

### Book Reviews

and group history, and ally themselves closely to Freud, believing that psychohistory is the fulfilment of his dream of solving the great cultural and historical riddles of mankind by his method. However, until psychoanalysis itself has been adequately evaluated, there can be no legitimate applied psycho-analysis.

The psychohistorians make voluble claims for their new approach, but its impact on the history of medicine has so far been very slight. If it is such a remarkably rewarding technique, why does it form no part of academic medical history, and in Britain, for example, is almost totally ignored?

PETER N. STEARNS, *Old age in European society. The case of France*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. 163, £6.95.

It is claimed here that denigration not veneration of the elderly is the commoner attitude. The author's aim is to provide a historical perspective on ageing in order to promote a better understanding of the present-day problems it creates, and to provide a more positive approach to it. He does this by presenting a number of thematic essays which explore topics such as, 'Old age in French working-class culture', 'Geriatric medicine', 'Where the elderly lived and live', and 'Towards a new style of life'. France is chosen because, together with Sweden, it earliest had the highest proportion of aged, and because it developed an attitude to the elderly before the modern phenomenon of ageing. The work is liberally documented, but the text can be fully comprehended without the end-notes. Most of the material deals with the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but this is a useful contribution to a subject that is being greatly neglected by historians. Considerable attention is currently focused on the history of the child, the family, and the female, but the elderly should be the next to be rehabilitated historically.

GORDON WOLSTENHOLME and JOHN F. KERSLAKE, *The Royal College of Physicians of London. Portraits II*, Amsterdam, Oxford, and New York, Excerpta Medica, 1977, 4to, pp. viii, 239, illus., \$24.00, Dfl.50.00.

In 1964 Sir Gordon Wolstenholme produced an elegant catalogue of portraits in the Royal College of Physicians of London, and he now presents a supplement containing descriptions of sixty portraits either acquired or found since then.

There is an essay by Rudolf E. O. Ekkart on 'Collections of portraits in Western Europe', and David Piper's Lloyd-Roberts Lecture of 1974, 'Take the face of a physician' is reproduced. Following these, the portraits are described by Mr. Kerslake with biographical notes on the sitter by Sir Gordon. The media represented include oil paintings, miniatures, sculptures, watercolours, drawings, and medals.

The subjects of the portraits are mainly the Presidents of the College, but there are a number which depict individuals who have little or no connexion with it. Like the earlier volume, this book is beautifully produced and it represents a useful addition to the iconography of the medical profession.

*The Journal of Physiology*, December 1976, 263: 1-71, 1P-229P, £6.00.

The Physiological Society was founded in 1876 and this is its *Journal's* centenary issue. Professor Sir Alan Hodgkin presents a paper 'Chance and design in electro-

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physiology', which describes the work of the Cambridge school of nerve function, 1934 to 1952. A continuation of Sharpey-Schafer's *History of the Physiological Society during its first fifty years 1876–1926* is provided by Dr W. F. Bynum in an excellent essay, 'A short history of the Physiological Society 1926–1976' (pp. 23–72), and there are descriptions of 'Historical exhibitions and demonstrations' (pp. 18–97P) which include papers on a wide variety of topics concerning the history of British physiology. They include contributions by outstanding living physiologists, such as A. V. Hill, Barcroft, A. F. Huxley, Whitteridge, and Feldberg. The rest of the number concerns demonstrations and communications of present-day physiology.

This is an important contribution to the history of physiology, which may be overlooked by historians. It deserves, therefore, to be published separately.

ERNA LESKY, *The Vienna Medical School in the nineteenth century*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xv, 604, illus., £16.00.

In 1965 Dr Erna Lesky, the distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine in the University of Vienna and Director of the Institute for the History of Medicine there, published *Die Wiener medizinische Schule im 19. Jahrhundert* which was received with justifiable acclaim; it was described by Professor O. Temkin as "... a magnificent achievement ... a work of great industry, of intelligent analysis, and of personal dedication. It deserves to appear in translation ... ." (*Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1965, 39: 587–589, see p. 589; see also review in *J. Hist. Med.*, 1965, 20: 422–424). It is one of the most scholarly and detailed accounts of a medical school in existence, and this, along with the importance and widespread influence of the New Vienna School itself, destined it to be an outstanding contribution to the history of medicine. It is now translated, with updating, which consists mainly of supplementing the bibliography and the notes, especially with recent publications, especially those in English. It remains a remarkable work, packed with information and dealing with a topic no student of nineteenth-century medicine can ignore. This translation is, therefore, most welcome for the book will now reach the wider audience it richly deserves. Dr. Lesky's masterpiece can be recommended unreservedly.

DAVID KNIGHT, *The nature of science. The history of science in Western culture since 1600*, London, A. Deutsch, 1976, 8vo, pp. 215, £4.95.

In an attempt to elucidate science as an intellectual, social, and practical activity overlapping other areas of knowledge and as an expression of culture, Dr. Knight, a historian of science, adopts a thematic, rather than the more traditional chronological, presentation. By this method he can cover a much wider canvas. Throughout, he is concerned with the whole of science and not a single science, and the entire book is based on historical material used judiciously and expertly as illustrative examples of the matter under consideration.

First, the author describes the ways in which investigators have assessed their own attempts to describe and explain nature, and then the relationships between science and other activities, the scientific community with its various institutions, science as a career, science and government, and the utility of science. His 'Epilogue' deals with science today and the problems it will face in the future.