

Book Reviews

Dr Cunningham holds out the welcome hope that more material from Glisson's pen may be made available. Perhaps material never before published even in Latin might open more new windows on his little-studied scientific career. Readers would appreciate an indication of the look of the English MS. Further, Glisson's printers were neat and accurate men; the substitution of "inoculationem" for "inosculationem" on p. 156 is the only important printer's error I have noticed. They are not fairly treated in this volume. The Latin is reproduced so as to look like a facsimile, but facsimile it is not; it perverts the appearance of the original, reducing clear print to just-legible, and even to illegible occasionally (pp. 22, 156, 164 for instance). If instead a transcript of the Latin had been made, then the Errata which are supplied on p. vii could have been noted at the points to which they refer.

It is also remarkable that apparently the printers of the present volume could not offer a Greek font. The consequences are unfortunate; the transliteration of Greek words on p. 27 is quite astray, despite the fact that Ent provided the correct reference to the original Greek. I also suspect that on p. 29 Glisson wrote *μῦριον*, not the "morios" offered by Cunningham. If I can (with a little amateur ingenuity) coax a scalable Greek font out of a run-of-the-mill LaserJet printer, surely Cambridge University Printing Services can do much better.

John M Forrester, Edinburgh

Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, Timothy Raylor (eds), *Samuel Hartlib and universal reformation: studies in intellectual communication*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. xix, 372, £40.00, \$59.95 (0-521-45252-X).

In July 1992, the University of Sheffield hosted a major international conference devoted to a detailed examination of the role of the Hartlib circle in promoting the cause of intellectual reform in mid-seventeenth-century England. Of the seventy-two papers presented,

eighteen were chosen for inclusion in the present volume, the final selection representing, in the words of the editors, "a series of case studies, each exemplifying work in progress in and around the world of Samuel Hartlib".

The result, particularly to anyone unfamiliar with that world, might appear at first sight awfully confusing and contrived. The concerns of the Hartlib circle were seemingly open-ended, lacking any coherence according to modern schemes of categorization. But of course, as the editors would no doubt point out, therein lies the crux of the matter, for Hartlib's world was not as yet organized along the lines of compartmentalized modernity. On the contrary, for Hartlib and his contemporaries, alchemy was indistinguishable from chemistry, and the arcane art of cryptology offered untapped potential for those seeking to create an universal language.

Consequently, a brief summary of the contents can do scant justice to the contributors and editors, but it should I hope provide some intimation of the vibrant eclecticism of the Hartlibians. Thus, apart from new insights into familiar Hartlibian topics such as alchemy, astrology and language reform, we are also introduced to such disparate subjects as garden design and philosemitism. Hartlib's chief accomplices, Dury and Comenius, figure prominently, and there are useful discussions of the philosophical and pedagogical roots of pansophism in the schools of central Europe. "Minor" figures such as Benjamin Worsley are rightly restored to a more prominent place in the formulation of public policy in the 1640s and 1650s, whilst the relationship of the Hartlib circle to Ireland, the colonies and the rest of Europe features in many of the papers. Finally, for those still unconvinced by the interconnectedness of such studies, I warmly recommend the editors' introduction which sets out clearly and concisely the central themes and organizing principles behind this book.

If I have a single reservation about this collection of essays, it is its failure to engage with the larger ideological issues and debates which were the subject of Charles Webster's

pioneering research into the Hartlib Papers (*The great instauration*, 1975), and which have since remained a topic of acrimonious debate. In particular, there is no indication here of a re-assessment of the importance of religious and political factors in the encouragement, or subsequent failure, of Hartlib's various schemes and ideas. Nor, despite the recent work of so many scholars on the subject, is there any clear understanding of the problematic nature of mid-century puritanism which Webster and others have detected as an essential ingredient of the Hartlibian reform movement. With the imminent publication of the Hartlib Papers in electronic form, it is to be hoped that scholars will have greater opportunity to engage further in these crucial areas of early modern thought in England. In the mean time, students of this period, whatever their field, have been reminded once again of the incomparable richness of the Hartlib papers as a primary source for the middle decades of the seventeenth century.

Peter Elmer, Nottingham

Manfred Wenzel (ed.), *Samuel Thomas Soemmerring in Kassel (1779–1784)*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Goethezeit, Soemmerring-Forschungen, vol. 9, Stuttgart, Gustav Fischer, 1994, pp. 483, illus., DM 148.00 (3-437-11626-6).

In the nine essays united in this volume the Soemmerring Editors and Research Group and associates examine the time that Samuel Thomas Soemmerring (1755–1830) spent as a young professor of anatomy at the Collegium Carolinum in Kassel. While thus focusing on the rather brief period of 1779 to 1784, their studies open a wide window to medicine, science, and culture in the then flourishing capital of Hesse-Kassel—shortly before its decline, which came with the death of its enlightened sovereign, Landgrave Friedrich II, in 1785.

In fact the latter's patronage is reflected in many of Soemmerring's activities in those

years, which are meticulously analysed and displayed in this book. As Eberhard Mey shows in a historical account of the medical faculty of the Collegium Carolinum, Soemmerring's call to Kassel fell in a period of ambitious efforts to upgrade this institution from a higher school and training place for surgeons to university level. From essays by Ulrike Enke and Sigrid Oehler-Klein on Soemmerring as an anatomist we learn that he was able to give his inaugural lecture (on the medical utility of exact knowledge of the lymphatic system) at the opening ceremony of the newly built anatomical theatre, on the Landgrave's birthday. At a meeting of the fashionable Société des Antiquités, sponsored and chaired by Friedrich, the young professor talked about the beauty of antique statues of children's heads, combining in his paper the drawing method of his Dutch mentor Pieter Camper, the classicist ideas of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and his own anatomical studies of infant heads. The corpses for the latter had been procured from the local obstetrical hospital and foundlings' home (Accouchier- und Findelhaus), which had been opened in 1763. From the Landgrave's natural history collection Soemmerring received teratological preparations. Having carefully examined them, he rejected both the traditional theory of maternal imagination and Albrecht von Haller's belief in mechanical obstructions in the womb as causes of malformation. Considering the uniformity of teratological types, he suggested instead that the fault should be sought in the "first disposition" of the embryo. When the corpses of black people (who had returned with Hessian troops from the American War of Independence) became available, Soemmerring was quick to dissect them to establish anatomical criteria of racial difference. In this way he arrived at his controversial and highly influential notion that—in relation to brain size—the cranial nerves were thicker in black than in white people. Mirroring contemporary prejudices, he interpreted this as a sign of greater sensual powers and inferior intellect, which brought blacks, while entirely human, "still somewhat