

Book Reviews

MARGARET ROWBOTTOM and CHARLES SUSSKIND, *Electricity and medicine. History of their interaction*, San Francisco, San Francisco Press; London, Macmillan, 1984, 8vo, pp. vii, 303, illus., £25.00.

Considering the use that doctors and other healers have made of electricity, both in practice and in theory, it is surprising how little attention the subject has received from historians. There is ample space for a monograph on Enlightenment medicine and electrical therapy, as well as one on electricity and theories of health and disease in the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century offers further scope; theory and therapy again, and also new areas such as electrophysiology and electrosurgery. By the twentieth century, the field has become boundless, including all the former categories plus electroencephalography, electrocardiography, electromyography, and so forth. Margaret Rowbottom and Charles Susskind have chosen to survey this whole territory from William Gilbert to C.T. Scanners. They have performed an invaluable task, for it is one which most historians would find daunting. Not only have they accomplished it, they have done it extremely well. This is straightforward, blow-by-blow factual stuff of the best sort. The authors survey a great deal of eighteenth-century literature, both therapeutic and theoretical; they describe it but, I am glad to say, they are not given to long interpretive pauses. Margaret Rowbottom was employed for many years in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. Her expertise is evident in the large number of useful illustrations of historical objects that decorate this volume. Charles Susskind has previously published widely on modern electrical technology. Presumably, his expertise accounts for the quite technical approach to late nineteenth- and twentieth-century material. Here the volume takes under its wing not only obviously electrical areas but also X-rays, radioactivity, and ultraviolet light. Although the authors do not draw any historical conclusion from their evidence, their volume is a reminder of the massive commercial investment in electrotherapy during the first fifty years of this century. That is another subject which would certainly pay dividends to the historian. The book is a goldmine of little-known literature, but unfortunately has only a biographical and not a subject index. Its other shortcoming is, of course, the price of comprehensiveness; the authors have left a lot of room for further research. If the possibility of a second edition arises, the authors might consider a bibliographical essay on the sources for their subject.

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GERLOF VERWEY, *Psychiatry in an anthropological and biomedical context: Philosophical presuppositions and implications of German psychiatry, 1820–1870*. Dordrecht, Boston, and Lancaster, D. Reidel, 1984, 8vo, pp. xix, 316, £30.50.

Twentieth-century clinical and biomedical psychiatry traces its roots to nineteenth-century German university medicine; it is therefore perhaps ironic that this history remains essentially obscure. As one would expect, there is a German-language tradition of commentary, but this focuses on the consequences of taken-for-granted shifts into physicalist theory and university settings (both associated with Griesinger), as well as a continuity of clinical categories. Verwey's book brings a new clarity and precision to the historiography. It has an exact historical purpose: to describe the philosophical self-conception of German psychiatry in two modes—"as an anthropological discipline and as a natural science"—from about 1820 to 1870. This is certainly a valid historical purpose when, as Verwey very clearly does, it excludes anachronistic rational judgements; further, given the self-consciousness of presupposition and theory in German academic culture, it is a necessary purpose and prerequisite for future, broader histories of psychiatry which may seek to describe its social and medical character.

Verwey characterizes two broad philosophical attitudes in psychiatry, the anthropological and the biomedical. The former, working within a tradition stamped with Kant's authority, sought a psychology treating man as whole, as body and soul in actual and conceptual union. The separation of the anthropological psychiatrists into psychists and somaticists (represented

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by Heinroth and Jacobi respectively), though it clearly generated significant contemporary dispute, disguises an essential unity of philosophical motive. A long chapter on Griesinger then illustrates the transition to a biomedical motive. Griesinger's method (inspired by physiological medicine) is carefully separated from his implicit ontology, a separation which distanced Griesinger (like Helmholtz or Du Bois-Reymond) from vulgar materialist mechanism. Verwey's patient drawing of distinctions, and above all his rigorous concern with the historical philosophical context, make his discussion continuously enlightening. And, since a contrast between anthropological and biomedical orientations remains of fundamental significance in both psychiatry and its historiography (notably, in contrasted accounts of Freud), these distinctions have wide relevance.

From the point of view of medical history, one might wish that there was more attention to the range of positions, rather than the few central figures, and to Griesinger's contemporaries and later physicalists. Instead, Verwey is more concerned with the pattern of philosophical assumptions, particularly those related to Kant and Schopenhauer, and this leads to a long discussion of the background of neo-Kantianism and anti-mechanism, giving a lop-sided weighting to the main theme (though certainly of interest in its own right). But I found some of the specific commentaries on general psychology—on Kant's ambiguity about the possibility of a "science" of psychology, or on Herbart's ontological psychology, for example—enormously helpful. For the reader interested in conceptions of what psychology might be, or in what historically has been thought to be rationally required to make psychology possible, this book is an invaluable resource. For the philosophical issues covered, it is an accurate and sensitive historical guide.

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JEFFREY MOUSSAIEFF MASSON (editor), *The complete letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, Cambridge Mass., and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xv, 505, illus., £19.95.

Publication of these letters, letters which "stand as one of the high points of intellectual achievement and insight of our time", has attracted considerable comment. The double story of how the letters came into the hands of Freud's close associate, Marie Bonaparte, and how she saved them from destruction by both the Nazis and Freud himself, and then how Masson acquired the contract to publish them, only to have the most melodramatic conflict with the Freud Archive, adds a truly exotic dimension. Few readers, then, are likely to be unaware of the letters' significance.

The publication (in German 1950, in English 1954) of selected and edited letters from Freud to Fliess, along with the previously generally unknown "Project for a scientific psychology" (drafted 1895), provided quite exceptionally rich sources for what has become an academic industry on "the origins" of psychoanalysis. It was always clear that the editors of this edition, who included Anna Freud as well as Marie Bonaparte, tried to separate the public "scientific" and the private "personal" dimensions in the correspondence. They were intimate with Freud's own fears about the public representation of psychoanalysis, a representation which had always a prominent historical dimension. But the public/private distinction is just what is always problematic to anyone reconstructing patterns of meaning – whether as a historian or as a psychoanalyst. Hence a complete edition of the letters (which has appeared simultaneously in German) is obviously of great value. It is also necessary to historians, since the original materials remain closed to access well into the next century.

How Masson gained access to these materials has been documented, with all its passion and conflict, by Janet Malcolm, first in the *New Yorker*, and then in *In the Freud archives* (1984). Using the skills and commitment of a team of translators and assistants, Masson has established what seems to be generally accepted as an accurate transcription of the letters and an accurate translation. The correspondence is one-sided, since Freud appears to have destroyed Fliess's letters to himself. There are 284 letters over the period of the