

Book Reviews

H. Kuhlenbeck

The Human Brain and Its Universe

2nd revised and enlarged edition of 'Brain and consciousness'; edited by J. Gerlach, Würzburg

Karger, Basel 1981

Vol. 1: The World of Natural Sciences and Its Phenomenology

VIII + 320 pp., 40 fig., bound; SFr. 165.-/DM 198.-/approx. US\$ 99.00

ISBN 3-8055-1817-X

Vol. 2: The Brain and Its Mind

VIII + 376 pp., 47 fig., bound; SFr. 232.-/DM 278.-/approx. US\$ 139.00

ISBN 3-8055-2403-X

Vol. 3: The World of Philosophy

VIV + 508 pp., 6 fig., bound; SFr. 297.-/DM 356.-/US\$ 178.00

This monumental work represents a philosophical background to the author's well-known 'The Central Nervous System of Vertebrates'. He studied philosophy under the Jena philosopher Eucken; his own concepts are based chiefly on Schopenhauer's doctrines and Vaihinger's fictionalism: 'it is as if'. With Schopenhauer, he emphasizes the 'brain paradox', our experienced world of consciousness being a brain phenomenon, while the brain itself is a brain phenomenon. This work is a mine of neurobiological data integrated with critical philosophical and historical discussions. It must be carefully studied in order to fully appreciate its extraordinary significance.

There remains the occasion to do full justice to the author: a former mountaineer and airplane pilot, a linguist who quotes the New Testament in Greek and the Buddhist 'Heart' Sutras in Sanskrit, let alone his excursions in German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (Kuhlenbeck masters Japanese, too), Kuhlenbeck, in short, is a polymath who becomes a philosopher when he reaches the limits of knowledge, which for him are represented by the Insoluble Brain Paradox.

Helen Adolf and Ernest A. Spiegel, Philadelphia, Pa.

M. Swash, M.S. Schwartz

Neuromuscular Diseases

A Practical Approach to Diagnosis and Management

Springer, Berlin 1981

316 pp., 167 fig.; DM 110.-/US\$ 46.90

ISBN 3-540-10548-4

It was the intention of the authors to describe and correlate clinical, electromyographical and morphological findings in neuromuscular diseases. The first part describes,

apart from clinical observations, electrophysiological methods, electromyography, measurement of nerve conduction velocity and muscle and nerve biopsies.

The more specialized part discusses spinal muscle atrophies, motoneuron disease and other diseases of the ventral horn. Detailed differential diagnostic considerations are always included. The reference list is updated until 1980 inclusive. Consideration of the histological findings at the end plate may be too brief, especially with regard to motoneuron disease and changes in the axoplasmic transport. The latter may, however, be of more theoretical relevance. The compression syndromes of peripheral nerves, the mono-neuropathies, the acquired polyneuropathies and the genetically mediated neuropathies are clinically and electromyographically adequately treated.

Described in the section on muscle dystrophies and acquired myopathies are benign myopathies in children (although they may not always be as benign as described), myotonic syndromes, metabolic and endocrine myopathies (although some subpopulations may not lead to dystrophies). The used nomenclature is, however, useful and has not been ideally solved until today. Under dystrophies, the histological findings on muscle spindles occupy a relatively large place. The section on myasthenia gravis and other myasthenic syndromes is, according to its clinical importance and according to improved therapeutical possibilities, presented in detail.

In the closing chapter on 'miscellaneous neuromuscular diseases' are found many less known but interesting suggestions. As far as the presentation is concerned, the book contains few patient illustrations but many histological illustrations and sufficient electromyographic findings with good reproductive quality. In general the authors succeeded to synthesize characteristics from clinical, electromyographical and pathological-morphological findings. The book should be primarily of interest for the clinically active neurologist.

A. Struppler