

For Calvinist historians, sixteenth-century literary scholars, and those who study conceptions of time in its broadest sense, this is a very useful book. For historians of technology, however, its major contribution is as a prospective counter-example, documenting the ways in which something that seems to be born from developments in timekeeping accuracy may instead be accidental to them.

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**Didier Kahn.** *Alchimie et paracelsisme en France à la fin de la Renaissance (1567–1625)*. (Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 80.) x + 806 pp., figs., table, bibls., indexes. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2007. (Paper.)

“Today, as yesterday, alchemy holds a terrible power to drive the greatest minds crazy” (p. 1). This ironic premonition opens Didier Kahn’s monumental work on alchemy and Paracelsianism in early modern France. The volume under review is only the first part; it will be followed by two more volumes: *Cercles alchimiques et mécénat princier en France au temps des guerres de religion et Science, religion et littérature dans la France alchimique*, both from the same publisher. All three stem from the author’s Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1998, and are intended to supersede Allen Debus’s pioneering *The French Paracelsians* (Chicago, 1991).

The first volume, divided into four main parts, aims to establish a reliable chronology of facts, mostly based on the dates of events and publications. In this sense it belongs to the genre of “history of the book.” Although the year 1567 is given in the title as the study’s *terminus a quo*, the first part (pp. 33–92) in fact starts from the end of the fifteenth century—that is, from the time of the earliest printed books on alchemy. The second part (pp. 93–194) turns to the so-called Paracelsian Revival, as the terminology of Lynn Thorndike has it. It treats the publication of the works of Paracelsus; the editorial project that culminated in the greatest alchemical collection, Lazarus Zetzner’s *Theatrum Chemicum*; the activity of the first French Paracelsian, Jacques Gohory; the early years of the Belgian Gerard Dorn; and the famous debate on antimony. The third part (pp. 195–351), devoted to the period 1568–1594, analyzes the later career of Dorn and two great debates, the first between Gohory and Alexandre de La Tourrette, the second between Joseph Quercetanus and Jacques Aubert. Next, the trial of Roch Le Bailif and its aftermath are examined. The fourth

part (pp. 353–593), covering the period 1597–1625, examines the conflict between the court physicians of King Henry IV and the Paris Faculty of Medicine; the Paris Rosicrucian hoax of 1623–1624; the affair of the fourteen theses intended for public discussion by Etienne de Clave and his friends (1624); and, finally, the late condemnation (in 1625) of Heinrich Khunrath’s famous *Amphitheater of Eternal Wisdom* and Marin Mersenne’s reaction to it. A brief conclusion follows. The volume also contains a massive and very valuable bibliography of manuscripts, printed sources, and secondary literature (pp. 607–616, 617–687, and 688–752, respectively).

Kahn beautifully presents a marvelous panorama of the flowering of alchemical literatures in France and Europe along with the evolution of Paracelsianism, noting their liveliness and diversity as well as detailing the colorful debates not only between the followers and the adversaries of the German *medicus chemicus* but also among the Paracelsians themselves. He is right to place the French scene in a broader European context as a part of the *respublica chemica*, which was in turn a part of the larger Republic of Letters. A good deal of space is thus devoted to describing not only the French and nearby Swiss and Belgian movements but also their German and Italian counterparts. To reach a balanced view, Kahn has read almost all the secondary literature written during the last century and more. His familiarity with German (which distinguishes him from many of his compatriots) enabled him to learn of the important achievements of Carlos Gilly and of the school of Joachim Telle and Wilhelm Kühlmann, often unjustly neglected by scholars. Based in Paris, Kahn has explored not only the rich materials preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and other Parisian libraries, but also Wallace Kirsop’s legendary unpublished Ph.D. thesis on Renaissance French alchemy (1960) and numerous articles by François Secret, also too often neglected by historians. His writing, dense and full of information, is a crystallized quintessence, concocted and distilled from innumerable notes accumulated over almost two decades.

This solid and ambitious work is written not for a small circle of specialists but for anyone who is interested in Renaissance intellectual history. A typical product by a French man of literature, its style is very elegant, with a good amount of wit and humor. But I am afraid that this love of elegance might work against the author, given his frequent use of tricky expressions. Sometimes, especially in his analysis of

the Paris Rosicrucian affair, Kahn goes into a meticulous description of details. Would it not have been better to present his findings concisely, instead of taking the risk of discouraging readers who wander in the middle of a vertiginous labyrinth? In any event, these small points are only my desiderata for this titanic work.

HIRO HIRAI

**Maimonides.** *Medical Aphorisms, Treatises 6–9: A Parallel Arabic-English Edition.* Translated by **Gerrit Bos.** (Complete Medical Works of Maimonides, 2.) xxvii + 160 pp., bibl., index. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2007. \$39.95 (cloth).

Moses Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon, 1138–1204) occupies a central position in Jewish culture as a religious leader, legalist, philosopher, and physician. He was born in Cordova, but when he was ten years old his family left Spain because of religio-political persecution under the fundamentalist regime of the Almohads. The family emigrated to Fez, in Morocco, then to Acre, and finally settled in Fustat, near Cairo. Maimonides made his living as a physician, serving the court and the public of the Egyptian capital, where he became the spiritual leader of the Jewish community.

The present volume is the second of the planned six of the *Medical Aphorisms*, which is undoubtedly the most widely used among Maimonides' medical works. One of its two thirteenth-century Hebrew translations has been edited in the past (the translation by Nathan ha-Me'ati, completed before 1823, is published in the dated edition by Züsmann Muntner [1959]; there is also an English translation by Fred Rosner [1989]), but the original Arabic text is edited here for the first time, with an English translation. Gerrit Bos, who took upon himself the monumental task of editing the complete medical works of Maimonides, brings this text to the public following other important studies of various aspects of Maimonides' medical *oeuvre*.

The *Aphorisms* was written both as a notebook for Maimonides' own use and as a teaching tool, modeled after a recognized genre of Arabic literature. It is the second stage in Maimonides' study and abbreviation of Galen, for it draws on the twenty-one *Abridgments of Galen's Works* that Maimonides made earlier (Y. T. Langermann, "Maimonides on the Synochous Fever," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 1993, 13, p. 176). These much more extensive *Abridgments* are also to be published in this series. The

*Aphorisms* consists mostly of excerpts culled from ninety medical works, out of the approximately 150 that make up the Arabic Galenic corpus. These were translated in the ninth century, usually by the translators of the Baghdad school headed by Ḥunayn Ibn Iṣḥāq (G. Fichtner, *Corpus Galenicus: Bibliographie der galenischen und pseudogalenischen Werke* [Institut für Ethik und Geschichte der Medizin, 2004]).

Maimonides extracted the *Aphorisms* out of Galen's loquacious prose; sometimes he abbreviated or paraphrased them, but he provided accurate references in order to facilitate consultation of the sources by doctors. He rearranged this material according to practical principles, including, in the present volume, inference from symptoms (treatise 6), etiology (treatise 7), general therapeutic regimen (treatise 8), and specific diseases (treatise 9). He added summaries of his own, notably on the health of "the general governing faculty" (treatise 6:94) and on preventing collapse (treatise 7:8–15). One notices occasional disapproval of Galen, but most such criticism is systematically presented in treatise 25, which has been published several times in Arabic and English. In pharmacology Maimonides prefers Arabic authors, introducing extensive excerpts from al-Tamīmī's book of medications (e.g., treatises 20:82–89, 21:57–70), as well as from 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Wāfīd of Toledo (999–1068) (treatise 21:67–89) and from Abū Marwān Ibn Zuhr of Seville (d. 1162) (treatises 20:67–81, 22:35–56), "the greatest among men in testing drugs" (p. 110 n 17; see also treatise 22:35).

The *Aphorisms* is an important source for fragments of Galenic treatises lost in the original Greek, such as *On sleep and wakefulness*, *On the slimming diet*, and *On the obscure movements*, an edition of which is in preparation by Bos and Vivian Nutton ("Introduction," p. xviii). Maimonides' quotations can also help scholars to reconstruct correct versions of spurious treatises, such as Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates On nutriment* (treatise 7:21).

Bos routinely compares Maimonides' Arabic quotations to the Greek editions of Galen, an instructive and painstaking effort. But the variations in the Greek, as compared to Maimonides' text, should not determine changes in the English translation, however minor (see 6:8, 6:17, 6:34, 6:35, 6:37, 6:42, 6:88, 7:35, 7:67, 8:32, 9:107), and should be more consistently marked by annotation. An uncharacteristic slip occurs in this connection. According to Bos ("Introduction," p. xix), Maimonides may be citing the authentic version of Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates On humors*, yet the English