

Book Reviews

not forget that, in towns, hospitals and town physicians were responsible for the care of the sick poor.

The catalogue entries are preceded by discussions that often bring up new problems for further research. A descriptive index of *objecta pharmaceutica* and a very full names index conclude this beautifully illustrated catalogue.

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AUGUSTIN ALBARRACIN, *Santiago Ramón y Cajal o la pasión España*, 2nd ed., with introduction by P. Lain Entralgo, Barcelona, Editorial Labor, 1982, 4to, pp. 311, illus., [no price stated], (paperback).

Compared with other Continental countries, Spain produced very few outstanding medical scientists in the nineteenth century. It is, therefore, understandable, as well as right and proper, that Spanish historians should laud the few who qualify. Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934) is one of them, and a great deal of literature is now available concerning the man and his immortal contributions to neuro-histology. It was he who presented more evidence than anyone else favouring the neurone doctrine; and no part of the nervous system escaped his remarkable technical skills, acute observations, and perceptive interpretations. This biography of him is unique in two ways: it relates Ramón y Cajal accurately and in detail to his topographical, social, and political background; and it presents a remarkable pictorial history of him. Concerning the second of these, the illustrations are profuse, excellent, and unparalleled, for many have not appeared elsewhere. Thus both the text and its supporting pictures provide an important addition to the biography of Spain's greatest neuro-scientist.

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HELEN SWICK PERRY, *Psychiatrist of America. The life of Harry Stack Sullivan*. Cambridge, Mass., and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 462, illus., £14.00.

Few physicians have had the impact on their times that Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) did. This biography by an associate and admirer, Helen Swick Perry, portrays the institutional and personal channels through which Sullivan affected psychiatry, psychoanalysis, anthropology and the other social sciences, and public policy. His teachings continue to symbolize the social dynamic view in psychiatry. More than any other one person he established the practicality of psychotherapy for schizophrenics, and he helped develop modern personality theory.

Perry trained as a professional writer, and this biography is leisurely and careful, with a very generous amount of speculation and literary connexion included alongside the results of the most exhaustive research. The only major source omitted appears to be the interview material recorded in Kenneth Leo Chatelaine's dissertation (only recently published as a book), and it would not affect Perry's contentions in any important way. Secondary sources are little used, and much evidence apparently based on correspondence is not documented in detail.

The core theme of the book is that Sullivan's life and work reflected his background in a rural New York county; indeed, 155 pages go by before he even enters medical school. Two sometime associates from Chenango County, psychiatrist Clarence Bellinger and, later, anthropologist Ruth Benedict, provide lengthy instructive parallels and contrasts. The book reads very well except for some repetition, and the story is told with unusual candor and includes, for example, Sullivan's own youthful schizophrenic episode, now established beyond a reasonable doubt.

Perry also deals forthrightly and in very substantial detail with the four factors that severely blunted Sullivan's influence with his contemporaries: his drinking; his irresponsible and deceptive (possibly dishonest?) financial dealings; his failure to acknowledge the sources of his ideas; and his partial acceptance of, and emphasis upon, homoeroticism. Unlike other writers, Perry deals with this latter subject with some refreshing scepticism, but without playing down the emphasis that was there in professional as well as personal aspects of Sullivan's life. (This

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reviewer can still remember how the great pioneer in the psychotherapy of schizophrenics, the man who originated the concept of homosexual panic, Edward J. Kempf, from whom Sullivan borrowed many ideas, sputtered in anger when he recalled how Sullivan had suggested that he – Kempf – had basic homosexual tendencies. Tact, as Perry also points out, was often not a strong suit of Sullivan's.)

By laying ghosts and settling rumours for once and for all, Perry has performed a most useful and, it is only fair to note, entertaining service. It should not be possible for scholars to proceed to the two important questions still unsettled. The first is the secret of Sullivan's influence – particularly his awesome clinical acumen, with which Perry deals, but only incidentally. The second is the quality of Sullivan's ideas. Most of his writings appeared only after his death, and thus far thoroughgoing systematizations of them – or critical historical discussions – have yet to appear. Perry, who has edited much of Sullivan's published work, whets the appetite in this biography.

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WILLIAM SCHUPBACH, *The paradox of Rembrandt's 'Anatomy of Dr Tulp'*, (*Medical History*, Supplement No. 2), London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1982, 4to, pp. xiv, 110, illus., £9.00.

This is undoubtedly a fascinating work. It presents in a penetrative manner a fresh view on the famous painting of young Rembrandt, usually called the 'Anatomy lesson of Dr Tulp'. It offers a new approach to the original meaning of the canvas, suggesting that it is not only a mere group-portrait of Dr Tulp amidst prominent Amsterdam surgeons, but also the expression of two general ideas and lessons of anatomizing, which would have been prevalent up to about 1675.

The first of these ideas presented by the author, which is fairly generally accepted, is that Dr Nicolaas Tulp – by demonstrating the ingenious mechanism of the *mm. flexor digitorum sublimis* and *profundus* – shows the wisdom of Nature, of God, the Creator. The second idea is that the figure of Frans van Loenen, often neglected, pointing to the corpse with his index finger, seems to refer to the mortality of human life, and to the old adage "know yourself". This is not merely conceived by Schupbach in the original psychological sense of the Greek, but also in a spiritual and metaphysical, religious way. The Wisdom of God as well as of the corpse leads the viewer to his relationship to God. So, these motives or mottoes are, according to Schupbach, as the two centres of the ellipse of the conception of the painting as a whole. Therefore, the author feels inclined to the hypothesis that the original forgotten meaning of the 'Anatomy lesson' is that of an emblematic group-portrait.

The starting-point of this interpretation seems to have been the result of research on the painting, making use of infra-red exposure and X-rays, by the staff of the Hague Mauritshuis, published in 1978. This, among other things, shows that Frans van Loenen originally wore a hat, which could suggest that he acted as "an unofficial assistant *praelector anatomiae*, whose task in the painting is to pass on Tulp's message to the viewer and to posterity".

Be that as it may – the entire argument of the author is extraordinarily well documented in the five appendices, with quoted texts and other references, running to some fifty pages, and occupying about one-half of the volume. Schupbach appears to be unusually familiar with old Dutch publications. The work is illustrated with forty-five plates, and has an index.

Of course, there are minor points on which the reader may differ from the erudite author. One may, for instance, wonder whether or not too much emphasis has been laid on the influence of the French anatomist Laurentius in The Netherlands. His textbook *Historia anatomica humani corporis* (1595) may have been much less used in Dr Tulp's country than is supposed in this book; J. A. van der Linden may have praised and recommended it in his *De scriptis medicis* (1637), but it has never been reprinted in Holland as it was in France and Germany.

Even for those who are not entirely convinced by the author's arguments, Schupbach's work is to be considered as an important contribution to a better understanding of Rembrandt's creation, which will be highly appreciated by both medical and art historians.

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