

*Time, Creation and the Continuum: theories in antiquity and the early middle ages* by Richard Sorabji (1983). London: Gerald Duckworth. ISBN 07156 1693 5.

In this extremely scholarly and penetrating study, which is now a classic, Professor Sorabji explores some fundamental questions concerning the nature of time. Is it real or merely an aspect of consciousness? Did it begin along with the universe? Can anything escape from it? Does it stand still? In addressing these questions and manifold other related issues, including eternity and timelessness, mysticism, and causality, the author engages in an illuminating discussion of early thought on the subject, ranging from Plato and Aristotle to Islamic, Christian, and Jewish medieval thinkers. Sorabji argues that the ideas of these early thinkers about time are, in many cases, more complete than that of their recent counterparts.

The first of the book's five parts is devoted to a discussion of 'the reality of time'. Starting from Aristotle's questions about whether there can be time (Phys. 4.10; 217b-218a30), Sorabji discusses the solutions proposed by the Stoics (Chrysippus, Poseidonius, Apollodorus and Alexander of Aphrodisias) and Augustine; Iamblichus, Proclus and Simplicius (flowing time); Aristotle (static and flowing time); and the Neoplatonists (indivisibility; and Damascius on the ceasing instant). The second part deals with 'time and eternity'. Here the author discusses the question whether time requires change; time, number and consciousness; is eternity timeless (Parmenides, Plato, Plotinus); whether anything is timeless; myths about non-propositional thought; mystical experience in Plotinus and Augustine; and the fear of death and endless recurrence. Part Three focuses on 'time and creation'. The discussion here revolves around the question of whether the universe had a beginning; infinity arguments in favour of a beginning; arguments against a beginning; timelessness versus changelessness in God; and Plato and Aristotle on the beginning of things. Part Four is concerned with the question of 'creation and cause'. Here Sorabji considers Gregory of Nyssa (the origin of idealism); Islamic thought (the origins of Occasionalism); and the principles of causation among the Platonists and Christians. And the fifth part deals with 'atoms, time-atomism and the continuum: Zeno's paradoxes of motion; arguments for atomism; types of atomism (early developments and after Aristotle); atomism and divisible leaps in Islamic thought; and stopping and starting. The references Sorabji gives in the bibliography and footnotes help to make

this book invaluable and the chronological list he gives of the philosophers whose work he discusses is extremely helpful.

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