

## Book Reviews

xix). Despite a tendency to interpretative ad hoc-ism, it does bring together the important monographic work (e.g. Bynum, Searle, Stocking, Young) that has been done, and in some instances offers perceptive independent readings of particular figures. One might quarrel with the decision to focus on the natural sciences in isolation from the social (and the failure adequately to appreciate the way in which Lamarckian assumption linked the two – archetypically in the work of Herbert Spencer, who is cited only three times), but, for the most part, the argument seems unexceptionable. While it climbs no interpretative heights, many readers may find this a “useful” book.

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FELIX KLEIN-FRANKE, *Vorlesungen über die Medizin im Islam*, (Sudhoffs Archiv, Beiheft 23), Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 161, DM. 52.00 (paperback).

Comprehensive surveys of Islamic medicine have never been common and, until recently, they have been mainly out of print. To examine this latest addition to so distinguished a series has thus been a matter of especial interest.

The initial chapters trace the historical development of medical knowledge and practice from the earliest surviving references, particularly in Arabic poetry. Here the author liberally recounts anecdotes from Ibn Abī Uṣaibi‘a and others, and the reader may be surprised to find the word “Physiker” used in a rather specialized sense. The important chapter on Islam’s freely acknowledged debt to works translated from Greek clearly advances Islamic medicine as very much more than the mere perpetuation of a tradition derived from Greece, as the attention given to this field today might suggest. The author also illustrates the Arabs’ familiarity with the problems of textual criticism, and adds that they knew of Hippocrates largely through Galen’s commentaries. Apart from sections on Dogmatic and Empirical medicine, the remainder of the work discusses medicine’s relationship to religion and to astrology (the human body seen as a microcosm that responded to healing best when the macrocosm was benevolent).

As the title suggests, this work claims to be no more than an introductory guide for students new to the field. Misprints apart, its style is clear and accessible, and absolutely no knowledge of Arabic is assumed. The specialist, however, may well feel that certain aspects deserve fuller treatment, and he should not expect to be led towards unknown horizons.

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WOLF ZUELZER, *The Nicolai case. A biography*, Detroit, Mich., Wayne State University Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 463, illus., \$30.00.

“Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor ulli.” This quotation from Ovid’s *Tristia* could be the leitmotiv of Georg Friedrich Nicolai’s whole life, not so much as a physician, but rather as a pacifist and humanitarian. Wolf Zuelzer deserves merit for this carefully researched and well-written biography, which does justice to a fairly difficult personality of encyclopaedic dimension and at the same time contributes extensively to our understanding not only of Wilhelmine Germany at war but even more so to that of the early period of the Weimar Republic.

Nicolai, the sometimes stubborn pacifist troublemaker, went through an ordeal as the victim of outraged hatred in the early 1920s which eventually forced him to leave Germany. His own scepticism about the real achievements of the German Revolution of 1918 proved all too true when he became the focus of fanatical antisemitic and nationalistically inspired student protests, ending, remarkably enough, in his “excommunication” from the academic community of Berlin University. He remained the *barbarus* not because his compatriots were unable to understand his ideas, but because they were unwilling to accept his new religion of humanity. Neither would they agree to his moral code based on the common biological and cultural denominators of mankind fighting an oversimplified and crude Darwinism which served the German public not only during the First World War, when Nicolai published his *The biology of war*. This was secretly distributed in a mere 2,000 copies and reached a greater audience only