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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Theodor Meynert (1833-92)

The centre of Austrian neurology during the 19th century was in Vienna. Vienna at that time was at its academic peak with the presence of such men as Skoda, Billroth, and Rokitansky. Meynert was born in Dresden and became Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry in Vienna (1873-92) where he performed studies in neuroanatomy and had a masterly grasp of the structure of the nervous system. He demonstrated that nerve cells in the cortex were in five horizontal layers (1867). In his book (1868) he discussed the cerebral cortex, hippocampal formation, olfactory bulb, and visual radiation. Eponymously he is remembered in Meynert's bundle, Meynert's commissure, the basal nucleus of Meynert, and the solitary cells of Meynert which are located in the region of the calcarine fissure. He singled out the calcarine fissure as being the most important of the occipital lobe. Meynert suggested that in addition to the occipital lobe, the whole temporal lobe may be involved in vision and that Parkinson's disease may be the result of defective function of the basal ganglia (1871). Among his contribution to the medical literature was *Diseases of the Forebrain* (1884). In that book he wrote on insanity as being a disease of the forebrain. He was editor of *Jahrbucher Fur Psychiatrie* from 1889 to 1892.

Meynert had a profound influence on the succeeding generation of neurologists including Sachs, Starr, and Putnam in America, and van Strumpell and Wernicke in Germany. Arnold Pick, of Pick's disease, who became Professor of Psychiatry in Prague, was also a student of Meynert, and Freud, in 1882, entered the General Hospital in Vienna as a clinical assistant to train with him.

His portrait appears on a set of Austrian postage stamps issued in 1937 to honour famous Austrian physicians (Stanley Gibbons 823, Scott B164).

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