nature and of science with its intellectual and moral assumptions, accompanied by a recurrent critique" (p. xi). Between these speculative articles are examples of his more historically grounded work that address aspects of science from the twelfth to the nineteenth century. Typically these focus on the writings of (mostly Catholic) "great scientists" that have appeared in Crombie's pantheon from the outset: his medieval heroes include Robert Grosseteste, Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham) and Roger Bacon, while the seventeenth century is represented chiefly by Galileo Galilei, to whom five articles are devoted (two of them jointly authored with Adriano Carugo), Johannes Kepler, Marin Mersenne and René Descartes. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are represented by papers on Moreau de Maupertuis (1698–1759) and Charles Darwin respectively. Three articles that have most obvious relevance to medical historians are those which address the study of the senses: Chapter 14 on Mersenne and the origins of

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language, Chapter 15 on theories of perceiver and perceived in hearing, and Chapter 16 on expectation, modelling and assent in the history of optics. Given that so little has been written on the senses other than vision, Crombie's contribution to this subject area remains invaluable. In much the same way, his emphasis on the interaction between craft skills and academic ways of knowing (exemplified here in Chapter 7 on experimental science and the rational artist in early modern Europe) is still worth reflecting on.

However, it is questionable what benefits are to be gained from retrospective collections of this kind, which are becoming increasingly fashionable within the historical profession. In exceptional cases (such as Owsei Temkin's *Double face of Janus* (1977), for example), a collection provides easy access to articles which remain classics in their field. In Crombie's case, however, virtually everything he has to say in these articles has been superseded, most notably by his own three-volume *Styles of scientific thinking in the European tradition* (1994). The extent to which he repeated himself over the years is all too evident here. The cumulative effect of this book has been to force me to articulate why I find Crombie's vision so deeply unsatisfactory. It seems to me that he essentializes Western science to the point where all methods and techniques which now come under the broad heading of "science" have always existed in one form or another. His approach is so flexible that as new techniques appear, so their origins will be discovered in the same place as always: the West. Fundamental differences of ideology and belief are concealed under the bland term of "styles", while the role that power, authority, passion and desire play in the making of science is rendered completely invisible. With his gaze firmly fixed on his ideal men, the forces which shaped the direction and goals of such rational beings are resolutely ignored. From the perspective of a younger generation that has de-idealized science, Crombie's account of well-behaved and morally upright scientists moving always

towards the truth with unmixed rationality and integrity seems remarkably dated.

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**Darrel W Amundsen, *Medicine, society, and faith in the ancient and medieval worlds*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. xv, 391, £33.00 (0-8010-5109-2).**

This collection reprints, with slight changes, nine of Darrel Amundsen's essays on the interrelationships between Christianity and medicine in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, along with two newly composed. The result is a coherent survey of a major theme, and shows up well its author's strengths—careful reading of unfamiliar sources, a reluctance to accept easy generalizations, and a firm commitment to the unity of his own faith and scholarship. He has always been a courteous controversialist, and one can only welcome the wider accessibility of some of his more important conclusions, particularly on the early church's attitudes towards the incurably ill, those born defective, and suicides. His classic exposition of the (often misinterpreted) ecclesiastical legislation on the practice of medicine and surgery should be essential reading for those who think that the medieval church proscribed many aspects of medicine and surgery because it had a horror of blood.

The two new chapters show Professor Amundsen still in good form. The first combines autobiography with an outline of his main theses over the years, not least the general acceptance of medicine by orthodox Christianity, its imposition of a new ethic of caring—and of patient suffering, and an awareness of continuity with many aspects of ancient medical ethics. But the air of the theologian becomes at times rarefied, and one would like to have seen a response to MacMullen's claim for Christianity as a healing religion *par excellence* and for the