

## Book Reviews

human nervous system led to a major series of treatises on the sense organs. The present volume throws new light on Sömmerring's neuro-anatomical work, and at the same time places it against a wide panoramic backdrop of Sömmerring's interaction with "forerunners", with successors such as Albert von Kölliker, and with contemporary friends and colleagues like Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Johann Foster, Goethe, Justus Christian von Loder, Johann Christian Reil, and the brother Joseph and Karl Wenzel. Based on the dissection of literally hundreds of human and animal brains, the latter two established a European reputation in cerebral anatomy which lasted well into the years of the Huxley-Owen and Vogt-Wagner clash. Of particular interest to the intellectual and social historian are the essays on Gall, phrenology, and the fear of materialism instilled by research on cerebral localization.

A shortcoming of this valuable and beautifully-produced volume is that it lacks an introductory essay in which the rich variety of historical topics could have been integrated and discussed under the headings of a few common themes.

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MARTIN WEBER, *Georg Christian Gottlieb Wedekind 1761–1831: Werdegang und Schicksal eines Arztes im Zeitalter der Aufklärung und der Französischen Revolution, mit einem Anhang: Wedekinds Diätetikvorlesung von 1789/90*, Soemmerring-Forschungen IV, Veröff. d. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur (Mainz), Stuttgart and New York, Gustav Fischer, 1988, 8vo, pp. 465, illus., DM 128.00.

MANFRED WENZEL (ed.), *Goethe und Soemmerring: Briefwechsel 1784–1828*, Soemmerring-Forschungen V, Veröff. d. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur (Mainz), Stuttgart and New York, Gustav Fischer, 1988, 8vo, pp. 179, illus., DM 58.00.

With Weber's *Wedekind* the Soemmerring-Forschungen present a biography of one of Samuel Thomas Soemmerring's Mainz colleagues. Georg Wedekind was appointed physician-in-ordinary to Elector Friedrich Karl Joseph in 1787; in the same year, the latter got Wedekind's nomination as associate professor accepted by the reluctant medical faculty. When, however, the *Mainzer Republik* was proclaimed in 1792, Wedekind left electoral service, becoming a founder and, with Georg Forster, one of the most active members of the local Jacobin Club. After fifteen years as a French military surgeon, he again became a personal physician, to the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, holding this post until his death in 1831. In 1809 the former Jacobin was even raised to the peerage.

Rich in contrast, the course of this life has induced earlier historians to charge Wedekind with blatant opportunism. Drawing upon new sources, such as material from the family archives and the Paris Archives de la Guerre, Weber's biography helps to correct this judgement. Analysing Wedekind's motives, Weber admits him to be driven by ambition. Yet it is also shown that throughout his life Wedekind felt deeply obliged to the ideals of the Enlightenment and was receptive to liberal ideas. Weber makes clear that the physician to the Mainz Elector never fully adapted himself to court life. Furthermore Wedekind is portrayed as enthusiastically enlightening the public on medical matters. This is particularly illustrated by the lecture on dietetics which he gave to numerous listeners of all classes in 1789–90 and which Weber has edited as an appendix to his book. Such contemporary issues as smallpox inoculation, as well as the classical six *res non naturales* found their way into this popular lecture.

It is a pity that the wealth of source material made Weber close his very readable biography with Wedekind's move to Darmstadt in 1808, all the more since almost half of Wedekind's 145 medical and political publications—as listed in the personal bibliography at the end of the book—appeared later.

Though Soemmerring's opinion of Wedekind is only hinted at by Weber, it certainly was not a high one. Soemmerring was antipathetic towards the French Revolution—as was his friend Goethe. The surviving correspondence between these two, covering the years 1784 to 1828, has now been edited by Wenzel in the fifth volume of the Soemmerring-Forschungen. It consists of

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52 letters demonstrating, in chronological order, five thematic focal points: Goethe's studies in comparative osteology, especially his (re-)discovery of the *Os intermaxillare* in human beings, the development of his doctrine on colours, Soemmerring's discovery of the *Macula lutea* in the human retina, the latter's controversial treatise *Über das Organ der Seele*, and finally palaeontology, particularly Soemmerring's study of *Ornithocephalus*. The correspondence provides valuable background information about contemporary research. For instance, Soemmerring's influence in directing Goethe from a physical to a physiological conception of his *Farbenlehre* is revealed. Vice versa, Soemmerring's thesis that the liquor in the cerebral ventricles formed the *sensorium commune* provoked severe criticism by Goethe, who pointed out that it resulted from an inadmissible mixture of physiology with philosophy.

Several of the issues figuring in this correspondence have been discussed in context in the first and third volume of the Soemmerring-Forschungen, partly by Wenzel himself, and the present edition can be seen as a welcome supplement. Apart from this, students of science in the *Goethezeit* will doubtless benefit from a perusal of this correspondence. Wenzel's detailed and competent comments, short biographies of persons mentioned, and index of names, places, works and subjects make it an extremely accessible source.

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MAYA BORKOWSKY, *Krankheit Schwangerschaft? Schwangerschaft, Geburt und Wochenbett aus ärztlicher Sicht seit 1800*, Zurich, Chronos, 1988, 8vo, pp. 336, illus., SFr. 36.00, (paperback); *idem, Ärztliche Vorschriften zur Schwangerschaftshygiene im 19. Jahrhundert, unter Berücksichtigung einiger Aspekte der Diätetik für Gebärende, Wöchnerinnen und Stillende*, Zurich, Chronos, 1988, 8vo, pp. iv., 383, SFr. 58.00, (paperback).

Although these appear to be complementary volumes, the one a swift overview of medical views of pregnancy, birth, and the puerperium from 1800 until today, the other a cross-sectional study of medical writing on pregnancy in Central Europe in the nineteenth century, the former volume is not what the title announces, and represents just a distillation of the second, Borkowsky's doctoral dissertation, for the grand public. Thus really one volume is to be assessed, the dissertation on "Schwangerschaftshygiene", which does not mean hygiene in a strict sense but medical advice on the conduct of pregnancy. On delivery and the puerperium she has almost nothing to say. Unlike the thesis—a photographic reproduction of the original typescript with corrections in pen—the popular version is professionally typeset and contains several interesting illustrations.

That Borkowsky has been overpowered by her material is evident just from the scholarly apparatus, some 2,272 literature citations and another 317 end notes: all in a volume of 286 pages of text. This enormous scaffolding of learning does not support a magnificent research effort but just an appraisal of the standard gynaecological and obstetrics textbooks of Central Europe in the nineteenth century. They are assessed not from the somewhat detached view of a scholar but from that of a writer on the front lines. The author, now a child psychiatrist practising in a small town in western Switzerland, explains that some of the material she read gave her pleasure, other books made her angry, and that the whole enterprise stretched out over a period of ten years during which she gave birth to and nursed her own three children.

Her research technique seems to have entailed noting each remark each professor made in his textbook about the management of pregnancy, sorting these notes in 21 separate piles, and writing the book by moving each of the piles from one side of the typewriter to the other. It would be otherwise hard to account for the 21 sections in which the main part of the book is divided. A brief introduction to "theoretical assumptions"—in which humoral theories receive one and a half pages—and a conclusion on the presumed clientele of the more popular guides, are tacked on at the ends. Still, as a research technique, Borkowsky's can produce dividends, for nowhere else have I seen such finely-grained accounts of what, for example, various authorities had to say about douching the vagina during pregnancy or the care of the breasts.