

## Book Reviews

was written c. 1450 in N. France. Such errors and omissions by Professor Ullmann do not seriously diminish the value of what he has offered us, but they emphasize that any editor of a text of an ancient medical author, in whatever language, should first check with the office of the Corpus Medicorum in East Berlin, whose files constitute the most up-to-date and correct list of manuscripts. For all its many merits, the old Diels catalogue is not enough, and it is sad that Professor Ullmann, who by his own researches in Arabic manuscripts has transformed our understanding of the Greek heritage in Islamic medicine, should have failed to note similar developments in the Western tradition.

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RICHARD SORABJI, *Time, creation and the continuum*, London, Duckworth, 1983, 8vo, pp. xviii, 471, £29.50.

This impressive book offers far more than its title suggests. Although time lies at its heart, it ranges over topics as varied as the origins of idealism, mystical experience, fear of death, atomism and the problem of creation, and the possible eternity of the world. The reader is led elegantly and carefully from early Greek philosophy to modern discussions of quantum physics, and can only marvel at the author's deep acquaintance with the philosophical writings of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. If nothing else, it shows that vital philosophical debate did not end with Rome's conquest of Greece or even with the problematic closure of the schools of Athens in AD 529.

The contribution of Galen to these discussions gets perhaps unduly short shrift, although, given the obscurity of the sources, Professor Sorabji can in no way be blamed for overlooking them. Galen, in both *On demonstration* and in *On my own opinions*, ch. 2 (soon to be published in a *Festschrift for Paul Moraux*), declared that both the creation of the world in time and its destruction were matters that could in no way be proved on the evidence available, and that arguments in favour of one position, even if accepted, did not entail any solution for the other problem. Galen's scepticism (briefly noted, p. 301) was bitterly opposed by his contemporary, Alexander of Aphrodisias (see my forthcoming article in *Bull. Hist. Med.*), and by a whole tribe of Arabic philosophers almost into the fourteenth century. Some, like as-Sijistānī and al-Amirī (tenth century, see S. M. Stern, *Medieval Arabic and Hebrew thought*, 1983, V.331), merely reported briefly on the celebrated confrontation between the two Greeks who had shared the same philosophical teacher, but others thought it important to counter Galen in detail. They based themselves on Galen's own writings, and argued against him with considerable respect (cf. J. C. Bürgel, *Nachr. Akad. Wiss. Göttingen*, 1967, 280–290). They included the great trio of Rhazes (cf. S. Pines, *Actes 7 Congr. Hist. Sci.*, 1953, 480–487; M. Mohaghegh, *Proc. 27 Int. Congr. Orient.*, 1971, 240–242), Geber (II.327–329, ed. Kraus) and al-Fārābī (M. Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi*, 1869, 134), and culminated in the Jewish doctor and philosopher, Maimonides. Professor Sorabji refers to his views on time and on the impossibility of proving conclusively whether the universe began, but without noting the clear influence of Galen, acknowledged by Maimonides himself in his *Guide for the perplexed*, I.73.3; II.13.1; II.15. But Galen's scruples could be exaggerated, and in his later *Aphorisms*, XXV.40, Maimonides took strong issue with his views on philosophy and cosmogony, which contradicted the Scriptures. Galen might have been a considerable logician, but he lacked the faith to resolve his doubts (cf., for an English translation of the relevant texts, J. Schacht, M. Meyerhof, *Bull. Fac. Arts Univ. Egypt*, 1937, 5: 53–76).

These addenda in no way diminish the value of this important book, which combines rigour, erudition, and elegance within its substantial covers.

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JOEL MOKYR, *Why Ireland starved: a quantitative and analytical history of the Irish economy, 1800–1850*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1983, 8vo, pp. x, 330, £22.50.

This book challenges conventional wisdom on the pre-famine Irish economy. Applying