

Book Reviews

rather than as progressing by taking us ever closer to the truth. Newton-Smith, on the other hand, argues that while the classic Popperian argument for scientific change as the provider of increased verisimilitude falls down, the Laudanian position is no less untenable, and that there are, after all, non-Popperian arguments for seeing science as an evolution towards the truth.

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WOLFGANG HUEBNER, *Die Eigenschaften der Tierkreiszeichen in der Antike. Ihre Darstellung und Verwendung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Manilius*, (*Sudhoffs Archiv*, Supplement XXII), Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1982, 8vo, pp. xi, 646, DM. 218.00.

Astrology forms perhaps the most important complement to medical history. Indeed, it may serve as a guide illuminating the transition from traditional (ancient – medieval) to modern medicine. For this may be seen as the secular result of its rejection – starting with (though still ambiguous) statements of Paracelsus and definitely pronounced without compromise by Van Helmont (1648). Here the *astra* are strictly left by themselves in the sky – they are to us mere signals indicating clock-time and seasons, but without any “influence” or “significance” concerning “life, body or fortune”. In other words, they are merely pointers to that cosmic “necessity” to which *everybody* is subjected, whatever his *individual* complexion or fate – *astra necessitant, non inclinant*. To understand the medical theory and practice that had gone before and was to survive in some form or other even today we have to re-think in ancient astrological terms in order to make sense notably of the bulky source-material on venesection and critical days in prognosis; the latter was one of the columns of Hippocratic medicine which was heeded by such an eminent modern clinician as Traube. In all this knowledge of the zodiac, and qualities attributed to each of its “signs” in itself and its influences on a certain individual, is essential. The number of pertinent sources and variants is legion and the work under notice provides their first and fundamental synopsis and synthesis. The result is a *corpus*, a systematic reference work of the first order including new texts and commentaries to which no justice can be done in the present frame and available space. The key-figure in all this remains Manilius of the Augustan age (early first century A.D.) with his poetical *Astronomica* as based on the earlier, but much less explicit work of Aratus, a protégé of the Egyptian Ptolemy Philadelphus in the first half of the third century B.C. It was Manilius who clearly separated the qualities of the zodiacal signs from their influences and effects. Astrology had, of course, its cradle in Babylon, and spread to Egypt and the Roman empire; it reached India. Through Persian and Arabic influence it re-entered Europe via Sicily and Spain to find new fertile soil in the artistic, scientific, and philosophical movement of the Renaissance when equally older objections to it were vigorously propounded. For our knowledge of this development the Arabic transmission of Greek sources was decisive, notably through such perennially influential authors as Albumasar, Abenragel, Alcabitus, the book *Picatrix*, and many others. Additionally, Indian and Syriac sources can now claim attention in this respect. Of new texts here presented, one in Greek deals with venesection and purgation. Diseases and their astrological complements naturally occupy much attention and space – particularly a detailed differentiation of diseases of the skin including fistulae and alopecia. Indeed, this book provides an essential tool for the historian of medicine and science.

Walter Pagel

ERICH DINKLER, *Christus und Asklepios*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980, 8vo, pp. 40, illus., [no price stated], (paperback).

This suggestive study of two Christian painted reliefs from Rome of c. A.D. 300 illustrates well the Christian takeover of motifs from pagan healing cults, particularly that of Asclepius. Even if Dinkler's main contention, that the types of the bearded Christ the healer and of the miracle-working apostle come from statues of Asclepius, perhaps from Pergamum, cannot be proved for certain, he is right to set it within the context of a struggle between competing healing cults. A century ago, Adolf von Harnack drew attention to the literary evidence for the assimilation

Although we cannot justify any claim that a scientific theory is true, the aim of science is the search of truth and we have no reason to be sceptical about the notion of getting nearer to the truth. Our knowledge can grow, and science can progress. Nevertheless, Popper's theory of approximation to the truth is problematic and is still the subject of studies and discussions. Keywords. Karl Popper Alfred Tarski Philosophy of science Logic Truthlikeness. 1 References to two fundamental problems of knowledge. Popper's philosophy of science takes as a starting point two fundamental problems of knowledge. On the other hand, rather can express a higher degree than expected: "I thought it would be cool this morning, but it's rather warm." If we combine would with rather, we get the semi-modal would rather. It helps us express preferences. It's similar in meaning to would prefer. The semi-modal would rather can appear with the preposition than to show an alternative. Students should not confuse would rather than with the two-word preposition rather than, which never separates and has the meaning of instead of. I find it logical and interesting to compare these structures because they both link to the In the idealized Popperian view of scientific progress, new theories are proposed to explain new evidence that contradicts the predictions of old theories. The heretical philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, on the other hand, claimed that new theories frequently contradict the best available evidence "at least at first." Which brings us to the odd moment in which we live. At the same time as an ever more bloated scientific bureaucracy churns out masses of research results, the majority of which are likely outright false, scientists themselves are lauded as heroes and science is upheld as the only legitimate basis for policy-making. There's reason to believe that these phenomena are linked.