

Book Reviews

One of its shortcomings is Oehler-Klein's tendency to include too many heterogeneous elements in the narrative; the problem being that her impressive knowledge of primary sources is not matched with an equivalent appreciation of important secondary literature. For example, she writes of the localization debate led by Gall, Pierre Flourens and Paul Broca without reference to the work of Robert M. Young, Edwin Clarke, Steven Jacyna and Anne Harrington; and, of the popularization of phrenology in Britain and America without citing pivotal studies by Roger Cooter and Steven Shapin.

One might think that the author's intention was to write a comparative study of the different reactions to Gall within the various interest groups in German society and in England and France. However, Oehler-Klein only partially fulfills such expectations, because there is no clear historiographical strategy behind her material. In consequence, the major part of the book delivers well-argued conclusions, while some passages remain on the level of pure description. Nevertheless, its scholarship and the enlightening analysis of literary texts, makes this book a rich and useful contribution to the *Zeitgeist* of the first half of the nineteenth century, which should not be ignored by anyone who is interested in Gall and his time.

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PETER-CHRISTIAN WEGNER, *Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828): Studien zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 1991, pp. xii, 201, illus., DM 48.00 (paperback 3–487–09382–0).

This anthology comprises six essays by Wegner on Gall, which were first published between 1983 and 1990, for the most part in the *Medizinhistorisches Journal* and in the third volume of the *Soemmerring-Forschungen*. They have been slightly revised and are supplemented by a common index and bibliography.

The main theme is the public reaction to Gall's doctrine of distinct cerebral organs (organology), particularly in the context of his lecture tour through Europe from 1805 to 1807. Accordingly, craniology or phrenology, as the most popular part of his teachings, plays a major role. Using the broad approach of cultural history, Wegner provides meticulous studies on Gall's reception in academic and noble circles in Schleswig-Holstein and on the craze for—as well as the mockery of—his doctrine in Paris. Contemporary snuffboxes ornamented with phrenological subjects and relevant caricatures are analysed in detail. Gall's striving for scientific recognition is documented by the edition of three of his letters to Cuvier. While the first (written in German) sketches some principles of organology, the other two (written in French and in addition translated by Wegner into German) defend with passion Gall's ideas on cerebral anatomy against the disapproving report that had been given in 1808 by Cuvier and other members of the Institut National de France. Gall especially insisted on his view that the convolutions of the brain were “duplicatures” which could unfold. It was not only based on anatomical arguments, but also on cases of hydrocephalus with mental functions not being greatly impaired.

The accusation of materialism against Gall's organology that had led to a ban on his lectures by the Viennese Court in 1801, continued to be made throughout his life and afterwards. Moreover, his view that the strength of specific character traits depended on the development of certain cerebral regions gave rise to reproaches of supporting fatalism and of exculpating criminal behaviour. These issues form a leitmotif that is well brought out by Wegner, especially in a study on reactions to Gall in the French press.

Since Wegner abstains from giving a summary of Gall's life and work, his collection of essays can hardly serve as an introductory text. It can be recommended, however, to readers with a special interest in cultural aspects of medicine in the *Goethezeit* and particularly in the history of “Gallism”.

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