

## Book Reviews

KENNETH DEWHURST, *Willis's Oxford lectures*, Oxford, Sandford Publications, 1980, 8vo, pp. x, 182, illus., £9.00.

In 1660, Thomas Willis, then aged thirty-nine, was appointed the fourth Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford. Provision for the chair had been made in the will of Sir William Sedley in 1618. Although the professor was expected to discourse on Aristotelian physics, Willis used the occasion to propound his iatrochemistry, neuroanatomical researches, theories of madness, and clinical observations. Dewhurst's book is a translation of Willis's Oxford lectures from the manuscript notes of John Locke, collated with those of Richard Lower, who were both in the audience.

By 1660, Willis was midway through his career. He had already shown his chemical interests in his account of epidemic fevers, *Diatribae duae medico-philosophicae* (1659). Much of the work for his *Cerebri anatome* (1664) was done during these Oxford years, and he was also germinating the ideas that were to mature in *De anima brutorum* (1672).

Dewhurst has preceded his translation of the lectures with an excellent biography, with copious references, which should stand as the most useful short secondary source for Willis's activities. The lectures themselves centre almost entirely around the nervous system, its anatomy (including an account of the cerebral convolutions), physiology (incorporating discussions of sleeping, imagination, and memory), and pathology (with detailed descriptions of such diseases as epilepsy and melancholia).

One of the most interesting things about the lectures is the variety of possible readings that could be made of them. Willis was a Royalist and an Anglican of impeccable pedigree. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt his belief in the immortal soul, or that these lectures were actually those delivered by Willis. Yet, were they manuscript notes by an unknown hand of lectures from an undiscovered source, they would be open to entirely different interpretations. It is well known that Willis sited various mental operations in separate areas of the brain. Yet, as described here, this seems like an exercise in rank materialism. Without any reference to the soul, memory and will are traced to the shape of the cerebrum and the meanderings of the animal spirits within. In a very Hobbesian way, motion is invoked as the root of all mental operations. Read in this way, the lectures provide an interesting lesson in the difficulties of situating an unknown text.

Dewhurst has not included the original Latin of the lectures but translated them into an easily readable form and provided ample useful annotations. In addition, he has provided references to Pordage's English version of Willis's published works. The translation, besides being of value to the seventeenth-century scholar, should also assist the teacher looking for a short original text to illustrate the major intellectual themes of the period. They are nearly all here.

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Wellcome Museum at the Science Museum

F. C. ROSE and W. F. BYNUM (editors), *Historical aspects of the neurosciences. A Festschrift for Macdonald Critchley*, New York, Raven Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xix, 537, illus., \$78.00.

Most authors hope first of all to achieve fame, financial recompense, or both, and in the case of academic endeavours also to advance their disciplines and to disseminate knowledge. But the contributor to a *Festschrift* has not altogether the same aim: he is primarily concerned with doing honour to a person he respects and he does not necessarily seek a reward for his devotion. This fundamental difference must guide the reviewer and temper his critical assessment of what is bound to be an uneven collection of essays.

Macdonald Critchley is one of the world's most respected clinical neurologists, and the editors of this book, a happy symbiosis of clinician and historian, decided to commemorate his eightieth birthday with a symposium devoted to the history of the science and art of neurology. We are not told when this took place, but forty-six papers were read at it, and they now comprise this elegantly produced *Festschrift*.

First of all, the title is misleading, because only some eighteen articles are concerned with the neurological sciences strictly speaking, and the rest deal with clinical topics, neurology the