



# Louis Pasteur

*By Dr. Patrice Debré*

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Distinguished French immunologist and physician Patrice Debré 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, Debré presents a complete critical account of his discoveries and the controversies they raised with other scientists and occasionally with his closest associates.

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

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 Lightner*

### From Library Journal

Biographers 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), Debré's biography was written to mark the centenary of Pasteur's death in 1895. Unlike Geison, who is a historian, Debré is a practicing scientist, the head of the Immunology Laboratory at the Pitié-Salpêtrière 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, Debré 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. Debré 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., Chicago*

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### From Scientific American

Trained 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 Debré in this fine biography traces the steps in the transition and illuminates Pasteur's many achievements in the field. Debré 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," Debré 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."

## Users Review

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**Angel Garcia:**

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