

Paradigmi

Rivista di critica filosofica

Fondata da Giuseppe Semerari

sito web: www.paradigmi.it

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Corrispondenza, manoscritti, libri per recensione e riviste in cambio vanno inviati alla Direzione

Periodico quadrimestrale. Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Brindisi n. 1/1983 del 10 gennaio 1983

Direttore responsabile: Franco BIANCO

Amministrazione e stampa: Grafischena, Viale Stazione 177
72015 Fasano (Brindisi) - Tel. 080.4414681-080.4426690 - Fax 080.4426690
www.schenaeditore.com
e-mail: info@schenaeditore.com

Abbonamento 2003: Italia € 26; Speciale Studenti € 19; estero € 30 da versare sul c.c. n. 13147723 intestato a Grafischena s.r.l. - Viale Stazione 177 - 72015 Fasano (Brindisi)
Un numero € 12; estero € 12

L'abbonamento va rinnovato con versamento anticipato

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Anno XXI, n. 62 - Nuova Serie - maggio-agosto 2003

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concentrata non tanto sulle condizioni di un'autonomia fisica neoplatonica, quanto piuttosto sulle regole e sulle modalità con cui la struttura e il sistema di rapporti vigente nel mondo intelligibile si traduce, attraverso l'azione dell'Anima, nell'interazione dei corpi naturali⁴¹.

SILVIA FAZZO

L'ARISTOTELISMO COME TRADIZIONE ESEGETICA

Parrebbe delle tendenze archeologizzanti della cultura dei primi secoli dell'età imperiale, l'aristotelismo si codifica e configura definitivamente entro l'epoca di Alessandro di Afrodisia come tradizione esegetica, legata al commento 'continuo' dei testi del maestro. Una tale tradizione si stratifica da un commentatore all'altro con fortissimi, ma per lo più impliciti, elementi di persistenza. L'operato individuale esce dall'ombra soprattutto nei casi di aporia o di intendimento controversibile. Di qui le difficoltà della storiografia tradizionale nel rendere conto dell'apporto dei singoli commentatori; e per converso l'interesse delle più recenti prospettive di ricerca.

1. *La tradizione esegetica come problema e come ambito di ricerca*

La relazione fra Aristotele e i suoi commentatori greci (la cui opera è collettivamente designata come *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*) è un ambito problematico che ha registrato nella seconda parte del XX secolo una svolta decisiva: dopo duemila anni di destino pressoché solidale, le sorti storiografiche dell'uno e degli altri sembrano avere in qualche modo divorziato, definitivamente.

Si tratta senza dubbio di un progresso: complesso da gestire, ma necessario, anzi inevitabile, come ora si potrebbe dire a consuntivo di un secolo — il Novecento — che ha visto nella discussione sul senso stesso dell'ermeneutica, in particolare dell'interpretazione del testo scritto, una modalità primaria del fare filosofia. Le ragioni che l'hanno reso indispensabile possono essere qui di seguito rievocate solo sommariamente. La crisi, come in un certo senso è giusto chiamarla, è partita dagli studi su Aristotele (infatti i commentatori non costituivano ancora un oggetto di ricerca a sé stante) e ha visto interagire, pur da binari ben separati, i progressi della filologia e del metodo storico, maturati già a partire dalla seconda parte del XIX secolo principalmente in ambito tedesco, con le tendenze spiccatamente analitiche che nel corso del XX hanno investito progressivamente anche gli studi aristotelici, nel mondo anglosassone ma non solo.

Determinante, nel porre i fondamenti concreti di un tale ripensamento, era stata l'attività patrocinata nel XIX secolo dalla Regia Accademia Prussiana delle Scienze. In tempi serrati e relativamente brevi avevano visto la luce sia l'edizione critica di riferimento dell'*Opera omnia* di Aristotele diretta da Samuel Bekker, pubblicata con i volumi complementari fra il 1837

⁴¹ Si veda in questo senso, sempre nello stesso volume, soprattutto il contributo di M. F. WAGNER, *Plotinus, Nature, and the Scientific Spirit*, pp. 277-329.

pio erano state fra le finalità specifiche della grande impresa editoriale². L'intento documentario di quest'ultima è attestato dalla scelta sistematica di fornire i volumi di diversi ordini di indici (obiettivamente utilissimi) comprensivi fra l'altro di voci di tipo trasversale (per es. stilistico e grammaticale, almeno per quanto consentito dall'organizzazione per entrate lessicali). Il testo aristotelico di riferimento non fu invece incluso nei volumi - una scelta, quest'ultima, in senso tecnico obbligata, ma non priva di conseguenze quanto alla fruizione futura dei volumi, che si trovano anche editorialmente svincolati e quasi emancipati dalla loro funzione originaria. Tale effetto disobbligante rispetto alla fissità della relazione tradizionale fra testo e commento è accresciuto dal fatto, prima assolutamente improbabile, che ad un medesimo lettore vennero a trovarsi disponibili, nei volumi dei *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, tutti i principali superstiti commenti greci della stessa opera di Aristotele. Questo evidenzia infatti la relatività delle scelte interpretative seguite e suggerite da ciascuno degli esegeti e apre le porte al confronto innanzitutto fra commento e commento, poi fra esegesi antica ed esegesi moderna, infine ed inevitabilmente, fra identità testuale e tradizione interpretativa.

È in questo senso che i progressi della filologia e delle scienze storiche, dopo le forzate interruzioni dei due conflitti mondiali, hanno potuto conungarsi, in modo sempre più intenso e produttivo, con le istanze e gli interessi della scuola analitica e con la svolta che questi hanno comportato negli studi aristotelici nel periodo fra le due guerre, e poi nella seconda parte del XX secolo.

Un'attenta rivisitazione analitica è stata in effetti rivolta ai testi di Aristotele, in particolare a quelli più segnalatamente fondativi della tradizione di scuola. Nel vario discorrere degli interpreti, ciò su cui oggi si raccoglie il maggior consenso è la critica, la progressiva demolizione di un certo tipo di visione sistematica della dottrina di Aristotele: una visione che la tradizione aveva consacrata come inamovibile e già racchiusa, in potenza se non in atto, nel pensiero e nei testi di Aristotele; e che invece l'analisi recente non cessa di rivelare priva di diretto riscontro e conferma in quei testi. In questa prospettiva, non solo il significato originario dei passi di Aristotele diviene

² Nel luglio 1862 un certo von Milozevsky aveva stabilito presso l'Accademia delle Scienze di Berlino una donazione destinata all'edizione dei frammenti di Teofrasto e dei primi Peripatetici. L'invito era rimasto però disatteso; a nulla giovò che nove anni dopo, nel 1871, lo stesso von Milozevsky raddoppiasse la donazione: nessuno infatti riusciva ad assumersi l'incarico in assenza di un'edizione critica dei commentatori. Fu con questa triste esperienza, riferisce H. Usener (*art. cit.*, p. 1012), che l'Accademia si risolse nel 1874 a patrocinare l'edizione dei *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*.

e il 1870, sia quella dei *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, voluta da Eduard Zeller e diretta da Hermann Diels, fra il 1882 e il 1909¹. Queste imprese editoriali costituiscono d'altronde solo uno degli aspetti di un'intensa attività erudita, interdisciplinare e di ampio respiro. I commentatori appaiono il filone poco esplorato di una grande miniera, che viene aperta all'uso estensivo da parte delle diverse discipline, incluse la grammatica e la storia della lingua. Il loro farsi disponibili in edizione critica apparve di immediato rilievo per l'estrazione di frammenti: in stretta concomitanza videro infatti la luce *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* di H. Diels (prima edizione: 1903)² e gli *Stoicorum Vetus Fragmenta* di H. von Arnim (la cui prima edizione è anch'essa del 1903³), più tardi le testimonianze sul primo Peripato (raccolte da F. Wehrli in *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, 1944-1959⁴) che sin da princi-

¹ *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, edita consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae* = C.A.G. Nel 1874 Zeller costituì il comitato editoriale insieme a Bonitz e J. Vahlen; fino al 1877 coordinava la redazione A. Torstrik, alla cui morte fu designato Diels, che insegnava presso il Königsstädtischen Gymnasium di Berlino. Del contesto e dell'orizzonte di attesa che determinarono e motivarono la grande impresa editoriale ci si può fare un'idea attraverso le recensioni di H. Usener (in «*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*», 26, 20-12-1892, pp. 1001-1022, in part. 1007-9, 1012) e di K. Praechter, in «*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*», 18, 1909, pp. 516-538, tr. ingl. in «*Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and their Influence*», a cura di R. Sorabji, London, Duckworth, 1990, pp. 31-54.

² Diels stesso era stato editore di una fonte principale di tali frammenti, i commenti di Simplicio alla *Fisica* (1882-1895) e al *De caelo* (1894). Sulla necessità di un'edizione propriamente critica, cioè con le diverse varianti conservate in apparato, come condizione per la raccolta dei frammenti, cfr. H. Usener, *cit.*, p. 1011 s.

³ Un ruolo importante vi è costituito dai trattati indipendenti di Alessandro di Afrodisia editi da I. Bruns in due volumi supplementari del C.A.G.: *Supplementum Aristotelicum* III.1-2, 1889-1892.

⁴ I dieci fascicoli curati da Wehrli sono ora in parte sostituiti da quelli curati da W.W. Fortenbaugh et al. per la serie Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities. Essi non includono però i frammenti di Teofrasto, dei quali aveva prodotto una prima silloge di riferimento F. Wimmer (Leipzig, Teubner, 1854-1862), ora interamente sostituita da W.W. Fortenbaugh - P.M. Huby - R.W. Sharples - D. Gutas, *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, Oxford, New Brunswick, 1985; il relativo commento è in corso di pubblicazione (degli almeno 10 voll. progettati sono apparsi i voll. 3-1, «*Sources on Physics*», ivi 1998, e 5, «*Sources on biology*»; ivi 1995 curati da R.W. Sharples e il vol. 4, «*Sources on Psychology*» a cura di P. Huby, 1999; ringrazio R.W. Sharples per la revisione di queste indicazioni bibliografiche, e per utili commenti relativi al presente contributo). Dal punto di vista documentario, i commentatori sono d'altronde importanti come fonte di tradizione indiretta per l'edizione delle opere di Aristotele (come H. Diels aveva illustrato in *Zur Textgeschichte der Aristotelischen Physik*, Berlin, Königlichem Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1882 I, pp. 1-42) e per i frammenti delle sue opere (lo sottolineava H. Usener, *cit.*, pp. 1011-1013). La prima edizione complessiva di questi ultimi era stata curata da V. Rose nel vol. V dell'edizione Bekker (1870, edizione poi riveduta per Teubner, Leipzig, 1886) fu seguita da diverse nuove edizioni sia particolari sia d'insieme (cfr. ora, con la ristampa dell'edizione Bekker medesima, O. Gigon, *Librorum deperditorum fragmenta, in Aristotelis Opera*, vol. III, Berlin-New York, de Gruyter, 1987; inoltre la selezione curata da W. D. Ross, Oxford, 1955).

terreno di aperta discussione, ma lo diviene, quel che più conta, la liceità stessa dell'operazione normalizzante degli esegeti tradizionali, che consiste nel connettere passi diversi e nel modellare l'interpretazione degli uni in funzione degli altri, e di tutti in funzione di una costruzione teorica preconcetta.

Vengono pertanto a rivestire un particolare interesse, di fianco ai testi di Aristotele, ma in modo diverso rispetto ai testi di Aristotele, quelle fasi di elaborazione intermedia che possono avere avuto un ruolo determinante nell'indirizzare in senso sistematico una tradizione quasi bimillennaria. Ed anzi, diviene oggetto di interesse il fenomeno stesso in virtù del quale la corrente principale del pensiero filosofico e scientifico dell'occidente si è costituita, quasi *ab origine*, come tradizione esegetica.

2. *L'aristolotelismo come tradizione esegetica e le difficoltà della storiografia*

Questo in effetti è un dato oggettivo: fra le correnti filosofiche di età imperiale, l'aristolotelismo prima e più di ogni altra si configura come tradizione esegetica, e cioè come tradizione nel senso più tecnico del termine.

Ancorata ai testi del maestro, al loro preciso dettato, al lessico in essi impiegato, la tradizione aristotelica trova infatti nella forma del commento non solo un veicolo di trasmissione, ma anche uno strumento privilegiato di elaborazione dottrinale.

È un sistema chiuso, ma non statico: si evolve verso una maggiore coerenza interna e una più esauriente risposta alle problematiche emerse nella mutata temperie culturale.

In senso lato, una tale evoluzione si può considerare avviata già nel primo peripato, ad opera degli immediati successori di Aristotele, in particolare Eudemo e Teofrasto. Una parte sostanziale del processo, tuttavia, quella del lavoro sui testi, si arenò probabilmente già con la generazione successiva: a quanto sembra e si dice, la biblioteca di Aristotele e Teofrasto andò dispersa e non restarono in circolazione che i dialoghi e le opere più divulgative. Di fatto, maestri e scolarci peripatetici di età ellenistica, pur proseguendo l'attività didattica, sembrano trovarsi a gestire un lascito dottrinale alquanto generico, aperto alle interferenze dottrinali e terminologiche delle scuole concorrenti, in particolare dello stoicismo.

Il processo che fa dell'aristolotelismo una tradizione di carattere eminentemente esegetico non giunge a compimento che nei primi secoli dell'era cristiana. Un tale processo presuppone, in primo luogo ed evidentemente,

l'edizione con la quale Andronico, nella seconda parte del I sec. a. C., rior- dinò e rese accessibili i trattati o *pragmateiai* scritti da Aristotele ad uso della scuola (le cosiddette opere 'esoteriche'). Dall'edizione di Andronico, che pure non soppiantò immediatamente la *vulgata* ellenistica, dipendono sia gli antichi commentatori del primo secolo d. C. (Boeto, Senarco) sia l'importante compendio di Nicola di Damasco.

La successiva, sostanziale svolta qualitativa è quella cui si assiste nel corso del II secolo d. C., a seguito della quale la tradizione esegetica fa proprie le finalità peculiari di un'epoca di diffuso arcaismo e di ritorno ai classici. L'atticismo in letteratura è una delle espressioni meglio conosciute di una generale tendenza archeologizzante, tale per cui negli antichi si vede depositato sia il modello stilistico permanente da imitare sia, in ambito filosofico, il patrimonio di una verità costituita in modo intramontabile e insuperabile.

In questo contesto va compresa anche la centralità assunta dal commento nella letteratura aristotelica.

A questo proposito la premessa ovvia, ma importante, è che il commento nasce con una funzione d'uso, non come prodotto culturale di valore indipendente. Per questo le diverse fasi della tradizione esegetica tendono a obliterarsi successivamente l'una con l'altra: quando una determinata opera di Aristotele viene fatta oggetto di un nuovo commento, quest'ultimo incarna, più o meno selettivamente e criticamente, l'eredità esegetica del commento precedente, senza però fame espressa menzione che in casi isolati. A questo punto il commento precedente può smettere di essere consultato e trasmesso, o verosimilmente (fenomeno di esclusione ed obliviscenza in alcuni casi quasi inevitabile trattandosi di opere da copiare a mano, molto più voluminose del testo aristotelico di riferimento) e andare dunque perduto. Nel nuovo commento coesisteranno, progressivamente stratificate ma almeno in parte indistinte, componenti recenti ed antiche, così che è difficile determinarvi quale sia contributo personale dell'ultimo commentatore, e quale quello di ciascuno dei suoi predecessori.

Tanto dunque in ragione della funzione che gli è propria, di commentare un testo già esistente, quanto in ragione delle dinamiche peculiari a questa forma di trasmissione, il commento presenta un carattere di voluta ed estrema impersonalità, tale per cui la figura di chi scrive resta nell'ombra non solo rispetto all'autorità del maestro ma anche rispetto al magistero collettivo della scuola.

Già così si comprende la prima, oggettiva difficoltà che la storiografia filosofica incontra nel valutare e rendere conto dell'opera dei commentatori e nel descrivere dunque tutta quella fase dell'aristolotelismo tardoantico di

cui essa è materia costitutiva. La documentazione infatti, pur essendo ampia, non attesta specificamente l'attività dei singoli, o la attesta solo episodicamente, in casi di aperto dissenso e discussione critica.

La difficoltà è poi aggravata da un fattore ideologico, e cioè dall'orientamento idealistico che informa la storiografia ottocentesca e che persiste in categorizzazioni e orientamenti valutativi ancora parte in uso specie sui termini non ancora interamente battuti. Un tale orientamento si trovava incentrato da una parte sulle grandi personalità; dall'altra sulla ricostruzione; attraverso le 'successioni' o *diadochai*, di uno sviluppo progressivo di idee originarie, che da larvate ed incomplete si manifestano progressivamente in tutta la loro pienezza e potenzialità. In entrambi gli aspetti, la ricostruzione storiografica ha lavorato, tradizionalmente, secondo una logica di segno opposto e con finalità antitetiche rispetto a quelle della traduzione esegetica. Queste ultime infatti si possono riassumere nella tendenza alla de-negazione dell'operato individuale e nella ricerca (o ricostruzione) a ritroso di una verità atemporale e definitiva che si ritiene consegnata nei testi fondativi della tradizione di scuola.

Conseguenza di questo tipo di difficoltà storiografica di fronte alla cultura del commento è una valutazione tradizionalmente negativa, che autorizza implicitamente il sorvolare sbrigativo (se non il sostanziale silenzio) di molti manuali scolastici, là dove il commento appare solo arida e prolissa ripetizione di quanto già consegnato nei testi dei maestri.

Né meno criticamente era stata valutata la tradizione esegetica là dove è stato possibile rilevare le differenze fra l'aristolismo dei commentatori e le dottrine effettivamente consegnate dai testi di Aristotele. Di qui infatti sono venute critiche anche più pesanti, vuoti di volontario tradimento, vuoti di inettitudine e fraintendimento rispetto al testo originale.

La riscoperta dell'opera dei commentatori come forma vitale di rielaborazione e non solo di trasmissione (o travisamento) della filosofia di Aristotele si data solo ad epoca recente. Questo non significa né che i problemi ora menzionati siano stati risolti in modo univoco, né che si siano reperite direttive di indagine stabilmente e comunemente definite dal punto di vista del metodo. Piuttosto, è stato il tipo di interesse e di contesto che di volta in volta motivavano l'indagine a determinare l'approccio perseguito nei singoli casi (cfr. *infra*, § 5). Tuttavia nel complesso questo ambito di ricerca costituisce una delle prospettive di ricerca più importanti che si siano aperte nella storiografia filosofica degli ultimi decenni, per motivi che meglio si potranno illustrare facendo riferimento all'esponente più importante e rappresentativo dell'aristolismo greco: Alessandro di Afrodisia (fl. 200 d. C. ca.).

3. Alessandro di Afrodisia: impersonalità e tradizione

La centralità di Alessandro si deve sia alla statura del personaggio in sé sia al ruolo cruciale che la sua opera viene di fatto a rivestire nella tradizione esegetica ai testi di Aristotele. Alessandro è il primo esegeta aristotelico del quale si possiedano interi commenti ad opere complete. In ragione infatti della tendenza sopra menzionata all'obliterarsi vicendevole e progressivo di questo genere di produzione, i commenti di Alessandro sostituirono quasi per intero il precedente patrimonio della letteratura di scuola.

La sua centralità consiste d'altronde nel fatto che oltre ad essere il primo autore di veri commenti strettamente aristotelici⁶. Sebbene infatti una parte dei suoi commenti, fra il V e il VI secolo sia stata soggetta a rifacimento (per questo infatti andò poi perduta) gli autori di questi nuovi commenti non sono aristotelici in senso stretto. Di fatto, dopo Alessandro non abbiamo più traccia di una scuola aristotelica connotata come tale, contraposta dunque in una relazione di concorrenza con le altre sette filosofiche.

Questo non comporta di per sé il totale abbandono né dei testi di Aristotele, né della tradizione esegetica con la quale venivano trasmessi. Accade invece che in un contesto culturale diverso ed evoluto, alcune parti del *corpus* aristotelico si trovino ad essere trascurate, come avviene per motivi diversi ai trattati biologici e alla metafisica: i primi per una caduta di interesse riguardo agli aspetti più empirici e osservativi della scienza della natura, la seconda perché sostituita, nel primato gerarchico che la scuola le aveva attribuito, da altri ordini di principi, di ispirazione in parte mistica e religiosa, e in campo filosofico da una metafisica di tipo neoplatonico.

Altre opere di Aristotele, di logica e fisica fondamentalmente, restano tuttavia in uso come canone scolastico di base. Di qui il proliferare dei commenti alle parti introduttive dell'*Organon*, soprattutto alle *Categorie*. Ma anche le opere di fisica (*De anima* incluso) possono richiedere un'esegesi diversa. Tale è quella proposta da Filopono, cristiano e dunque crea-

⁶ Temistio (IV sec.) scrisse non più commenti ma parafrasi. Fu forse l'ultimo filosofo antico a volersi presentare come seguace di Aristotele, almeno nella misura in cui glielo consentiva il contesto culturale, fortemente impregnato di neoplatonismo, cfr. H. J. BLUMENTHAL, *Themistius: the last Peripatetic Commentator on Aristotle?*, in R. SOBAWI (a cura di), *Aristotle Transformed*, cit., pp. 113-123. Quanto ad Alessandro e al suo ruolo nella tradizione aristotelica posso rinviare a S. FAZZO, *Aporia e sistema. La materia, la forma, il divito nelle Questiones di Alessandro di Afrodisia*, in «Publicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Pavia», 91, Pisa, ETS, 2002, Id. (a cura di), Alessandro di Afrodisia, *La Provvidenza. Questioni sulla provvidenza*, Milano, BUR, 1999, in part. pp. 5-18.

zionista, contrario all'eternità del mondo e preoccupato dell'immortalità dell'anima, indotto pertanto da una parte a contraddire l'esegesi di Alessandro⁷, in parte all'occorrenza a criticare lo stesso Aristotele. Neoplatonico è invece l'orientamento di Simplicio, meno apertamente critico e dissidente, ma attento alla conciliazione fra Aristotele e Platone. Così i commenti di Alessandro alle opere fisiche furono soppiantati da quelli di Filopono al *De generatione et corruptione* e alla *Fisica* (quest'ultimo a sua volta parzialmente perduto: della sua seconda parte, il V-VIII, non abbiamo che frammenti) e dagli enormi commenti di Simplicio alla *Fisica* e al *De caelo*. Di Alessandro e dei suoi commenti oggi perduti, Filopono e Simplicio portano traccia in modo selettivo e critico: lo nominano, decine di volte Filopono, centinaia di Simplicio, per rivisitarne e riaggiornarne l'interpretazione, oppure per contrastarla apertamente, come fa specialmente Filopono, ma non con lo scopo di trasmetterla al lettore un'idea obiettiva; lo citano dunque per lo più sui passaggi controversi o controvertibili, mentre estensivamente ne espropriano, per lo più tacitamente, molti degli interventi più tecnici e strutturali, dei quali segue qui una succinta rassegna.

Il commento di Alessandro ha carattere 'continuo' (e fungerà pertanto da modello al 'commento grande' di Averroé⁸). Esso comporta cioè l'analisi dettagliata di tutto quanto il testo di Aristotele e lo discute 'lemma' per 'lemma' (in greco, *lémma*, dal verbo *lambanô*: parte 'presa' di volta in volta in esame). I primi a comparire nei commenti ai singoli lemmi sono, quando ci sono, i periodici sommari iniziali e i neipiloghi delle trattazioni precedenti; questi hanno la funzione di introdurre, di organizzare e di rendere facilmente accessibile il senso generale di passi, capitoli o gruppi di capitoli, specie se complessi, criptici, poco coerenti o in altro modo difficili.

Segue solitamente una ripetizione o chiarimento, più o meno parafrasato, del contenuto del singolo passo. Qui, la componente di parafrasi può consistere semplicemente nel rendere espliciti i nessi logici e sintattici, per es. sostituendo i pronomi neutri con sostantivi, mettendo in chiaro il verbo principale, riordinando la disposizione delle parole, sostituendo i termini ambigui con alcuni più specifici, mutuati da altri passi dello stesso testo o

da altri testi del corpus⁹. Oppure, se l'operazione è complessa, può avvenire che l'esegeta produca una vera analisi logica dei vari passaggi argomentativi. In un modo o nell'altro, implicitamente cioè o esplicitamente, si tratta di ridurre a forme ben riconoscibili di argomentazione un testo non di rado ellittico o elusivo o comunque difficile da seguire: di ridurre al sillogismo nelle diverse figure le argomentazioni che possono essere considerate propriamente dimostrative ovvero 'apodittiche'; e di chiarificare altri procedimenti di carattere non apodittico ma dialettico cui Aristotele può fare ricorso quando la dimostrazione apodittica non è direttamente praticabile (per esempio la divisione e la progressiva eliminazione per diairesi delle diverse possibilità). In questi modi l'impianto dottrinale si trova a essere ristrutturato dall'interno, attraverso un lavoro sull'interpretazione dei singoli testi. La determinazione di quale sia il contenuto del testo avviene primariamente in questa attività di chiarificazione e parafrasi. Per questo è proprio qui che l'operato dell'esegeta, quanto più passa inosservato, tanto più fa tradizione e viene integrato quasi automaticamente nell'opera dei successori.

Un altro tipo di intervento caratteristico, che passa da Alessandro e dai suoi predecessori ai commentatori successivi, è il rinvio, esplicito o implicito, a loci paralleli. Si tratta di una rete incrociata di rinvii in virtù della quale testi aristotelici diversi da quello commentato possono essere evocati per la comprensione di un passo problematico. Così, di fatto, una griglia dottrinale già costituita determina l'orizzonte di riferimento, se non addirittura la pre-comprensione, per l'interpretazione del passo in esame. Il presupposto (che resterà d'altronde implicito e indiscusso fino al XX secolo) è chiaramente quello di una generale coerenza fra le diverse opere di Aristotele, e di una potenziale, reciproca riconducibilità delle dottrine e teorie che vi si trovano espresse o soggiacenti¹⁰.

Tutto questo comporta, fra l'altro, un importante ma sotterraneo intervento di semplificazione sia sul lessico sia, conseguentemente, sulle dottrine

⁹ Cfr. G. ABBAMONTE, *Metodi Esegetici nel commento in Aristotelis Topica di Alessandro di Afrodisia*, in I. GALLO, (a cura di), *Seconda Miscellanea Filologica*, Napoli, Arte tipografica, 1995, pp. 249-266.

¹⁰ Per questo si è potuto dire che gli esegeti spiegano Aristotele attraverso Aristotele, analogamente a come i filologi alexandrini spiegavano Omero attraverso altri passi di Omero. Cfr. fra i saggi di P. L. DONDI, *Alessandro di Afrodisia e i metodi dell'esegesi filosofica*, in C. MORESCHINI (a cura di), *Esegesi, parafrasi e compilazione in età tardoclassica*, Napoli, Arte tipografica, 1995, pp. 107-129. Sui punti di contatto fra esegeti filosofici e filologia alexandrina ha efficacemente insistito anche ABBAMONTE, *Metodi Esegetici*, cit. (cfr. n. prec.). Si vedrà più ampiamente l'op. *Problemi di inventio: suadasi sul commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia al I libro dei Problemi di Aristotele*, in corso di pubblicazione. Anche l'importanza e l'intensità del lavoro sul lessico, cui si fa cenno qui *infra*, può essere considerata un indizio in questa direzione.

⁷ Secondo Filopono infatti (*in De anima* 10.1-3 Hayduck), «Alessandro di Afrodisia cerca di trascinare giù con sé anche Aristotele alla propria opinione» che l'anima sia tutta inseparabile e dunque interamente morale.

⁸ Chiamiamo 'commento grande' il *tafsir* di Averroé, che ha per modello anche formale il commento continuo di Alessandro (così anche in Dante: «Averrois, che 'l gran commento fece», *Inf.* IV, 144). L'espressione non indica dunque semplicemente la dimensione, ma è da intendersi in senso tecnico, per opposizione ad altri tipi di commenti che Averroé scrisse, quali il 'commento medio' (*talkhîs*) e l'epitome.

ne. Questo intervento si attua con effetto cumulativo, incorporando ad ogni passaggio una progressiva energia teorica (come forse si potrebbe dire per tutti i lavori di riordino, nei quali da uno stato più confuso si passi ad una configurazione più determinata). È una rielaborazione che ha una precisa ricaduta sull'impianto dottrinale, ma si attua e si verifica più direttamente a livello del lessico.

Sul lessico, la differenza si può misurare in relazione alla grande fluidità espressiva che si riscontra non solo fra i diversi testi ma anche all'interno dei singoli testi di Aristotele. Il loro contenuto viene infatti trascritto in un linguaggio unificato e quanto possibile univoco, tale per cui significato e significante vengono a corrispondersi in modo stabile.

Il processo di semplificazione lessicale è per lo più silenzioso, non tematizzato. Esso emerge solo in modo indiretto, in specie nei casi di 'aporia', nella misura in cui, a conseguenza di un tale processo, è il linguaggio di Aristotele, o a risultare ambiguo e a richiedere dunque chiarificazione e traduzione nel linguaggio di scuola, o a poter essere considerato e dichiarato ambiguo, là dove in qualche modo i testi risultano contraddittori (o contraddire una dottrina già attestata nella scuola)¹¹. È qui che il lavoro sul lessico estrinseca il suo maggior potenziale ideologico, in vista di un aristotelismo stabilmente codificato in forma scolastica. Distinguendo infatti significati diversi di un unico termine, o lavorando sulle definizioni, è possibile smussare elementi di contraddizione fra uno scritto e l'altro e conservare il presupposto della fondamentale coerenza e reciproca riconducibilità delle dottrine di Aristotele.

All'interno del commento, il luogo deputato alla discussione delle aporie è in coda all'esegesi dei singoli lemmi (o dei sottolemmi se il lemma si trova a sua volta frazionato in unità minori). Le soluzioni possono essere e anzi di solito sono più d'una. Se teniamo presente la tendenza, che si è menzionata, alla stratificazione del magistero esegetico, è possibile ed anzi probabile che le diverse soluzioni ne siano traccia o documento. Si può qui osservare in che modo l'aporia lavori al servizio del sistema: il sistema può presentarsi come compiuto e coerente proprio per il fatto che le contraddizioni, alla stregua di residui, vengono assorbite nelle aporie a soluzioni multiple. La forma aporia/soluzione non è usata come espediente didattico, tanto è vero che l'alternativa fra le diverse soluzioni non viene risolta in modo definito e dogmatico. Al contrario, una tale struttura presenta il pre-

¹¹ Sulla funzione delle aporie nella tradizione esegetica, con particolare riferimento ad Alessandro, cfr. S. FAZZO, *Aporia e sistema*, cit.

gio di restare aperta non solo all'esegesi precedente ma anche a quella successiva: agevolmente, i commentatori posteriori riporteranno le diverse soluzioni attestate da Alessandro aggiungendo inoltre la propria¹².

Questo tipo di evoluzione nella lettura, nell'interpretazione, nel ripensamento dei testi aristotelici è una tendenza che progredisce attraverso le diverse fasi della tradizione esegetica. Il fatto che l'esito di queste diverse fasi si conservi nei commentatori successivi ad Alessandro, nonostante la loro adesione ad un differente orientamento ideologico, segue una logica chiaramente riconducibile alle esigenze della scuola. Della scuola infatti siffatte persistenze esprimono le esigenze primarie: semplicità, coerenza dottrinale, chiarezza di esposizione, riferimento forte all'autorità degli antichi, e di Aristotele in particolare, soprattutto nei settori attinenti alla formazione di base, logica e fisica.

È in questi termini, mediato e ristrutturato dal secolare magistero di generazioni di commentatori, che l'aristotelismo viene a costituire, senza vere alternative in altre correnti di pensiero, un'universale, potente grammatica del linguaggio filosofico e del pensiero scientifico.

4. Sulla fortuna di Alessandro e dei commentatori

Periodiche riviviscenze d'interesse per i commentatori greci di Aristotele hanno accompagnato a breve distanza, come indispensabile complemento, almeno tre grandi fasi di recupero e ripensamento del corpus aristotelico: nel medioevo arabo (IX-X secolo), nel Rinascimento (nel XVI secolo), in epoca moderna (dalla fine del XIX secolo - cfr. *supra*, § 1). C'è dunque una relazione determinata fra la circolazione del testo di Aristotele e la diffusione dei relativi commenti greci. Sembra fare eccezione il medioevo latino: i testi di Aristotele tradotti dall'arabo restarono in buona parte congiunti ai relativi commenti di Averroé che in arabo li avevano accompagnati. Averroé però a sua volta aveva fatto uso estensivo delle traduzioni arabe dei commenti greci, soprattutto alessandristi: noto e importante è il caso del commento (oggi perduto) di Alessandro al libro *Lambda* della *Metafisica*, per il quale il commento di Averroé costituisce la nostra fonte principale. Averroé nell'esordio esprime infatti chiaramente il suo proposito: per la se-

¹² Per questo indicativamente sembra potersi presumere (benché nella maggior parte dei casi non lo si possa verificare) che l'ultima delle diverse soluzioni fosse in linea di massima la più vicina nel tempo, e dunque anche nel pensiero, all'esegeta che scrive.

zione del libro di cui possiede il commento di Alessandro (due terzi circa), egli intende «riassumere con chiarezza e brevità» il commento di Alessandro nel proprio commento (Averroé in *Met.*, p. 1393 Bouyges). Secondo tale premessa, il *Comento grande* di Averroé alla *Metafisica* si strutturò dunque almeno in parte, dove fu possibile, come un 'supercomentario', ovverossia come un commento del commento alla *Metafisica* di Alessandro.

Più in generale, in effetti, in tutto il medioevo arabo la figura di Alessandro assunse, fra i commentatori, assoluta centralità: Alessandro fu «l'Esegeta» per eccellenza, così come Aristotele era «il Filosofo» per eccellenza. Il nome stesso ne fu assimilato alla lingua dei *faïlasifa*, reinterpretandosi la parte iniziale, «Al-», come articolo determinato, «al-»: «al-Iskandar al-Afrūdāfī» (o: al-Afrūdāfī). In virtù di questo suo ruolo Alessandro si trovò presto a rivestire una specifica funzione di mediazione fra il testo di Aristotele e la cultura araba, per un caratteristico e vivace fenomeno di attribuzionismo. Alessandro non fu solo infatti colui che illustra la dottrina del maestro, ma anche colui che spiegandola la amplia in senso teologico (gli furono attribuiti opuscoli tradotti degli *Elementi di teologia* di Proclo) e creazionistico (due opuscoli che gli furono attribuiti in tal senso sono risultati derivare dal *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* di Filopono). Non a caso, furono gli arabi a conservarci i trattati di Alessandro *Sulla provvidenza* e *Sui principi dell'universo* che andarono invece presto perduti in greco¹³.

A partire dall'inizio del XVI secolo, le prime edizioni a stampa delle traduzioni latine e dei testi greci dei commentatori seguirono a ruota, nel giro di pochi decenni, l'edizione aldina del testo greco di Aristotele (1495-1498). Già pertanto dalla prima metà del XVI secolo si instaurò la tendenza a usare e citare i testi di Aristotele con il sussidio e l'accompagnamento di un commento greco, ancorché questo potesse essere naturalmente criticato e discusso¹⁴.

Così, anche se in proposito non esiste ancora una sintesi di insieme, è chiaro ed è noto che la filosofia del XVI e XVII secolo, nella misura in cui si confronta con temi e problemi aristotelici, trova nei commentatori sia uno strumento concreto che sorregge i grecisti nella difficile lettura del te-

sto aristotelico originale¹⁵, sia un punto di riferimento ideale. I commentatori rappresentano infatti l'esegesi più antica e in un certo senso più autorevole del pensiero di Aristotele, oppure, negativamente, la 'retroguardia'. Lo si vede per esempio dal configurarsi della discussione sull'immortalità dell'anima nell'aristolismo padovano del XVI secolo come disputa fra averroisti e 'alessandristi' (da Alessandro di Afrodisia); o dalla presenza di Simplicio come interlocutore nel *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo* di Galileo Galilei (1632): espressioni, queste, fra le più note, ma non isolate, della potenzialità che i commentatori hanno avuto in quei secoli, e mantengono in qualche modo ancora oggi, nel fare dell'aristolismo un orizzonte di dibattito ampio, aperto e in qualche modo vitale.

5. Tendenze della storiografia recente

Soprattutto dopo le due guerre, per i motivi sopra menzionati, i commentatori greci sono stati oggetto di un'attenzione sempre più costante e specifica¹⁶.

Fra i primi a trarre giovamento dall'edizione dei *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* nella seconda parte del XX secolo sono figurati quegli orien-

¹⁵ Questo tipo di rapporto con i commentatori greci è testimoniato da un'ampia ma quasi inesplorata fioritura di annotazioni apposte a margine delle prime edizioni a stampa del testo greco dei commentatori. Ne ho illustrati alcuni esempi in *Philology and Philology on the Margins of Early Printed Editions of the Ancient Greek Commentators on Aristotle, with special reference to copies held in the Biblioteca Nazionale Bradense, Milan*, in C. W. T. BLACKWELL - S. KUSUKAWA (a cura di), *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Conversations with Aristotle*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999, pp. 48-75.

¹⁶ Fra i primi a comparire in ambito italiano si segnalano gli studi di G. MOVIA, *Anima e intelletto. Ricerche sulla psicologia peripatetica da Teofrasto a Cratippo*, Padova, 1968; Id., *Alessandro di Afrodisia tra naturalismo e misticismo*, ivi, 1970. Uno spoglio estensivo del C.A.G. è alla base dell'opera di Paul Moraux, fondatore dell'Aristoteles-Archiv presso la Freie Universität Berlin. Moraux, già autore di una giovanile ma importante monografia su Alessandro (*Alexandre d'Aphrodise Eséète de la noétique d'Aristote*, Liège, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, 1942) compilò negli ultimi anni della sua vita la prima vera storia dell'aristolismo greco: *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen. Von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*, Berlin-New York, de Gruyter, vol. I (sul I sec. a. c.), 1973, vol. II (sul I e II sec. d. C.), 1984 (tr. it. *L'aristolismo presso i greci*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2000); il libro II.2 tratta l'influenza dell'aristolismo in intellettuali non strettamente aristotelici, vasto argomento che esula dall'ambito ristretto di queste mie pagine. Il terzo e ultimo volume, dedicato ad Alessandro, è uscito postumo a cura di J. Wiesner nel 2001, corredato di un ultimo capitolo sull'etica e sul determinismo (pp. 511-616) e di una bibliografia vasta ed aggiornata curati R. W. SHARPLES (pp. 618-650). Utili sintesi sull'aristolismo in età romana sono quelle di H. GORTSCHALK, *Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman world* e di R. W. SHARPLES, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation*, entrambi in H. TEMPORINI, W. HAASE (a cura di), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen welt*, Berlino, de Gruyter, 1987, pp. 1079-1174 e pp. 1176-1243. Un'ampia trattazione manualistica è quella di G. REALE, *Storia della filosofia*, IV, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1984, pp. 3-50.

¹³ La conoscenza di questi testi e di questi problemi è un'acquisizione particolarmente recente. Cfr. *infra*, § 5.

¹⁴ L'impatto dei commentatori greci sulla cultura rinascimentale fu tale, che esso giustifica oggi, ai fini di una migliore conoscenza di quest'ultima, la ristampa estensiva delle loro traduzioni latine sotto la direzione di Ch. Lohr (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca Versiones Latinae temporis resuscitatarum litterarum* = CAGL, Stuttgart-Bad, Camsstat, Frommann-Holzboog, 1990). Sembra costituire un caso a parte la *Metafisica*, che si continuò a citare molto spesso insieme al commento di Averroé.

In etica, il ravvivarsi del dibattito sul determinismo e sui temi ad essi connessi (fato e libertà individuale) ha posto al centro dell'attenzione non solo i testi di Aristotele ma anche quelli di Alessandro di Afrodisia, nei quali il tema è trattato in modo più diffuso ed esplicito, sempre però secondo un linguaggio e un armamentario concettuale aristotelico, in uno spirito dunque di continuità rispetto ad Aristotele. Come aristotelico, infatti, Alessandro si contrappone direttamente al determinismo stoico negli scritti *Sul fato*, *Su ciò che è in nostro potere*, *Sulla fortuna* e *Sul caso*¹⁹, e non solo sul versante etico ma anche sul versante fisico, come appare nello scritto *Sulla missione*²⁰.

Un commentatore che ha suscitato attenzione particolare per motivi in parte opposti, non per il suo zelo di ortodossia bensì per il suo dissenso rispetto ad Aristotele, è il cristiano Filopono (490-570 ca. d. C.): caso particolare, per certi aspetti atipico, di un esegeta che sui temi centrali della fisica aristotelica (e specialmente sull'eternità del mondo) prende risolutamente posizione contro il maestro²¹, o ancora più facilmente contro Alessandro (in particolare sull'immortalità dell'anima, cfr. *supra*, § 3).

Quanto a Semplicio, contemporaneo di Filopono, e agli altri commentatori neoplatonici, uno degli aspetti maggiormente studiati è stato quello del rapporto fra esegesi e scolasticità: il modo cioè in cui la struttura stessa del commento si fa funzionale alle esigenze della scuola. Questo è evidente in particolare nei commenti alle *Categorie*, che erano il primo testo di Aristotele da leggere nel *curriculum* degli studi: a partire dalla fine del V sec. d.

¹⁹ Si veda in proposito il volume di R. W. SHARPLES, *Alexander of Aphrodisias On Fate*, London, Duckworth, 1983) che raccoglie il trattato *Sul fato* e gli opuscoli della *Manissa* (cfr. n. prec.) relativi a questi temi. Il dibattito è poi ampiamente proseguito: cfr. la *General bibliography* a cura dello stesso SHARPLES (2001), s. v. "Fate, determinism". Per una sintesi, cfr. P. L. DONINI, *Aristotelismo e indeterminismo in Alessandro di Afrodisia*, in *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung* a cura di J. WIESNER, cit. pp. 72-89; in, *Il De fato di Alessandro di Afrodisia: questioni di coerenza*, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II, 36.2, pp. 1244-1259.

²⁰ Il trattato si trova tradotto e commentato, con ampia introduzione, in R. B. TODD, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics*, "Philosophia Antiqua" 28, Leiden, Brill, 1976.

²¹ Cfr. R. SORABJI, *Philoponus and the rejection of Aristotelian science*, London e Ithaca - NY, 1987, ove si trova anche una bibliografia generale su Filopono; di questa, un aggiornamento si trova in F. DE HAAS, *John Philoponus' new definition of prime matter. Aspects of its background in Neoplatonism and in the ancient commentary tradition*, Leiden - Boston - Köln, Brill, 1997. Significativo del tipo di interesse suscitato dalla possibilità di un esegeta "dissidente" è il fatto che il primo volume a comparire nella serie di traduzioni diretta da R. SORABJI (cfr. n. 18) è stato quello dei frammenti del trattato di Filopono *De aeternitate mundi contra Aristotelem* (non identico al *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* sopra menzionato, che è invece integralmente conservato), a cura di C. WILDBERG, *Philoponus against Aristotle on the eternity of the world*, N. Y., Ithaca, 1987.

talisti, principalmente di area tedesca, che si sono interessati ai rapporti fra mondo arabo e cultura greca. Nel caso di Alessandro, la disponibilità dei testi greci e arabi ha permesso di identificare il corrispondente greco di molti opuscoli trasmessi in arabo sotto il nome di questo autore ma con titoli diversi rispetto a quelli a noi noti. Così nel corso degli anni Sessanta sono state redatte le prime, perfettibili liste dei testi attribuiti ad Alessandro conservati in arabo. È stato un primo progresso, in virtù del quale si è potuto poi lavorare per discernere l'autentico e lo spurio, per evidenziare le eventuali libertà di traduzione, per ricondurle alle specifiche tendenze culturali che animavano i traduttori, soprattutto quelli attivi nel primo periodo, nella cerchia di al-Kindī (IX sec.)¹⁷.

Come menzionato, un particolare interesse è stato rivolto ai commentatori in ambito anglosassone, dove un approccio di tipo analitico ai testi di Aristotele ha trovato in essi i precursori, i mediatori e gli interlocutori per un dialogo con i testi di Aristotele, rivisitati e riproposti nella loro potenzialità attuale¹⁸.

¹⁷ Cfr. *supra*, § 4. Un quadro dello status *quaestionis* relativo alle traduzioni arabe tratte da o scritte ad Alessandro di Afrodisia si può ricavare dalla notizia su "Alexandros d'Aphrodisie" di R. GOULET e M. AOUAD in *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* a cura di R. GOULET, vol. 1, Paris, Éditions du CNRS, 1989, pp. 125-39 del quale ho curato un aggiornamento in corso di pubblicazione nel volume di supplemento *ivi*, 2003. Pietra mi ha sulle traduzioni nella cerchia di al-Kindī e sui testi ivi attribuiti ad Alessandro ma provenienti da Proclo è il volume di G. ENDRESS, *Proclus Arabus*, Beirut-Wiesbaden, Orient-Institut für deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1972. Sulle traduzioni da Alessandro, cfr. S. FAZZO - H. WIESNER, *Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Kitāf - circle and in the al-Kindī's cosmology*, in «Arabic Sciences and Philosophy», 3, 1993, pp. 119-153. Sul movimento di traduzione greco-arabo, cfr. ora D. GURTAS, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, London-New York, Routledge, 1998, (trad. it. a cura di C. D'ANCONA e C. MARZINI, *Pensiero greco e cultura araba*, Torino, Einaudi, 2002).

¹⁸ Prodotto caratteristico ne è una fioritura di studi e traduzioni commentate. Fra le raccolte di studi, si segnalano *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung; Paul Moraux gewidmet*, a c. di J. WIESNER, 2 voll., Berlin, de Gruyter, 1987; *Aristotele Transformato*, cit., che include una bibliografia generale sui commentatori, pp. 485-524. Fra le traduzioni, va menzionata innanzitutto l'imponente impresa di traduzione in inglese dei *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* diretta di R. SORABJI (*Ancient Commentators on Aristotle*, London e Ithaca - NY); inoltre, per quanto riguarda Alessandro, in inglese si segnalano i volumi di SHARPLES e TODD citati *infra*, nn. 19 e 20, e il *De principis* tradotto dall'arabo da C. GENEQUAND (Leiden - Boston - Köln 2001); in francese l'edizione e traduzione del *De fato* di P. FILLIET nella collezione Budé ("Les Belles Lettres", Paris 1984); nella stessa collezione, è progettata una nuova edizione e traduzione francese di tutti gli scritti indipendenti di Alessandro diretta da R. W. SHARPLES (è in uscita, curato dallo stesso SHARPLES, il volume contenente i venticinque opuscoli della cosiddetta *Manissa* = C.A.G. Suppl. II.1); in italiano, la traduzione del *De anima* di P. ACCATTINO e P. L. DONINI (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1996), le traduzioni del *De fato* di C. NATALI e B. TERAMO (Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1996) e di A. MAGRIS (Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1996), del *De providentia* di M. ZONTA e delle *Quaestiones* sulla provvidenza di S. FAZZO (nel volume a cura di S. FAZZO, Milano, BUR, 1999); del commento attribuito ad Alessandro al libro *Lambda* della *Metafisica*, da parte di R. Salis (Cagliari 2000); del *De intellectu* da parte di P. Accattino (Torino 2001).

C., il 'Proemio' dei diversi commenti neoplatonici e cristiani alle *Categorie* (ad opera di Ammonio, Filopono, Olimpiodoro, Simplicio, David) si formizza secondo una serie di domande in qualche modo canoniche, la risposta alle quali non ha solo un valore strumentale rispetto al testo da leggere ma anche una sua propria funzione pedagogica²².

Fra le tendenze della bibliografia più recente, va infine segnalato un interesse specifico per il rapporto fra testi e commenti, che in passato era stato tematizzato in modo alquanto marginale ed episodico. Particolare attenzione si rivolge pertanto ai metodi del commento e ai presupposti – più o meno marcatamente sistematici, mai comunque neutrali e sempre in qualche modo problematici – che sono l'implicito sottinteso dell'attività degli esegeti²³.

Rassegne

²² Cfr. I. HADOT, *Les introductions aux commentaires exégétiques chez les auteurs néoplatoniciens et les auteurs chrétiens*, in *Les règles de l'interprétation*, a cura di M. TARDU, Paris, Les éditions du cerf, 1987, pp. 99-119; Id. (a cura di) Simplicius. *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, fasc. I e III, Leiden - Boston - Köln 1990 ("Philosophia Antiqua" 50-51), in part. I, pp. 19-182. Su Simplicio, che commentò anche il *Manuale di Epiteto*, letto come preparazione etica preliminare alla lettura di Aristotele, cfr. l'introduzione della stessa HADOT a Simplicius. *Commentaire sur le Manuel d'Épictète*, Leiden - New York - Köln 1996 ("Philosophia Antiqua" 66) e la bibliografia ivi segnalata, pp. 456-463.

²³ In ambito italiano hanno visto la luce diversi contributi in questa direzione, fra i quali: P. L. DONINI, *Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in età postellenistica* (in: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.36.7, 1994, pp. 5027-5100); F. ROMANO *La scuola filosofica e il commento*, in *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica*, a cura di G. CAMBIANO - L. CANFORA - D. LANZA, vol. VIII, Roma Salerno, 1994, pp. 587-611; su Temistio, M. CAFONE CIOLLARO, *Osservazioni sulla Parafrasi di Temistio al De anima aristotelico in Egesesi, parafrasi e compilazione* a cura di C. MORESCHINI, cit. (cfr. n. 10) pp. 79-92; P. VOLPE CACCIATORE, *La parafrasi di Temistio al secondo libro degli Analitici posteriori di Aristotele*, ivi, pp. 381-395; inoltre i contributi di ABBAMONTE, DONINI e FAZZO citati *supra*, nn. 6, 10 e 11.

Arabic Sciences and Philosophy, vol. 3 (1993) pp. 0-00.
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ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS IN THE KINDĪ- CIRCLE AND IN AL-KINDĪ'S COSMOLOGY*

SILVIA FAZZO AND HILLARY WIESNER

“How do the heavenly bodies physically affect the sublunary world?”

On this topic, similar accounts can be found in four groups of texts: (1) a few fragmentary statements in Aristotle; (2) Greek works of the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 A.D.); (3) Kindī-circle Arabic versions of the same writings; and (4) the cosmological works of al-Kindī.

Across the centuries of transmission and transformation of Aristotle's thought, we observe a gradual expansion from latent possibilities introduced by his own partial or allusive statements, to philosophical justifications of celestial influence in the Greek writings of Alexander, to more specific astrological models in the Kindī-circle's Arabic Alexander, which al-Kindī himself reworks with further astronomical and astrological details. In fact, this is a subject on which al-Kindī's cosmology relies explicitly on Alexander, or better, on the transformed Alexander.

But the relationship was circular. While the Kindī-circle's Alexander was closely followed by al-Kindī on certain points, al-Kindī exerted a reciprocal influence on the Arabic Alexander, who was largely a product of his own group of translators.

On this subject, as on so many others, Alexander did not give an account independent from Aristotle's doctrine. In order to appreciate the development of Aristotle's incidental and incom-

* This article arises from research we did together at the Warburg Institute of the University of London during the spring of 1992. We discussed every point together; nevertheless, S. F. is more responsible for the section on Greek sources and on the transformed Kindī-circle Alexander, whereas H. W. is more so for the section on al-Kindī, and translations and quotations from Arabic are hers, including the Kindī-circle versions of *Quaestiones* 2.3 and 2.19 from MS Istanbul, Millet Library, Carullah 1279, 32 ff. which we give here as an Appendix (p. 000). We have been generously helped by M. Aouad, Ch. Burnett, R.W. Sharples, N. Webb, and F.W. Zimmermann. To them and to the whole Warburg Institute and its director Nicholas Mann we are enormously grateful.

plete treatment of these matters, we may recall here the texts Alexander uses most:

De generatione et corruptione II.10, 336a15-337a33 most clearly states that, of the two basic movements of the heavens, the first, i.e. the regular movement of the sphere of the fixed stars, is in itself the cause of continual movement on earth, whereas the other, the motion on the ecliptic, because of its obliqueness is able to draw the cause of generation (i.e. the sun) closer and to take it further away, so that a balance and an alternation may be possible between generation and corruption. This second movement has been established by God for the sake of the preservation of the species of living things through the eternal cycle of generation and corruption. Significantly, the other planets are not mentioned by Aristotle.¹

Incidental remarks on these same points of obliquity and double movement can be found also in *Phys.* II.2, 194b13 and *Met.* XII.5, 1071a15-16; further important cosmological details are given, although in a rather cryptical way, in *Met.* XII.6, 1072a10-18.

A different and very relevant point is stated in the first book of the *Meteorologica*. Here Aristotle says that the first principle of movement for the sublunary elements are the heavenly movements, since they govern the sublunary elements *by contact* (339a21-32)² and affect differently each one of them accord-

¹ There are two related and very helpful articles by John North on this subject: "Celestial Influence - The major premises of astrology," in P. Zambelli (ed.), *Astrologi hallucinati* (Berlin and New York, 1986), pp. 45-100, reprinted in J.D. North, *Stars, Minds and Fate* (London, 1989), pp. 243-98; and "Medieval concepts of celestial influence: A survey," in Patrick Curry (ed.), *Astrology, Science and Society* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Wolfeboro, 1987), pp. 5-17.

² The heating, explains Aristotle, is not due to a hot quality of the heavenly bodies, but to the movement and the contact together: "the circular motion (...) dissolves and inflames by its motion whatever part of the lower world is nearest to it, 340b10-14, on the same topic see al-Kindī, *On the Proximate Efficient Cause* [in *Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyya*, ed. Abū Rīda, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1950-53)], vol. I, p. 223, lines 16 ff.: "It was advanced in the physical discussions that movement produces heat in the elements and what is compounded from the elements, by accepted arguments. The elements therefore receive the influence either through movement or through contact (*bi-al-mumāssa*). That which is touching the last of (the elements) is neither hot nor cold nor moist nor dry; therefore they receive through contact with him only the influence of movement. That which is touching [the last of the elements] varies with the [heavenly] bodies, their movement and position, because some of them are greater and some smaller and some slower and some faster and some more distant and some closer and on account of all of the terminations of the [heavenly] bodies, in speed and slowness - when it is ascribed to the essence [of the heavenly bodies] -

ing to their proximity: they act first on the space which is directly in contact with them (*ton geitniōnta malista topon*, 338b21-22), where we find the dry and hot element called fire,³ and then on the air which is below the fire, and so on. In that way, the heavenly power is the efficient cause of sublunary phenomena.

These statements are rather fragmentary; in no way do they amount to an integral theory of the dynamic interaction between the heavenly and the sublunary bodies.

In order to understand from an historical point of view the character of Alexander's elaboration of these few passages, one should keep in mind that one of the main concerns of our commentator was to address philosophically a number of questions current in his day about fate (in the two treatises *Peri heimarmenes pros tous autokratoras*, i. e. the so-called *De fato*, and in the shorter *Peri heimarmenes* = Mantissa XXV), providence (in his *Peri pronoia* and in other shorter treatises, like *Quaestiones* 1.25 and 2.19), and the power exerted by the stars (*Quaestio* 2.3). His tendency is to complete and update Peripatetic philosophy, since Aristotle never used the words *heimarmene* and *pronoia* in the sense in which Alexander, who follows the usage of his contemporaries, does.

Alexander does his best to formulate a theory compatible with Aristotle's outlook, and then to show such a theory as implicit in Aristotle's texts.

Alexander's treatments of *pronoia* and fate show strong similarities. We may take the main lines of the *incipit* of the *Peri pronoias* from the faithful and diligent arabic version of Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus called *Fī al-ʿināya* (*On Pronoia*), in which the *Peri pronoias* is best preserved:⁴

and in height and lowness and distance and closeness. We find the things which effect heat in other things by movement do so more intensely whenever they are large, close, fast, and low. Therefore the cause of the genesis of heat in the elements is from the first element moving over them ... (etc.)."

³ Aristotle calls this either fire or "a sort of fire" (*hoion pyr*, 340b 33) but says that the name of "fire" is not totally appropriate, for fire is strictly speaking "the ebullition of a dry exhalation" (341b21); see R.W. Sharples, "The school of Alexander?," in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed* (London, 1990), pp. 83-112, esp. pp. 98-9.

⁴ Abū Bishr Mattā's translation is edited together with the Kindī-circle translation by H.-J. Ruland, *Die arabischen Fassungen von zwei Schriften des Alexander von Aphrodisias: Über die Vorsehung und Über das liberum arbitrium*, diss. (Saarbrücken, 1976). Like Ruland, we call Abū Bishr Mattā's translation D18 and

Of those who philosophised on the subject of *pronoia* and who have conveyed to others a certain knowledge about that, some of them claimed that (...) the term *pronoia* is empty, without meaning, because there is no thing that is originated whose origination arises from the view of God and his reflection (...) [whereas others] claimed that nothing which comes to be arises without *pronoia* and that everything is filled with God and he penetrates all the things which exist. (p. 1.5-11, p. 5.1-3 Ruland; cf. Grant frgm. 3, first part)

Later in this text, Alexander will say that the common opinion of men is sufficient to demonstrate that gods exist and that they are ensouled and rational (p. 51 Ruland), and will stress that the real problem is to know what is their *pronoia* and how extensive it is, according to Aristotle (p. 58 Ruland).

This can be compared with the way the treatise *Peri heimarmenes* = Mantissa XXV starts, which is also very similar to the beginning of the major treatise *Peri heimarmenes pros tous autokratoras* after the *exordium* and dedication (p. 165.14 ff. Bruns).⁵

Concerning fate it is worth considering what it is and in which of the things that are [it is located]. That fate is *something* is sufficiently established by the common conception of men (...). Anaxagoras is not deserving of credence

the Kindī-circle translation D15, following their numbering in Dietrich's list of preserved Arabic translations of Alexander's works in A. Dietrich, "Die arabische Version einer unbekanntenen Schrift des Alexander von Aphrodisias über die *Differentia specifica*," *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, phil.-hist. Kl. (1964): 85-148. Some Greek fragments of Alexander concerning providence are preserved apud Cyril of Alexandria and published by R.M. Grant, "Greek literature in the treatise 'De Trinitate' and Cyril 'Contra Julianum'," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 15 (1964): 265-79. Four of these correspond to passages of Abū Bishr Mattā's translation, and support its authenticity. Others may well have had a different source. I intend to write about this elsewhere [S. F.]. On the earlier version of Alexander's *Peri pronoias* made in the Kindī-circle, see below, p. 11 ff.

⁵ On the introduction of the latter, see the subtle analysis of J. Mansfeld, "Diaphonia in the argument of Alexander *De fato* Chs. 1-2," *Phronesis*, 33 (1988): 181-207, who also compares it with the *incipit* of *Peri pronoias*. See also *ibid.*, p. 181 n. 4 a discussion on the authenticity of Mantissa XXV. I do believe that this should be regarded as authentic, and none of the arguments advanced until now appears strong enough to prove the opposite; the quality and the style of writing and also the content of Mantissa XXV are such as one would expect from a genuine work of Alexander. I hope to write about this elsewhere [S. F.]. Anyway, since the section we quote from Mantissa XXV is very similar to a corresponding one in *De fato* (whose authenticity is not questionable), this problem does not touch directly on our point here.

when he testifies against the common belief; for he says that fate is not anything at all, but that this term is an empty one. But as to what it is and in what [it is located], the common conception of men is no longer sufficient to indicate this. For they cannot agree either with each other or with themselves about this. For they change their opinion concerning fate with the times and the circumstances. At one time they posit fate as something unalterable and inescapable and place all things that are and come to be under it; at another one can hear them often speaking of what is contrary to fate and of what is contrary to destiny. (179.25-180.3, trans. R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias On Fate* (London, 1983), p. 106.)

Then, speaking about fate, Alexander applies it to the fortunes of individuals and says that its cause is also the cause of nature, and that this cause is the circular movement (*periphora*) of the heavenly bodies (169.23-25 Bruns). In the *Peri pronoias* he specifies that providence is general; it preserves species and is not concerned with individuals. But the efficient cause of both is the same: the heavenly bodies, their movements and their *dynameis* administer providence and fate (although Alexander never defines their relationship explicitly).

Another common feature of these treatises (the two on fate and the one on providence) is that they pay considerable attention to the opinion of other philosophers, in order to show the superiority of Alexander's own doctrine, whose intention is to reconcile Aristotelian orthodoxy and factual evidence. For every point of his own doctrine, however, Alexander gives a rational argument.

This is even more true of Alexander's other treatments of the subject of providence: for they, as the Greek title of the collection *Aporiai kai lyseis*⁶ in which they are preserved suggests, are marked by a strong aporetic character. We call them *Quaestiones*. Among these we have several texts on *pronoia*.⁷ One of them, *Quaestio* 1.25, is very relevant in itself,⁸ but does not seem to have been translated in the Kindi-circle. And in fact we will find that its strong argument *against* the idea that

⁶ "Problems and solutions," in four books, edited by I. Bruns in *Supplementum Aristotelicum* (Berlin, 1892), II. 2.

⁷ The authenticity of some of them is questionable. *Quaestio* 2.21 is stylistically anomalous and contradicts in its content at least one passage of *Quaestio* 1.25, which is very likely to be authentic. I intend to write about this elsewhere [S. F.].

⁸ It is the only one which uses as a source the passage of *Met.* XII.6, 1072a 10-18 mentioned above, for this latter is probably the source for *Quaestio* 1.25's obscure developments about the two movements of the planetary spheres.

what we call *pronoia* is a mere accident (argument which is: the movement of the *planomenoi asteroi* on the circle of the ecliptic is *for the sake of* the preservation of the cycle of generation and corruption in the sublunary world, p. 40.34-41.4 Bruns)⁹ is totally ignored by the Kindī-circle adaptor of D15 (see below, pp. 14-15) and by al-Kindī himself.

Texts of Alexander that the Kindī-circle surely had are the *Peri pronoias*, *Quaestio* 2.3 and *Quaestio* 2.19. Their translation, or better, adaptation, must have been available to al-Kindī himself. Let us then concentrate our attention on these texts and their destiny. We may see first of all how these three texts – *Peri pronoias* and the two *Quaestiones* – are related to each other in the original Greek.

Peri pronoias makes a distinction between two ways in which providence exists: it resides in the heavens and it acts on the sublunary world by contact.¹⁰ Thus there is divine power in every natural being, governing and ordering the being and bringing everything to its proper perfection.¹¹ Humans have a purer nature, and providence makes them rational.¹² The individual human has reason, and so provides for his own needs, while differences among individuals are accidents due to matter.

Quaestio 2.19¹³ works with some of these concepts from a slightly different viewpoint. It asks whether the whole world has providence or not. Since by its own nature the cosmos is well ordered,¹⁴ then the world should have no need of providence. From this negative hypothesis he reasons his way to a reconciliation with the common notion that providence exists;

⁹ See on this R.W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence: Two problems," *Classical Quarterly*, 32 (1982): 198-211.

¹⁰ See Aristotle *Meteor.* I.3, 339a21-32 mentioned above, on causal relationship by contact.

¹¹ See also Ps. Arist. *De mundo* 397b20-23.

¹² This point connects *Peri pronoias* with *Quaestio* 2.3, see below, pp. 7-8.

¹³ The title of *Quaestio* 2.19 in the Greek manuscripts is: "That, <if> the universe is eternal and the essence of the universe is its ordering, this too should be in its proper being" (trans. Sharples). But there is good reason to assume that Alexander himself did not give the titles to the individual *Quaestiones*, see I. Bruns' preface to *Supplementum Aristotelicum*, II.2, p. XI.

¹⁴ Aristotle *De caelo* said that the movement of the heavens is eternal by nature: see e.g. I.2, 269a5-7; II.7, 289a15-16.

it is mediated by the spheres and it preserves species on earth.¹⁵

Quaestio 2.3¹⁶ can be related in another way to the *Peri pronoias*. At least three points stated in the *Peri pronoias* are reworked in *Quaestio* 2.3. That is, the latter states that the divine power acts upon the sublunary world by contact starting from the first sphere of fire and through it upon the other "simple bodies"; and that the divine power is in matter according to the receptivity of the various matters, some of which are purer and more subtle, and so capable of being ensouled; and, most important, that providence makes human beings rational.

Here *Quaestio* 2.3 most probably refers¹⁷ to the *Peri pronoias* when it says "*It was supposed (ekeito) that it was through this power that providence made human being[s] rational creature[s].*"¹⁸ Here Alexander, after a first solution which makes the heavenly power only the source of the soul of ensouled being, suggests in a second solution that the divine power is also the cause of bodies being what they are, whether they are just simple bodies such as fire and air which are affected according to their proximity to the divine heavenly body,¹⁹ or compound, ensouled bodies. This solution is presented as a suggestion rather than as a proper statement, and reflects therefore more a work-in-progress report than a dogmatic conclusion.

Here, however, Alexander's inquiries about the physical rela-

¹⁵ See R.W. Sharples, "The unmoved mover and the motion of the heavens in Alexander of Aphrodisias," *Apeiron*, 17 (1983): 62-6, esp. p. 62, who pointed out in *Quaestiones* 2.19 and 1.25 that, although the movement of the heavens depends on the first *ousia* they ceaselessly desire, their relationship with the latter is not analysed by Alexander in terms of *pronoia*.

¹⁶ "What the power is that comes to be, from the movement of the divine body, in the body adjacent to it (*geitniōnti*, see Arist. *Meteor.* 338b21-22 quoted above, pp. 2-3) which is mortal and subject to coming to be"; English trans. R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias Quaestiones 1.1- 2.15* (London, 1992); Italian translation in S. Fazzo, "Alessandro d'Afrodisia e Tolomeo: aristotelismo e astrologia fra il II e il III sec. d.C.," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, 4 (1988): 627-49, transl. pp. 644-9.

¹⁷ Contra P. Moraux, "Alexander von Aphrodisias Quaest. 2.3," *Hermes*, 95 (1967): 159-69, esp. p. 163 n. 2.

¹⁸ 48.19-20 Bruns, trans. Sharples.

¹⁹ Again, see Arist. *Meteor.* I.1-3 on the action by proximity; an even closer parallel is between 48. 5-8 Bruns and Ps. Arist. *De mundo* 397b27-30, see P. Moraux, "Alexander von Aphrodisias Quaest. 2.3," p.163.

tionship among heavenly and sublunary bodies "according to Aristotle" reach their culmination. As a result of Alexander's effort, we find that a link has been established between an Aristotelian physics and the strong belief common among his contemporaries in the submission of sublunary phenomena to the configurations of stars and planets.²⁰ It is difficult to say which reasons led our author to this kind of compromise. Previous development of Aristotle's theories by Alexander's predecessors and the criticism of certain opponents are likely to have played an important part. However, it is clear that Alexander concentrates considerable energies on avoiding the extreme positions which regarded the stars as efficient causes of every single event on earth – an assumption which is shown in the *De fato* to be the point Alexander was most worried about, as it did not leave any place (whether theoretical or practical) for human free will and choice.

The interest of these three texts for our research (*Peri pronoiās*, *Quaestiones* 2.3 and 2.19) lies not only in their intrinsic value (for they provide, with *Quaestio* 1.25, on which see above, p. 6, the most explicit statements on how the celestial spheres affect sublunary bodies) but also in the fact that all of them were, as we have said, available to the Kindī-circle.

But in what form were they available? For it is well known that the Kindī-circle's translations were not especially literal or faithful to the text.²¹ Kindī-circle translations are well known as texts reflecting an agenda.²² Actually, they did not need to be literal, if we may take al-Kindī's own attitude toward Greek philosophy as indicative – that is, it needs completion.²³

A full survey of the destiny of Alexander texts in the Kindī-

²⁰ See Fazzo, "Alessandro d'Afrodizia e Tolomeo...", esp. pp. 640-3.

²¹ See G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus* (Beirut, 1973), and F.W. Zimmermann, "The origins of the so-called Theology of Aristotle," in J. Kraye, W. Ryan, C. Schmitt (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages*, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts, 11 (London, 1986), pp. 110-240.

²² Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, p. 326 remarks on the Proclus' translations in the Kindī-circle that they "contain a number of considerable additions and alterations (...). While some of these are merely explanatory glosses, most of the corollaries, insertions, and modifications, also a few omissions, involve a deliberate revision of the author's metaphysical system."

²³ He says this about his own philosophical endeavors, in the best Greek fashion, but it evidently applies to the translations as well; see al-Kindī, *On First Philosophy*, Abū Rīda I. 103.10 f.

circle is outside our present purpose.²⁴ Instead, we wish to concentrate our attention on what happens to these three texts. This will give essential information for understanding al-Kindī's use of them and will show their close connection with al-Kindī's own philosophy, which is voiced in his own treatises and in the translations of his associates.²⁵

We shall see how al-Kindī's idea of the need to improve and complete Greek philosophy affects the form and the content of these texts.

If we compare the Greek *Quaestio* 2.3 with vE34,²⁶ i.e. its Kindī-circle adaptation, it is quite evident that for this text the kind of improvement the adaptor intended was chiefly to clarify this aporetic, dense, and sometimes obscure treatise.

To this end, the text is completely reworked and rewritten. A detailed account of all the changes would take too long for the present article, since hardly a sentence is left without new arrangement or relocation. Surprisingly enough (at least if we compare this with what happens to the other texts we are concerned with), in spite of such extensive manipulation, the difficult doctrine laboriously expounded by Alexander is not misinterpreted.²⁷ True, the original distinction between first and sec-

²⁴ However, it is worth mentioning that G. Endress was apparently the first to analyse in detail the Arabic translation of a number of *Quaestiones* (among which *Quaestio* 2.3 and *Quaestio* 2.19) as Kindī-circle's texts. See his *Proclus Arabus*, esp. pp. 64-67. On *Peri pronias*, see F.W. Zimmermann, "The origins", p. 180.

²⁵ See F. Zimmermann's remarks on the Kindī-circle adaptors; "Since they changed what they disliked, they must have liked what they retained. [Such texts] give a much fuller picture than do al-Kindī's own writings of the kind of philosophy he was commending to his public." F. Zimmermann, "Al-Kindī," in M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant (eds), *Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne and Sydney, 1990), chap. 20, pp. 364-9, see on p. 366.

²⁶ vE34, "On the power <coming> from the movement of the sublime body to the bodies falling under generation and corruption," is text number 34 in van Ess's supplement to Dietrich's list (J. van Ess, "Über einige neue Fragmente des Alexander von Aphrodisias und des Proklos in arabischer Übersetzung," *Der Islam*, 42 (1966): 148-68). A list of the correspondences between Dietrich's and van Ess's lists and the surviving Greek texts of Alexander is given by R.W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias: scholasticism and innovation," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, XXXVI, 2 (1987): 1176-243, on pp. 1192-3. We read the text from MS Carullah 1279, fol. 64a13-64b21.

²⁷ Only the idea of two powers in the simple bodies and three powers in the compound bodies ("in the simple, changing bodies are two powers, the first of them from the first body and the other from themselves. In the compound bodies are three pow-

ond solution is eliminated: the adaptor combines the arguments of both solutions into one single doctrine. Still, such a transformation succeeds in reflecting what Alexander after all encourages the reader to do: for the argument of the first solution about ensouled bodies (48.27-49.12 Bruns) should be assumed as true also in the second one, which speaks just about simple and compound bodies (49.28-50.27 Bruns), and therefore needs to be completed by the former.

We must then postulate behind vE34 an adaptor whose understanding in Greek philosophy was advanced, and who had the freedom to manipulate the text. But also, the considerable amount of work he does to understand and explain this text and his basic faithfulness to Alexander's doctrine show that at least on this topic Alexander's authority enjoyed the highest consideration.

Some minor changes which occur from *Quaestio* 2.3 to vE34 deserve to be at least mentioned.

The typical Alexandrian expression "divine body" (*theion sōma*), said of heavenly spheres, becomes systematically "sublime" (*sharif*) body" (the same happens consistently in D15, the Kindī-circle adaptation of *Peri pronoiās*).

We also find interpolation of astrological developments – namely, fuller details on how different influences from the stars are efficient causes of the various organic compounds. Also, the activity of the heavenly power on the earth is described in a more astrological and more concrete way, in terms of *emanation* (*fayḍ*). Moreover, some references to various works of Aristotle are inserted.²⁸ It is clear that the adaptor felt moti-

ers, the first of them from the first sublime body and the second from the simple, changing bodies and the third from themselves," see below, Appendix, p. 33) does not seem to have a direct parallel in the Greek original, and I'm not sure it reflects exactly what Alexander intended to say. Anyway, it may well be seen as an exegesis of Alexander's statement about the compound bodies having a share in more powers (*pleionōn koinonounta dynameōn*, p. 50.18 Bruns).

²⁸ The first is: "I say that because of this power come the movements of these bodies to their proper places, and because of these movements every one of them comes to its completion and its perfection, just as the Sage related in the *De caelo* (*kitāb al-samā*)" in the fourth book (*maqāla*"); but this idea appears nowhere in *De caelo*. A second is: "... I say that the vegetative soul is first, then the animal, then the intellectual and rational. The Sage has treated how that is in the *De anima* (*kitāb al-nafs*)"; somehow the adaptor may be referring to *De anima* II.3, 414a29-415a14; but the reference is so generic that it does not need to refer to any specific passage. The third reference is: "This first form coming to be from the sublime heavenly body in matter <is> the form of the first bodies and <is> the cause of the oppositeness of

vated to make explicit references so often as possible to individual works of Aristotle, in order to give the text a stronger authority. We shall see better from the adaptations of *Peri pronoias* and of *Quaestio* 2.19 that the injection of quotations or references, whether correct or spurious, is a common practice of the Kindī-circle adaptors; this can sometimes give important information on the knowledge of Aristotle these scholars had.

Now, in what form could al-Kindī have read Alexander's *Peri pronoias*?

We have from the Kindī-circle, an anonymous, partial translation, earlier than D18 (the literal translation of Abū Bishr Mattā referred to and quoted above), called *Fī al-tadbīrāt al-falakiyya*, approximately translated "On the Direction of the Spheres."²⁹ This title shows what the Kindī-circle adaptor and his colleagues were seeking from this text. As mentioned above, since the original Greek is lost, only the later translation, which we call D18, enables us to appreciate the most relevant discrepancies between D15 and its *exemplar*.

Here is the *incipit* of this Kindī-circle adaptation:

Maqāla of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Directions (*pronoias*) of the Spheres (*al-tadbīrāt al-falakiyya*).

He said: the Sage related in his book which is called the Book of Pronoia (*tadbīr*) that the cause of the generation (*kawn*) of the things falling under generation and their preservation (*ḥifẓ*) and their endurance (*dawām*) in their forms is the sublime heavenly bodies (*al-ajrām al-samāwiyya al-sharīfa*), for they are directing and preserving them, I mean that the power (*quwwa*) of the sun and the rest of the stars (*kawākib*) like the sun is the cause of the generation of the natural, changing things and their endurance

their substances and their natures just as the Sage related in his book which is called the *Metaphysics* (*ba'd al-ṭabī'a*) and that is sufficiently treated here"; this also is not found as such in *Metaphysics*, not at least in the Greek original of it.

²⁹ *Tadbīr*, lit. "direction" or "governing," is the only word *this* translator has for *pronoia*; its plural form appears only here in the title. Abū Bishr Mattā will use *ināya* instead. Kindī tends to use *tadbīr* or various phrases (see below, p. 25). R. Goulet and M. Aouad's article "Alexandros d'Aphrodisias," in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* (Paris, 1989), vol. I, p. 137 translates D15's title "Traité d'Alexandre sur le gouvernement des sphères." Cf. above, note 4 on Ruland's edition. Whereas D18 is very likely to come from a former Syriac version of the Greek *Peri pronoias* (since apparently Abū Bishr Mattā did not know Greek), there is no reason to assume that D15 was translated from Syriac, contra Ruland, pp. 107-8.

(*illa kawn al-ashyā' al-ṭabī'iyya al-mustahila wa-dawāmihā*). For, among all the heavenly bodies, especially the movement of these stars (*ḥarakat hādhihi al-kawākib khaṣṣatun min jamī' al-ajrām al-samāwiyya*), the arrangement of some of them in relation to others and the proportion of their distance from these natural things falling under generation and change (*wa naẓm ba'dihā ilā ba'd wa al-i'tidāl bu'dihā min hādhihi al-ashyā' al-ṭabī'iyya al-wāqi'a taht al-kawn wa al-istiḥāla*) are the cause of their generation and of the endurance of their forms (*wa dawām ṣuwarihā*), especially (*wa lā siyyamā*) the sun and its movement. (p. 33.1-11 Ruland; see below, p. 27 for parallel passage in al-Kindī)

More strikingly is the substantial difference from the *incipit* of the original *Peri pronoias*, which we quoted in a summarized translation just above (p. 4). In fact, D15 omits the whole first section of the treatise,³⁰ which is mostly devoted to a doxographical discussion. The parallel passage in D18 to the opening of D15 is:

For Aristotle said that the well-being (*salāma*) of the things which are here below, of their coming-to-be (*kawn*) and of their subsistence [well-being] which is essential, eternal (*abadiyya*) and which they have by species, is said to be not without divine *pronoia* (*al-ʿināya al-ilāhiyya*) and [he said] that the power emitted from the sun and the moon and the other stars which travel the way of the sun according to his view, is the reason (*sabab*), in his opinion, for the generation (coming-to-be) of the things whose upholding (*qawām*) is through nature and for their preservation (*wa li-ḥifẓihā*). For he thinks that the ordered movement of these stars and the proportion of their distances from the things which are here are the causes of these things, and preeminent to the rest of the stars in that is the sun (*wa al-mutaqaddam fi dhālika li-sā'ir al-kawākib al-shams*). (p. 33. 1-8, Ruland)

Although both texts derive from a common source, D15 gives a more general resumé of what is reported as Aristotle's opinion about providence in *Peri pronoia*, and introduces the passage – strangely enough – with “the Sage related in his book which is called the Book of Pronoia”; we will return both to this quotation and to the omission of the first section of the original *Peri pronoias* in D15.

It is worth noting here that from the outset D15 assumes a strongly astrological colour, which is totally missing in D18's

³⁰ In the Escorial manuscript of D18, 87b-93a, that is more than two fifths of the whole treatise.

incipit, although, as mentioned above, the common astrological beliefs of Alexander's time may have influenced Alexander's treatises both on *pronoia* and on fate. In fact, no reference to the "divine *pronoia*," i.e. the *pronoia* exercised by God, is preserved in D15. On the other hand D15's reference to the "arrangement of some of the stars in relation to others" must have been missing in the Greek original of this passage, as we can judge from D18. It is then clear that D15, unlike D18, appears to be a treatise mostly concerned with the physical and astrological influence of the stars on the world, rather than with the theoretical and philosophical problems connected with the concept of *pronoia* and its formulation in Aristotelian terms. This is confirmed by the title of D15, "On the Direction (*pronoia, tadbīrāt*) of the Spheres."

The two treatises also differ considerably in style.

In D15, many features characteristic of Alexander's style are – more or less regularly – missing. Among them is a certain kind of demonstration. In D18 Alexander, in accordance with his usual practice, gives arguments for every concept he introduces which is not directly stated in any work of Aristotle. This is the case, for instance, when he speaks about a *dynamis* from the heavens; when he mentions a *pronoia* acting in the sublunary world (both points at p. 33 Ruland); when he assumes that the gods exist, and that they are ensouled and rational (p. 51 Ruland); when he introduces his main doctrine of the *pronoia* conceived in two ways, "according to Aristotle" (p. 59 Ruland); when he gives a physical explanation of the interaction by contact among heavenly and corruptible bodies (p. 87 Ruland, a parallel passage to *Quaestio* 2.3). In all these cases Alexander's arguments, whether short or long, are mostly left out of D15, which is, for that reason chiefly, almost one fourth shorter than the corresponding part of D18. That means that the same concepts are assumed in D15 in a more dogmatic and much less problematic way. The same effect is given by the omission of the whole first section of the *Peri pronoias*, that is, the doxographical survey which Alexander introduces to show (following Aristotle's custom) his own arguments and doctrine as issuing from the difficulties raised by the analysis of predecessors' opinions. Instead, D15 often gives details lacking in D18, details which for the most part reflect an astrological interest. So, any author's reference to the power (*dynamis* in Greek) exercised by the heavens (which according to D18 is the physi-

cal way providence acts to preserve species) is reinterpreted and developed in an astrological sense.

But there is much more. Every mention both of God and of the gods that we find in D18 is transformed by D15 into a reference to the heavenly bodies and their power. Consequently, the adaptor draws conclusions Alexander would not have easily agreed with. When for instance D18 says that God is provident toward the world by his own choice (p. 67 Ruland), D15 attributes free choice to the stars, which does not really fit with Alexander's conception of free choice.³¹ On the other hand, D18 also says that God does not exist or act primarily for our sake. D15 twists this into a statement that the stars act primarily for their own sake, and therefore the providence which they exercise on us is a mere accident of their activity. In contrast, Alexander stated elsewhere, on a strong Aristotelian basis, that providence is *not* accidental.³²

Other spurious alterations and interpolations cannot be explained other than as effects of a sort of astrological speculation: among the stars, some are more, others less pure (p. 77 Ruland; al-Kindī himself wrote a treatise "On the Explanation of the Difference among the Heavenly Bodies"³³). D18 says instead that the mixture of bodies on earth may differ because of the disposition of the stars (and *Quaestio* 2.3 says the same in its second solution) – different stars, claims also D15, direct different entities (bodies or souls) on earth; but Alexander never says so: according to him it is the whole heavenly body, by its complexity, which makes possible complex organic and ensouled bodies on earth, cf. *Quaestio* 2.3, 49. 14-22 Bruns.

Sometimes, D15's adaptor does not appear to be fully consistent. At p. 67 Ruland, he says about the stars that "nothing comes to be (...) without their will (...) except that this is not intentional on their part" (as mentioned above, Alexander could hardly have left any free will to the stars). Again: D15 says very clearly at p. 55 that the stars act only accidentally on the sublunary, but at p. 63 it just denies that they may act "only to direct the substances of the earthly world" which

³¹ For Alexander, the heavens govern our world by their own natural movement; how could they be free to do otherwise? For they can't act against their nature, and also, the circular movement doesn't have any opposite (see Arist. *De caelo* I.4, 270b32 ff.).

³² See above, p. 6.

³³ See *al-Fihrist*, Flügel, p. 257 line 17.

seems a considerably softer position. Anyway, as just mentioned, neither in D18 nor elsewhere does Alexander say providence is accidental, and his *Quaestio* 1.25 shows that he could not have admitted that.³⁴ It is worth anticipating that al-Kindī did affirm both that the stars acted accidentally on the sublunary world, and that they act by free choice.

All the details mentioned until now show in D15 a clear shift of interest in the direction of astrology. Another important un-Aristotelian and un-Alexandrian view-point probably reflects the adaptor's religious background: twice during the text he not only says, but reports as Aristotle's view, that the power exercised by the heavenly bodies must have an end in time. The adaptor evidently alludes to Christian/Islamic doctrine on the end of the world. This is emphasized by al-Kindī in many treatises, including his treatise *On the Proximate Efficient Cause of Generation and Corruption*, the text of al-Kindī that most directly reflects – as we will see in detail – Alexander's influence. The way D15 introduces this totally un-Aristotelian concept by quoting and affirming Aristotle deserves particular interest. This will lead us also to a more general investigation of the several *independent* Aristotelian quotations in D15.

We turn, then, to those references in D15 to Aristolian works which are not found in the corresponding passages of D18.

In the first passage where we find the idea of an end to the heavenly power (p. 81 Ruland), D15 mentions, unlike D18, Aristotle's *De gen. et corr.* as a source for Alexander's statement that every natural process of generation has a *telos* (*ghāya*), i.e. a point of perfection in which the process of generation ceases. Although the topic discussed here is generation, no close parallel passage is to be found to this idea in *De gen. et corr.*;³⁵ rather, Alexander here seems to refer to another passage from Aristotle, namely *Phys.* 199b15-7. Perhaps, D15's adaptor intended to support the authority of the text with a closer reference to Aristotle, but he had to guess, and failed to quote the

³⁴ Cf. note 31.

³⁵ The parallels Ruland suggests (*De gen. et corr.* 336b32, and *De caelo* 273a4-6) appear to be misleading (*De gen. et corr.* is also quoted according to a *lectio deterior*, i.e. *entelechē* instead of the correct *endelechē*). Unfortunately, we cannot explore here the possibility that Philoponus is the source for this use of Arist. *De gen. et corr.* See H.A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (New York and Oxford, 1987), esp. pp. 86-116.

right source. Then, once it is assumed with Aristotle that every process of generation has a *telos*, D15 says that "the end (*nihāya*) of generation is the end of the sublime heavenly creative power": is that a reference to the end of the world? Apparently so.

The second, more explicit passage occurs at p. 89 f. Ruland; here also we find a quotation lacking in D18. This quotation is from Aristotle's *De caelo*, but again it is interesting to see the use Alexander makes of Aristotle's argument. While in D18 (93,1-4 Ruland) we find an Aristotelian quotation about the perfection and the *eternity* of the world,³⁶ this is lacking in D15. Instead, D15 uses a section in the *De caelo* I.7 which demonstrates the spatial finitude of the universe.³⁷ But the passage is reworked in D15 where, coupling *ghāya* and *nihāya* as in the previous example (Ruland p. 81), D15 shifts the concept from spatial to temporal finitude. In that way, the end of the universe becomes associated with chronological ending:

For the essence (*huwiyya*) [of the first bodies] is terminable (*tabṭul*), just as the Sage explained in the *De caelo* by sufficient arguments. For he said there that there is no body without a termination (*nihāya*) and ultimate end (*ghāya*), neither a straight body nor a round one. If there is no unending body (*jirm ghayr mutanāhin*), every terminable body (*jirm mutanāhin*) has a terminating power (*quwwa mutanāhiya*), because it is not possible that the terminable body have an unending (*lā nihāya*) power.³⁸ And if this is so, and if the heaven is a terminable body; its power was not other than terminable, and if it is terminable, then it will cease one day (*sataqifu yawman*), and when it ceases it will be no more (*fa-idhan waqafat, baṭalat*). (Ruland pp. 89-91)

³⁶ *De caelo* I. 9, 279a25-30.

³⁷ I.e. the world cannot be an infinite (*apeiron*) body because then it could not move circularly, because for doing so it would need an infinite power, and since "nothing of what is limited has an infinite power" (275b 22-23) there should be something also infinite to move the infinite; but two infinities cannot exist.

³⁸ Cf. *De caelo* I.7, 275b22-23. The same statement of Aristotle, *outhen echei apeiron dynamis tōn peperasmenōn*, occurs among Philoponus' arguments against the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world. Both here and by Philoponus, the argument is accepted, but used to claim the opposite of what Aristotle did. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between these two un-Aristotelian uses of this argument: Philoponus fights openly and at length against Aristotle and claims that he is wrong, whereas here it is striking that D15, while claiming the temporal finitude of the universe, not only never openly rejects Aristotle's view, but even pretends to report Aristotelian views. On the fortune of Philoponus' arguments against the eternity of the world among the Arabs, see H.A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*; id. "John Philoponus as a source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish proofs of creation," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1969): 357-91.

Up to now we have seen two citations of Aristotle (always, "the Sage"), which D15 introduces in the text. For the mention of *De gen. et corr.* saying that every natural process of generation has a *telos* we did not find any fitting parallel in Aristotle's original. This reference does not need to reflect a direct knowledge of this treatise, but seems rather a guess on the part of the adaptor; whereas the reference to *De caelo* about the spatial finitude of the universe is accurate, although very freely reinterpreted. The same can be said about another reference to the *De caelo* in D15: where D18 says "we have already shown," D15 says: "The Sage has explained that in *De caelo*" (p. 73 Ruland). With this, D15 gives another correct reference to *De caelo*, where parallel passages to the idea here expounded can be found *passim*, for example at I.3, 270a13 ff., and II.4, 287a23 ff.³⁹

As for pseudo-Aristotelian quotations, let us recall the opening of D15: "He [Alexander] said: the Sage related in his book which is called the Book of Direction..." (again, "direction" is *tadbīr*, i.e. the word that D15 uses for *pronoia*). An odd citation, but fortunately in this case we can check the Greek text, which luckily survives as a fragment, quoted by Cyril of Alexandria. Instead of this quotation, Alexander says "Aristotle affirms" (*aristotelēs phēsi*), and in fact D18 faithfully translates exactly this: "Aristotle says." But an examination of the passage and of its possible parallels in Aristotle's work shows that Alexander did not intend to give a quotation, but rather a paraphrase of Aristotle's statements in general (the closest passage is *De gen. et corr.* II.10, esp. 336b31 ff.). Thus far, D15's "The Sage said" is correct.

But what is this supposed treatise by Aristotle about *pronoia* cited by D15? No Aristotelian nor pseudo-Aristotelian work ever circulated under this name. Nevertheless, other passages

³⁹ Other quotations of Aristotle in D15 (from *Phys.* at p. 59; from *Met.* at p. 93) are not independent but derive from the original Greek of Alexander, as the parallel with D18 shows. A couple of citations from *De caelo* (93.1-4 and 93.5-7 Ruland) which are found in D18 are missing in D15, and so is missing in D15 another couple of citations (p. 59.8 and 61.5 Ruland) whose origin is rather obscure: they both claim that according to Aristotle the providence extends "until the heaven of the Moon." Although they are not found in any preserved work of Aristotle, they have parallels in later reports of Aristotle's views, e.g. Diogenes Laertius 5.32, Atticus fr.3.56 f., 69 ff. des Places. See for further details: Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence," p. 198 n. 10; *idem*, "Alexander of Aphrodisias: scholasticism and innovation," p. 1216.

too give references similar to this first one: at p. 51, where D18 says "as Aristotle said," D15 injects a gloss: "as the Sage said (...). The Sage has already clarified and explained that in the book which is called The Book of Direction; there, he has dealt with it exhaustively." Then we read at p. 65.1 Ruland "The Sage also said in the book which we named above" (no similar reference is in D18). Moreover, it is worth saying now that vE33, that is the Kindī-circle adaptation of Alexander's *Quaestio* 2.19 also refers to an Aristotle's Book of Direction: "The whole world has a director in two ways (...) as the Sage related in his book called The Book of Direction." Neither this reference to "the Book of Direction" nor the idea that "the whole world has a director in two ways" are in the Greek *Quaestio* 2.19. The reference is clearly to Alexander's *Peri pronoias*.⁴⁰ Once more, the treatise is attributed to Aristotle.

Now, to better understand the reason for such occurrences, we may call to mind the omission of the whole first section of the *Peri pronoias* in D15 (see above, p. 12). In the title of the *Peri pronoias*, as D18 translates it, it is said that Alexander "reports and clarifies the opinion of Democritus and Epicurus and the rest of the accounts of the remaining philosophers on *pronoia*." That is, Alexander is reported as giving information about various philosophers' works on *pronoia*. The whole first section is devoted to others than Aristotle. Then, at p. 31 of D18 Alexander complains that some people think that some doctrine about *pronoia* could possibly be better than Aristotle's. After that, the proper exposition of Aristotle's theory begins with "For Aristotle said that the well-being of the things which are here... (etc.)." This means basically, as mentioned before, that Alexander will now explain what one could say on *pronoia* according to the fragmentary statements of Aristotle. But Kindī-circle scholars could hardly have been aware of this hidden meaning of our text.⁴¹ This means that they must have understood that Alexander in the main section of his treatise

⁴⁰ See both D18 and D15 at p. 60 Ruland.

⁴¹ Modern scholars also have failed to recognize it. For example, Ruland at pp. 34 n. 1 and 115.2 suggests that the quotation may come from Aristotle's *Peri philosophias*; I. Bruns ("Studien zu Alexander von Aphrodisias -III, Lehre von der Vorsehung," *Rheinisches Museum*, 45 (1890): 223-35, esp. p. 234) prefers to eliminate the reference to Aristotle from the Greek fragment; whereas Grant ("Greek literature in 'De Trinitate'," p. 278) correctly suggests that "what Alexander taught he must have regarded as Aristotle's."

on *pronoia*, having finished with the opinions of others, was now going to summarize and explain the contents of an original treatise of Aristotle on *pronoia*. This would logically be called *The Book of Pronoia (tadbīr)*.

Another pseudo-Aristotelian reference to Aristotle deserves particular interest. It comes at the very conclusion of D15, and does not have any parallel in D18:

It has now become clear and evident how the heavenly bodies direct the earthly world with a universal direction (*tadbīran kullīyyan*). As for the particular direction (*al-tadbīr al-juz'īyy*), the Sage explained how that is in the book which is called *Astrologia*, by sufficient, irrefutable arguments. (p. 105 Ruland)

This in turn resembles the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *De caelo* 291a30, which mentions the ordering, arrangement, placement, priority and distance of the stars, saying "We have spoken of these things in our book which is called *Astrologia*, and we have given a satisfactory account of them in it."⁴²

This in turn is based on Aristotle's Greek *ek tōn peri astrologian theōreisthō* at the corresponding point in his *De caelo*, for he says that the ordering and priority and distances of the stars *should be studied in astronomical treatises*, where that is discussed satisfactorily (*legetai gar ikanōs*).⁴³ The Kindī-circle translator of D15 may then have been familiar with this Kindī-circle *De caelo*, and he also identifies "particular" direction with astrology.⁴⁴

We come then to vE33, that is the Kindī-circle adaptation of *Quaestio* 2.19, which also gives a good example of how both knowledge of various Greek texts and non-Alexandrian theories circulating in the Kindī-circle can have affected the work of adaptation of individual treatises by Alexander.

⁴² *Aristotelis De caelo et Meteorologica*, ed. 'A. Badawi, *Islamica*, 28 (Cahire, 1961), p. 267. See G. Endress, *Die arabischen Übersetzungen von Aristoteles' Schrift De Caelo*, diss. (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), p. 244.

⁴³ *De caelo* II.11, 291a31-3. "Pour les détails relatifs à l'ordre des astres, le philosophe renvoie aux travaux des spécialistes, comme Platon l'avait fait quelques années plus tôt," P. Moraux, *Aristote Du Ciel* (Paris, 1965), p. CIV. This is therefore not a reference to a real work of Aristotle in D15; contra Ruland on this passage (p. 105 n. 2), who suggests that D15 refers to the treatise *Astronomikon* which Diogenes Laertius attributes to Aristotle.

⁴⁴ On general and particular astrology (*katholikon, eidikōteron*) see, for example, Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* II.1.

vE33's title is: "On the world and which of its parts have need in their endurance and in their perpetuation of the direction of other parts; and which of its parts do not have need of the direction of other parts." This shows already by itself that *Quaestio* 2.19 has here been read in the light of the *Peri pronoias*' discussion about parts of the world having or not having need of other parts (cf. D18, p. 61 Ruland).

As it is preserved in MS Carullah 1279 (fols 63b21-64a13), vE33 is a considerably longer treatise than the Greek *Quaestio* 2.19. It can be easily divided into two halves.

The first half summarizes or translates the whole of the Greek text, except for a couple of points, i.e. it excludes – deliberately, it is evident – both the idea of the world being "eternal by its own nature," and *Quaestio* 2.19's first solution, which suggested that in one sense the whole of the world does not need any providence from outside. These are incompatible with al-Kindī's views and are missing in vE33.⁴⁵ In spite of these omissions, close similarities and *loci paralleli* give strong evidence that the adaptor did work on *Quaestio* 2.19's whole Greek text.

But already in this first part of vE33 we find passages without parallel in the Greek. Some are mere paraphrases and explanations. Another, as we have seen above, inserts in the text a reference to what Aristotle said in "the Book of Direction," actually a reference to Alexander's *Peri pronoias*.⁴⁶ Another injects a spurious reference to the action of the "first director" (i.e. agent of *pronoia*) as "originator," "adorner," "perfector" and "preserver" of the heavenly bodies: this is a theory which does not have any parallel in *Quaestio* 2.19.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Unless one of them is cryptically preserved at the very beginning of vE33 in the obscure statement that the world's essence "has no *telos* (*ghāya*) over it", see below, Appendix, p. 35.

⁴⁶ See above, p. 18.

⁴⁷ This theory is in harmony with al-Kindī; and with the treatise D16, wrongly attributed to Alexander, preserved also in the same Carullah 1279 (69a-b). The attribution of D16 to Alexander, although never questioned until now, is false. Matter is here said to be a non-existent, and privation an existent: which is just the opposite of what Aristotle (*Phys.* I. 8. 192a 2 ff.) and consequently Alexander says (e. g. *Quaestio* I.24. 38.17-20 Bruns). Moreover, D16 discusses a passage of Arist. *Phys.* I.8 which Alexander discusses in his *Quaestio* 1.24 and ap. *Simpl. In Phys.* 236.24 ca.-238.14 with utterly different arguments. I intend to give fuller arguments elsewhere [S. F.]. Another treatise misattributed to Alexander is D29 "That every separate cause is present in everything as well as in nothing, according to Aristotle." Already P.

The second part of vE33⁴⁸ does not have any direct parallel in the Greek *Quaestio* 2.19. Again, as in the Arabic title, we read here about parts of the world having need and parts not having need of other parts. This could come from a continued paraphrase of *Quaestio* 2.19. p. 63.16-24 Bruns, but is also very close to the very same passage of the *Peri pronoiias* (see in part. D18, p. 61 Ruland), already quoted in the first part of vE33 as “the book called the Book of Direction.”

Shortly afterwards, another quotation deserves our attention: “the first Director (*mudabbir*) is the cause of the genesis (*hudūth*) of the essence (*huwiyya*) of all the parts of the world, just as the Sage related in The Book of Causes.” Such a reference tied to such a Proclan concept encourages the hope that this might be the earliest appearance of the *Liber de causis*, appearing anomalously by the name under which it travelled to the west. The phrase does not exactly match any in the *Liber de causis*, although the terminology and the notion are at home in it.⁴⁹

In this second part, vE33 reaches the conclusion that “the first Director,” already mentioned in the first part, originated and now oversees the upper world directly, while the generation of the lower world

is by the First Agent, except that it comes from him only by the intermediary of nature, and nature is the caretaker of it. I say that nature organises it and preserves its arrangement in its state eternally, not letting it cease from

Thillet ap. Goulet – Aouad, “Alexandros d’Aphrodisias,” (p. 137) doubted its attribution to Alexander, and F. Zimmermann recently recognized in this text Procl. *El. Theol.* prop. 98, whose *incipit* is: “Every separate cause (*aition chōriston*) is at once everywhere and nowhere.” See Zimmermann’s forthcoming article “Proclus Arabus Rides Again.” From the content of both D29 and Procl. *El. Theol.* prop. 98, it is now clear that the translation of the title of this treatise “Que toute cause séparée est dans toutes les choses, et non pas dans une seulement selon l’opinion d’Aristote” given by Thillet in *Alexandre d’Aphrodise, Traité du destin*, p. LIV n. 3 is inaccurate.

⁴⁸ The second part starts from: “So if this is as we have described, we resume and say also that the world has two parts...,” see below, Appendix, p. 36 f.

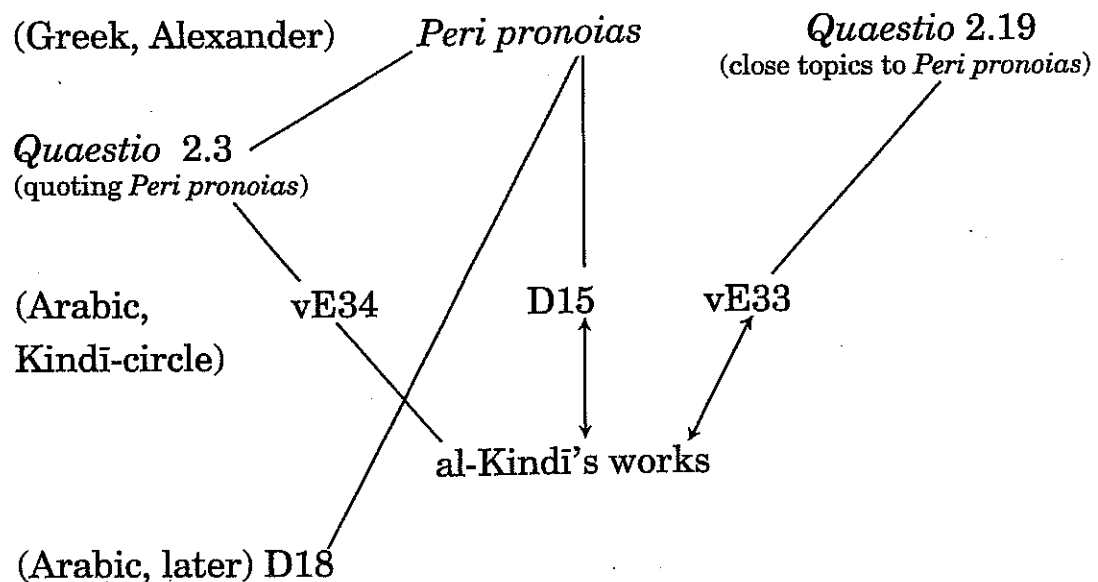
⁴⁹ Section 17 says that all things possess being because of the first being (‘A. Badawi (ed.), *Neoplatonici apud Arabes. Procli: Liber (Pseudo-Aristotelis) de expositione bonitatis purae (Liber de Causis). Procli: De aeternitate mundi. Procli: Quaestiones naturales. Hermetis: De catigatione animae. Patonis (Pseudo-): Liber Quartus*, Islamica, 10 (Cahire, 1955), p. 19) Section 8 describes how the intellect is director (*mudabbir*) to all things beneath it (*ibid.*, pp. 11-12). Section 22 calls God the *mudabbir* (*ibid.*, pp. 23-4).

its state. *I mean by nature the first heavenly bodies*, for nature is the beginnings of the movement of bodies, as the Sage said, and the beginnings of the movement of the changing bodies and their cause are the sublime heavenly bodies.

In the *Quaestio* 2.3 Alexander does say that nature is a power coming from the heavenly bodies. But to *identify* nature and heavenly bodies is a step Alexander never took.⁵⁰ Such an identification effects a total astral determinism, subordinated to God, which is at home in al-Kindī.

vE33 appears, finally, as a composite text which combines a translation from the Greek *Quaestio* 2.19 with some extraneous developments and injections of ideas which must have been very familiar to the adaptor and his colleagues.

The fact that the "Book of Direction" (which indicates, as we have seen, Aristotelian opinions expressed in Alexander's *Peri pronoias*) is clearly referred to in vE33, allows us to conclude our section on these three Kindī-circle adaptations of Alexander's text with the following stemma:



Al-Kindī's own cosmological work shares certain concepts and vocabulary with the Kindī-circle Alexander. In their Greek form and even more in their Arabic form, Alexander's writings com-

⁵⁰ The idea of nature as a subordinate creator under God is rather found in Philoponus ap. Simplicius in *Phys.* p. 1145.9-11.

municated an authentically Aristotelian physics with an enhanced celestial causality – an appealing combination.

Key thematic points which al-Kindī and the Arabic Alexander share are:

The heavenly bodies and their movements bring about and preserve the existence of all that comes to be, and cause all generation and corruption.

The heavens are therefore the dispensers of the divine *pronoia*.⁵¹ The heavenly power acts by contact, beginning from the uppermost sphere of pure fire; different sublunary bodies have differing receptivities, affecting what they become.

Variations in the heavens cause various mixtures of elements upon the earth; in this way the heavens ensoul compound bodies capable of ensoulment with the three types of souls (vegetative, animal and rational).

What is ensouled and rational is nobler.

Proximity and distance give rise to opposite effects being produced by the same heavenly body.

The obliquity of the ecliptic is critically important for all life on earth.

The doctrine that the duration of the spheres' existence and power is temporally finite is sporadically inserted into some of the Arabic Alexander texts, while it is pervasive in al-Kindī, for whom the spheres, although incorruptible and perfect, have a lifespan set by God.

God, the First Agent, originated, preserves, and perfects the creation through the mediation of the celestial spheres which he created. Like the previous idea, this is not a formulation of the Greek Alexander.

The most relevant texts of al-Kindī on these matters are *On the Proximate Efficient Cause of Generation and Corruption* (Abū Rīda I. 214-237)⁵² and *The Explanation of the Prostration of the*

⁵¹ Therefore, in al-Kindī's physical, cosmological and astrological writings there is no contradiction between astral causality and providence, as one might otherwise assume. For example Atiyeh ("but neither does he explain how the Divine Providence works": G. Atiyeh, *Al-Kindī* (Rawalpindi, 1966), p. 69) and Fakhry ("his repeated insistence on the all-pervasiveness of divine providence and God's role as the creator and superintendent of the world ... would appear to run counter to the thoroughgoing determinism of popular astrology": M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1970), p. 101).

⁵² The fact that al-Kindī quotes D15 in this text was noticed by A. Hasnaoui, "Al-Kindī, al-Ibāna 'an al-'illa al-fā'ila al-qarība li al-kawn wa al-fasād (Éclaircissement

Furthest Body and its Obedience to God (Abū Rīda I. 244-261).

The former treatise begins with a summary of Aristotelian physics, particularly reflecting the *De gen. et corr.* This appears to derive from some intermediate reformulation of Aristotle, and al-Kindī punctuates his text with recurring phrases like “it has been explained in the physical discussions (*fi al-aqāwīl al-tabīʿiyya*,” p. 219, line 12).⁵³ It is a summary explaining the types of movement, the four causes, the arrangement of the spheres, the elements, and their compounds. Of course it is Aristotelian at its root, but it is condensed and elaborated like an interpretive epitome of Aristotle. Alexander’s influence is felt only indirectly, if at all.⁵⁴

At the point in this summary where al-Kindī turns to cosmological matters, he says that he has already explained about the remote efficient cause and First Cause, that God, “the innovator (*al-mubdiʿ*) of all, the completer (*al-mutammim*) of all, is the cause of causes and innovator of every agent” in his *On First Philosophy* (p. 219).⁵⁵ He then announces his intention to describe the divine *pronoia*: “So let us now examine the proximate efficient cause of everything that comes-to-be and corrupts, so that it become clear to us how the universal direction is by divine, foregoing wisdom (*al-tadbīr al-kullī bi-al-hikmat al-sābiqat al-ilāhiyya*, p. 219) The mention of *al-tadbīr al-kullī*

de la cause efficiente prochaine de la génération et de la corruption),” in A. Jacob (ed.), *L’Encyclopédie philosophique universelle*. Vol. III: *Les oeuvres philosophiques*, ed. J.F. Mattéi (Paris, 1992) (forthcoming).

⁵³ Compare his reference to “our physical discussions” beginning the section on the four causes, at p. 217.16.

⁵⁴ As Abū Rīda pointed out (p. 219 n. 7), some of the ideas found here were also put by al-Kindī into his *On the Explanation that the Nature of the Heavens is Different from the Natures of the Four Elements* (Abū Rīda II. 40-46), to which al-Kindī refers in *On the Prostration of the Furthest Body* (Abū Rīda I. 253), which in turn was written after *On the Proximate Efficient Cause*. *On the Explanation that the Nature of the Heavens is Different from the Natures of the Four Elements* describes in an Aristotelian way the elements and their properties and describes the celestial sphere as incorruptible, having no opposite into which it may corrupt since it does not contain the four qualities.

⁵⁵ Note the similarity to *De gen. et corr.* I.3, 318a6 f. where Aristotle leaves aside discussion of the first cause which belongs to first philosophy to turn to the second, material cause and later to the moving cause of the heavens, saying “to know the unmoved principle [i.e. God] is work of the other philosophy, the first philosophy (*tēs eteras kai proteras ... philosophias*). Similarities make it appear that in his *On the Proximate Efficient Cause* al-Kindī is producing his own version of *De gen. et corr.*

here bears an interesting resemblance to the conclusion of the Kindī-circle D15, with its universal and particular *tadbīr*.⁵⁶

This summary of Aristotelian physics, as it progresses, comes increasingly closer to the contents of Alexander's *Peri pronoiās* (D15), *Quaestiones* 2.3 and 2.19, until it arrives at the distinctively Alexandrian idea of ensoulment through the influences of the heavenly bodies. Like D15, vE34, the Arabic version of *Quaestio* 2.3, deals with this process in detail, saying:

As for the compound (i.e. ensouled) bodies coming to be from the mixing (*mizāj*) of the elements and their transformation, they come to be because of the many different powers which are in them, and the variety of their forms comes about from the variety of the heavenly powers from which they come to be at their generation from the mixing of the elements and their transformation." (vE34, Carullah, fol. 64b14 f.)⁵⁷

One may compare al-Kindī's statement that "the actions of the soul follow from the mixings of the bodies (*mizājāt al-ajsām*),⁵⁸ and the mixings vary with the variation of the elevated bodies (*al-ashkhāṣṣ al-āliya*) by place and movement and time and quality, as we have advanced." (Abū Rīda I. 224-225) For astrological purposes, the actions of the soul, along with its composition, must somehow depend upon the spheres.

An interesting parallel is al-Kindī's *Discussion on the Soul, Summary and Brief*, in which he says of Plato and Aristotle:

They both affirm together in a place among all their treatises that *the soul's actions appear in the bodies (al-ajrām) which are under generation only by mediation (bi-tawassuṭ) from the celestial sphere (falak)*. The statement of Plato, 'united with a body (*jism*) by which she makes her actions appear in bodies (*al-ajrām*),' is not that she is united with a body (*jism*). He meant by it that she acts in bodies (*al-ajrām*) only by mediation of the body (*jism*) which is the celestial sphere (*falak*). (Abū Rīda I. 281, lines 14-17).

While interpreters have tried to make sense of this by taking it as a discussion of the World Soul,⁵⁹ al-Kindī himself says that

⁵⁶ And its pseudo-reference to Aristotle's *Astrologia* (see above, pp. 19-20).

⁵⁷ Even more detailed on this point is the Greek *Quaestio* 2.3, 48.27-49.14 Bruns.

⁵⁸ Note also that the statement "the actions of the soul follow from the mixings of the bodies," is strikingly close to the title and to the *incipit* of the work of Galen, *Quod animi mores (Hoti tais tou sōmatou krasesin hai tēs psychēs dynameis hepon-tai)*.

⁵⁹ Al-Kindī, *Cinq épîtres*, ed. J. Jolivet and R. Rashed (Paris, 1976), pp. 71-2.

he is describing the Aristotelian soul which is "simple substance whose actions appear in bodies" (p. 281), and reconciling it with Plato's vision. If the individual soul's actions result from heavenly intermediaries as well, this treatise could apply to all types of soul.

Al-Kindī says later in *On The Proximate Efficient Cause* that a change in the path of the sun would change the distributions of the four qualities "in the bodies which are beneath it, because of (their) reception of the sorts of characters and customs and volitions of the soul according to the measure of their more general (*al-a'amm*) mixing arising among them (or: from it) and the more particular (*al-akhaṣṣ*) mixing of each one of the beings coming-to-be and corrupting under it" (Abū Rīda I. 236, lines 1-4).⁶⁰ This is another application of the same concept shared by D15 and *Quaestio* 2.3, although al-Kindī does not explain the mechanism of celestial influence by contact in quite the same way as Alexander.

Al-Kindī repeatedly describes this process in *On the Proximate Efficient Cause*, supplying examples taken from D15 and from Ptolemy⁶¹ and from his own resources of astronomical, astrological, and meteorological information.

We may now look at al-Kindī's version (in *On the Proximate Efficient Cause*) of the opening passage of the Kindī-circle *Peri pronoias*, that is D15, which is quoted above (p. 12):

For, among the heavenly bodies, especially these stars (*fa-inna hādhihi al-kawākib khaṣṣatun min bayna jamī' al-ajrām al-samāwiyya*), the arrangement of them in relation to one another (*wa nazm ba'ḍihā ilā ba'ḍin*), and the proportion of their distances from these natural things falling under generation and change (*wa-ta'dīl ab'ādihā min hādhihi al-ashyā' al-ṭabī'iyya al-wāqi'a taht al-kawn wa al-istiḥāla*), and the number of their movements, some of them from east to west and some from west to east, and their proximity and distance from the center show, more than the heavenly bodies, that the [above mentioned stars] are the cause of the generation (*kawn*) of the things falling under generation and corruption and the endurance of their forms (*wa dawām ṣuwarihā*) for the duration for which their Creator destined them, and especially (*wa lā siyyamā* the sun. (Abū Rīda I. 226-227)

⁶⁰ See also Abū Rīda I. 226, lines 3 ff., that every body has from its origination a character according to the measure of its mixture, following the variation of proximity, speed, positioning of the planets, etc.

⁶¹ E.g. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* II.2 seems to be the source for al-Kindī's remarks about the physical characteristics of the inhabitants of the different climes.

A look at the Arabic shows that al-Kindī is paraphrasing the Arabic Alexander (D15, Ruland p. 33, see above), sometimes copying out phrases almost word for word and sometimes inserting additional concepts and details. The phrase limiting the duration of the heavens is not present at the corresponding point in D 15, but this important issue is dealt with at length by the Kindī-circle adaptor later on in the text (see above p. **).

Al-Kindī follows this passage with an astronomical analysis of the sun's distance, mass and movement, "as has been shown in the views of the mathematicians," intended to show that the sun's influence must indeed be the greatest of all (p. 227-8).

While Aristotle had mentioned only the sun and moon as influencing bodies, and Alexander mentioned all the planets, al-Kindī recognizes influences from all the planets and the stars as well, for the other planets move in the ecliptic like the sun and moon (p. 233, line 3 ff.). He concludes that:

The great benefits of the rest of the planets in the generation and corruption of beings coming-to-be and corrupting are not hidden, nor the benefits of the stars which are not planets, because there attaches to them what is attached to the planets, with respect to their greatness and their smallness and their association with the sun, the moon, and the rest of the planets. (p. 235)

This is followed by an illustration of a potential effect of Sirius Major.

The longest passage from Alexander incorporated by al-Kindī is taken from the first pages of the Kindī-circle adaptation of the *Peri pronoiās* (D15) and begins from page 226 of *On the Proximate Efficient Cause*. It concerns the angle of the ecliptic and the effects of the sun and moon on the regions, the climate, and the seasons of the earth.⁶² Beginning from the first page of D15 (Ruland 33), the Kindī-circle Alexander's version reasons that if the distance of the sun from the earth were other than it is, there would be no plants or animals; this is verified by the uninhabitability of certain latitudes of the earth, excessive in heat and cold (pp. 37-9). If the sun moved in a parallel circle instead of the inclined ecliptic, then there would be no seasons, but rather summer or winter perpetually (p. 43). And if the sun

⁶² For another reworking of an originally Greek source by al-Kindī, see F. Rosenthal, "al-Kindī and Ptolemy," *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, 2 vols (Rome, 1956), vol. II, pp. 436-456.

didn't pass across the constellations, there would be no daily cycle of night and day and all living things would suffer accordingly (p. 45). Likewise the moon, which determines the generation of clouds and rain, also needs to be in its proper position (pp. 47-9).

The parallel passages in *On the Proximate Efficient Cause* beginning from page 226 are extensive and often literal, although al-Kindī's version is enriched by supplementary illustrations, technical terms and analysis. We have quoted the first section of this just above. It continues with a description of the uninhabitable latitudes of the earth, giving specific details about the angles which produce these conditions (p. 228). Then he tells how, if the distance of the sun from the earth were greater, it would resemble those desolate northern latitudes, and if the sun were closer then the earth would be burned and barren as it is in those places already too near to the sun (p. 229). If the sun moved in a circle parallel to the equator, then there would be no seasons, but always either summer or winter or one of the other seasons (p. 229). Then all would be uniform and generation and corruption would be disrupted, as it is when we find seasonal abnormalities in our world. And if the sun didn't move across the great sphere once a day, there would be no daily cycle of night and day and plants and animals would suffer accordingly (p. 230). Here al-Kindī places some additional analysis about the disruptions of the seasons by an orbit of the sun not centered on the earth, which prompts a digression into the delicate correspondence of qualities, elements, and seasons which would be nullified by such a change, and praise of the Creator's placement of the sun and arrangement of these correspondences (pp. 230-1). Then he gradually returns to D15, to describe the effects of the moon and its proper placement in a way which includes and enlarges upon what D15 has to say, always with a tendency toward greater detail.

In the following pages (esp. p. 233) al-Kindī emphasizes the role of the other heavenly bodies, in addition to the sun and moon, which accounts for diverse meteorological conditions experienced through the years. He then gives specific examples of the effects of the heavenly bodies on heat and moisture on the earth, which in turn directly affect the physical conditions and constitutions of the human body (pp. 234-5). The total effect is to fill in all the implicit possibilities of Aristotle's partial observations on the effects of the sun and moon. Al-Kindī is

most concerned to attribute influence to all the heavenly bodies and to specify the variables which affect their influence: size, distance, speed, regularity of orbit, and their placement relative to one another in the sky and relative to points on the earth.

A less clear but very interesting passage occurs near the rhetorically elaborate beginning of *On the Proximate Efficient Cause* :

In the arrangement (*naẓm*) of this world and its ordering (*tartīb*) and the action of some (part) of it in another (*ba 'dihī fī ba 'dīn*) and the submission (*inqiyād*) of some (part) to another and the subjugation (*taskhīr*) of some (part) to another and the perfection (*itqān*) of its shape according to the best way in the generation of everything that exists and the corruption of everything that corrupts, and the endurance (*thabāt*) of everything that endures and the cessation (*zawāl*) of everything that ceases, is the greatest proof of the most perfect direction (*pronoia: tadbīr*), and with every direction there is a director (*mudabbir*)... (Abū Rīda I. 215, 10 ff)

Such a passage is reminiscent of the Arabic adaptation of *Quaestio* 2.19, yet enriched in language and at home in the cultural and religious milieu of al-Kindī's time and place.

The treatise *On the Explanation of the Prostration of the Furthest Body* was written after *On the Proximate Efficient Cause*, to which it makes reference (pp. 247 and 255). It therefore shares with the latter some points originally taken from the Kindī-circle adaptation of the *Peri pronoias* (as at p. 247.1-3, 12-13), but these are incidental to the main argument of the treatise, which constructs proofs to show that the heavenly bodies obey the command of God, that they can obey only if they have free choice, and that if they have free choice then they must have rational souls and are the source of our rationality (Abū Rīda I. 246). There is a similarity to the *De principiis* on *ikhtiyār* (choice), but on the whole this argument is part of a larger one to prove that the universe is a living, rational being with the senses of sight and hearing in the Proclan fashion,⁶³ and Alexander is not the source.

The heavens as a whole are ensouled for Alexander as well but not like this.⁶⁴ This treatise asserts of the world organism

⁶³ On this see R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic, Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oriental Studies, 1 (Oxford, 1962), p. 202.

⁶⁴ See Alex. *Quaestio* 1.25, 40.10 Bruns ff, Alex. ap. Simplicius *In Phys.* 1218.20-36 and 1261.30-1262.4; *De principiis*, French trans. 'A. Badawi in *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, 1st ed. (Paris, 1968), p.124.7 ff. [2nd ed. (Paris,

as a whole that the celestial sphere is the proximate cause of the life of its living body, saying that the life in the living body is its form, and the celestial sphere effects the form in it (p. 258).

Al-Kindī's arguments that the heavenly bodies are the source of our rationality are different from but in harmony with Alexander's particular theory of ensouling, which comes about from the mixing of the *dynameis* proceeding from the heavenly bodies with the elemental substrate of the sublunar world. In *On the Prostration of the Furthest Body* he emphasizes that the heavenly bodies are the cause of our rationality, fundamentally because the rational is superior to the irrational and a cause is superior to what it influences, but using a number of very distinctive arguments which do not pertain here.

In adopting and transmitting an astrologically activated Aristotle, al-Kindī was in agreement with, in particular, the Sabians of Harran. We find a significant union of astrolatry and Aristotle in al-Kindī's account of the beliefs of the Harranians preserved in the *Fihrist* (Book 9, Chapter 1; Flügel, pp. 318-20). Moreover, in describing their beliefs as concretely Aristotelian, al-Kindī comes close to describing his own theories as well, on cosmological issues like those which attracted him to Alexander of Aphrodisias. For example, al-Kindī says that the Harranians "say that the heaven moves with a freely chosen (*ikhṭiyāriyya*) and intelligent (*'aqliyya*) motion," (p. 318.24) which is the central point of his own *On the Prostration of the Furthest Sphere*. They also recognize the planets as intermediary in God's *tadbīr* (p. 319.9). They take their physics from the *Physica auscultatio*, the fifth nature of the incorruptible heavens from the *De caelo*, the derivation of living things from the elements from the *De gen. et corr.*, sublunary phaenomena from the *Meteorologica*, the incorporeal soul from the *De anima*, perception from the *De sensu*, the ineffability of God from the *Metaphysica*, and proofs from the *Analytica Posteriora* (p. 319.31 ff). So it was that al-Kindī's Aristotelian inclinations found their sources and effected their synthesis of Aristotle and astral causality, in his works and those of his contemporaries.

**Appendix: an English translation of
vE34 and vE33 from Carullah manuscript**

For the convenience of the reader, we give translations of the texts we use which are not available in Arabic edition, nor in translation.⁶⁵ They rely only on MS Carullah 1279 and are only provisional until a proper edition. There are some gaps in the translation because the manuscript is damaged. Our warm thanks to F.W. Zimmermann for some corrections.

vE34 = Carullah 1279, fols 64a13-64b21 (from Alexander *Quaestio* 2.3)

On the power <coming> (lit. being, al-quwwa al-anniyya) from the movement of the sublime body (al-jirm al-sharīf) to the bodies falling under generation and corruption.

We intend to examine the power coming to be in the simple, changing bodies which we call a nature and whether it is the beginnings of the movement and rest of every natural body, or whether they are that in themselves (*bi-'aynihā*).

So we say that every body among the simple bodies comes to be a body in actuality according to the state they are in from the power of the first sublime body and its movement. We will tell how that is in the future. As for now, let us say that among bodies there are the simple and the compound, and that the first body pours forth (*yufīdu*) its power firstly upon the simple bodies then after that upon the compound bodies. Yet (for) those simple bodies proximate to it, adjacent to it, the emanation of its power upon them is more, and (for) those distant from it, the emanation of its power upon them is less and more distant from it. And we say also that because of this sublime power every one of the simple bodies comes to be in the state in which they are.

Now I say that because of this power come the movements of these bodies to their proper places, and because of these movements every one of them comes to its completion and its perfection, just as the Sage related in the *De caelo* (*kitāb al-samā'*) in the fourth book (*maqāla*).

⁶⁵ We are looking forward to the edition with French translation, Emma Gannagé is preparing of these and other Arabic translations of Alexander's texts preserved both in Arabic and in Greek.

If this is in accordance with what we have described, we resume and say: in the simple, changing bodies are two powers, the first of them from the first body and the other from themselves (their own essence, *min dhātihā*). In the compound bodies are three powers, the first of them from the first sublime body and the second from the simple, changing bodies and the third from themselves.

We say that the compound bodies are better (*afdāl*) and nobler (*akram*) than the simple changing bodies and that they come from them, and that among them are the vegetative and the animal and the intellectual and rational. These faculties are not in the first changing bodies; these faculties are in the compound bodies from the first sublime body. For the compound bodies come only from the mixing (*mizāj*) of the simple changing bodies, so when certain ones mix with others, that body emanates upon them from its power also, producing in the compound body what was not in the things from which they came to be.

The variety of the compound bodies corresponds to the variety of the power coming to be from the first sublime body, more and less. And that power varies also corresponding to the variety of the mixing of the simple changing bodies, except that this happens only by arrangement and ordering (*sharḥ wa-ṭaqs*). I say that the vegetative is first, then the animal, then the intellectual and rational. The Sage has treated how that is in the *De anima* (*kitāb al-nafs*). I say how the vegetative body comes firstly from the mixing of the elements and the sublime power, then the animal body after it, possessing sense, then the intellectual and rational body, summing up the enquiry. And he relates there that the simple bodies coming-to-be under the sphere of the moon are like matter for the sublime heavenly bodies in the genesis of the perfect ensouled bodies, meaning by this statement that the four elements, when they relate to the compound bodies, are to them like prime matter without property or shape since there is absolutely nothing in it which comes to be. So the heavenly bodies are the imparters of the forms by their varying movement and by their sublime power coming from them to them.

[64b] The heavenly bodies [...] the simple changing [bodies] coming to be under the sphere of the moon according to the materiality [...] forms firstly from those sublime bodies, then generation occurs from their mixing, I mean the generation of

the [...] bodies [...] the forms of the elements corresponding to their proximity and distance from the heavenly bodies. For that one of them which is close to the sublime bodies, in it there is more of their power, and its form is hot (and) dry and there is much movement. This body informed with this form is the first of the bodies falling under generation and corruption to receive the influences. That one of them which is distant, their power is not in it except slightly, weakly; its form is cold (and) dry.

If that is so, we resume and say that the sublime heavenly bodies are the cause of the oppositeness (*tadādd*) of the forms of the simple changing bodies. It receives a form and an influence opposite to the form of its fellow corresponding to its proximity and its distance from the sphere of the constellations in which the sun and moon and the rest of the planets travel. For the simple bodies which are under the sphere of the moon are like matter to them, as we have said previously. As for that one of them which is close to it, its motion is very uniform and its form is hot (and) dry. So therefore the first sublime heavenly body is cause to this form, I mean the heat and dryness by which fire is fire, and after that it is also the cause of the form of heat and moisture by which air is air and it is also the cause of the moisture and cold by which water is water and it is also the cause of the form of dryness and cold by which earth is earth. This first form coming to be from the sublime heavenly body in matter <is> the form of the first bodies and <is> the cause of the oppositeness of their substances and their natures just as the Sage related in his book which is called the *Metaphysics* (*ba'd al-ṭabī'a*) and that is sufficiently treated here.

As for the compound bodies coming to be from the mixing of the elements and their transformation, they come to be because of the many different powers which are in them, and the variety of their forms comes about from the variety of the heavenly powers from which they come to be at their generation from the mixing of the elements and their transformation.

We resume and say in summation that that one of the first changing bodies proximate to the first sublime heavenly body is more active than (mere) passivity and reception of the influences, and in that distant from it, passivity and reception of the influences prevail over activity and influencing.

It has now been made clear and sound that a power reaches from the first body to these simple changing bodies falling

under generation and corruption, and that it is the cause of the form of the bodies opposite to one another, and that it is different from the power which is in the first simple bodies, by a sound, sufficient account.

vE33 = Carullah 1279, fols 63b21-64a13 (from Alexander *Quaestio* 2.19)

On the world and which of its parts have need in their endurance (thabāt) and their perpetuation (dawām) of the direction (tadbīr) of other parts; and which of its parts do not have need of the direction of other parts.

The world has an essence (*huwiyya*) and an arrangement (*sharḥ*), and an essence which has no end over it (*wa-huwiyya lā yafūquhā ghāya min al-ghāyāt*). So, we would like to find out which parts of the world have need of the direction of other parts, in the endurance of their arrangement and their upholding (or, <perpetuation>) and which of its parts do not have need in their endurance and perpetuation of the direction of other parts.

So we say: every director (*mudabbir*) is either a director of a new thing (I say that it originates the being (*al-anniyya*) of the thing) or it is a director for the improvement of the essence of the thing and its organisation (*tartīb*) (I say that it improves the thing and organises it and brings it to a *telos* (*ghāya*) in beauty and perfection). If that is so, we resume and say that the whole world has a director in two ways (I say for origination and for adorning and perfecting), just as the Sage related in his book called *The Book of Direction*, although the sublime part of the world not falling under generation and corruption is, rather, eternal in one state and one motion, desiring to imitate the first agent – like the heavenly bodies, for they have no need in that endurance of the direction of any part of the world (I say in improvement and their preservation and their perpetuation). For the first director is their director (I say that he is their originator and their adorer and their perfecter and he is the preserver of their being and their perfection and their perpetuation).

What is in the world falling under generation and corruption does have need of the direction of certain parts of the world in the preservation of its being and its perfection and its perpetuation – like the changing, opposite bodies. (I say that the heavenly bodies are the directors of these changing bodies and they

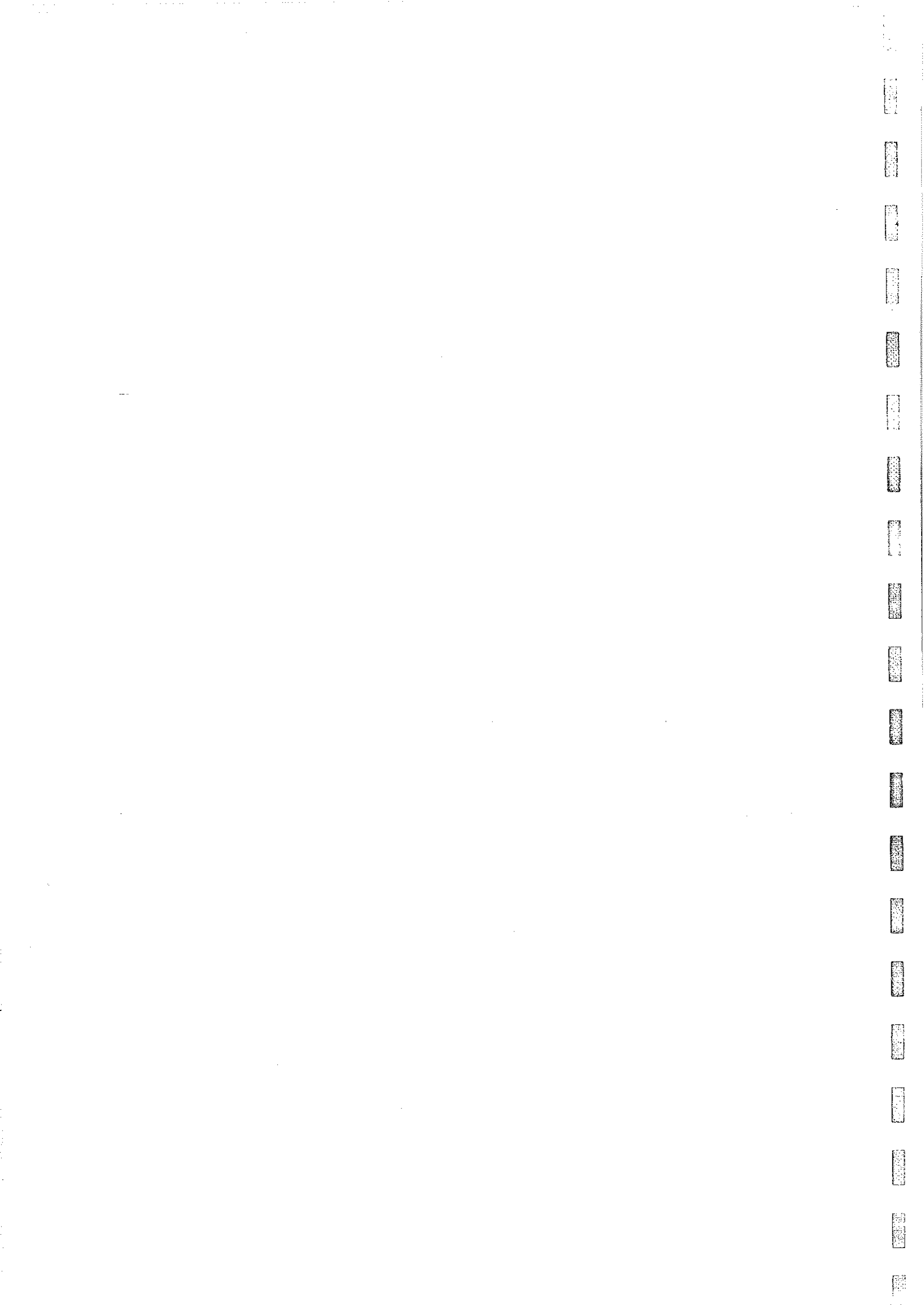
ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS IN THE KINDĪ-CIRCLE

are the ordering of their changing and of the endurance of their forms by their continual (*dā'ima*) movement, and they keep them from ceasing, although their preservation and their endurance and their perpetuation are in form, not by number.)

So if this is as we have described, we resume and say also that the world has two parts: one of them not generated from any other thing and not falling under corruption, constant (*dā'im*) in movement, not changing and not undergoing alteration and having no need of the direction of any other part of the world (I say in [64a] the improvement of its arrangement (*nazm*) and its preservation in its state [...] in its state eternally; and the other part is generated, falling under [corruption... having need in] its endurance of the direction of certain parts of the world, which are the heavenly bodies without any need of [...] at all, for the first director is the cause of the origination of the essence of all the parts of the world, just as the Sage related in The Book of Causes.

And we say also that every one of the world's parts whose essence and form came to be together, and whose form did not come from another form changing, <that part is> from the first agent without intermediary (*bi-lā tawassuṭ*). He is the director of that part also, preserving it always in its state; they are the first sublime heavenly bodies. Every part of the world whose form did not come to be together with its essence, given that what comes to be by changing from another form also changes into another form, the generation of that part is by the first agent, except that it comes from him only by the intermediary of nature, and nature is the caretaker of it. (I say that nature organises it and continually preserves its arrangement in its state, not letting it cease from its state; I mean by nature the first heavenly bodies, for nature is the beginnings of the movement of bodies, as the Sage said, and the beginnings of the movement of the changing bodies and their cause are the sublime heavenly bodies.)

It has now been made clear and sound <which> parts of the world have need, in their endurance and their preservation and their organisation and their perpetuation, of the direction of other parts of the world, and which of its parts do not have need, in their organisation and their endurance and their perpetuation, of the direction of other parts of the world.



L'ALEXANDRE ARABE ET LA GÉNÉRATION À PARTIR DU NÉANT*

Silvia FAZZO

L'Alexandre Arabe... c'est qui?... c'est quoi?

Comme nous allons le voir, l'Alexandre Arabe n'est pas tellement un «qui», mais plutôt un «quoi»: une sorte d'étiquette, pour désigner le *corpus* des traités conservés en arabe, qu'on attribue au commentateur grec d'Aristote Alexandre d'Aphrodise, qui a vécu entre le II^e et le III^e siècle de notre ère.

Ce serait beaucoup trop simple, en effet, de vouloir attribuer ce *corpus* à un seul personnage historique. Devrait-on plutôt considérer le dénominateur commun de ces traités du point de vue de leur fonction culturelle commune? C'est une hypothèse que je me propose d'examiner plus loin.

Le problème de la création ou génération *ex nihilo*, dont je vais m'occuper, est un bon exemple, me semble-t-il, des raisons qui peuvent rendre souhaitable une nouvelle évaluation de l'Alexandre Arabe dans son ensemble.

Nous pouvons partir d'un témoignage de Miskawayh (mort en 1030). Dans son *al-Fawz al-asğar* («Le moindre triomphe»), Miskawayh parle de la création, par Dieu, du monde à partir du néant, et cite une série d'arguments contre l'opinion, dit-il, de Galien et de certains philosophes, «que tout s'engendre toujours à partir de quelque chose». À ce propos, Miskawayh cite un traité qu'Alexandre aurait écrit, pour réfuter justement la théorie que «tout s'engendre toujours à partir de quelque

* Cette contribution reflète le premier stade d'une recherche sur l'Alexandre Arabe entreprise en 1992 au Warburg Institute de l'Université de Londres. Du matériau pertinent fut en partie découvert, en partie redécouvert avec l'aide de Fritz Zimmermann, Hillary Wiesner et Robert W. Sharples. Je leur suis très reconnaissante, ainsi qu'à tous ceux qui nous ont aidés dans nos recherches au Warburg Institute. Je suis néanmoins seule responsable de tout contresens ou usage inapproprié des données, soit ici, soit au cours des développements ultérieurs que cet article — ainsi qu'il apparaîtra — requiert. Je remercie aussi M. Aouad, qui a donné l'occasion à cette contribution d'être discutée au Colloque, et Emma Gannagé, qui a aimablement révisé le texte français.

chose», et prouver que «les choses contingentes qui viennent à être ne s'engendrent d'aucune autre chose»¹.

En ces termes, on trouve donc que le nom d'Alexandre, le très fidèle commentateur d'Aristote, est lié à la tradition islamique de la *creatio ex nihilo*, tout au moins dans la mesure où Alexandre aurait réfuté l'opinion que ce qui existe est toujours créé à partir de ce qui existe déjà. Et pourtant, il est évident que ni Alexandre ni Aristote ne croyaient à la création, par un premier Créateur, ni du monde tout entier ni d'aucune chose à partir du néant. L'impossibilité d'une *creatio ex nihilo* est bien, comme l'a dit Walzer, «one of the almost axiomatic tenets of Greek philosophy»².

Un malentendu pourrait pourtant se produire à ce propos. C'est vrai qu'Alexandre parle de la génération à partir du *non-étant* (*ek tou mē ontos*), à la suite du chapitre I.8 de la *Physique* d'Aristote³. Mais le non-étant n'est pas le néant, et le problème de la génération à partir du non-étant, chez Aristote et Alexandre tout au moins, est bien différent du

¹ Voici le début du chapitre de Miskawayh, *al-Fawz al-aşgar*, I. 10, dans la traduction de J. W. Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology* (London-Redhill, 1945), I. 1, p. 116: «People who are not accustomed or practised in the study of speculative matters think that nothing can be made without some other thing. This is because they see that one man is produced from another and one horse from one another. This idea spread to such an extent that Galen became an exponent of the view, but Alexander wrote a book devoted to the refutation of this theory and proved that contingent things which came into existence were not made from anything else». Miskawayh se réfère ici vraisemblablement au traité D16 (cf. ici, *infra* p. 279s.). La suggestion d'une telle identification se trouve déjà chez A. Altman - S.M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli. A neoplatonic philosopher in the early tenth century*, Scripta Judaica 1 (Oxford, 1958), p. 73, n.2, mais, faute d'un examen de D16 en tant que tel, avec quelque imprécision: «Miskawayh knew the views of Galen from a polemical treatise by Alexander of Aphrodisias, who refuted Galen's thesis «that a thing can only come into being from another thing», preserved in an Arabic translation in MS Escorial, no. 794. (It is obvious from the argument as reproduced by Miskawayh that the problems discussed in that treatise did not concern *creatio ex nihilo*, which was, of course, entirely foreign to Alexander)». On se réfère évidemment à D16 [MS Escorial 798 (794 dans la numérotation ancienne), fols. 83^v-87^r]. Mais, *contra*, nous allons voir dans notre discussion que: 1) le traité D16 n'est pas la traduction d'un traité authentique d'Alexandre; 2) D16 parle de la *creatio ex nihilo*; 3) D16 ne fait pas mention de Galien comme adversaire d'Alexandre.

² R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (London, 1949), p. 26. Pour Aristote, cf. e. g. *Physique*, I.4. 187a 27: c'est «l'opinion commune des physiciens, que rien ne peut être engendré de rien».

³ Cf. Alex. ap. Simpl. in Arist. *Phys.*, I.8. 236.15-238.22 Diels et Alex. *Quaestio* I.24, au titre *Exégèse du passage du premier livre de la Physique d'Aristote, vers la fin, où il dit que, dès qu'on trouve la matière, on a résolu aussi les apories des anciens*. Il existe de ce dernier texte, *Quaestio* I.24, une version arabe relativement fidèle, D20, qui pourtant traduit, elle aussi, régulièrement le grec *to on* (lit.: «l'étant») par «quelque chose», et *to mē ontōs* («le non-étant») par «néant». Différent du grec est aussi le titre: *Traité d'Alexandre: de la matière, de la privation, de la génération. Solution d'un problème posé par quelques anciens qui refusaient ainsi la génération <telle que l'expose> le livre d'Aristote sur la Physique*.

problème de la *creatio ex nihilo*. C'est une question beaucoup plus abstraite: il s'agit de réfuter l'immobilisme parménidien, en montrant que, même si au sens absolu rien ne s'engendre du non-étant (*ek tou mē ontos*), toutefois par accident il y a génération à partir du non-étant: à partir de la matière. Car la matière, d'où tout s'engendre, est en elle-même un étant, mais par accident un non-étant, puisqu'elle a en soi, comme accident, la privation (c'est-à-dire *le fait de ne pas encore être ce qui d'elle s'engendrera*), et la privation est en elle-même un *non-étant*⁴. Rien ne peut s'engendrer principalement de la privation, car celle-ci, n'étant pas, n'est pas un substrat qui persiste au cours du procès de génération⁵. Pourtant, par accident, la génération se fait aussi de la privation, qui est un accident de la matière. Dans ce sens, toute chose s'engendre par accident à partir du non-étant⁶.

L'on voit bien que l'hypothèse même du créationisme est ici hors de question. Un concept-clef est ici le *non-étant par accident*, qu'on ne saurait pas identifier avec un *néant par accident*: un *néant par accident* est tout à fait inconcevable. Le fait donc que la discussion d'Aristote et d'Alexandre concerne la génération à partir du non-étant, tandis que celle de Miskawayh concerne la génération à partir du néant, trace une ligne nette de démarcation entre les deux.

Pourtant, Miskawayh cite l'autorité d'Alexandre, et son témoignage n'est pas isolé.

Le nom d'Alexandre se trouve aussi lié au problème de la *creatio ex nihilo* dans un texte de l'Alexandre Arabe conservé dans le MS Escorial 798, rédigé au IX^e siècle dans le cercle d'al-Kindī⁷, texte désigné par ceux

⁴ Cf. Arist. *Phys.* I.9. 192a 3-6; Alex. *Quaestio* I.24, 37.26-31.

⁵ La génération en soi (*kath'hauto ginesthai*) à partir du non-étant et de la privation serait possible seulement si le non-étant pouvait rester comme substrat et pouvait en même temps se transformer dans son contraire à lui. Mais cela est impossible; cf. e.g. Alex. *Quaestio* I.24, 38.25 ss.

⁶ Ce qui précède est un compte rendu sommaire et partiel d'une partie des difficiles chapitres I.8-9 de la *Physique*, à l'aide de l'exégèse alexandriste aventureusement préservée dans les deux témoignages cités à la note 3. En toute rigueur, Alexandre distingue deux explications possibles de la solution proposée par Aristote à l'aporie des anciens: l'une distinguant le non-étant en soi (privation) du non-étant par accident (matière); l'autre, distinguant la génération en soi (*kath'hauto ginesthai*) de la génération par accident (*kata symbebēkos ginesthai*) à partir de quelque chose. Mais la distinction entre ces deux aspects de la solution de l'aporie des anciens n'est pas explicite dans Aristote. D'où la synthèse proposée ici.

⁷ D16 a été reconnu comme l'œuvre du cercle d'al-Kindī par F. W. Zimmermann en conformité avec les critères formulés par G. Endress (éd., tr. comm.), *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio theologica in arabischer Übersetzung* (Beirut-Wiesbaden, 1973).

qui étudient Alexandre sous le sigle D16, suivant la numérotation progressive d'une liste des ouvrages d'Alexandre conservés en version arabe⁸.

Voici le titre du traité D16: «Discours d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Comment réfuter la thèse de celui qui dit qu'une chose ne peut provenir que d'une autre chose et où l'on démontre que toute chose ne peut provenir que du néant».

Aucun original grec de D16 ne nous est connu. Cela d'ailleurs n'est pas étonnant: on sait déjà que jamais Alexandre d'Aphrodise n'aurait dit une chose pareille.

On trouve pourtant des points de contact précis entre D16 et la position prétendument alexandriste chez Miskawayh: Miskawayh cite l'opinion de Galien et d'autres philosophes, réfutée par «Alexandre», que tout s'engendre toujours à partir de quelque chose: elle serait fondée par l'argumentation suivante: «(puisque'ils voient qu') un homme s'engendre toujours d'un homme⁹, un cheval d'un cheval». D'une façon similaire, en D16, l'auteur réfute les anciens qui soutiennent cette même doctrine et qui avancent l'argument suivant: «(nous voyons que) <toujours> une chose vient d'une autre, comme un homme d'un homme, un cheval d'un cheval».

De telles coïncidences sont suffisantes pour nous faire croire que c'est bien à D16 que Miskawayh se réfère, lorsqu'il dit: «Alexandre consacra un traité à réfuter cette opinion». Il y a pourtant une différence: Miskawayh attribue à Galien l'opinion discutée, tandis que, dans D16, le nom de Galien n'est jamais cité. Évidemment, il est vrai que Galien croyait que rien ne se crée qu'à partir de quelque chose¹⁰, mais cela est vrai

⁸ Cette liste a été établie par A. Dietrich, «Die arabische Version einer unbekanntem Schrift des Alexander von Aphrodisias über die Differentia specifica», *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, phil.-hist. Kl. (1964), pp. 85-148. Cela justifie la lettre «D», le chiffre 16 renvoyant à l'ordre du traité dans la liste.

⁹ Peut-être une réminiscence de l'aristotélicien *anthrōpos gar anthrōpon gennāi kai hēlios* (*Phys.* II. 2. 194b13)? Le pas était fréquemment cité, cf. e. g. p. 60.11 Ruland de la version arabe du *Peri pronoiās* (D18) d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise; Ch. Genequand, «Quelques aspects de l'idée de nature, d'Aristote à al-Ghazālī», *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, 116 (1984): 105-29.

¹⁰ Pour Galien, le principe que «tout s'engendre de quelque chose qui est et rien ne s'engendre de ce qui absolument n'est pas» est un exemple des *axiōmata* ou *archai logikai* des philosophes anciens (*De med. meth.*, I. 36.19-37.1 Kühn); le démiurge a eu besoin de matière et d'instruments pour faire les parties du corps (cf. e. g. *De usu partium* VI.13. 343 Helmreich). Selon ce même principe, Galien réfute la doctrine de la création de Moïse: «he [Moïse] is censured for having omitted the *causa materialis* and, we may add, for having thus virtually postulated the *creatio ex nihilo*, to which later Christians,

aussi pour Alexandre — je veux dire: l'Alexandre Grec. Or, l'Alexandre de D16 soutient la génération à partir du néant.

Il faut donc avant tout exclure qu'Alexandre d'Aphrodise soit l'auteur véritable de D16.

En deuxième lieu, la présence du nom de Galien chez Miskawayh qui parle de D16, et son absence en D16, éveille aussi nos soupçons. Il semble qu'à un certain moment (l'instant précis jusqu'à présent nous échappe), la littérature islamique ait voulu engager Alexandre dans une polémique contre Galien au sujet de la génération à partir du néant. Plus généralement, il paraît qu'au fil du temps le nom de Galien a servi de manière systématique à identifier l'adversaire de l'Alexandre Arabe.

En effet, les traités où l'on trouve ou l'on a cru trouver l'Alexandre Arabe en controverse avec Galien sont assez nombreux¹¹, aussi bien que les notices biographiques et doxographiques qui nous conserveraient la trace d'une querelle entre les deux personnages. Les détails sont parfois étonnants. Alexandre, dit-on, aurait fréquenté assidûment Galien à Rome, lorsqu'il avait déjà été chargé d'enseigner la philosophie péripatéticienne à Athènes (ce qui est évidemment impossible pour des raisons chronologiques aussi bien que logistiques)¹². Galien, comme il était expert en médecine, aurait cru l'être aussi dans les autres sciences philosophiques, dans lesquelles il était faible¹³; il aurait écrit des traités contre Aristote;

Muhammadans, and Jews explicitly adhered». (R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, p. 26). Il est donc évident que Galien ne suppose pas que l'agent créateur dont il parle, e. g. dans son *De propriis placitis*, ch.2 [cf. la version arabo-latine du passage, éditée en tant que *specimen* par V. Nutton, «Galen's philosophical testament: 'On my own opinions'», in *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung. Paul Moraux gewidmet*, éd. J. Wiesner, 2 vol. (Berlin-New York, 1987), t. I, pp. 27-51, notamment p. 38], puisse créer *ex nihilo*, et le mot grec rendu par *creator* doit bien avoir été *demiourgos*. En effet, le latin et le grec ne possèdent pas un mot qui caractérise la *creatio ex nihilo* comme distincte de la *creatio* qui est la génération naturelle à partir des éléments, tandis que l'arabe a *ibdā'* ('innovation' *ex nihilo*, différente de la génération dans le temps à partir des éléments) qui recouvre cet usage à partir d'al-Kindī, cf. A. Altman — S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, pp. 66 ss. Sur la *creatio ex nihilo* dans la «Théologie d'Aristote», cf. C. D'Ancona, «Per un profilo filosofico dell'autore della "Teologia di Aristotele"», *Medioevo*, 17 (1991): 83-134.

¹¹ Cf. R. Goulet — M. Aouad, notice «Alexandros d'Aphrodisias», dans R. Goulet (dir.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* (Paris, 1989), t. 1, pp. 125-39, notamment les titres nos 23, 25, 27, 35, 40, 45, 58, pp. 135-9.

¹² La tradition confond probablement Alexandre d'Aphrodise et Alexandre de Damas, plus âgé de quelques décennies. Pour une revue critique des sources arabes sur la controverse, cf. P. Thillet, «Introduction» à Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Traité du destin* (Paris, 1984), pp. XXXII ss.; V. Nutton, «Galen in the Eyes of his Contemporaries», *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 58 (1984): 315-24.

¹³ Sur une source de ce lieu commun chez les Arabes, cf. F.W. Zimmermann ap. V. Nutton, «Galen in the Eyes of his Contemporaries», p. 321.

il aurait trouvé qu'une certaine argumentation d'Aristote était «extrêmement obscure et éloignée de ce qui est correct au point de n'être pas du tout imaginable», et encore «extrêmement laide et répugnante»¹⁴. Alexandre, lui, aurait défendu Aristote; il aurait appelé Galien «tête de mule»¹⁵, et il aurait écrit contre Galien de nombreux traités et réfutations.

Or, on chercherait en vain la trace d'une telle polémique dans le corpus grec. D'ailleurs, le manque de retenue, l'âpreté de ton, la polémique *ad hominem* envers les contemporains sont très éloignés d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise: un commentateur aristotélicien très rigoureux au style très technique, sec et impersonnel. Galien, de son côté, est bien loin de s'opposer à Aristote aussi radicalement que la tradition concernant la polémique le voudrait, même s'il se permet un jugement personnel différent d'Aristote sur certains points¹⁶.

Dans le futur, donc, il faudra procéder à une nouvelle évaluation critique très attentive pour ce qui concerne l'authenticité de cette polémique dans son ensemble.

Une hypothèse extrême, mais possible, par exemple, serait que toute la controverse d'Alexandre contre Galien n'a jamais existé, ni dans leur vies, ni dans leurs œuvres: elle naîtrait plutôt de la réitération d'un cadre typique, d'un *topos* selon lequel Galien serait l'adversaire *standard* de l'Alexandre Arabe, et Alexandre serait, quant à lui, le personnage *standard* qui défend Aristote et qui explique les problèmes controversés ou obscurs de la doctrine d'Aristote. Aristote, lui, ne représenterait pas seulement la vérité philosophique, mais, à la différence de la tradition

¹⁴ D28 de l'Alexandre Arabe ayant pour titre *Réfutation de la critique de Galien contre la thèse d'Aristote que tout mobile ne peut se mouvoir que par un moteur*, publié dans N. Rescher et M.E. Marmura (éd. et trad.), *The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen's Treatise on the Theory of Motion* (Islamabad, 1965), pp. 79 (ar.); 18 (trad. angl.).

¹⁵ Sur les différentes interprétations qui ont voulu adoucir l'extravagance de l'épithète, cf. P. Thillet, «Introduction» à Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Traité du destin*, pp. XXXIII-V (notamment p. XXXIII n. 2) et p. XLV n. 1.

¹⁶ En tant qu'anatomiste, Galien refuse de donner aveuglément son assentiment à des opinions désormais dépassées après des siècles de dissection. Notamment, il prend ses distances par rapport à Aristote sur la *vexata quaestio* du site de l'*hēgēmōnikon*: Galien, grâce à ses observations sur l'anatomie du système nerveux, le place dans le cerveau, contre le cardiocentrisme aristotélicien. Pourtant, il a pour Aristote une très haute considération. Spécialement, il admire dans Aristote, sa logique et sa doctrine de la démonstration (l'*apodeiktikē methodos*, qui a pour lui la plus grande importance dans la formation du médecin): il affirme, à ce sujet, que des «choses excellentes ont été dites par les philosophes anciens de l'école de Théophraste et d'Aristote, dans les livres des *Seconds Analytiques*» (*De plac. Hipp. et Plat.*, II. 170.7-9 Müller). Galien voua de nombreux commentaires et monographies à l'étude de la logique aristotélicienne. P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, t. II (Berlin - New York, 1984), pp. 687-808, consacre une large section à l'importance de Galien pour l'histoire de l'aristotélisme.

grecque, il représenterait la vérité théologique et même la vérité tout court. Nous serions donc en présence d'une sorte de drame idéologique où s'affrontent les doctrines (aristotélisme contre galénisme) et finalement la philosophie-théologie (créationisme, indûment attribué à Alexandre comme exégète d'une «Théologie» d'Aristote) obtient le primat sur la philosophie-médecine (doctrine physique de la génération des éléments, typiquement attribuée à Galien, le médecin-philosophe par excellence)¹⁷.

Ceci n'est qu'une hypothèse de recherche. De toute façon, il est évident que D16 n'est pas la traduction arabe d'un traité authentique d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise, car ce dernier était un aristotélisant orthodoxe qui ne croyait pas du tout à la *creatio ex nihilo*¹⁸.

D'après le supplément de J. van Ess à la liste de Diétrich¹⁹, D16 serait conservé dans deux manuscrits: l'Escorial 798, que nous avons déjà mentionné, et le Carullah 1279 de la Bibliothèque Süleymaniye d'Istanbul. D16 s'y trouverait à l'intérieur d'un recueil de traités attribués à Alexandre. Ce recueil a le titre étrange: «Traité extraits par Alexandre du livre d'Aristote nommé 'Théologie'», et ceux qui s'intéressent à l'Alexandre Arabe le désignent par le sigle D27, car il occupe la 27^e position dans la liste de Diétrich. Il y aurait donc un double de D16 à l'intérieur de D27, plus exactement en 7^e position; on l'appellera donc D27g, suivant une suggestion de F. Zimmermann²⁰.

¹⁷ La référence plus évidente se fait ici au traité de Galien *Hoti ho aristos iatros kai philosophos*.

¹⁸ Une année après cette communication, qui, pour la première fois, établissait sans hésitation l'inauthenticité et de D16 et de D27g (traité sur lequel cf. ici *infra*), Ahmad Hasnawi pouvait annoncer la source authentique de D16: le livre IX du *De aeternitate mundi* de Philopon (cf. A. Hasnawi, «Alexandre d'Aphrodise vs Jean Philopon: Notes sur quelques traités d'Alexandre «perdus» en grec, conservés en arabe», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 4, (1994): 53-109, notamment pp. 76-92; sur la relation entre ce même traité philoponien et D 27g, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 101-106. L'hypothèse selon laquelle Philopon serait la source de certaines spéculations de l'Alexandre Arabe sur la création du monde et sa finitude avait été esquissée, à propos de D15 (version du «cercle d'al-Kindi» du *De providentia*), dans notre article S. Fazzo / H. Wiesner, «Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Kindi-Circle and in al-Kindi's Cosmology», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 3 (1993): 119-53, à la p. 134, n. 38 (cf. aussi p. 133 n. 35), où la précision selon laquelle l'usage du nom d'Aristote est très différent dans l'Alexandre Arabe et dans Philopon n'atténue pas la portée de la parentèle, mais souligne une distinction importante (vs Hasnawi, p. 88 n. 48). [Je remercie les éditeurs d'avoir permis l'introduction de cette mise à jour. Cette note mise à part, la rédaction de la communication présente reflète, bien entendu, l'état de la question sur l'Alexandre Arabe à la date du Colloque (mars-avril 1993)].

¹⁹ J. van Ess, «Über einige neue Fragmente des Alexander von Aphrodisias und des Proklos in arabischer Übersetzung», *Der Islam*, 42 (1966): 148-68.

²⁰ F.W. Zimmermann, «Proclus Arabus Rides Again», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 4 (1994): 9-51, aux pp. 15-16.

D'après ce que je sais, l'identité de D16 et D27g n'a jamais été mise en question. Évidemment, ils n'avaient pas été traduits!

Il faut que j'exprime, à ce propos, toute ma gratitude à Fritz W. Zimmermann et à Hillary Wiesner avec lesquels j'ai eu la chance de travailler sur l'Alexandre Arabe et qui ont traduit ces deux traités.

En premier lieu on a découvert que D16 et D27g sont différents.

En deuxième lieu, on peut dire que D27g, à la différence de D16, semble avoir été conçu en relation directe avec Aristote *Physique* I.8, dont il est, en quelque sorte, le commentaire. On se rappellera que la discussion authentique d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise sur la génération à partir du non-étant (*Quaestio* I.24 et *Alex. ap. Simpl. in Phys.* 238.6 ss.) se présente sous la forme d'une exégèse de ce même chapitre aristotélien. Nous avons donc là, dans la commune exégèse de *Phys.* I.8-9, un point de contact, indirect il est vrai, avec l'Alexandre Grec. Mais l'interprétation en est bien différente. En celle-ci, D27g se rapproche beaucoup plus de D16 que de la tradition grecque.

Voyons d'un peu plus près la nature de la relation de D27g avec Aristote et avec D16.

D27g présente Alexandre expliquant deux affirmations apparemment contradictoires d'Aristote: d'une part, il est impossible que quelque chose vienne du néant; et, d'autre part, toute génération vient du néant (*sic*)²¹.

Comme dans D16, donc, nous avons en D27g une opposition dialectique entre l'opinion créationiste et l'opinion opposée: sauf qu'en D27g, à la différence de D16, on cherche à concilier les deux doctrines, donnant même à l'opinion anti-crétioniste des arguments assez substantiels. On rappellera que le seul argument anticrétioniste dans D16 était qu'un homme est engendré toujours d'un homme, un cheval, d'un cheval. D27g, en revanche, cite les principaux éléments conceptuels qu'Aristote utilise en *Phys.* I.8 pour expliquer le procès naturel de la génération,

²¹ Voici le début de D 27g: «Le Sage a dit: Il <n'> est <pas> possible qu'une chose soit engendrée de rien. Et il se peut aussi qu'aucune chose ne soit engendrée de quelque chose, mais que toute génération ne soit engendrée que de rien. Alexandre a dit: Ce propos du Sage est très incompréhensible et obscur, tel que ses parties se contredisent les unes les autres comme on pourrait le penser. En effet, il n'est pas possible qu'une chose soit engendrée de rien. Comment peut-il alors dire qu'aucune génération ne peut être engendrée de quelque chose, mais est plutôt engendrée de rien? Comment peut-il dire aussi qu'il n'est pas possible qu'une chose soit engendrée de rien?» Évidemment, comme l'on a vu aussi pour D16 et D20, D27g traduit *to on* par *quelque chose* et *to mē* on par *néant*.

excepté la distinction «en soi»-«par accident» (on trouve cette dernière dans Aristote, et puis dans l'Alexandre Grec, mais non dans D27g). Au cours de l'exposition de la doctrine anti-créationiste, se trouvent notamment citées la distinction entre matière, forme et privation, et aussi la distinction entre «en acte» et «en puissance».

D27g soutient ensuite la doctrine créationiste, au moyen d'arguments assez typiques, comme l'on jugera d'après quelques parallèles avec d'autres textes en arabe, surtout avec D16, que je donnerai à la suite de chaque argument.

Voici, en substance, les arguments.

Premièrement, c'est la forme qui est sujette à génération et corruption. D16 dit à peu près la même chose, en l'expliquant au moyen d'une démonstration détaillée.

Deuxièmement, la forme ne se déplace pas d'un corps à l'autre, mais se termine en néant (D16 rend plus explicite l'intérêt de cet argument, en disant que si la forme, lorsque le corps se corrompt, passe au néant, alors elle provient aussi du néant lors de la génération).

Troisièmement, la forme ne préexiste au procès de génération, ni comme forme immatérielle séparée de la matière, ni même dans l'intellect du Créateur (ce point se trouve discuté en ouverture du livre du pseudo-Ammonius *Sur les opinions des philosophes*, un important pseudo-épigraphe néoplatonicien de l'antiquité tardive découvert par Stern)²².

Le quatrième argument est la distinction entre l'action de Dieu, qui crée du néant autant la forme que la matière, et l'action de la nature, qui peut créer du néant seulement la forme (on trouve une distinction semblable entre création divine et création naturelle dans D16, ainsi que dans al-Kindī²³, Miskawayh et Israeli, et déjà chez les auteurs grecs chrétiens, notamment chez Philopon²⁴. Le lexique des philosophes arabes

²² Altman-Stern, cit., pp. 70-1. Le traité du pseudo-Ammonius (où des doctrines néoplatoniciennes sont attribuées aux philosophes anciens tels que Thalès, Plutarque, Xénophane) est maintenant intégralement édité et traduit par U. Rudolph, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, vol. 49, pt. 1 (Stuttgart, 1989) (je dois à F. W. Zimmermann cette information bibliographique). J'emprunte à Altman-Stern, cit., pp. 66-73 les parallèles à propos du concept de *ibdā'* (*creatio ex nihilo*) entre Israeli, al-Kindī, Miskawayh, Ammonius et Philopon.

²³ Cf. *supra*, n. 10.

²⁴ Comme le dit Philopon dans son commentaire sur la *Physique* (CAG X.1145), «Dieu diffère en ceci de la nature (...) dans la mesure où la nature crée les choses qui s'engendrent à partir des êtres (*ex ontōn*), Dieu, à partir des non-êtres (*ek mē ontōn*)».

distingue les deux «créations»²⁵. C'est ainsi que le rédacteur de D27g conçoit la génération à partir du néant comme l'œuvre de Dieu. La génération à partir de quelque chose serait en revanche l'œuvre de la nature (l'infériorité de la nature par rapport à Dieu est ainsi implicitement soulignée: la science de la nature sera donc à un niveau plus bas que la philosophie conçue comme théologie).

On peut remarquer aussi qu'il arrive à l'Alexandre de D27g de donner, soit pour la privation, soit pour la matière, une définition incompatible avec celle que l'on trouve chez l'Alexandre Grec et chez Aristote.

En effet D27g dit que la privation est quelque chose d'existant. Pour Alexandre d'Aphrodise (un auteur très constant et cohérent dans ses définitions), la privation est un non-être en soi-même, et un être seulement par accident.

D27g dit aussi que la matière n'existe pas en soi-même, tandis que, pour Alexandre d'Aphrodise, la matière est un être en soi, et le non-être, entendu comme privation, lui appartient seulement par accident.

Nous avons là encore d'autres arguments pour affirmer avec confiance que D27g non plus n'est pas l'œuvre d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise.

En outre, nous rappellerons que D27g est aussi différent de D16. Par conséquent, D27g devra être pris comme un élément à part dans une nouvelle, prochaine liste des traités de l'Alexandre Arabe.

En conclusion: j'avais dit qu'il serait trop simple que le *corpus* de l'Alexandre Arabe soit l'œuvre d'une seule personne historique, d'un seul auteur. En effet, on sait déjà que dans l'Alexandre Arabe il y a différents degrés de fidélité à l'Alexandre Grec: à côté des vraies, littérales traductions de traités authentiques d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise, il y a des manipulations de traités d'Alexandre et aussi des textes d'auteurs divers, que souvent nous ne sommes pas à même d'identifier. Par exemple, nous ne savons pas qui est l'auteur de D16 et D27g. Par contre, pour de nombreuses œuvres, la source a été identifiée: les *Éléments de Théologie* de Proclus²⁶. Tout récemment, par exemple, F.W. Zimmermann a découvert que D29 aussi, un autre traité attribué à Alexandre par la tradition manuscrite en arabe, est la traduction d'une proposition de ces mêmes *Éléments* de Proclus, avec l'addition d'une préface où Alexandre est fait protagoniste, et annonce qu'il va expliquer une affirmation tirée

²⁵ Voir *supra*, n. 10.

²⁶ C'est le cas de D8 (identifié par Dietrich, «Die arabische Version»), D23 et de parties de D27, une pièce miscellanée qui contient au moins vingt *Propositions* des *Éléments de Théologie* (cf. Endress, *Proclus Arabus*).

du livre dit «Théologie» d'Aristote...²⁷ Encore une trace irréfutable, ici, de la tendance générale qui fait d'Alexandre le paladin d'un aristotélisme réinterprété et transformé dans le sens de la plus tardive théologie philosophique néoplatonicienne.

Cela étant dit, l'hypothèse d'interprétation que je propose peut être résumée de la manière suivante: le dénominateur commun des textes de l'Alexandre Arabe n'est pas tant la référence à l'Alexandre grec, que la fonction culturelle de ce *corpus* dans son ensemble.

Celle-ci s'exprime dans un contexte où Aristote, le Sage par excellence, représente le maximum du savoir, la vérité philosophique et théologique, donc la vérité tout court. Par conséquent Alexandre, qui déjà chez les Grecs est l'exégète par excellence, devient comme figure culturelle celui qui éclaircit tous les problèmes et les difficultés d'interprétation de cette vérité qui, à tort ou à raison, porte le nom d'Aristote. Il essaiera aussi de la concilier avec la théologie musulmane et de la défendre face à ses opposants. L'Alexandre Arabe a dans ce contexte pour adversaire le Galien Arabe²⁸. D'où la tradition, uniquement arabe et non transmise en grec, d'une farouche polémique entre Alexandre et Galien.

Mais cet argument est pour l'instant seulement une hypothèse de recherche, toute à approfondir²⁹.

²⁷ «Alexander says: Aristotle says in his book called <Theologia, i.e. theory> of divinity, that...» (le texte continue avec la Proposition 98 de Proclus). Traduction et parallèle avec l'original grec se trouvent chez F. W. Zimmermann, «Proclus Arabus Rides Again», pp. 10-13.

²⁸ Pourquoi Galien? A ce sujet, des indications importantes se trouvent chez F.W. Zimmermann, «Al-Farabi und die philosophische Kritik an Galen von Alexander zu Averroes», in A. Dietrich (ed.), *Akten des VII. Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, Göttingen, 15. bis 22. August 1974, Sonderdruck aus *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge* Nr. 98 (1976), pp. 401-414; Ch. Genequand, «Quelques aspects de l'idée de nature», pp. 121 ss., où se trouvent aussi des doutes importants sur l'authenticité des notices des biographes. A la p. 113, l'approfondissement du problème est posé comme *desideratum*: «Les relations entre Galien et Alexandre d'Aphrodise présentent un problème et n'ont pas encore fait l'objet d'une étude systématique». Cela est vrai, et c'est vrai aussi que personne ne semble avoir douté de l'authenticité du *corpus* de traités attribué à Alexandre contre Galien dans son ensemble. C'est là la question que je me propose d'examiner dans le futur (cf. la note suivante).

²⁹ Ayant passé au crible les témoignages et les contributions anciennes et modernes à l'histoire d'une controverse entre Alexandre et Galien, je développe l'hypothèse esquissée ici dans un article au titre «Alessandro contro Galeno?» (à paraître).



