

Book Reviews

scientific scepticism, Johnson still finds it “curious that, of all available psychiatric drug treatments, lithium therapy is still the one treated with most suspicion and mistrust by so many clinicians and even with outright and overt hostility by a few”(p. 129). There are many more obvious reasons than he is prepared to entertain.

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TERRY CLIFFORD, *Tibetan Buddhist medicine and psychiatry. The diamond healing*, York Beach, Maine, S. Weiser; Wellingborough, Northants, Thorsons, 1984, 8vo, pp. xx, 268, illus., £12.95.

Eastern medical systems are enjoying a great vogue at the moment because they are holistic, endeavouring to heal the whole person, not just bits of the patient's body or mind. This book is an excellent example of a description of this method because the intertwining requirements of body, mind, and spirit are each shown to receive treatment. This treatment then helps the other strands of the personality. (1) Buddhist medicine deals with the spiritual and ethical requirements. It provides inner peace as a prerequisite for well-being. (2) Tantric medicine purifies the invisible system of channels and wheels known from yoga. (3) Somatic medicine deals with the body; and (4) psychiatric medicine with the troubles of the everyday mind. They are not watertight compartments and influence one another.

The core of the book is formed by a translation of three chapters on psychiatric medicine from the Tibetan, with part of the original text in facsimile. Tables of plants and other substances used in psycho-pharmacology are provided, with explanations on their appearance and details of their application. Subjects difficult for Western readers, such as the concepts of deities and demons, are explained in Western terms.

Any criticism made of such a comprehensive and well-balanced survey of the field is really of small importance. While history is touched upon only where it is useful for elucidating some connexions, it is alleged in three different passages that uroscopy was an indigenous Tibetan invention. This is by no means certain, because Western influences existed during the Middle Ages. Though the genuine works of Galen do not deal in detail with the diagnosis of diseases from the urine, Byzantine writers like the fourth-century Magos of Emesa in Syria and the seventh-century Theophilus Protospatharios of Constantinople had worked out elaborate systems. Syriac and Byzantine learning was taught at Gondeshapur in Persia, and Persian ideas are known to have travelled to Tibet via the trade routes.

Some other small criticisms could be made about inconsistent terminology, such as the indiscriminate use of the words “airs” and “winds” instead of deciding to use one or the other. The sources mentioned are sometimes secondary but the detailed bibliography will help the more interested reader to consult the primary sources.

To keep the price within the reach of the ordinary reader, the book has foregone glossy colour plates, but it has a great number of very useful working illustrations.

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H. A. SNELLEN, *Two pioneers of electrocardiography. The correspondence between Einthoven and Lewis from 1908–1925*, Rotterdam, Donker, 1983, 8vo, pp. 140, illus., Dfl.55.00.

Although Willem Einthoven received the 1924 Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology for the discovery of the mechanism of the electrocardiogram, he fully realized that it was Thomas Lewis who had made the prize possible by demonstrating clinical application of the instrument. Starting in 1908, Einthoven and Lewis wrote to each other frequently between their respective homes of Leiden and London, and by 1924 they had become good friends. Fortunately, Einthoven saved almost all of his letters. Thanks to H. A. Snellen's continued interest in publishing Einthoven's writings, we now have this complete collection of the correspondence between Lewis and Einthoven. Professor Snellen has supplied biographical sketches of these two men and has summarized key developments every year or two. He

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provides an excellent guide to the secondary literature on Einthoven, Lewis, and the electrocardiogram (ECG), as well as to available translations of Einthoven's papers. High-quality reproductions of several ECG tracings as well as of handwritten letters and diagrams not only make the book an aesthetic success, but also allow the reader access to primary source material. These documents are especially valuable for the historian interested in seeing the actual tracings and following the technical discussions.

The first group of letters are primarily concerned with instrumental details, as Einthoven and Lewis worked out the best method for recording the ECG. Next, the two discussed the proper interpretation of the wave; in the last period they attempted to understand its formation. These letters are central for understanding the history of ideas about the ECG.

But there is more than merely the history of the ECG in these letters, for the slim size of this volume belies its substantial value for historians interested in a broad range of topics in early twentieth-century medicine. Allbutt, Osler, Wenckebach, and many other leading physicians of the day crossed paths with Einthoven and Lewis. The frank, practical exchanges about arranging meetings in each other's country, addressing various societies, or meeting particular individuals give a fascinating insight into the class structure of British and Dutch medicine. Both Einthoven and Lewis had to deal with the impact of World War I on the conduct of medical research, and then with the issue of how to treat scientists who were former enemies. Historians of early twentieth-century medicine will want to spend a few minutes with this book; those interested in the development of cardiology will want to read it.

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MARY A. B. BRAZIER, *A history of neurophysiology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: from concept to experiment*, New York, Raven Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. 239, \$81.00.

For nearly three decades, Molly Brazier as she is affectionately known, has made important contributions to the literature on the history of neurophysiology. At the same time, she has been accepted as one of the world's most eminent electrophysiologists of the nervous system, with a classic book on this subject now in seven languages. Her historical writings have covered all aspects of neurophysiology, but especially the role played by electricity in the functioning of the nervous system, and they continue to provide valuable and reliable sources of information.

Fortunately, Dr Brazier has now brought together her many researches on events in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a book that is the first of two, the second presumably dealing with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first volume is divided into two equal parts: neurophysiology in the seventeenth century; and the rise of electrophysiology in the eighteenth. Throughout, the chapters deal chronologically with individuals and their achievements, grouped by the schools or movements they represent, but not by the concepts with which they were grappling. There is an emphasis on the experiments carried out, and plates from the original reports frequently illustrate them. This is a most advantageous technique, and there are many excellent illustrations throughout the book. Dr Brazier's historical writings have been characterized by two features. First, she has always taken into account not only the evolution of neuroscientific thought, but also related contemporary events in philosophy, politics, literature, and art; second, she explores sources little known or previously unknown in the West, as she did, for example, in her scholarly study on the origins of the electroencephalogram. These historical methods, together with a pleasant style and adequate documentation, will make the volume an important contribution to the history of the neurosciences.

It is not without its faults, however. In view of the fact that Dr Brazier's history of neurophysiology covers the same period of time as Max Neuburger's classic essay of 1897, to which she makes no reference, it is natural that one would wish to compare and contrast the two works. Neuburger dealt only with the central nervous system, and he mustered a mass of scholarly data to demonstrate conclusively that the main neurological theme in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the localization of function in the brain, introduced by Thomas Willis, mostly demolished by Haller, and resurrected by Gall in the last decade of