

## Book Reviews

of motifs from pagan healing cults by the Christians, and it is good to have a further archaeological demonstration of the same point. This rivalry may go some way to explain the total destruction at Pergamum of all artistic representations of Asclepius of Pergamum, for which we have to rely on statues and coins from Thrace and the Black Sea region and on the late testimony of an Arabic scholar who knew his Galen, see G. Strohmaier, *Festschrift Franz Altheim*, 1970, pp. 143–153. Dinkler rightly notes the long survival of non-Christian healing shrines into the fifth century: in Britain the shrine of Nodens at Lydney was built in the last third of the fourth century, and its great days extended well into the fifth, long after the adoption of Christianity as the official state religion.

Vivian Nutton  
The Wellcome Institute

HENK J. KLASSEN, *History of free skin grafting. Knowledge or empiricism?*, Berlin, Heidelberg, and New York, Springer-Verlag, 1981, 8vo, pp. xii, 190, illus., DM. 70.00/\$35.50.

Surgeons have always been interested in ways of speeding the healing of large open wounds. But it was not until 1869 that Reverdin, a Swiss surgeon working in Paris, discovered how to transplant small pieces of skin which had been completely detached from the donor site. This is “free skin grafting”, which is one of the main principles of plastic and reconstructive surgery today. Klasen has written the first book to be devoted solely to this method of skin grafting, and he has given a detailed account, with an excellent bibliography, of its development from the middle of the nineteenth century up to 1950, concluding that “every step . . . has been based on empiricism”.

Klasen mentions Zeis, who produced the first history of plastic surgery in 1863, but omits Zeis’s references to the re-union of completely detached parts, and the fact that this union was considered to be the physiological basis of the successful “take” of the pedicled-flap grafts which were then so popular. Hoffacker (1828) had unrivalled experience of the injuries sustained by the duelling students in Heidelberg, and gave clear reports of successful re-union of amputated parts of the face. Klasen also omits the work of Baronio (1804) on free grafting in animals, and Hooke’s experiments (1663–64) in the early years of the Royal Society. There is no index.

“Free-grafting” is only one method of transplanting skin. “Pedicled-flaps” have a much longer history, but Klasen does not mention their relation to “free grafts” and the varying popularity of each at different times; the rival claims of these methods were not resolved until the First World War. This book is primarily for surgeons, who will know how these methods of grafting complement each other.

T. J. S. Patterson  
Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine  
University of Oxford

FRANÇOIS JACOB, *The possible and the actual*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. viii, 71, £6.30.

It is nearly always interesting to read how a great scientist regards the general philosophical and moral problems raised by his subject, especially if he belongs to a culture rather different from one’s own. We may be close to France geographically, but anyone who tries to follow existentialist philosophy may feel that we are many miles apart. It is pleasant, therefore, to find that François Jacob thinks very much as we Anglo-Americans do, with great humanity but hints of romantic idealism. He is certainly one of the greatest molecular biologists, and he also has an excellent grasp of most of the major problems of biology in general and of medicine. In these sixty-nine pages are words of wisdom on many of the intellectual, social, and political problems raised by science.

It is all done with a light touch and much good historical sense. He begins with “Why two sexes rather than three?” and so to some classical allusions and to the question of how “myths