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Neurological stamp

Franciscus de le Boë or Sylvius 1614–72

The chief interest of Franciscus Sylvius was alchemy. He was one of the founders of the iatrochemical school which thought that all phenomena of life and disease were based on chemical action. (He should not be confused with Jacques Dubois, 1478–1555, also called Sylvius, who was an instructor of anatomy in Paris).

Franciscus Sylvius was considered a great teacher of his time and was among the first to introduce ward instruction. His name is linked eponymously to the Sylvian fissure, but his relationship to this structure is obscure. The aqueduct between the third and fourth ventricles has been previously attributed to both Jacobus and Franciscus Sylvius but it had been described long before by others.

Sylvius noted that some tremors were always present but others appeared only with movement. He explored the concept of thermal and tactile senses, had an understanding of ductless glands and was one of the first to propose that the pancreas produced a juice, which together with saliva and a form of fermentation, aided digestion. He was the first to describe tubercles and the process of cavitation. The Netherlands honoured him with this stamp in 1937 (Stanley Gibbons no 470, Scott no B95).

L F HAAS