

Book Reviews

KENNETH DEWHURST, *Willis's Oxford lectures*, Oxford, Sandford Publications, 1980, 8vo, pp. x, 182, illus., £9.00.

In 1660, Thomas Willis, then aged thirty-nine, was appointed the fourth Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford. Provision for the chair had been made in the will of Sir William Sedley in 1618. Although the professor was expected to discourse on Aristotelian physics, Willis used the occasion to propound his iatrochemistry, neuroanatomical researches, theories of madness, and clinical observations. Dewhurst's book is a translation of Willis's Oxford lectures from the manuscript notes of John Locke, collated with those of Richard Lower, who were both in the audience.

By 1660, Willis was midway through his career. He had already shown his chemical interests in his account of epidemic fevers, *Diatribae duae medico-philosophicae* (1659). Much of the work for his *Cerebri anatome* (1664) was done during these Oxford years, and he was also germinating the ideas that were to mature in *De anima brutorum* (1672).

Dewhurst has preceded his translation of the lectures with an excellent biography, with copious references, which should stand as the most useful short secondary source for Willis's activities. The lectures themselves centre almost entirely around the nervous system, its anatomy (including an account of the cerebral convolutions), physiology (incorporating discussions of sleeping, imagination, and memory), and pathology (with detailed descriptions of such diseases as epilepsy and melancholia).

One of the most interesting things about the lectures is the variety of possible readings that could be made of them. Willis was a Royalist and an Anglican of impeccable pedigree. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt his belief in the immortal soul, or that these lectures were actually those delivered by Willis. Yet, were they manuscript notes by an unknown hand of lectures from an undiscovered source, they would be open to entirely different interpretations. It is well known that Willis sited various mental operations in separate areas of the brain. Yet, as described here, this seems like an exercise in rank materialism. Without any reference to the soul, memory and will are traced to the shape of the cerebrum and the meanderings of the animal spirits within. In a very Hobbesian way, motion is invoked as the root of all mental operations. Read in this way, the lectures provide an interesting lesson in the difficulties of situating an unknown text.

Dewhurst has not included the original Latin of the lectures but translated them into an easily readable form and provided ample useful annotations. In addition, he has provided references to Pordage's English version of Willis's published works. The translation, besides being of value to the seventeenth-century scholar, should also assist the teacher looking for a short original text to illustrate the major intellectual themes of the period. They are nearly all here.

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F. C. ROSE and W. F. BYNUM (editors), *Historical aspects of the neurosciences. A Festschrift for Macdonald Critchley*, New York, Raven Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xix, 537, illus., \$78.00.

Most authors hope first of all to achieve fame, financial recompense, or both, and in the case of academic endeavours also to advance their disciplines and to disseminate knowledge. But the contributor to a *Festschrift* has not altogether the same aim: he is primarily concerned with doing honour to a person he respects and he does not necessarily seek a reward for his devotion. This fundamental difference must guide the reviewer and temper his critical assessment of what is bound to be an uneven collection of essays.

Macdonald Critchley is one of the world's most respected clinical neurologists, and the editors of this book, a happy symbiosis of clinician and historian, decided to commemorate his eightieth birthday with a symposium devoted to the history of the science and art of neurology. We are not told when this took place, but forty-six papers were read at it, and they now comprise this elegantly produced *Festschrift*.

First of all, the title is misleading, because only some eighteen articles are concerned with the neurological sciences strictly speaking, and the rest deal with clinical topics, neurology the

speciality, or with neurologists. They cover a remarkable range of topics, a variety that is directly proportional to the diversity of their scholarly quality and the number of Whiggish comments they contain. Only a few of the papers warrant being mentioned by name, but there are others of considerable merit. Among the latter are the biographies, which deal with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Horsley, Carswell, Thudichum, Willis, Gordon Holmes, Brown-Séquard, Houston Merritt, Charcot, and Gilles de la Tourette. Francis Schiller in his usual scholarly style writes on electrotherapy, but his main message concerns terminology, of which he is a master. J. D. Spillane's account of paralysis and sensory ataxia is also worthy of comment, although he draws little from German sources. 'The seat of the soul' by G. W. Bruyn is a curious, superficially scholarly piece, with the ostentatious use of Greek and Latin in the text and marred by recurrent opacities and the use of material that has already appeared elsewhere. One of the few outstanding contributions is by Dr. K. Dewhurst on Willis and British neurology. Whereas most of the papers display "internalist" history, Dewhurst, and also Schiller, bring a broader spectrum to their writing. Also of special interest are the papers on neurology in Norway, India, and Japan, about which little has been written so far.

There is a brief appreciation of Dr. Critchley and a list of his publications, but regrettably no mention of his historical interests. And yet this is a prominent feature of a multi-faceted genius, and presumably the reason for the theme of the symposium and *Festschrift*. No one, for example, can forget Dr. Critchley's celebrated lecture on the history of Huntington's chorea, his account of European neurology, or his use of history in teaching. Dr. Critchley's many contributions to the history of neurology literature are worthy of comment, and it would have been useful if even the titles of his historical books and papers had been listed separately. But, like the entries themselves, the list is incomplete, because the important paper, 'Neurology's debt to F. J. Gall (1758–1828)' (*Br. med. J.*, 1965, ii: 775–781), has been omitted. And finally, a critical comment on the high price of a fascinating and valuable book is inevitable; no doubt the many illustrations have contributed to the cost, and some pruning of those that have appeared again and again in previous publications would have achieved some economy.

Nevertheless, we must congratulate the contributors for their devotion and the editors for their industry, but, more importantly, Dr. Macdonald Critchley for having generated so much reverence, inspiration, and affection throughout the world.

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RUSSELL N. DEJONG, *A history of American neurology*, New York, Raven Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. [vi], 157, illus., \$23.80.

Too long have we awaited an account of the beginnings of the neurological sciences in the United States! When the American Neurological Association held its 100th annual meeting in 1975 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Joe Foley, a brief but fascinating centennial account was published by Denny-Brown, Augustus Rose, and A. L. Sahs. This commentary whetted one's appetite, and hence we cordially welcome Dr. Russell DeJong's elegant volume.

Medicine was not established as a profession in North America until the Revolution. By 1800, there were four medical schools in the United States. As in Great Britain, general physicians were responsible for the care of patients with maladies of the nervous system. Neurology emerged as a speciality during the War of the States (1861–1865), largely through the enterprise of Weir Mitchell and W. A. Hammond. Both were commanding and versatile personages, whose fame and influence extended far beyond the American continent. Their interest in injuries and diseases of the nervous system encouraged other general physicians on the East Coast, particularly in Philadelphia and New York, including C. K. Mills and W. G. Spiller, Joseph Fraenkel, Joseph Collins, and Pearce Bailey sr. The last three were instrumental not only in founding the Neurological Association but also the New York Neurological Institute, the latter not materializing until 1909 in premises in East 67th Street. Further west we recall the pioneering work of Robert Bartholow in Cincinnati, the first person to stimulate the human brain, and then Frank W. Langdon, also of that city. The neurological tradition of