

Book Reviews

recurring “innovations” in institutional reform, T. G. Davies on Ernest Jones (not quite the demolition job that the Introduction implies), and Virginia Berridge on the vicissitudes of the disease model of addiction. James Birley’s 1974 lecture, the first in the book, compares the work of psychiatrists and painters; Berrios’s entire essay (1988), the last, can be read as an amplification of Birley’s formulation that it all comes down to the business of “transforming the data . . . by a process of symbolic representation”.

What causes “madness”?—the governing élite’s nervousness about popular religious radicalism, or rotting teeth? For that matter, whence comes the history of psychiatry? Apparently, out of the divergence of consensus: but a divergence along class lines, between the professions of medicine and history, or simply over time? This book provides ammunition for adherents of all sorts of explanations.

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TOBY A. APPEL, *The Cuvier–Geoffroy debate: French biology in the decades before Darwin*, Monographs on the History and Philosophy of Biology, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. 305, illus., £29.50.

Controversies hold a natural appeal for the historian of science. When the confrontation is between such “two great men” (p. 237) as Georges Cuvier and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, and has wide-ranging ramifications, the attraction is well-nigh irresistible. This book is in most respects a model of how the task of extracting the full meaning as well as the full drama of such an historiographic opportunity should be attempted. The institutional setting of early nineteenth-century French science is lucidly sketched; and the previous careers of the protagonists and their gradual drift into conflict described. After an account of the debate before the Académie proper, the wider contemporary reaction is discussed. The final chapter considers later glosses upon the controversy, and tries to establish its significance in the history of nineteenth-century biology.

From this analysis the Cuvier–Geoffroy debate emerges as a multi-faceted conflict between various interests and ideas. It was both an argument about the control of scientific patronage and about the public role of scientific knowledge. It was, moreover, closely linked to contemporary political events as well as to cultural movements that extended far beyond the boundaries of France. Last, but not least, it was an esoteric technical debate; at issue were not merely the particular points in comparative anatomy that divided Geoffroy and Cuvier, but the whole question of the future goals and conceptual tools of the science.

What one misses in this study is any attempt to show how these various threads hang together. It may be convenient to treat the “internal” and “external” aspects of the debate separately; but to accept this distinction as more than provisional is to concede too much to Cuvier.

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THOMAS D. BROCK, *Robert Koch: a life in medicine and bacteriology*, Berlin, Springer, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 364, illus., DM 48.00 (N. American distributor: Science Tech Publishers, Madison WI).

There was, until the publication of this volume, no English-language biography of Robert Koch. Brock’s account of the life and work of this important figure is thus very welcome. Full-length biographies of great medical scientists have been somewhat out of fashion recently, so it is perhaps worth reflecting on what we might now expect to learn from this genre. I would suggest the following: an account of the person’s work—the meritorious and the mundane; a discussion of their personality—public and private; an analysis of the context of their work—professional networks, institutions and wider social milieu; and an assessment and explanation of their work. In these days, when historians are interested in the “invention of