

Wolfgang Uwe Eckart and Robert Jütte, *Medizingeschichte. Eine Einführung*, Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 2007, pp. 378, €19.90 (paperback 978-3-8252-2903-0).

For many years, German students of medicine have relied on Wolfgang Uwe Eckart's *Geschichte der Medizin* (Springer, 1988) concisely and successfully to steer them through the obligatory history of medicine course that is part of the medical curriculum. The present book, written with Robert Jütte, is not, as the title might suggest, an update for the new millennium but rather the authors' contribution to plugging a gap left by so many introductory works.

History of medicine is, of course, not confined to the clinic, roaming free in the hallowed halls of the humanities and the social sciences. While the adoption and reshaping of concepts and methodologies from the interdisciplinary tool bag has allowed medical historians a broadness of range not common in other branches of history, it has also increased the amount of "arcane" knowledge that an often extremely diverse cohort of students is required to assimilate.

Well-known historians like W F Bynum, Roy Porter, José Babini and José María López Piñero (to name but a few), as well as Eckart himself, have produced admirable works that provide concise introductory histories and chronologies of medicine, both for academic and general readers. Alas, precious little exists to provide the same readers with a simple way through the thornier concepts of methodologies, schools of thought and sources. Indeed those newly developing their medico-historical interests often find that they have to hit the ground running, particularly those, such as the aforementioned medical students, not lucky enough to be attached to a specialized department, or with a background in the sciences. These groups will benefit the most from this volume.

First and foremost, this text is no popular history book: unashamedly academic in style and content, it is squarely aimed at the undergraduate student (or postgraduates

making the leap from another discipline or those simply wishing to refresh distant memories), assuming little prior knowledge but, nevertheless, plunging the reader headfirst into the deep waters of source types and evaluation, historiography, methodologies and principal concepts. From basic advice on secondary sources and citations, the use of oral history or iconographic sources, and the uses and pitfalls of the internet, the volume passes through methodological approaches including the history of ideas, gender history, historical anthropology and biography, segueing into tangential disciplines ('Grenzgebiete und Nachbar-disziplinen', pp. 243–311) such as the history of pharmacy, technology and dentistry. The history of alternative medicine (one of Jütte's own interests) is not forgotten, and key notions such as medicalization, professionalization and retrospective diagnosis are examined. The short chapters cover an enormous amount of material, quickly equipping the reader with a basic but solid grounding in often complex concepts. As can be expected from authors of Eckart and Jütte's background and experience, each chapter concludes with a succinct bibliography to take matters further if needed or desired.

Most interestingly, this book does not limit itself to covering the above-mentioned basics, but also offers something akin to career guidance to budding medical historians. An entire section ('Aus- und Fortbildungsmöglichkeiten', pp. 129–33) is dedicated to the availability of training in history of medicine, both in Germany and abroad, while another section ('Fachbibliotheken und Medizinhistorische Institute', pp. 102–11) lists relevant libraries and research institutes, highlighting their respective interests and strengths.

In summary, this remarkable volume is something of a departure from the traditional introductory textbook, less a replacement than a perfect companion to the old stalwarts, aimed at those who realize that their path lies in history of medicine, and are casting around for a metaphorical hand to hold while delving deeper into the thickets. The addition of

practical guidance on career options and relevant institutes adds and builds on the strengths of Robert Jütte's *Institutes for the history of medicine and health in Europe: a guide* (Sheffield, 1997). Both theory and practice are thus tightly woven together to provide a tome that will doubtless prove a boon to students and enthusiasts of the history of medicine for years to come. The only fly in the ointment is that, as often happens in this field, the book is inaccessible to those without a good knowledge of German. Maybe someone will take up the reins and provide a pan-European volume on the back of this, but until that time a good dictionary remains essential.

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Jan A Witkowski and John R Inglis (eds), *Davenport's dream: 21st century reflections on heredity and eugenics*, New York, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2008, pp. xiii, 298, \$55.00 (hardback 978-0-87969-756-3).

In 1911 Charles Benedict Davenport published the first edition of *Heredity in relation to eugenics*. Grounded firmly in the belief that a multitude of physical, mental and even career-related (e.g. seafaring) traits followed a pattern of Mendelian inheritance, the American scientist's book was a principal guide to eugenic studies in the early twentieth-century. However, by the mid-1940s his text had become regarded as at best misguided, at worst a resource for earlier US sterilization programmes, and even Nazi race policies. Moreover, "even by the standards of his own day", Davenport's science of heredity was "usually dubious and often plain wrong", the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory he helped found amounting "scientifically to much less than it might have been". (D J Kevles, *In the name of eugenics*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, MA, 1995, p. 48).

Davenport's Dream, edited by Jan Witkowski and John Inglis (both scientists at

Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory), brings *Heredity in relation to eugenics* to light again, a facsimile of it accompanying ten essays written by eminent voices in the field of genetics, opening with James Watson's discussion of 'Genes and Politics'. As a key document in the history of biology and of the eugenics movement in America, Witkowski and Inglis consider Davenport's book worthy of reconsideration; however, the most compelling reason they identify is that problems he attempted to tackle, moral and ethical issues the eugenics movement highlighted, remain of public interest today and subject to "cautious scientific enquiry" (p. viii). Furthermore, increasingly sophisticated knowledge and techniques—not least the completion of the Human Genome Project—have changed the scale of debate about use of DNA-related information: from efforts to improve a race, to those aimed at individual genetic constitutions.

Read together, these essays—each written with reference to Davenport's work—combine to produce an exposition on aspects of modern genetics, some highly technical, such as mitochondrial DNA technology. The presence of the original text itself is therefore crucial, helping to embed often complex accounts of, and justifications for, modern genetic research in an historical context.

That said, nearly all the authors are scientists. The effect overall is to showcase articulate, considered, frequently persuasive claims, yet each with a pronounced pro-science bias. Lewis Wolpert's closely argued contribution, the last (intentionally?), is especially robust in its placement of human nature within the reach of genetic manipulation. The media's tendency towards "genetic pornography" and "moral masturbators'" objections to human cloning both earn his rebuke in what is a resolutely positivist polemic. Although indubitably erudite and informative, Wolpert's contention, that "reliable scientific knowledge" (as opposed to "unreliable" knowledge or the technology to which "reliable" knowledge is applied) is "value-free" (p. 189) denotes a