

### Book Reviews

OWSEI TEMKIN, *The double face of Janus and other essays in the history of medicine*, Baltimore, Md., and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, 8vo pp. x, 543, £16.90.

No-one can deny that Owsei Temkin is now the world's most distinguished historian of medicine. Who else in their writings can cover the whole span of medical history from pre-Greek Antiquity to the twentieth century with authority, flair, and impeccable scholarship? Which medically qualified historian of medicine has command of most European languages, Russian, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, and of some Syriac? Who is equally at home with technical medical or biological material as with medieval or nineteenth-century philosophical concepts? The answers are obvious and cannot be denied.

For the last forty to fifty years Professor Temkin has been writing books and papers. He works steadily, compulsively, and quietly, and has never indulged in self-promotion nor had the need for publicity dear to some writers. The end-result is a remarkable body of scholarship, and here at last is a choice selection of papers that we have all read many times and which have aided and inspired generations of students, and will continue to do so.

The book begins with the title essay which is a charming and frank account by Temkin of his career in the history of medicine, especially concerning the outstanding contributions he has made to his chosen discipline. His warm and attractive personality shines through his prose and will remind his many students and colleagues of their privileged contacts with him. Then follow seven groups of papers, all previously published: 'The historical approach to medicine'; 'Medicine: ancient and medieval'; 'Medicine: Renaissance to twentieth century'; 'Basic medical science and biology'; 'Health and disease'; 'Surgery and drug therapy'. A few of the essays appeared originally in German, and they have been translated by Professor Temkin's wife, Mrs. C. Lilian Temkin; it is most appropriate, therefore, that she too features in this remarkable book.

It illustrates so well the characteristics of Owsei Temkin's writings: the singular breadth of learning, the originality, the insistence on accuracy resulting in faultless scholarship, and the perfect prose, perhaps including here and there conjugal collaboration. Even the index of this book is a masterpiece.

It is unnecessary to insist that everyone involved with the history of medicine and of biology should either possess a copy of this book or have ready access to one. The fact that it enshrines the writings of today's master historian of medicine should be sufficient, even though the price is high. Dare we hope that another volume is now being planned?

EDWARD P. MAHONEY (editor), *Philosophy and humanism. Renaissance essays in honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, Leiden, Brill, 1976, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 624, Dfl.120.

Kristeller (born 1905) is one of the most outstanding Renaissance scholars in the world. His influence by his teaching and writings has been immense, and in this *Festschrift* thirty-two students and colleagues join together to honour him. Their essays reflect the high level of scholarship characteristic of the master and together they form an important contribution to Renaissance studies.

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A few of the articles are concerned with scientific or medical topics such as magic, the pre-Adamite theory, the soul, mathematics, the nova of 1572, and love and sex in the *Decameron*. There are also pieces on Kepler, and on three Renaissance physicians: Niccolò Leonicensi (1428–1524), Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512) and Giovanni Garzoni (1419–1505). References to the works of Aristotle and Galen also occur in several of the essays, but it is a pity that a writer has not contributed more specifically to their role in the Renaissance, a subject of interest to Kristeller and one that he has encouraged scholars to pursue.

Nevertheless, the rich variety of learning demonstrated in this adulatory volume will be of the greatest interest to all students of the Renaissance and it forms an appropriate tribute to a remarkably productive and influential man. There is included an account of him and his work, together with a list of his writings (1929 to 1974), of which 149 are styled “major publications”.

MAURIZIO SANTINI (editor), *Golgi Centennial Symposium: perspectives in neurobiology*, New York, Raven Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. xvii, 668, illus., \$60.00.

The Golgi Centennial Symposium was held in Pavia and Milan in 1973 to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the discovery by Camillo Golgi (1844–1926) of the histological technique which revolutionized the microscopical examination of nervous tissue. The papers presented at the symposium, and others solicited, number sixty, and are collected here into groups: ‘Geometry of the neuron’, ‘Inter-neuronal organization’, etc. Thus most of the book deals with the results of modern research on the nervous system, but historians of medicine will be particularly interested in the first portion, ‘Golgi commemoration’, and the last, ‘Perspectives of neurobiology’. The former consists of three essays on what the Golgi technique has given us, the discovery of the Golgi apparatus, and a history of the synapse. Although they are excellent surveys they tell little about the history of histology *per se* and their technicalities will defeat many, and this is also the case with the articles on ‘Perspectives’. The remainder of the articles are also specialized and although a certain amount of history is referred to they are the data for tomorrow’s history books not for today’s.

Throughout, the book is lavishly illustrated and has full documentation. It is a pity, however, that no serious attempt is made to place Golgi’s work in true historical perspective, so that its relations with research elsewhere in the medical sciences can be assessed. Moreover, it is curious that in a commemorative volume of this kind no reasonable biography of the central figure, Camillo Golgi, is to be found. In an appendix there is, however, a translation of his report of 1873 ‘On the structure of the gray matter of the brain’. But this paper gives no details of Golgi’s staining method which seems odd in a book celebrating it! (For an English translation of the best description, published in 1875, see E. Clarke and C. D. O’Malley, *The human brain and spinal cord*, Berkeley, Cal., University of California Press, 1968, pp. 842–845). There is also a very brief account of the Golgian memorabilia at the Museum for the History of the University of Pavia and a one-page account of Golgi and the Istituto Lombardo.