

Book Reviews

Edward's brother Henry was private chaplain to Aylesbury. In later years, she was frequently in Cheltenham during the season, as were the Jenners, and Edward was in London when she played the lead in a short-run play written by Joanna Baillie, the sister of Matthew, whom Jenner knew well. Also, Charles Moore, the brother of James Carrick Moore of vaccination fame, followed her about devotedly, to Cheltenham as elsewhere. From these events she becomes a "keystone of the Jenner circle" (p. xvi) – a curious metaphor surely. Similarly, with reference to the actress Harriot Mellon we read, "The romantic saga of this beautiful but penniless Cheltenham girl who married one of the richest men in the world will be [and is] dwelt upon later, since Jenner himself was obliquely involved" (p. 50) – to the extent of having Harriot's mother and stepfather, who ran the post office and a music store in Cheltenham, among his patients.

What makes this attention to the private lives of innumerable "exalted personages" so curious is the author's own acknowledgement of Jenner's devotion to his invalid wife and family, which severely limited any social life he might have had, and of his marked dislike for London. The enormous effort that Jenner put into the vaccination campaign seems to be obscured rather than elucidated by the chit-chat about the famous, much of it irrelevant to Jenner's career, so that in this book Jenner, instead of being raised in our estimation by having known so many famous people, would appear somehow diminished by so much association with the trivial. The author has undoubtedly turned up some new details on Jenner's career, but readers will find more balanced and useful accounts in the already existing literature.

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FRANCOIS DUCHESNEAU, *La physiologie des lumières. Empiricisme, modèles et théories*, The Hague, Boston, and London, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982, 8vo, pp. xxi, 511, Dfl. 185.00/\$97.00.

This work addresses the problem of how a distinct science of physiology evolved during the course of the eighteenth century. Before 1707, when G. E. Stahl's *Theoria medica vera* was published, investigators of nature recognized no clear epistemological frontier separating the study of the objects of the inorganic realm from that of organisms. Gradually, however, theories concerning the nature of living bodies gave way to physiology, an autonomous and strictly delimited field preoccupied with the functions and forces specific to vital phenomena. Concurrently, there was a transition from natural history to biology. That is, a descriptive and classificatory knowledge of morphological characteristics gave way to an experimental theory founded on the analysis of functions. To his examination of this process, Duchesneau applies the perspective of a historian and a philosopher who examines the method of formulation of scientific theories and their function. Accordingly, he is preoccupied with such problems as the role of experimental method, the genesis of hypotheses, the role and nature of models and the evolution of concepts.

In ten chapters, the author discusses the work of fourteen physiologists beginning with Stahl, who subjected prevailing mechanist models of organic function to a new philosophical analysis. He catalysed the development of physiology by contending that the composite living body is more than merely the sum of its parts. To account for the activity of life, he invoked the soul to serve as an integrating principle. A number of his successors, including Whytt and Barthez, would similarly assign the regulation of the body to a soul or other principle heterogeneous to the bodily substance. Others, including Haller, Bordeu, and Bichat, were to locate vital activity in the parts themselves.

The pivotal figure among enlightenment physiologists, according to Duchesneau, is Haller. He based his influential theory of living activity on a study of the phenomena of irritability and sensibility which were not reducible to physicochemical properties. Significantly, he attached them to minute fibres which were seen to be the instruments of bodily activity. The author identifies two types of conceptualization to which Hallerian theory came to be subjected. On the

Book Reviews

one hand, Wolff and Blumenbach attached vitalism to epigenesis. On the other hand, the Montpellier tradition developed the notion of the organism as a network of quasi-organisms in which living forces reside. The latter approach culminated in the work of Bichat, who, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, located vital properties in distinct tissues which he treated as bodily elements.

This is an important book, valuable both for its scope and cogent analyses. It reveals much about how and why the complex of "vitalist" theories in the enlightenment gave life science a new language upon which to construct a new science. I found Duchesneau's discussion of the work of Stahl and of Leibniz, both difficult writers, to be particularly instructive. Because this is a complex subject, the book is often difficult and slow. Many subordinate clauses and long paragraphs exacerbate the problem. Perseverance is, nevertheless, worthwhile.

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GERHARD EIS, *Medizinische Fachprosa des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 351, Dfl. 70.00 (paperback).

GUNDOLF KEIL, PETER ASSION, WILLEM FRANS DAEMS, HEINZ-ULRICH ROEHL (editors), *Fachprosa-Studien*, West Berlin, Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1982, 8vo, pp. 734, illus., DM 248.00.

Gerhard Eis (1908–1982) transformed by his teaching and his example the study of medieval technical literature in the German and related vernaculars from obscure antiquarianism to a flourishing speciality that has much to teach historians of medicine, anthropologists, and editors of non-literary texts. His ability to derive important information about doctors, medical practice, and the transmission of ideas from even the most unpromising material has given to the history of medieval medicine in Germany a far more rounded picture than that of France, where archival documents have so far predominated, or Britain, where the task of recovery has scarcely begun. It is good to have as a memorial this second selection of his papers of medical interest to follow his *Forschungen zur Fachprosa*, Berne and Munich, 1971. They treat of lists of remedies, medical tracts for both man and beast, as well as important biographies of previously obscure physicians. The last item is a review of Moorat's catalogue of the Wellcome pre-1650 manuscripts, from which Eis gained important information for his study of Albert Birchtel (pp. 130–136).

Fachprosa-studien represents the work of Eis's pupils and younger colleagues. The middle ages are considered in a broad geographical perspective, from English herbals to Byzantium and a work wrongly ascribed to Paul of Aegina, to Islamic leper hospitals and a treatise of the Syrian Qustā ibn Lūqā. Most authors, following their master's example and with evident technical skill, take individual tractates and relate them to their historical context. There is a general concern with the identification of various remedies (on which Stannard's 'Botanical data and late medieval "Rezeptliteratur"', pp. 371–395 imparts much sound sense) and with the way in which authors combined old and new material (see in particular Dilg's analysis of Euricius Cordus 'On theriac', 1532). Only Schipperges in his discussion of "reason" and "experiment" devotes much space to medical theory, although many authors, in particular Baader and Keil, have much to say that bears on the manner of its transmission. Baader's long survey (pp. 204–254) of the library of the court doctor at Cesena, Giovanni Marco da Rimini, which is a reworking of his article in *Studia codicologica*, 1977, shows how much medieval medicine there was in the library of a humanist doctor of the mid-fifteenth century. Another article of similar length and value is Assion's reconstruction of the medical and cultural life of the fifteenth-century court of Sigmund of Tyrol at Innsbruck, with its Italian-trained doctors having to compete with wandering healers recommended by resourceful abbots, and with the surgeon Klaus von Matry always ready to hold up his record of thirty years' proven experience to overshadow the rival "Welschen" (i.e. Italian) physicians, whose pay was far higher than his. Assion also plausibly attributes a tract on bladderstones to Ulrich Ellenbog, who is famous for