

Raymond KLIBANSKY, Erwin PANOFSKY, and Fritz SAXL, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, edited by Philippe DESPOIX and Georges LEROUX; foreword by Bill SHERMAN. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019 (New Edition), 18 × 27,3 cm, xxxviii-632 p., ISBN 978-0-7735-5949-3 (cloth)

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Volume 75, Number 3, September–December 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1102510ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1102510ar>

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Publisher(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (print)

2562-9905 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Peddle, F. K. (2023). Review of [Raymond KLIBANSKY, Erwin PANOFSKY, and Fritz SAXL, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, edited by Philippe DESPOIX and Georges LEROUX; foreword by Bill SHERMAN. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019 (New Edition), 18 × 27,3 cm, xxxviii-632 p., ISBN 978-0-7735-5949-3 (cloth)]. *Science et Esprit*, 75(3), 446–451. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1102510ar>

Finally, it should be noted that Swinburne also keeps the book focused; I later learned that he converted to Eastern Orthodoxy quite late in life, though his religious convictions do not come into play at any point during this book, even while discussing such topics as the immortality of the soul (indeed, Swinburne keeps a sceptical position regarding these matters, and does not consider any claims/evidence for life after death, as noted already).

In short, this book offers a clear and diligent discussion of an interesting topic, and is well worth the reader's time/consideration. It offers an important contribution to the literature on philosophy of mind, and has already sparked a number of questions/comments/concerns in my mind, as the last few paragraphs of this review attest.

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Raymond KLIBANSKY, Erwin PANOFSKY, and Fritz SAXL, **Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art**, edited by Philippe DESPOIX and Georges LEROUX; foreword by Bill SHERMAN. Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019 (New Edition), 18 × 27,3 cm, xxxviii-632 p., ISBN 978-0-7735-5949-3 (cloth)

While making my leisurely way through *Saturn and Melancholy* during the expansive days of the current pandemic, I could not help but think regularly of the Reverend Edward Casaubon, the studious mythographer of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Casaubon, undoubtedly modelled by Eliot on the Renaissance philologist, Isaac Casaubon, is a pedantic, selfish, elderly clergyman, so taken up with his scholarly research that his marriage to the adorable, and much younger, Dorothea Brooke is predestined to abject failure. His unfinished, and unfinishable, book, *The Key to All Mythologies*, is intended as a monument to Christian syncretism. Casaubon's wearisome research is as much out of date as his mannerisms. His polyglotism is certainly suspect. He may very well have been Eliot's idealized stand in for "homo melancholicus." She does quote Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), with its atrabilious warnings of the serious consequences of "overmuch study," at the beginning of the chapter on the Reverend. Burton's hilarious *Philosophaster* is an earlier satire on university life (the Oxford of his day) and the excesses of scholarship, elements of which found their way into *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Neither the real Isaac, nor the fictional Edward, Casaubon find their way into *Saturn and Melancholy*. Burton, however, is represented, with Plate 112 showing the title page to his famous multi-volumed treatise. It is instructive, however, as to the serpentine nature of the topic, "in flatu serpentis" our authors would say, of how just about everything could be viewed, and almost was, through the lens of "melancholy" and its on and off again connection with the celestial "Saturn." No obscurities are too obscure in this gargantuan effort to intertwine art history with philosophy, poetry with tragedy, medicine with astral magic, Pythagorean mystical numerology with iatromathematics, Aristotle with the Neo-Platonic Ficino, or to unearth tables

of the humoral dispositions in the pseudo-Soranus and Vindician, and to associate seasonal cycles with the four temperaments, *ad infinitum*. We are all melancholics, if not choleric, if not phlegmatic, if not sanguinic, or some combination thereof. As we will see, that does not necessarily mean you are a depressive, but it could mean you are a genius.

The theme of melancholy is by no means moribund, for either philosophers or medical doctors, or storytellers. Multiple books on melancholy and depression were recently reviewed by Gregory Hays in the *New York Review of Books*, Vol. LXVIII, No. 16 (October 21, 2021), along with a new edition of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Angus Gowland (London, Penguin Classics). Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's short story "Green Tea" (1871), Emanuel Swedenborg, and Winston Churchill's "black dog" are all about that disease "melancholia." Psychiatrists, psychics, novelists, and yes, philosophers of mind, have been rivetted throughout the ages on its powers. As Hays says of Burton "the more of the *Anatomy* one reads, the harder it becomes to say what its real subject is." *Saturn and Melancholy* is vulnerable to the same slippage.

The publication and editorial history of this monumental work is one of the more tortuous in the many sagas of twentieth century scholarship. The Afterword by Philippe Despoix, somewhat antiseptically entitled "The Long and Complex History of a Warburgian Publication Project (1913 - 1990)," sketches its initial genesis in Erwin Panofsky's (1892 - 1968) and Fritz Saxl's (1890 - 1948) treatment of Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I* in the early decades of the twentieth century, building on the earlier work of Karl Giehlow. The project was housed in the famed Warburg Library Network. This network of scholars and archivists is extensively described in *Raymond Klibansky and the Warburg Library Network*, previously reviewed in these pages¹, and which is profitably read as a companion volume to *Saturn and Melancholy*. See especially, Philippe Despoix's, "Melancholy and Saturn: A Long-Term Collective Project of the Warburg Library," and the five essays in Part III of the former volume.

The first incarnation of *Saturn and Melancholy* appeared in 1923 with the title *Dürer's 'Melencolia I': A Historical Investigation of Sources and Types* by Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl. Shortly thereafter Raymond Klibansky (1905-2005), then a graduate student in philosophy, enters the picture and the project starts to take a look at the ancient and medieval sources of the labyrinthine medical and natural history of melancholy. Through wars, death, and a diaspora (literally and figuratively) of scholars, the project carried on culminating in the three-authored English edition of 1964 (New York, Nelson), which is the core edition for the current updated volume. Erwin Panofsky, the eminent interpreter of Albrecht Dürer, died in 1968, twenty years after Saxl's passing in 1948. Klibansky carried on with his research, augmenting and contributing to new editions in Italian (1983), French (1989), and German (1990). There were some rumblings in the 1990s for a new edition of the even then long out of print English edition of 1964, but this had to wait until the current edition published by McGill-Queen's University Press, which includes an English translation of Klibansky's Preface to the 1990 German edition. The Editors' Note on page xi contains a helpful list of additions to this new publication of *Saturn and Melancholy*. Perhaps nothing represents better the "spirit" of the Warburg Institute

1. *Science et Esprit*, 72/1-2 (janvier-août 2020), p. 238-242.

than this work and the *in camera* drama of its journey through more than a hundred years of reflection on melancholy, Saturn, and the famous engraving “Melencolia I” of Dürer (1471-1528).

Part I “The Notion of Melancholy and Its Historical Development”

The “melancholy” narrative substantively begins with the “black bile” or “atrabilious” of Aristotle’s *Problem*, XXX, quoted in full in *Saturn and Melancholy* (18-29) in the original Greek, with an English translation. There are precursors even to this text, which is the Old Testament of the natural philosophy of the black bile. The New Testament is Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Klíbanky, always looking for sources, finds hints of “the doctrine of the four humours” in the Pythagoreans, Empedocles, Alcmaeon, and Hippocrates. The four humours of blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm get hooked up with all things four, such as the tetrad, the four elements, the four seasons, or the four ages of the human life cycle. There is an excellent Table on pages 62 - 63 in *Saturn and Melancholy* on how the four humours get described by authors such as Galen, Soranus, Isidore, and Bede. As an aside, there is much to be said about the metaphysical implications of the fourfold, such as one finds in a modern philosopher like William Desmond and his idea of the “metaxological,” but one will search in vain in *Saturn and Melancholy* for a coherent metaphysics.

It is with Aristotle that the properties of the “black bile” (*atrabilia*) get their first scientific treatment in ancient philosophy. There is an extensive analysis of this text by Klíbanky, who makes the rather extraordinary conclusion that *Problem* XXX could be not be truly understood until the appearance of the phenomenon of “genius” in the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century. The elevation of melancholy to hybrid status occurs early in Western literature. Is it pathological, a disease with numerous sub-categories? Is it formative of four distinctive types of disposition? How do philosophers use an analysis of the melancholic state to characterize moral judgments? What are the diagnostic and curative approaches developed by physicians? These twists and turns are historically canvassed in the Stoic tradition through the eyes of such characters as Cicero, Rufus of Ephesus, Asclepiades, Archigenes, and Soranus. Chapter II of Part I traces the various notions of melancholy in medieval medicine, science, and philosophy.

None of this is easy going for the general reader. There are vast stretches of badly overgrown footnotes, many with untranslated texts in classical Greek, Latin, Italian, old German, or old French. Many references are dated, though not without interest. A good number of the footnotes would have been better integrated into the body of the text, though many lengthy quotations could better serve their purposes if significantly truncated. Much of this scholarship today would find its way into specialized monographs and journals. *Saturn and Melancholy* has, at times, the ambience of an aged and frozen compendium. Nonetheless, the ponderous is often leavened with insightful inferences that could only come from the authors’ long immersion in all themes melancholic in culture and art history.

Part II “Saturn, Star of Melancholy”

Part II switches gears from the mundane reverberations in human nature of the melancholic state to a spectrum of influences emanating from a special celestial

object, Saturn. The melancholic disposition is frequently described as “Saturnine.” Other celestial objects were connected in many writers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with one of the four temperaments, for example, Jupiter with the sanguine, Mars with the choleric, and the moon and Venus with the phlegmatic. The chronological ordering in this Part II of the narrative is a bit choppy, but there is a determined effort to start with “Kronos-Saturn” (or Saturn-Chronos) in the astrophysics and astrology of classical Greek literature, Neo-Platonism, the Church Fathers, and eventually scholastic natural philosophy.

Chapter II, “Saturn in the Pictorial Tradition,” makes good use of the material in the 150 Illustrations at the end of the book. By the time we reach the Italian Renaissance there emerges two distinctive sides to the Saturnine nature. One is wicked and mournful, a devourer of children, and a cunning arithmetician. The other is sublime and contemplative. A good example can be found in Plate 56, by Girolamo da Santa Croce, where Saturn is portrayed as an old peasant, but nonetheless contemplative with melancholic touches and postures. Saturnine themes are endless in mythology, humanism, and many Christian pictorials. Chapter II, with its plethora of suggestive connections in art history and textual representations, opens up doors of inquiry through which today only the specialist would dear trod.

Part III “Poetic Melancholy” and ‘Melancholia Generosa”

This short section turns to the melancholic in poetry. The most significant part for the overall story is the section on the Renaissance philosopher and translator, Marsilio Ficino, in Chapter II “Melancholia Generosa.” The connection between Ficino and Dürer is fascinating and originally developed by the authors. Melancholy in late medieval poetry is often representative of the subjective mood or as indicating heightened self-awareness. Some more well known characters come on the scene in Chapter I of Part III. We have Boccaccio’s *Ninfae Fiesolano*, Chartier’s *Espérance ou Consolation des Trois Vertus* (1428), Dante’s *Paradiso*, Milton’s *L’Allegro*, Keats’ *Ode on Melancholy*, and even Beethoven’s late string quartets. Boccaccio’s *Decameron* will resonate well with current pandemic-fatigued audiences for we have all been sequestered in this or that country villa, to leisurely swop stories and pursue Warburgian interests not normally pursued in more frenetic times.

Chapter II delves immediately into the “new doctrine” of melancholia. This is the elevation of melancholy to a “positive intellectual force” (241). No longer a subjective emotional condition, there is now a significant re-orientation to the speculative life and the “sovereignty of the human mind” (243). The *vita contemplativa* has always been associated, certainly since Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, with self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In the Middle Ages the contemplative life was valued only insofar as it enabled one to draw nearer to God. In the “homo literatus” of the Renaissance this changed. The *vita speculativa* of Lorenzo de’ Medici’s Florence is an end in itself. Pico della Mirandola’s famous *On the Dignity of Man* epitomized the new humanism.

It is, however, in the life and work of Marsilio Ficino, self-described as “Philosophus, Medicus et Theologus” that the protean history of Saturn and melancholy found their most systematic philosophical treatment. The monograph in question is Ficino’s *De vita triplici* (1482-1489) deals with the therapy and symptoms of the Saturnine character. Melancholy emanates from Saturn, according to Ficino, and is

a divine gift. Saturn is the mightiest and noblest star. It leads us to transcendental states, while acknowledging the dangerous bipolarity of Saturn. We are imprisoned in Saturn's baneful influence but in its power there lies the possibility of escape from the humoral temperament. This is because Ficino, ever the committed Neo-Platonist, sees everything in terms of the interchange between the earthly and the heavenly. The stars "saturate" all things, living and non-living, with their qualities. You may not know that peppermint combines the qualities of Jupiter and the sun (264). Ficino is not alone in these views. Roger Bacon need only be consulted. The bestowing of astral qualities on souls and bodies allows Ficino to include his system all the traditional therapies and remedies. There is now a metaphysical justification for a threefold method of "sober dietetic prescriptions" (266), pharmaceutical, and the blandishments of astral medicine or iatromathematics (267-268). The glorification of Saturn is aptly captured in a long quotation from *De vita triplici* on pp. 271-273. The Saturnines of the Platonic Academy of Florence knew well enough who was the father of their eponymous hero. The Florentine doctrine of genius is taken up by the authors in the next section on Albrecht Dürer.

Part IV "Dürer"

The narrative of *Saturn and Melancholy* begins with Giehlow and Panofsky on Dürer and ends with perceptive interpretation of Dürer's *Melencolia I*. The decisive person in the Germanic bridge between Ficino and Dürer is Agrippa of Nettesheim. His *Occulta Philosophia*, originally completed in 1510, is a fusion of Florentine Neo-Platonism and other elements out of multiple traditions, including Averroes. According to our authors there is no work of art "which corresponds more nearly to Agrippa's notion of melancholy than Dürer's engraving" (360). *Melencolia I* is the melancholy of the inspired artist, an imaginative being, rather than of the speculative or the rational. It is neither metaphysical nor religious, neither political nor scientific. The imaginative achievements of painters are derived from a higher divine inspiration. Creative power lay in the irrational, the individual gift of the "Musarum sacerdotes," and not in the "ratio" of the exact sciences as defined by Galileo.

For Aristotle the value of melancholy lays in its capacity for great achievements in all fields. In the Middle Ages the "melancholy disease," by shielding one from worldly temptation, allowed for moral good and an intensified relationship with God (390). While *Saturn and Melancholy* does not state it explicitly, it is not hard to see how Dürer's *Melencolia I* is one of the key jumps from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, *via* Ficino and his German successor Agrippa of Nettesheim, into a modernity imbued with the countervailing forces to the Scientific Revolution of the "species fantastica" rooted in the "furor melancholicus."

Generally

Saturn and Melancholy contains such a wealth of accumulated scholarship, over multiple fields, covering the whole of the Western intellectual tradition, that it would be better to describe this publication as an archival event, an encyclopedia, or even an *ad hoc* attempt at library construction, with all the attendant problems of inchoate narratives and abortive searches for a thesis. *Saturn and Melancholy* will rival the dictionaries on your bookshelf for sheer weight and density. The text itself, and its

cascading rivers of footnotes, would tax the abilities of the most formidable polyglots. The editors have attempted to alleviate this problem somewhat with supplemental translations in the “Additions” section (413-428). The ancient Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and French quotes in the footnotes are, however, mostly untranslated and can only serve as a guide for more specialized scholars. Why some quotations are translated and not others is a mystery, for example, on p. 226. Nevertheless, the laity get a reasonably accessible text while the high priests of Warburg are left to find their pleasures in the footnotes. Long, untranslated quotes are a bit of an occupational hazard with scholars associated with the Warburg Library Network. In the end what Klibansky and company probably had in mind with *Saturn and Melancholy* is, principally, to open up research vistas and agendas for posterity. Bill Sherman’s “Foreword” certainly attests to the legacy of such a motive.

There is not much to fault with the copy editing in *Saturn and Melancholy*. The list of “Figures” at the end of the “List of Abbreviations” on p. xxxvi should have page references, both here and when they are mentioned later in the text. There is the odd typo, for example, on page 271, footnote 100, “least” for “east,” and footnote 29 for 2, on page 251. There are probably other quibbles one could raise with the many long citations of text, especially in the footnotes, a distinctive Warburgian trait, but given the stupendous amount of scholarship in this volume, it must be acknowledged as a considerable feat of production and copy editing.

This New Edition contains Klibansky’s “Preface to the German Edition (1990),” Klibansky’s and Panofsky’s “Preface to the First English Edition (1964),” “Additions to the Notes from the 1990 German Edition, with Supplemental Translations of Quotations,” “Supplemental Bibliography for the German Edition (1990),” “Addendum on the Text History of [Ps-] Aristotle, *Problem XXX*, 1,” “Afterword: The Long and Complex History of a Warburgian Publication Project,” “Index of Manuscripts,” “Index (1964),” “Illustrations (150),” and three technical Appendices on Dürer and Cranach. *Saturn and Melancholy* is a beautiful book with its many illustrations and appurtenances. One can only imagine the editorial and typesetting efforts that went into its production. McGill-Queen’s University Press have given it a very reasonable price of \$65.00.

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THÉOLOGIE

Luc BULUNDWE et Chen DANDELLOT en collaboration avec Simon BUTTICAZ (eds.), **Approches et méthodes en sciences bibliques: Quoi de neuf?** (Cahiers de la Revue de théologie et de philosophie 25). Genève, Droz, 2021, 15,5 × 22,7 cm, 348 p., ISBN 978-2-6000-6271-8.

Ce collectif rassemble des contributions proposées lors d’un colloque du même nom que le livre, tenu à l’Université de Genève en septembre 2018. Le volume est divisé en