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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

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economic theory and cliometric techniques, and using considerable ingenuity to extract the maximum information from three main sources – the Poor Law Report of 1836, the Census of 1841, and the Devon Commission of 1846 – Mokyr seeks to explain why Ireland was poor. Traditional explanations of Irish poverty (overpopulation, lack of natural resources, insecure land tenure, rural unrest, and emigration) are subjected to statistical testing relying predominantly on regression analysis. This produces negative results so Mokyr, paradoxically, is forced to turn from quantitative to qualitative analysis to produce heavily qualified conclusions on the failure of agricultural entrepreneurship and lack of capital as explanations of Irish poverty.

Poverty is defined by the author in distinctive terms as “the probability of a random individual at a random point in time dropping beneath subsistence”. Subsistence crises and the dependence of the Irish on the potato are therefore central to his investigation. Yet Mokyr follows contemporary observers in emphasizing the good health and physical strength of the Irish despite their dependence on the potato for food. And he argues that “poverty had little to do with famine”, rather famine was caused by “bad luck”, since the fungus that attacked the potato crops in the 1840s had not struck before.

The reason why Ireland starved might thus appear as if it remained as elusive as before. However, Mokyr’s book, with its innovative use of sources, and its rich comparative material placing Ireland firmly in a European context, has thrown fresh light on a complex subject. And further discussion will no doubt be provoked by the occasional use of unreliable data, and arbitrary assumptions in this volume.

This is not an easy book to read, and the publisher’s view that “Mokyr’s line of reasoning is transparent and will be easily accessible to readers without graduate training in economics and econometrics” is quite unrealistic. One assumes that the author himself would have made no such claim.

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M. A. CROWTHER, *The workhouse system 1834–1929. The history of an English social institution*, London, Methuen, 1983, 8vo, pp. x, 305, £5.95 (paperback).

Dr Crowther’s book is a valuable survey of the establishment and complex growth of what Poor Law administrators called “indoor relief” and modern social workers refer to as “residential care”. As the embodiment of deterrence and less eligibility which constituted the core of Poor Law philosophy, the workhouses of the nineteenth century achieved the status of myth, and have, correctly in many ways, been regarded as “uniquely reprehensible” by historians and the public. Yet, as Dr Crowther argues, they can also be viewed as simply one of the phalanx of institutions – prisons, hospitals, asylums – which emerged with industrial society representing the tendency to see incarceration as the solution for a wide variety of deviant behaviour. Many faults were not peculiar to the Poor Law, but common to all large-scale institutions. Yet the dichotomy at the heart of the workhouse system *did* create severe problems. The dual function of deterrence for the able-bodied, together with the provision of basic care for other categories of the poor, created an inbuilt bias against the development of the latter in a humane and generous manner. The stigma of inferiority associated with Poor Law services and the endless pressure of financial constraints on a rate-funded organization, constantly hampered the development of more specialized institutions for the sick, children, and the aged out of the all-purpose general mixed workhouse. In the field of medicine, the Poor Law service retained a second-class reputation down to 1914, reflecting financial problems and the limited views of Guardians and Central Authority alike. But this was in turn reinforced by the medical élite, which was only too willing to see the mass of chronic patients – poor and uninteresting – confined to the Poor Law infirmaries whilst the Voluntary Hospitals received the more interesting acute cases. Only in the 1920s did the larger infirmaries break away from the old image, but they were still a minority, and the smaller rural workhouses remained “Victorian”, with a single sick ward and untrained nurses. By then, the able-bodied inmate had largely disappeared, and workhouses were receptacles for the old, the very young, the infirm, and other casualties of