

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.