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Book Review

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The Limbic Brain[1] by Andrew Lautin[2]

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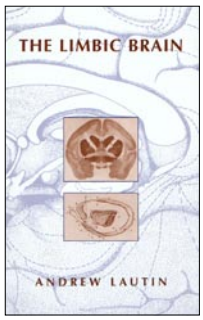

(1) • The Limbic Brain
• Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers
• New York, 2001
• ISBN 0-306-46086-6
• Number of pages: 138
• Number of illustrations: 32
• Publisher's web site: http://www.wkap.nl/

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Dr. Lautin has written this 134 page book with a wonderful description of maybe the most important part of the brain as related to our emotions and behavioural patterns: the limbic brain. Hence the name of the book.

The limbic part of the brain has been thoroughly described in five chapters with a detailed summary of each chapter at the beginning of the book providing an overview and guideline to each chapter. Additionally a summary or conclusion in each chapter helps the reader to understand better the concepts and detailed descriptons within the context.

Developmental descriptions of the limbic part of the brain and the definitions expanding these structures all the way to the 'limbus' or border of the cerebral cortex both anatomically and histologically gives us a wide perspective about the importance of the limbic system in emphasizing its role in our emotional world, from the simplest emotion to the most complex behaviour.

The historical context of the book is very interesting, bringing before our eyes the flow of chronology in the discovery and description of the structures and the gradual explanation of behavioral functions related to the experience that physicians had with their patients. A striking example given is MacLean's limbic system paper where he links certain parts of the brain to each other and then to certain behaviours seen in psychiatric disorders.

Another example is the idea proposed by neurosurgeon Scoville as to the relation of memory and the medial part of the temporal lobe after the surgical removal of these parts.

As the book proceeds, we come across the concept of brain evolution and the thesis and anti-thesis put forward by different scientists. The neural network presenting the pathways and linkage systems between the limbic structures and other parts of the brain as suggested by Dr. Nauta after his tracing technique studies is also worthy of notice.

Progressing through the book, the reader travels in time with relation to the gradual progress made in identification of neural these structures and the advance made as their functions were established paying special tribute to Broca who first defined the "Great Limbic Lobe".

I found this book very instructive especially from the point of view of its historical contents. Also within its chronological context we come to learn about how knowledge piled as experiments and studies progressed from simple anatomical observations to histologic and clinical studies.

I wish to congratulate the author and I recommend this book to all who have undertaken the study of neurosciences, to students and to all who have interest in the subject.

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