

other than 19th-century narrative conventions. Portrayals of the breakdown of marriage portended the collapse of fictional realism, observes Tanner, and led to works of extreme "physicality" (D. H. Lawrence), excessive word play (Joyce), and "mere solipsism" (Proust).

Science & Technology

THE PURPOSIVE BRAIN

by Ragnar Granit
MIT, 1980
244 pp. \$12.50



Rat



Tree shrew



Man

From The Purposive Brain.

"Why" the human brain works as it does is as relevant a question as "how," to Granit, a 1967 Nobel laureate in physiology. Granit combines philosophy of science with an up-to-date technical explanation of eyesight and human motor control, and of the mastery of the two by the brain. Along the way, he reviews the debate over such issues as the purpose of a reflex and how and why the brain's right and left halves differ. (Most scientists agree that the brain's left hemisphere controls language communication; the right perceives and comprehends but cannot express itself verbally. Yet, one researcher found that an isolated right hemisphere retains the ability to compose music.) Granit carefully underlines the limitations of all scientific theories that claim to identify Nature's ends. "There is no explanation," he notes, for "the talent that made possible the creation of [Beethoven's] Ninth Symphony." Moreover, some subjectivity is inevitable, even in the laboratory. The wall of ignorance that so often blocks scientific advance, Granit emphasizes, is erected, in large part, by "the head that beats against it."

THE COLDER THE BETTER

by David Wilson
Atheneum, 1980
272 pp. \$9.95

Rocket fuel, the superconductive magnets that are used in atomic particle accelerators, and even some instant coffees (of the freeze-dried variety) would not exist but for cold. Wilson, a British science writer, details the erratic history of low-temperature technology. Cryobiology—the study of low temperatures' effects on biological systems—was the