

Book Reviews

focus, and is now herself studying the relations of the universities to other institutions. There is considerable scope, even in Germany. To give one example, although university professors kept the committee of the German Zoological Society firmly in their hands, its founding meeting in 1890 was held not in a university town but in Frankfurt am Main, in the Zoo, where the host was the chairman of the local Senckenberg Society for Research into Nature. Third, investigating other sites of morphological research and other arenas in which the science was produced for its audiences is the most obvious way to bring a host of other actors and their often very different perspectives into view. In the only case in which a wider social movement makes a difference to her account, Nyhart deals with zoology professors' problem that evolution, the most powerful generalization their discipline had to offer, was political dynamite. Cleverly, she almost makes us believe that Haeckel, perhaps the most famous German zoologist, failed because he was just not stolid enough. But though ministers may have preferred "sunder" men, undisciplined others reckoned that Haeckel remained *too much* the German professor.

Nyhart also looks forward to a richer social and cultural history, but boldly reckons her account of morphology in the disciplines will stand up to it. I cannot help thinking that the very processes of academic life that she describes are likely to ensure that new work will do more than simply flesh out her narrative. But I am sure that the book will remain indispensable to historians of the life sciences and medicine for many years to come.

Nick Hopwood, Wellcome Institute

Urban Wiesing, *Kunst oder Wissenschaft? Konzeptionen der Medizin in der deutschen Romantik*, Medizin und Philosophie, Band 1, Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1995, pp. 365, DM 78 (3-7728-1634-7).

It would be difficult to imagine that Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Saul Kripke,

or any other twentieth-century philosopher could have such an impact on today's medical profession that this be divided into opposing camps, each promulgating from its partisan philosophical premise a different view of the status of medicine. Yet just such an important role was played by philosophers in the Romantic era when many of Germany's leading physicians defined the foundations of their profession in terms of the philosophical conceptions of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte or Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Several historians have addressed the question of how fruitful these discussions were for the subsequent development of medicine. Wiesing keeps this contentious issue at arm's length, and focuses on what the authors of the voluminous literature of German Romantic medicine had to say about the question: "Is medicine an art or a science?"

The Leyden physician Hermann Boerhaave had decreed that theoretical medicine was a science and that practical medicine belonged to the arts. But around the turn of the eighteenth century, with the prestige of the life sciences rising, a number of different solutions were proposed to the age-old conundrum "science or art". Wiesing recognizes four of these and accordingly defines four groups of Romantic physicians. First, there were the empirical-eclectic ones, such as Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland and Carl Arnold Wilmans, who stuck to the traditional science-art dichotomy and attributed a doctor's effectiveness to his experience and personal talent. Second, there were the Kantians, most famously represented by Jacob Friedrich Fries. They, too left the dichotomy of art *versus* science intact, but were preoccupied with the notion of experience, arguing that what doctors collected in practice were merely loose observations and that proper experience required the mental faculty of judgement ("Urteilkraft"); medicine could not be elevated to a science.

A subsequently notorious, third group were the nature-philosophical doctors, followers of the Jena philosophers Fichte and, more influential, Schelling. To them, medicine was not only a science, but the very flower of the

natural sciences. Wiesing places Andreas Röschlaub in a fourth category of his own who, in discussing the nature of physiology, followed Schelling, but restricted the utility of the natural sciences for medical practice to a propaedeutic role. The practice of medicine, he believed, needed a theoretical foundation of its own, not one derived from the sciences. An interesting sub-theme in Wiesing's study is the reaction of his four groups to Brunonianism, which Röschlaub introduced and Schelling adopted, but which Kant and his followers liked, too.

Wiesing's detailed and systematic survey provides a salutary reminder that Romantic medicine was anything but monolithic and embraced a variety of fundamental positions, of which *Naturphilosophie* was only one. This book is Wiesing's *Habilitationschrift* (thesis for the higher doctorate); it is a worthy example of its kind, and an appropriate first volume in a new series on 'Medizin und Philosophie'. Yet by not having gone further than a conventional discussion and classification of major publications, the author leaves some relevant issues largely untouched, such as to what extent the four groups he recognizes represented actual social networks and schools of medicine, and why it was that philosophers could have exerted such a major influence on German medicine.

Nicolaas Rupke, Göttingen

Michaela Trieb, *Die Medizinische Fakultät der Universität Helmstedt (1576–1810). Eine Studie zu ihrer Geschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Promotions- und Übungsdisputationen*, Repertorien zur Erforschung der frühen Neuzeit, Band 14, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1995, pp. 354, DM 138.00 (3-447-03699-0).

Helmstedt is one of the lost universities of Europe. Founded in 1576 by the Lutheran Duke Julius of Brunswick, it was suppressed in 1810 in the reorganization of the universities of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Westphalia. It was

never a great success. Plague and the Thirty Years War put an end in 1625 to its most promising years, the Dukes of Brunswick were never the richest of princes, and growth was constantly stifled by the arrival of new competitors in the region such as Halle and Göttingen. Rarely more than ten medical students entered a year, and although some teachers enjoyed a more than local fame (notably Herman Conring, Lorenz Heister, the Scot Duncan Liddell, who returned to Aberdeen, and various members of the Meibom family), few had ambition or sought to act on a wider stage. With the ending of the university the town itself sank into a torpor, to gain even more transitory celebrity as the major crossing point on the motorway to Communist Berlin.

Why then should one wish to study the medical life of this most provincial of German universities? Firstly, because it is typical of most European universities in its aims of providing a steady but small flow of state employees, and in its largely local faculty. Secondly, because the marvellous row of medical dissertations from 1585 to 1810 provides a nice indication of the interests and priorities of the average medical man. And thirdly, because of the interaction between the various parts of a "confessional" (here Lutheran) university. Michaela Trieb provides a sound overview of the medical faculty's history, based almost entirely on its archives. She tabulates the numbers of students and professors, publishes the statutes, and provides brief biographies of the professors. Her interest lies in the 495 MD dissertations and the 311 "pro gradu" or preliminary disputations, most of which are now in the Herzog August Library at Wolfenbüttel. Her cataloguing of the theses is excellent, when checked against the more than 50 theses that exist in the Wellcome Library. These formed part of the Medical Society of London's Library, and are all duplicates of theses recorded. Similarly, her exposition of what the theses meant to a student and how they were produced is thorough and convincing.

However, her reliance on archives and theses, and the strict limits she puts to her task,