

Book Reviews

Unlike so many books published today, spelling mistakes are few, though it is a pity that the only occasion Oswald Schmiedeberg's name is mentioned it is spelt incorrectly. There is a useful list of symbols which may be encountered in earlier documents. Particularly useful are the definitions describing the site and mode of drug actions as they were understood in the eighteenth century and on into the next one. Terms such as "diaphoretic" and "emetic" are of course readily understood today, but "discutient", "alternative", "restringent" and "antihectic" are not.

The bibliography is remarkably uneven. Three listings are given to Ann Leighton's work on American gardens, as well as other botanical works, and yet Jonathan Pereira's influential *Elements of materia medica and therapeutics*, William Salmon's translation of George Bates's *Dispensatory* (which he called *Pharmacopoeia Bateana*), and John Quincy's *Dispensatory* and William Lewis's up-dated versions are all omitted. A particularly useful inclusion would have been John Ayrton Paris's *Pharmacologia* of 1812 with its centuries-old materia medica but the first glimmerings of understanding how substances react in the body.

There is no doubt that a book of this nature is needed, but one gains the impression that too little thought has been given to the project. One looks forward to an amended and enlarged second edition.

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GUNTER MANN and FRANZ DUMONT (eds), *Die Natur des Menschen: Probleme der physischen Anthropologie und Rassenkunde (1750–1850)*, Soemmerring-Forschungen 6, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, Stuttgart, Gustav Fischer, 1990, 8vo, pp. 457, DM 128.00.

"Soemmerring-Forschungen" is an ambitious historical project, inaugurated by Gunter Mann, and aiming to point out the major scientific developments during the "Goethezeit". The six volumes already published demonstrate that the interests of Professor Mann and his collaborators mainly focus on medical, physiological, and biological topics, which are more or less related to the anatomist Samuel Thomas Soemmerring, whose *Opera Omnia* (including letters and diaries) are being prepared for publication. The volume under review is based on an interdisciplinary symposium, which was organized to investigate the various approaches to human nature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

It is impossible to do justice to nineteen contributions, especially since they deal with heterogeneous aspects like physiology, brain anatomy, philosophy, books of travels, or anthropology. Most of the articles are characterized by an impressive scholarship. The reader is provided with careful analyses of concepts by scientists and philosophers like Georges Buffon, Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Christoph Girtanner, Franz Joseph Gall, Petrus Camper, and Georges Cuvier. Numerous aspects like the debates between the "monogenists" and "polygenists" in the eighteenth century or the social background for comparative studies of the brains of white and black people are very well presented. Another fascinating point is the connection between natural history and the "Ästhetisierung der Natur", which—as it is plausibly shown—was a direct consequence of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's theory of the classical beau ideal. It seems that this relation remained a constant factor during the Enlightened and Romantic periods, and I would have wished to get more details about this.

The only problematic point of this volume is the unquestioned juxtaposition of articles written from different methodological viewpoints. Some authors reflect the social and the cultural background, others prefer a more "internal" historical view. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, but the result is a rather heterogeneous picture of anthropological discussion at that time. The editors, however, are perfectly aware of this. Mann states in the preface that he regards the various articles as material for further research, leaving unanswered the question whether or not more systematic theories on the eighteenth-century life sciences like the ones by Michel Foucault and Wolf Lepenies get support from this volume. Apart from this

Book Reviews

methodological shortcoming we now possess a compendium which provides useful insights into various anthropological concepts in the period between 1750 and 1850. Every scholar involved in the history of the life sciences to the beginning of the so-called scientific era will gratefully profit from the innumerable new historical insights in this book.

Michael Hagner, Medical University of Lübeck

JULES KOSKY, *Mutual friends: Charles Dickens and Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989, 8vo, pp. x, 245, illus., £14.95.

In 1909 "the editor of a standard edition of Dicken's collected works made the overwhelming claim that The Hospital for Sick Children was 'founded on a small scale over fifty years ago by Charles Dickens and a few others'." The narrative of this book firmly refutes the claim. It emerges that Dickens's part in founding the institution in Great Ormond Street was indirect. His journal, *Household Words*, published a sentimental article 'Drooping Buds' (co-written with Henry Morley) six weeks after the hospital opened on 16 February 1852. In February 1858 Dickens was the main speaker at a "Festival" to raise funds; a few months later he gave a benefit reading of *A Christmas Carol* for the hospital. Dickens described the Children's Hospital poignantly in *Our Mutual Friend* as the haven where Betty Higden's grandson Johnny finds refuge. This is all.

Kosky's book primarily concerns the real founder of the Hospital, Charles West (1816–98). The task is not easy. There is no previous biography of West and there is a shortage of primary material about the origins of the Hospital (of which Kosky is Honorary Archivist). West was born the son of a small businessman and Baptist lay preacher. His childhood—unlike Dickens's—seems to have been serene. At St Bartholomew's West won prizes but since his father was a Baptist minister, he could not go on to Oxford. He studied instead for two years in Bonn and Paris, where he worked at the L'Hôpital des Enfants Malades. On his return, he began his long fight to set up something equivalent in England.

West was convinced that a children's hospital was necessary both to treat children and—more importantly—as a research centre for children's diseases. He encountered two kinds of obstruction. On the Continent, children's hospitals were supported by the authorities. In Britain, the finance had to be raised from private donors. More surprisingly, perhaps, there was powerful medical resistance to the idea of a children-only institution. Florence Nightingale objected on the grounds that children made excessive demands on nursing staff. West waged a long battle to persuade the governors of the Royal Infirmary for Children in Waterloo Road to change from a dispensary to an in-patient hospital. When, after six years, they still refused he formed his own establishment with the aid of a well-connected colleague, Henry Bence Jones.

Kosky integrates Dickens into the picture as a valuable propagandist. His fiction (particularly the emblematic Little Nell) sensitized the British public to the suffering child. There are numerous occasions when, as Kosky puts it, the veil between Dickens and West trembled. And certainly they had philanthropic friends in common. But there is no evidence of any direct relationship or that Dickens was ever more than a casual well-wisher. It is the chronically unsung Charles West who emerges as Kosky's hero. (The publisher announces that royalties of *Mutual Friends* will go to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.)

John Sutherland, California Institute of Technology

JOSEPH S. FRUTON, *Contrasts in scientific style: research groups in the chemical and biochemical sciences*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 191, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1990, pp. xii, 473, \$40.00 (0–87169–191–4).

Biochemistry is surely destined in the near future for a higher profile within history of medicine. In an era of its ever-increasing importance to clinical medicine, Joseph Fruton, following on from his monumental synthesis *Molecules and life*, has written another book that everyone in the field will want to read.