

Book Notices

ERNST FLOREY and OLAF BREIDBACH (eds), *Das Gehirn—Organ der Seele? Zur Ideengeschichte der Neurobiologie*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1993, pp. xxi, 424, illus., DM 84.00 (3-05-002399-6).

This volume is the outcome of a symposium on 'The history of ideas in neurobiology' held in Bad Homburg (Germany) in June 1991. Neurobiology touches upon a question which continues to fascinate: the mind-body problem. "Naturphilosophen" once assumed the brain to be the seat of the soul. Modern neurophysiologists account for the brain as an apparatus, akin to a computer. They operate with terms such as "information", "inhibition", "transmission" or "impulse". This terminology is not unproblematic or less theory-laden than that of the romantics. The history of neurobiology illustrates the struggle of the human mind to comprehend itself.

The first part of this volume discusses romantic ideas of the organ of the soul and the gradual evolution of concepts in nineteenth-century neuro-anatomy, such as the neuron and the reticular theory. The second part explains theories of cognition and nervous activity through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminating in an analysis of Fechner's work on what he calls "Psychophysik". Finally three essays question modern assumptions and our own conceptual tools in neurobiology. In the light of the analysis of the history of ideas in neurobiology, it becomes clear that we should scrutinize contemporary ideas as carefully.

JOHN SURTEES, *The Princess Alice and other Eastbourne hospitals*, Eastbourne, Local History Society, 1994, pp. 244, illus., £5.85 (0-9504560-5-5).

Local histories of local hospitals are a familiar but unsatisfactory genre for professional historians. All too often such histories are concerned with local minutiae to the exclusion of broader historical themes and analysis. In many respects, however, John Surtees has written a superior example of the genre: there is here at least plenty of information of the kind which contributes to a wider hospital history, for example on the impact of war, and on how local hospitals financed themselves. The Eastbourne hospitals seem to be particularly well documented, and Dr Surtees has made good use of oral history sources. The bulk of the volume is devoted to the Princess Alice, founded in 1882 in memory of Queen Victoria's second daughter, who died of diphtheria in 1878, aged 35, shortly after a happy holiday visit to the town. Further chapters cover the Downside (1885-1979), initially the fever hospital; the Gildredge (1914-1979), founded as the tuberculosis hospital; the Leaf Homeopathic Cottage Hospital (founded 1888); and the local maternity home (1919-1976). Inevitably many questions which professional historians would wish to raise remain unanswered, but so do questions which the layman too might wish answered: the Princess Alice is, it seems, about to disappear, but why the selling off of inpatient services to Associated Nursing Services should spell the end of the hospital is not explained. The lives of most of these Eastbourne hospitals span a bare century: there is a larger history waiting to be written here, for which this book provides many materials.

POUL ASTRUP, PETER BIE and HANS CHR. ENGELL, *Salt and water in culture and medicine*, transl. Kirsten Skovbjerg and Andrew L. Cameron-Mills, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1993, pp. xi, 287, illus., DKK 350.00 excl. VAT (87-16-11226-1).

In presenting the history of water and salt in one small volume Professor Astrup and his co-authors had a difficult task, especially as they do not appear to have identified the readers for whom this book was written. It is neither an easy read nor a comprehensive reference book. Partially a picture book with captions, the text varies from being of general interest, almost common knowledge, to giving detailed, specialist accounts of investigations and procedures.

The introductory chapters contain a vast amount of information some of which is naively simplified, as on page 88, where the effect of bathing is said to "press oedema fluid into the central vessels" and the case history which follows is misplaced in time and location. It is difficult to verify

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the source of any statements and separate fact from opinion as the references, except in chapter 4, parts 4 and 5, are given alphabetically, with no referral point in the text. The second part of the book follows the gradual development of the understanding of the importance of maintaining a stable salt/water balance for survival and the various means of achieving this state. More ruthless selection and editing of the contents could have been helpful.

Journal of medical Biography, ed. J. M. H. Moll, published by the Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE, quarterly (Feb., May, Aug., Nov.), subscription (1994): individual, £35, \$65.00; institution, £45, \$85. Orders should be sent with payment to: Publications Subscription Department, Royal Society of Medicine Services Ltd, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE, UK.

The *Journal of medical Biography* was launched in 1993 as a "vehicle for regular and systematic coverage in the field of medical biography". Apart from straightforward biographical articles, each issue is divided into sections which deal with various biographical themes, such as 'Investigators', 'Patients', 'Truants', 'Historical vignettes', 'Plaques on London houses of medico-historical interest', and an 'Anniversary profile'. Illustrations are an important component.

Contributions submitted for publication should be sent to, Dr J. M. H. Moll, Editor, *Journal of Medical Biography*, Sheffield Centre for Rheumatic Diseases, Nether Edge Hospital, Sheffield S11 9EL, UK.

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

(The inclusion of a title does not preclude the possibility of subsequent review. Items received, other than those assigned for review, are ultimately incorporated into the collection of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.)

Baer and modern biology, Proceedings of the International Conference 1992, Folia Baeriana VI, Tartu, Institute of Zoology and Botany of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, 1993, pp. 304, no price given (9985-50-037-7).

ANDERS BRÄDSTRÖM and LARS-GÖRAN TEDEBRAND (eds), *Health and social change: disease, health and public care in the Sundsvall district 1750-1950*, Report no. 9 from the Demographic Data Base, Umeå University, 1993, pp. 189, illus., no price given (91-7174-850-4).

ROBERT BUD, *The uses of life: a history of biotechnology*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. xiii, 299, illus., £30.00, \$49.95 (hardback 0-521-38240-8), £12.95, \$19.95 (paperback 0-521-47699-2). The hardback edition was reviewed in *Medical History* in July 1994.

ERICA BURMAN, *Deconstructing developmental psychology*, Critical Psychology series, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, £40.00 (hardback 0-415-06437-6), £13.99 (paperback 0-415-06438-4).

J. M. KEPPEL HESSELINK, *Beelden in de mist: de geschiedenis van de neurologie in capita selecta* ['Unclear images': the history of neurology in capita selecta], Pantaleon Reeks No. 11, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 1994, pp. 248, illus., Hfl. 59.50 (90-5235-053-1).

H. F. J. HORSTMANSHOFF (ed.), *Pijn en balsem, troost en smart: Pijnbeleving en pijnbestrijding in de oudheid* [Pain and balsam, consolation and sorrow: the experience of pain and the combatting of pain in antiquity], Pantaleon Reeks No. 13, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 1994, pp. 240, illus., Hfl 89.50 (90-5235-042-6).

STANLEY L. JAKI, *Is there a universe?*, Liverpool University Press, 1993, viii, 137, £16.50 (hardback 0-85323-498-1), £8.95 (paperback 0-85323-009-9).