

Book Review

"The Myth of Senility — Misconceptions About The Brain and Aging", by Robin Morantz Henig, Anchor Press-Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1981; 317 pp., \$17.95.

The author of this new, easily readable little book is a Washington science writer whose publications have appeared in various American popular science magazines. Stirred on by the spry mentality of her 75-year-old grandfather and similar alert, active, old people, the author has expanded her initial article of concern about mental incapacitation accompanying aging (in the *New York Times Magazine*) into this highly entertaining and reasonably accurate discussion of true senility and the myths which have accompanied aging of the nervous system for many decades.

Beginning with a brief Foreword by Robert Butler, the former director of

the National Institute on Aging, Henig has concocted a very pleasant mix of scientific descriptions of the studies dealing with the aging human brain with personal anecdotes of patients and families grappling with Alzheimer's dementia, wherein senility is no longer a myth. She has a generally accurate grasp of recent work carried out by numerous prominent investigators laboring in the field — including Eisdorfer, Drachman, Roth, Kleemeier, Katzman, and even a few Canadians such as David Schonfield and Donald Crapper. Most of her scientific condensations should be understandable by anyone with a layman's grasp of modern medicine, although it has been difficult for the author to place in proper perspective some of the claims for magic, therapeutic cures of loss of higher cognitive function in old age, which occasionally border on the absurd.

The 10th, final chapter, "A Look To The Future", leaves the reader with some optimism that the American federal research establishment is at last beginning to acknowledge the importance of the gerontological "lobby"; and the book concludes with a series of well-documented Notes, offering ample bibliographic references for further reading.

Although investigators researching the neurobiology of aging will undoubtedly find occasional, generally minor inaccuracies, this book represents an admirable effort to discuss the medical aspects of the aging human nervous system for the general public, and would make an excellent suggestion for any clinical neuroscientists beset by the frustrated relatives of a demented patient.

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Books Received

AN ANATOMICAL AID FOR THE EVALUATION OF COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY SCANS, 1981. Edited by G.J.R. Maat, G.J. Vielvoe and J. Tinkelenberg. Published by Mefar BV, Beetsterzwaag, The Netherlands. 127 pages. \$87.50 US.

ATLAS OF PEDIATRIC ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY, 1981. By Warren T. Blume. Published by Raven Press. New York, NY. 336 pages. \$85.00 US.

CHEMISMS OF THE BRAIN: BASIC AND APPLIED NEUROCHEMISTRY, 1981. Edited by R. Rodnight, H.S. Bachelard, W.L. Stahl. Published by Churchill Livingstone, New York, NY. 334 pages. \$68.75 Cdn.

CLINICAL ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHY, 1981, 4th Edition. By L.G. Kiloh, A.J. McComas, J.W. Osseleton, A.R.M. Upton. Published by Butterworths, Woburn, MA. 292 pages. \$49.95 US.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE NERVOUS SYSTEM - British Society for Developmental Biology, Symposium 5, 1981. Edited by D.R. Garrod and J.D. Feldman. Published by Cambridge

University Press, New York, NY. 403 pages. \$84.50 US.

GENETIC NEUROBIOLOGY, 1981. By Jeffrey C. Hall, Ralph J. Greenspan, William A. Harris. Published by The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. 284 pages. \$29.95 US.

HUNTINGTON'S CHOREA, 1981. By Michael R. Hayden. Published by Springer-Verlag, New York, NY. 192 pages. \$47.00 US.

LIVING WITH HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE, 1981. By Dennis H. Phillips. Published by The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI. 230 pages. Cloth \$30.00 US, Paper \$9.95 US.

MANSON'S TROPICAL DISEASE, 18th edition. By P.E.C. Manson-Bahr and F.I.C. Apter. Published by Bailliere Tindall, London. 843 pages. \$97.50 Cdn.

MITOCHONDRIA AND MUSCULAR DISEASES, 1981. Edited by H.F.M. Busch, F.G.I. Jennekens and H.R. Scholte. Published by Mefar BV, Beetsterzwaag, The Netherlands. 223 pages, \$37.50 US.

MORAL, ETHICAL AND LEGAL ISSUES IN THE NEURO-

SCIENCES, 1981. By T.P. Morley. Published by Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill. 71 pages.

MYASTHENIA GRAVIS, 1981. By Eijiro Satoyoshi. Published by Columbia University Press, New York, NY. 426 pages. \$47.50 US.

SLEEP: NORMAL AND DERANGED FUNCTION, 1981. Edited by H.A.C. Kamphuisen, G.W. Bruyn and P. Visser. Published by Mefar BV, Beetsterzwaag, The Netherlands. 140 pages. \$32.50 US.

THE FETUS AND INDEPENDENT LIFE - Ciba Foundation Symposium 86, 1981. Published by Pitman, London. 372 pages. £ 22.50.

THE MYTH OF SENILITY - MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE BRAIN AND AGING, 1981. By Robin Marantz Henig. Published by Doubleday Canada Limited, Toronto, Ont. 317 pages. \$17.95 Cdn.

WILLIS'S OXFORD CASEBOOK (1650-52), 1981. Edited by Kenneth Dewhurst. Published by Sandford Publications, Oxford, England. ix + 199 pages. £ 12.00. (limited edition of 750)