

Galen [addendum] Encyclopedia Article

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Galen's influence on medieval Islamic thought in general, and on Arabic philosophy in particular, can hardly be overestimated. Galen himself developed a system of philosophical and medical views that gained tremendous authority in Late Antiquity, notably in Alexandria and the Hellenized East. He emphasized the necessity that physicians be conversant in philosophy, and this idea was thoroughly enshrined, for instance, in the Late Antique medical curriculum in Alexandria. To give just one example, physiological and nosological processes were explained in terms of Aristotelian categories and the four causes. This medical tradition, aptly called "Galenism," shaped the Islamic notion of sciences and medicine to a large extent; it is therefore not surprising that many of the most famous Arabic philosophers such as al-Kindī, al-Rāzī (Rhasis), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) were also prominent physicians.

Virtually all the works of Galen's medical and philosophical writings were translated into Arabic, and it is in this language that some of the most interesting philosophical works such as *On Medical Experience* survive. The idea of experience was hotly debated among medical authors in the medieval Islamic period, and treatises such as al-Rāzī's *Doubts concerning Galen* show that Arabic authors engaged critically with him. However, many of Galen's ideas, such as concepts about human physiology, which had already entered Late Antique Greek popular intellectual culture, became commonplace in the Islamic world.

See Also

Al-Kindī, Abū-Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ishāq; Aristotelianism; Averroes; Avicenna; Experience; Islamic Philosophy.

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