

BOOK REVIEW

The Intentional Brain: Motion, Emotion and the Development of Modern Neuropsychiatry

by Michael R Trimble

Hardback, 328 pages
Johns Hopkins University Press
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Professor Trimble has a lifelong passion for neuroanatomy, neurology and psychiatry. He sets out his intention in the first lines of his preface: *“This book supports a phenomenological approach to understanding human experiences. This includes the importance of narrative, of telling stories ... this book is not simply about neuropsychiatry as a medical discipline, but it is in many ways much more a reflection of the way the brain and its functions have been viewed over the centuries.”*

The first chapter covers Greek and Roman literature. This is followed by medieval Christian ideas and attitudes to epilepsy and other motor disorders. The Renaissance moves from dissection through *melancholia* to Descartes. Enlightenment goes from Willis to George III and Pinel. Romanticism sets the developments of literature against those of neurologists and alienists of the early 19th Century. The next chapter concentrates on Hughlings Jackson and Charcot and their colleagues.

The late 19th Century concentrates on Wernicke, Freud and Maudsley. World War I brings further discussion of Freud, work on memory and war neurosis. “The Turn of the Screw” visits developments in the United States and Europe with the writings of Jelliffe and White, and of Schilder and Sherrington. The final four chapters link developments in therapy and theory over the last 100 years.

The book is well written with many anecdotes and side discussions highlighting personal links between key figures in the story. The author devotes as much space to the practitioners as to the ideas and techniques they promulgated. Inevitably, due to the breath of coverage, he is unable to explore subjects or events at any length. For example, the development of English psychiatry in the pauper lunatic asylum is little addressed. Similarly, ECT is given a couple of pages.

Trimble has written a very personal account that concentrates on the development of the neuropsychiatry that he experienced and contributed to significantly. However, he does not try to promulgate a clear thesis: you will not find any description of why or how neurology and psychiatry separated or how behavioural neuropsychology and neuropsychiatry became separate disciplines.

Overall, *The Intentional Brain* is a good read. Although lacking some detail in parts, the extensive footnotes and references are useful stepping stones to more extensive study of the individual topics covered. The book is recommended as a useful introduction for readers new to the subject.

Peter Carpenter
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