

Book Reviews

group psychology indicate that the trust we place in ethics committees may need re-examination. The heavy emphasis placed on science in contemporary medical education may harbour dangers for our patients today and tomorrow, which a critical historical perspective such as that presented here may help to avert.

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FRANK FENNER (ed.), *History of microbiology in Australia*, Parkville, Australian Society for Microbiology, 1990, 8vo, pp. xiv, 610, illus., £35.00 or US \$75.00 incl. p. & p. from the Australian Society for Microbiology Inc., 191 Royal Parade, Parkville 3052, Australia.

In recent years, there have been a spate of political anniversaries conveniently linked to coincidental, though not identical, anniversaries in medical science, from the US Declaration of Independence bicentennial in 1976 to that of the French Revolution in 1989 (hard on the heels of the centenary of Pasteur's first anti-rabies inoculations in 1986). Now comes a history of microbiology in Australia, celebrating the bicentennial of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, and the centennial of Pasteur's mission to Australia in 1888, when by virtue of its isolated position as an "island laboratory", Australia served as an early, though not entirely successful, trial ground for Pasteur's method of biological control of a destructive rabbit population.

From then on, microbiologists and microbiological services in the widest sense, encompassing concerns with both human disease and diseases of livestock and crop plants (reflecting Australia's heavy dependence on its agriculture and sheep farming), have progressed to an unshakable position of international renown. The book is a tribute to the strength of Australian microbiology and its research institutes. The discoveries and achievements are legion, from Joseph Bancroft's eponymous adult worm of filariasis, to the more recent work on rabbit myxomatosis as it reflects on the evolution of virus-host relationships, and the inspired studies of influenza viruses, the roles of their respective haemagglutinins and neuraminidases, and their effect on antigenic drift.

For the serious student of any or all branches and ramifications of Australian microbiology, and its interaction with developments in the rest of the world in the twentieth century, this is an invaluable catalogue of achievements. It also includes potted biographies, with portraits of many of the greater and lesser lights of the period. With nearly 300 contributors and "coordinators", and more than five times as many working scientists and their manifold contributions referred to in the text, in addition to detailed information concerning teaching institutions and research institutes, the more than 600 pages of the present volume, at the comparatively modest price of £35, is admirable value by today's publishing standards.

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H. E. HENKES (ed.) and CL. ZRENNER (associate ed.), *History of ophthalmology 1*, Sub auspiciis Academiae Ophthalmologicae Internationalis, repr., *Documenta Ophthalmologica* 68, nos. 1-2, Dordrecht, Boston, and London, Kluwer, 1988, 8vo, pp. 184, illus., Dfl. 165.00/\$85.00/£49.95 (paperback).

The book is a collection of eighteen papers read at annual meetings of the Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis; not all of them come up to a scholarly standard. A wide area, in time and in place, is covered although, of course, no comprehensive picture emerges.

The late Eugene Chan, e.g., contributed a survey of Chinese ophthalmology over more than 3,000 years, while Amalric (Albi, France) looks at the representation of the eye in African art, stressing its influence on such modern painters as Juan Gris. It is surprising to learn from Stefanopoulos (Athens) that legends about Hippocrates (actually rather fantastic ones) still live on in the villages of Cos. Reviewing the ophthalmic contents of the Hippocratic writings, Lascartos and Marketos (Athens) emphasize the concept of ocular affections as manifestations of general disease; they rightly think it useful to remind their highly specialized professional colleagues of this ancient truth.