

Book Reviews

MOSES A. SHULVASS, *The Jews in the world of the Renaissance*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, 8vo, pp. xv, 367, Dfl.58.00.

All aspects of Jewish life are dealt with: the Jewish population, the community, economic life, family and social life, religious life and morality, literature, the fine arts, the Renaissance in daily life, and the world of science. In the last of these there is a section on medical science and physicians, but it occupies only six pages.

However, this book, which appeared first in Hebrew, is an important contribution to Renaissance studies, and all those concerned with the history of medicine or science during this period must consult it. It is a scholarly work, which has already enjoyed wide appeal.

DIETLINDE GOLTZ, JOACHIM TELLE and HANS J. VERMEER, *Der alchemistische Traktat "Von der Multiplikation" von Pseudo-Thomas von Aquin*, (*Sudhoffs Archiv*, Beiheft 19), Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1977, 8vo, pp. vi, 173, DM. 48.00 (paperback).

Thomas Aquinas is not usually associated in people's minds with alchemy, but this treatise has been ascribed to him since the fourteenth century. The ascription was the more readily accepted as genuine since Aquinas had discussed alchemy in the course of his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. Moreover, the treatise was not a tissue of mystifications like many other writings in the same genre but showed the author to be an independent thinker and experimenter with a fairly lucid style and an ambition to benefit the poor and down-trodden rather than to enrich the wealthy and powerful. The editors of the text, which appears in Latin, German, and Italian, show the ascription to be untenable and list a number of verbal parallels from similar writings to indicate the date, after Aquinas' death, when it was compiled. The preliminary studies contributed by the three collaborators are a model of sobriety and clarity and deal with authorship, sources, literary form, content, and diffusion of the work. The actual Latin text is based on fourteen manuscripts, one of them from the Wellcome Institute, whilst the sole surviving Italian version also belongs to the Wellcome. The study closes with a glossary of terms in Latin, German, and Italian, and a copious bibliography.

RONALD C. FINUCANE, *Miracles and pilgrims. Popular beliefs in medieval England*, London, Dent, 1977, 8vo, pp. 248, £6.95.

Many have written on medieval medical miracles, but few have been as thorough as the author of this book. He has investigated over three thousand miracles attributed to saints after their deaths, and bases his discussion of pilgrims, beliefs, miracles, and healing upon an analysis of them. Each saint's cult had its own history, and devotees varied in class, sex, and illness according to the shrine. Although the main purpose of the latter was therapeutic, political ends, spiritual comfort, and other subsidiary needs were also satisfied. As the author points out, the scenes at curative shrines are worthy of close examination because they tell us a lot about medieval people. As far as the history of medieval medicine and the psychology of the medieval individual are concerned, a deeper study by a medical scholar, alone or in collaboration, will add to Mr. Finucane's pioneer research. There is obviously need for further investigations

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into this large and important field, and his book will help to open up the area for further probing.

NICHOLAS H. STENECK, *Science and creation in the Middle Ages. Henry of Langenstein (d. 1397) on Genesis*, Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xiv, 213, illus., \$14.95 (\$4.95 paperback).

The author's aim is to provide more information about the less well-known scholarship of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, which, with the contributions of outstanding known individuals, provided the background against which the Scientific Revolution must be measured. He concentrates on the state of late medieval science, typified by the writings of Henry of Langenstein, who lived in the fourteenth century. He first gives a survey of the 'Life, training, and works of a medieval scientist', then presents a critical review and assessment of Henry's *Lecturae super Genesim*, which deals with metaphysics, optics, astronomy, cosmography, meteorology, astrology, the biological sciences, and human sciences. The latter includes sections on 'The human body and disease', 'Psychology', and 'The human machine'.

For any appreciation of medieval and early renaissance science, this scholarly book will be essential reading for the historian of science or of medicine.

PETER RICHARDS, *The medieval leper and his northern heirs*, Ipswich, D. S. Brewer, 1977, 8vo, pp. xvi, 178, illus., £6.00.

By about 1500 leprosy had disappeared from all of western Europe except Scandinavia and Iceland, where it persisted till the twentieth century. This book deals mainly with these survivals, particularly on the Baltic islands of Åland, being based on documentary and pictorial evidence. It is fascinating to observe how closely the laws controlling lepers followed the biblical originals, and the comparison of nineteenth-century Baltic leprosy with that of medieval England is most illuminating and helpful to our historical appraisal of the disease. There is an appendix of translated documents which have been used as source-material. The book is well produced, amply illustrated, and moderately priced.

EVERETT MENDELSON, PETER WEINGART and RICHARD WHITLEY (editors), *The social production of scientific knowledge*, Dordrecht and Boston, D. Reidel, 1977, 8vo, pp. vii, 294, [no price stated].

The publishers plan a series of sociology of science yearbooks, and this is the first title in it. Each will consist of papers devoted to a particular topic, and this volume is made up of eleven essays by ten authors. They are arranged in three groups: 'The institutionalisation of the sciences: changing concepts and approaches in the history and sociology of science'; 'Social relations of cognitive structures in the sciences'; 'Social goals, political programmes and scientific norms'.

Historians of medicine will be especially interested in the first of these sections, especially in Professor E. Mendelsohn's excellent paper, 'The social construction of scientific knowledge'. On the other hand, more sociological topics will have less appeal. Nevertheless, this is a commendable work, and future titles in the series, *The dynamics of science and technology* (1978) and *Countermovements and sciences* (1979), will expand further the important subject, the sociology of science.