Louis Pasteur

Dr. Patrice Debreacute;
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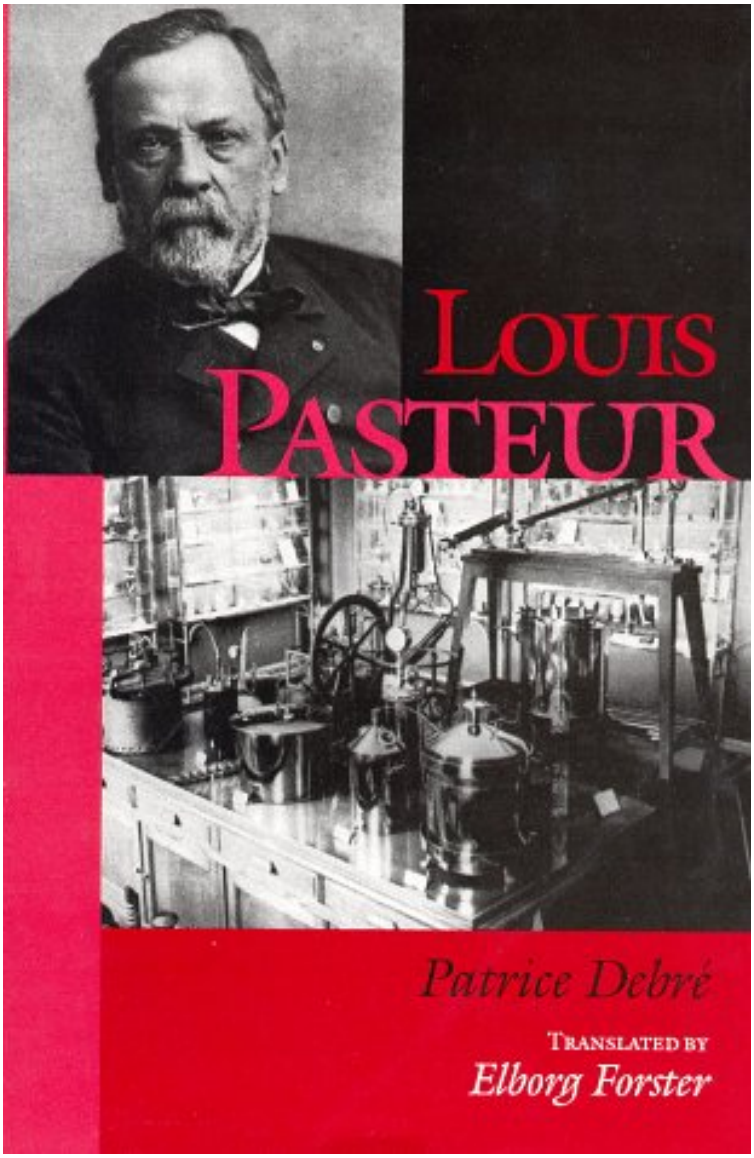

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Dr. Patrice Debreacute; : Louis Pasteur before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Louis Pasteur:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Intuitive genius, brilliant experimentalist, intellectual arrogance - the life of PasteurBy Daniel PutmanDebre's biography of Pasteur is thorough and well-written. The reader sees both the incredible intuitive and experimental genius of the man along with his arrogance and tendency at times to make the data fit the hypothesis. This is a more well-rounded biography of Pasteur's life compared to Gerald Geison's

biography - The Secret Science of Louis Pasteur - which I also read. Geison's book shows how far Pasteur would go, especially later in his life, to insure his scientific fame and to ignore unfortunate results. However, Debre also covers these traits of Pasteur but puts them into a different context. Debre spells out in detail Pasteur taking credit for his assistant's work at times. But, relativism aside, it is difficult to judge what he did in modern terms since the master-apprentice relationship in the 19th century was one of a dominance in the laboratory unheard of today. And if there ever was a "master" of the lab, it was the obsessive Pasteur. Debre does not excuse Pasteur but he also gives us a more thorough understanding of the cultural context. A more serious issue is the rabies vaccine. The rabies vaccinations, which Geison upbraids Pasteur for in a couple ways, are put into a different context by Debre. Debre presents the early vaccinations as a choice between a patient likely to get rabies and a vaccine only partially tested. A terrible decision but one we can understand. Geison, like Pasteur's medical assistant Roux, argues that the vaccinations were hasty and probably unjustified and the vaccine was far more untested and hypothetical than Pasteur publicly claimed. Pasteur's motives are seriously questioned. In order to get a full picture of these issues, especially the Joseph Meister rabies inoculation and the issues surrounding the famous anthrax/sheep experiment, the reader would do well to read both books. However, if you want a full biography of Pasteur's entire life and career, Debre's book is the one to choose.The book is dense with details and in most places well-written and clear. It was very clearly written for a French audience and the potential English reader needs to be aware that there are many references to French scientists and authors that he or she may be unfamiliar with. Given the audience, it is also not surprising that the book leans strongly toward French accomplishments. Debre does not put down German or English accomplishments. His descriptions of Lister and Jenner are well done. Nevertheless, I often had the sense that the book would have been stronger if Debre had given more time to non-French predecessors and contemporaries of Pasteur. The translation by Elborg Forster is for the most part smooth. There are some passages in which the translation into English is a bit awkward but overall the book reads well. The early section on Pasteur's important chemical discoveries is very readable for the general public, though a chemist might wish for more details. (Geison's book has more details on this aspect of Pasteur's life.) The chapter on rabies is one the reader will not forget. It is mesmerizing - humans fighting off a horrible disease, labs with rabid, snarling and slavering animals, experiments that make the reader cringe, and Pasteur's precautions that included having a loaded pistol handy both for animals that may get free and for any humans who may become infected.(See the citation from Roux's niece on p. 430 for an explanation of this extraordinary last point.) The modern reader will be torn between the pain caused so many animals and the goal that Pasteur and his "team" had in mind. This chapter is worth the price of the book alone.In terms of public recognition it is hard to find anyone comparable to Pasteur except perhaps Newton and Einstein. He put experimental medicine on the front page of newspapers. As Debre puts it at one point, if Edward Jenner discovered vaccination, Pasteur discovered vaccine and how to make it. Another cogent point was made by Thomas Brock, the author of the excellent biography of Robert Koch. Pasteur focused on protecting and curing individuals; Koch focused heavily on protecting populations. Debre shows the reader the dispute between these two giants in the field and how it ties into the intense rivalry between the French and the Germans, especially after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Pasteur was an incredibly unusual human being - a true experimental and intuitive genius who was so certain of his hypotheses that he set up brilliant experiments to show that he was right, sometimes at the expense of work done by others. But he almost always was right (and often lucky). We can rightfully criticize Pasteur for his conceptual stubbornness and some of his later moves that strike us as unethical but the intuitive and experimental insight of the man was incredible. This book spells out Pasteur's life in detail and is the best overall biography of the man on the market.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. General overview of life written by friendly author who failed ...By bgarramoneGeneral overview of life written by friendly author who failed to examine any of Pastuers short comings or personality quirks.6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Underachieves its PurposeBy Ralph WhiteYou bought this book because you wanted some insight into the life of the "father of microbiology." You wanted to see, in particular, whether his genius was carefully nurtured or if it arose spontaneously. You will be disappointed, and the reasons may never be clear. When a book translated from a foreign language under-achieves its objectives and leaves the reader unsatisfied, it is never clear if the fault lies with the author or the translator. Elborg Forster's translation of Patrice Debreacute;'s ambitious work has two closely-related problems. The first problem which the reader encounters is the density of the language. The ponderous syntax of the French intellectual is preserved in Forster's prose, and it does not work as well in English. The second problem is that either the author or the translator is not sufficiently scientifically literate to be able to explain Pasteur's original contributions. For example, Chapter Two provides a great discussion of "isomorphism," without ever explaining what the formal mathematical term means in the context of the growth of crystals. Also, speaking of "left-handed" and "right-handed" crystals, without informing the reader of how the terms are used, renders the meaning inaccessible to even the scientifically literate reader. Considering the amount of scholarship which obviously went into the book, it would have been worth the modicum of effort necessary to welcome the reader rather than challenge him. It's a shame. Such a great man; such a weak book.

Distinguished French immunologist and physician Patrice Debreacute; offers an extensive, balanced, and detailed

account of Louis Pasteur's life, struggles, and contributions. Drawing heavily on Pasteur's own scientific notebooks and writings, Debreacute; presents a complete critical account of his discoveries and the controversies they raised with other scientists and occasionally with his closest associates.

.com Louis Pasteur was more than just a man; in the words of his latest biographer he was "a living symbol, embodying both science and France." That's a pretty heavy assessment, but coming from respected French immunologist Patrice Debre, it's certainly credible. Written for the centenary of Pasteur's death, this book is a comprehensive, insightful examination of his life and work, made far more interesting and accessible by the author's natural flair for describing the details of scientific research with simple, compelling prose. Though it is fashionable to undermine the posthumous reputations of our heroes (and many have gone to work on Pasteur), Debre finds greater value in acknowledging Pasteur's obstinacy and possible data fudging within the much-broader context of the man's incredibly successful working life. By his insistence on practically applying science to real problems, he helped further France's silk and wine industries and greatly reduced the harm of such diseases as anthrax, cholera, and rabies. With all that--and more--to his credit, it seems hardly worthwhile to complain that he may have predetermined some of his experimental results or harbored unreasonable anti-German sentiments, and Debre refuses to judge Pasteur on anything less than his entire life. On that scale, his heroism is beyond doubt. --Rob LightnerFrom Library JournalBiographers are like the characters in the classic Japanese film Rashomon, who each reveal one aspect of the truth when recounting the same event from their unique perspective. Like Gerald Geison's revisionist and controversial The Private Science of Louis Pasteur (LJ 5/1/95), Debr?'s biography was written to mark the centenary of Pasteur's death in 1895. Unlike Geison, who is a historian, Debr? is a practicing scientist, the head of the Immunology Laboratory at the Piti?-Saltp?ti?re Hospital in Paris, and director of a research unit associated with the French National Center for Scientific Research. Drawing heavily on Pasteur's own notebooks and writing, Debr? provides a counterpoint to Geison's book, which had charged Pasteur with scientific misconduct. Writing in an engaging style, he has created a balanced and detailed account of Pasteur's personal and professional life. Debr? clearly understands the difficulties of trying to get one's peers to accept changes to established procedures and practices even when science supports these changes. Highly recommended for undergraduate, graduate, and general readers.AJames Olson, Northeastern Illinois Univ. Lib., ChicagoCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Scientific AmericanTrained in physics and chemistry, beginning his career as a teacher of those subjects and a researcher in crystallography, Pasteur (1822-1895) as a young man would not have seemed likely to make an international reputation in medical research. But he did, and Debreacute; in this fine biography traces the steps in the transition and illuminates Pasteur's many achievements in the field. Debreacute; sees Pasteur's paper of 1857 on lactic fermentation as "the birth certificate of microbiology" and his later work on vaccines as "the birth of a new discipline," namely, immunology. "The Pasteurian revolution," Debreacute; writes, "created a close link between theory and practice. It became clear that medicine could no longer do without science and that hospitals must no longer be mere hospices."