

REASON AND RATIONALITY IN ARABIC-ISLAMIC COSMOLOGY. THE CASE OF THE *ON THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE CELESTIAL SPHERES* (*FĪ L-TADBĪRĀTI AL-FALAKIYYA*)

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Abstract: Alexander of Aphrodisias (2nd–3rd century CE), a key figure in Hellenic philosophy, influenced Arabic-speaking thinkers through two distinct interpretations: a Neoplatonized Aristotelianism and a faithful Peripatetic approach. In the treatise entitled *Fī l-tadbīrāt al-falakiyya* (*On the Governments of the Celestial Spheres*), he explores themes like good arrangement (*al-sharḥ wa-l-niẓām*), reason (*naṭīq*), and the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*). These concepts frame the emanative process where the First Cause creates and governs the cosmos. Nature, embodying divine power, compensates for human imperfections with the rational soul while maintaining cosmic harmony. This study highlights key passages, illustrating Alexander Arabus' contribution to Arabic Aristotelianism.

Keywords: Divine power (*al-quwwa al-ilāhiyya*); Kindī-circle; Alexander; Arabic Aristotelianism; Emanationism; Cosmological Governance.

In the history of cosmology, during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the clear distinction between the celestial upper world and the sublunar lower one was a key controversial point.¹ The first region considered as perfect, contains the stars moving in circular motion, is divine and imperishable, while the sublunar region is inhabited by the species subject to generation, becoming and dissolution and moving with rectilinear motion, which possesses a beginning and an end.² This distinction, rooted in Aristotle's *De caelo* and discussed for centuries by commentators belonging to all the philosophical schools, was inherited also by the Arabic-speaking philosophers in the Muslim context through the Graeco-Syriac-Arabic translation movement of the 'Abbāsīd era.³

Additionally, Plato's *Timaeus* provides some interesting elements that allowed later philosophers and commentators to combine Hellenic philosophy

1 See BALTES 1976; FALCON 2002; FALCON 2016; CODA 2022.

2 See ELDERS 1965; ARISTOTELES 1965, vii–cxc.

3 D'ANCONA 2005, I, 5–47.

with Abrahamic narrative, peculiarly Islam. The latter is based on the two great pillars of monotheism and creationism. Whilst Aristotle's cosmos is eternal but presents the First unmoved mover moving the first sphere "ὥς ἐρώμενον" ("as being loved"),⁴ Plato's cosmos is generated ("γενητός")⁵ by the Demiurge, the superior God, who shapes a pre-existing matter ("χώρα")⁶ which moves in absolute disorder ("πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως")⁷.

These basic elements of cosmology reached the Arabic-speaking scholars of the 'Abbāsid and Būyid periods and decisively contribute to the rise of the scientific discourse and of philosophical speculation in the Islamic lands (i.e., *falsafa*). As demonstrated by the ground-breaking studies of Gerhard Endress, Cristina D'Ancona, and Peter Adamson,⁸ a pivotal role was played by translators, *literati*, scientists, and philosophers who take part of the circle headed by the first 'Arab philosopher' Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (870 CE ca./2nd century). This was a group of scholars consisting not only of Muslims, but also of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and even polytheists. As we know from Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*,⁹ within this circle, both Plato's *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *De caelo* were translated by the Byzantine-origin translator Yaḥya ibn al-Biṭrīq (Yūḥanna, son of the Patrikios).¹⁰ The Kindī-circle's translations and adaptations eminently contribute to the development of the Hellenic sciences and philosophy for the Medieval Islam and beyond.¹¹

Yet, how to set up a unitary cosmological discourse if the cosmos appears sharply divided into two parts? How is the First separate Cause, i.e., the Abrahamic God, related to the sublunar substances? That is, what kind of causality and metaphysics are we referring to? These are only a few of the questions the Kindī-circle's works try to answer in order to bring the discourse of the Ancients firmly within the ranks of Islam and its main dogma, that is, the *tawḥīd* (the Oneness and Unity of God). Among the Kindī-circle's works halfway be-

4 ARISTOTELES 1924, Λ 7, 1072b 3–4.

5 PLATO 1960, 31 b1–3.

6 PLATO 1960, 52 d2.

7 PLATO 1960, 30 a4–5.

8 ENDRESS 1997; D'ANCONA 1991.

9 IBN AL-NADĪM 1871–1872, I, 250.28–251.2; English translation IBN AL-NADĪM 1970, 593, 603.

10 See D'ANCONA 2022.

11 See ZIMMERMANN 1986; ENDRESS 1997; D'ANCONA 1996.

tween cosmology and metaphysics is the adaptation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Providence*.

My contribution here will aim to show how the Kindī-circle's adaptation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Providence* fits markedly into the history of Aristotelianism so as to involve Arabic philosophy in the history of Western thought. I will attempt to do this by focusing on the notion of 'divine power', a red thread in this history. First, I will present how this notion was reinterpreted by Alexander of Aphrodisias. Then, I will focus on the so-called 'Kindī-circle Alexander' and the *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya* (*On the Governments of the Spheres*) in order to demonstrate its peculiarities but also its commonalities with Neoplatonism.¹²

Alexander of Aphrodisias, the major exegete of Aristotle, wrote a personal treatise on the theme of providence which is lost in Greek and handed down to us into two Arabic versions. The first most ancient translation and adaptation was realized within the circle of al-Kindī (9th/3rd century), while the second Arabic translation was made by Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus (10th/4th century) for the Peripatetic school of Baghdad. Due to the philosophical approach to translations of this school and certain studies conducted so far,¹³ the second version is known to be closer to the original Greek text, while the Kindī-circle translation has been long studied as appendix of Abū Bišr's translation to such the extent that in the canonical edition of Alexander's *On Providence* made by Hans-Jochen Ruland in 1976, the version of Abū Bišr helps to reconstruct and fill the gaps within the Kindī-circle's version.¹⁴ With my doctoral dissertation I have tried to demonstrate the need to read the Kindī-circle's text independently from Abū Bišr's translation for the richness of the milieu where it is originated and for the relevance of the teachings in the work itself. Furthermore, the discourse on providence that emerges from pseudo-Alexander's *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya* (*On the Governments of the Spheres*) displays elements to fill the cosmological gap, and the notion of "divine power" is among them. With my contribution I will

12 My edition of the Arabic text, with English translation and an analytical introduction, is forthcoming with Brill.

13 See WALZER 1953; GUTAS 1998; D'ANCONA 2011; GUTAS 2011, GUTAS 2017. Concerning particularly the *Fī l-ʾināya*, see ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1998; FAZZO 2000; THILLET 1960.

14 See FAZZO, WIESNER 1993; ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1998; ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 2003.

narrow the focus down to this primary notion, without leaving out the relevant role played by the Kindī-circle Alexander’s cosmology in the formative stage of *falsafa* and Arabic Aristotelianism, which this circle contributes decisively to. Indeed, the notion of ‘θεῖα δύναμις’ or *al-quwwa al-ilāhiyya* (i.e., ‘divine power’) is the cornerstone of the cosmological and metaphysical architecture of the Arabic Aristotelianism as it was developed within the *Plotiniana Arabica* and within the Kindī-circle Alexander’s cosmology as well. But first of all, what does it mean “providence” in the Kindī-circle adaptation, the *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*? The author writes:

And we say that government [*tadbīr*, i.e., providence] is of two degrees: [i.] the first of these two is the government of the celestial bodies from the outermost sphere up to the Moon’s sphere; [ii.] the second one is the government of the world which is under the Moon’s sphere. As for the government of the first bodies, it comes from the First Agent [*al-fā’il al-awwal*]; whereas as for the government of the earthly world, it comes from the first bodies, because of what they receive from the First Power.¹⁵

Leaving aside the philosophical lexicon shared by the Kindian circle, the primary role of this ‘First Power’ immediately comes to light. Integrated by Alexander himself in his cosmology, this notion can already be found in the ‘cosmo-theology’ of the Peripatetic *De mundo* and further developed within some of Alexander’s school writings known as *Quaestiones* (Ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις, i.e., *Problems and Solutions*). In the *De mundo* chapter 5, we find:

So also, the divine being, by a simple movement of the first region, gives its power to the next things and from these again to those further away, until it permeates the whole. For one thing, being moved by another, itself again also moves something else in regular order, while all things act in a way appropriate to their own constitutions; but there is not the same way for all, but a different and diverse one, in some cases even the opposite, although there is just one initial striking of the key-note, as it were, that leads to movement.¹⁶

15 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, ff. 79v 8–11:

ونقول إنّ التدبير ضربان: [١] أحدهما تدبير الأجرام السماوية من فلك الأقصى الى فلك القمر؛ [٢] والآخر تدبير العالم الذي تحت فلك القمر. فأما تدبير الأجرام الأول فيكون من قبل الفاعل الأول، وأما تدبير العالم الأرضي فيكون من قبل الأجرام الأول لما صار فيها من القوة الأولى.

16 ARISTOTELES, *De mundo*, 398b 19–27: “Οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἡ θεία φύσις ἀπὸ τινος ἀπλῆς κινήσεως τοῦ πρώτου τὴν δύναμιν [20] εἰς τὰ συνεχῇ δίδωσι καὶ ἀπ’ ἐκείνων πάλιν εἰς τὰ πορρωτέρω,

This is “a single power pervading all things” (“μία [ἡ] διὰ πάντων διήκουσα δύναμις”)¹⁷ that helps Alexander to figure out a possible answer to the distinction between an action performed by essence, primarily (‘προηγούμενως’) by the First Cause and an action performed ‘κατὰ συμβεβηκός’ (*per accidens*). Divine providence seems to reach the lower bodies of the cosmos and acts upon them only *per accidens*, since what is worthy of receiving the direct action of the First Cause are the heavenly bodies, superior to everything in dignity.

Indeed, Alexander’s main argument in the *On Providence* is that providence belongs to the upper world, acts on the earthly world through the divine power by contact starting from the first sphere of fire and proceeding upon the other ‘simple bodies’.¹⁸ On one hand, Alexander emphasizes that the movement of the stars on the oblique trajectory of the Ecliptic along with the motions of the Sun and the Moon are *for the sake of* the preservation of the process of becoming in the sublunary world.¹⁹ On the other hand, it is divine power that makes the human being a sublunary body endowed with reason. Alexander’s *On Providence* follows this doctrinal pathway explained in his *Quaestiones* 1.25, 2.3 and 2.19.²⁰

Indeed, divine power, that we also call ‘nature’, makes the things in which it is found exist and gives them a form according to a certain orderly connection, without acting according to a deliberation (*al-rawiyya*). Nature acts neither according to deliberation nor according to reasoning (*bi-l-fikr*) in regard to each of the things it does since nature is an irrational power. Rather, nature foreruns the existence of a being: thus, this being comes to be because of the animal (as being the physical begetter) and the heavenly body as being the begetter of its principle.²¹

μέχρις ἂν διὰ τοῦ παντός διεξέλθῃ· κινηθὲν γὰρ ἕτερον ὑφ’ ἑτέρου καὶ αὐτὸ πάλιν ἐκίνησεν ἄλλο σὺν κόσμῳ, δρῶντων μὲν πάντων οἰκείως ταῖς σφετέραις κατασκευαῖς, οὐ τῆς αὐτῆς δὲ ὁδοῦ πᾶσιν οὔσης, ἀλλὰ διαφόρου καὶ ἑτεροίας [25], ἔστι δὲ οἷς καὶ ἐναντίας, καίτοι τῆς πρώτης οἷον ἐνδόσεως εἰς κίνησιν μιᾶς γενομένης” (translation THOM 2014, 45–47, slightly modified). See ARISTOTELES, *De mundo*, 399a 30–35. Cf. GREGORIĆ, KARAMANOLIS 2021, 30–138.

17 ARISTOTELES, *De mundo*, 396b 28–29.

18 ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1998, 181–259.

19 ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1892, Q. 1.25, 40.34–41.4; Q. 2.19; ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1992 and 1994.

20 ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1998, 183–193, 195–219 and 221–225.

21 ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1976, 77.10–79.5; ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 1998, 151.

Differently from the Greek Alexander, the Kindī-circle Alexander develops the notion of divine power in line with Neoplatonic emanationism and a twofold model of Creation. This Creation manifests itself both as instantly coming-into-being of things and as God's bringing-into-being of things through intermediaries.

Emanationism and creationism are two constitutive elements of pseudo-Alexander's text which are in common with other well-known pseudepigrapha elaborated within the circle, that is, the *Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr* (i.e., *Discourse on the Pure Good*, known in the Latin West as *Liber de causis*) the *Theology of Aristotle*, and sections of John Philoponus' treatises. All these pseudepigrapha share the Kindī-circle's purpose to conjugate Hellenic philosophy with the common narrative of the Abrahamic religions, particularly Islam, by attributing to Aristotle and his disciple Alexander works originally elaborated by Neoplatonists (such as Plotinus, Proclus, Philoponus). Moreover, within pseudo-Alexander's *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*, passages from all these mentioned pseudepigrapha converge to such a degree that it is quite difficult to establish the main source among them.

Here, divine power is a virtue or force that utterly pervades the cosmos from the lowest species up to the perfect celestial bodies and that is poured out from the First Cause through the heavenly bodies themselves.²² This force is a key aspect of that universal, outspread Reason which characterises both Hellenic Neoplatonism and Arabic Aristotelianism, partially coinciding with it. Indeed, the Kindī-circle Alexander's plays a crucial role for the commonality of these two perspectives, since within the *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*, this universal rationality leads to the overall ordering of the cosmos. The adaptor writes:

We say that the body endowed with the soul is nobler than the body that is soulless, the body of the animal is nobler than the ensouled body, and the body endowed with the intellect is nobler than the body of the animal. And this is the reason why it is said that the human being is the noblest entity within the earthly world; and this is for the celestial power, that we call Nature, performs noble activities, and produces different movements.²³

22 PINES 1986, 252–255; ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS 2011 and 2017; ENDRESS 2002, 19–74; ENDRESS 2012.

23 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real

The overall arrangement of the cosmos also includes the ordering of the sublunary species from the vegetative soul to the rational one, according to the well-known doctrine of Aristotle's *De anima*:

Concerning the various species of the bodies whose existence is subject to generation and dissolution, amongst them there are those that receive only the vegetative soul and cannot be animals. i.e., plants; those that can receive the vegetative soul and the sensible one [i.e., the animal]; and those things that can receive the vegetative, the sensible and the rational soul, like the complete and perfect bodies, that are the pure, bright, and harmonious bodies and for this reason they happen to possess the rational soul. If this is so, then we say that nature, which is the celestial force, governs the things subject to generation and corruption until they reach their perfection and their end, distinguishing between things, differentiating them from one another, and also preserving their forms through reproduction and generation from one another.²⁴

Indeed, we know that Aristotle's *De anima* was translated within the circle. Nature coincides with the divine power. Moreover, thinking of the heavenly bodies as considered by Alexander of Aphrodisias means thinking of bodies that do not operate only in astronomical and Ptolemaic terms by carrying out their motions along their own circle, along the Ecliptic and the Earth, but it means thinking of bodies that possess a role as agents of the divine 'πρόνοια' over the entire cosmos by forwarding life and eternity over the sublunary bodies as well.

The gnoseological part of emanationism, concerning the self-reflection of the intelligence that thinks itself and creates the following sphere, is absent. Nonetheless, pseudo-Alexander discourse goes into even more detail regarding the role of heavenly bodies as agents of God's governance (*tadbīr*): the adaptor makes them, the 'first bodies' (first to be created), as the intermediaries between God's absolute Creation and the sublunary world which is, instead, subject to

Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, ff. 80v 25–81r 2:

ونقول إن الجرم المتنفس أكرم من الجرم الذي ليس بمتنفس؛ والجرم الحيواني أكرم من الجرم المتنفس؛ والجرم العقلي أكرم من الجرم الحيواني. فلذلك قيل إن الإنسان أكرم من جميع الأشياء التي في العالم الأرضي، وذلك أن القوة السماوية التي نسميها طبيعة تفعل أفاعيل شريفة، وتحرك حركات مختلفة.

24 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrātī al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, ff. 81v 6–12:

وأما سائر الأجسام الكائنة تحت الكون والفساد، فمنها ما يقبل النفس النامية فقط ولا يقوى على أن يكون حيواناً، شبه النبات؛ ومنها ما يقوى على قبول النفس النامية والحيوانية؛ ومنها ما يقبل النفس النامية والحيوانية والناطقة، شبه الأجرام النائمة الكاملة، وهي الأجرام النقية الصافية المعتدلة، فلذلك صارت فيها النفس الناطقة. فإن كان هذا هكذا، قلنا إن الطبيعة، وهي القوة السماوية، إنما تدبر الأشياء الواقعة تحت الكون والفساد إلى أن تبلغ تمامها وغايتها وتفصل فيما بين الأشياء وتميز بعضها من بعض وتحفظ صورها أيضاً بالنسل والتكوين بعضها من بعض.

dissolution. Incidentally, monotheism and creationism, the two pillars of the Abrahamic religions, becomes the cornerstones of the so-called 'Kindī-circle's metaphysics file' as well. Indeed, concerning emanationism and the notion of 'divine power', the adaptor of *Fī l-tadbīrātī* asserts:

The celestial bodies spread their power upon all the earthly changing bodies in conformity with the receptive attitude of each and every one of them. That is to say, every single body that has the potency to be ensouled, indeed becomes ensouled because of that power; and every single body that has the potency to be an animal, indeed becomes an animal because of that power; and every single body that has the potency to be endowed with the intellect, indeed becomes a body endowed with the intellect because of the reception of the power of those 'celestial' bodies. Indeed, these bodies subject to change differ from each other greatly, and this is for depending on their reception of that power, to that extent that power flows upon them. And the celestial bodies differ from each other as well.²⁵

Differences among the sublunary bodies come to be because of their receptivity of the divine power which flows over all of them from the celestial bodies. These latter also come to be differentiated because of each different receptivity of the divine power. Just as in the Greek Alexander receptivity of the heavenly bodies is due to their proximity ('γειτνίσις') to the First Cause and receptivity of the sublunary bodies is due to their proximity to the heavenly bodies, so in the Kindī-circle Alexander also the heavenly bodies differentiate each other in accordance with their proximity to the First Cause. Therefore, the doctrine of proximity developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Quaestiones* and in his *De mixtione* is re-designed and re-semantised by the Kindī-circle's adaptor in order to (i.) allow broad and tangible distinctions between all the bodies of the cosmos, (ii.) bridge the cosmological gap between the celestial region and the sublunary world, and (iii.) grant an overall stability and permanence of the cosmos.

25 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrātī al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, ff. 80v 17–23:

فإن كان هذا هكذا، قلنا إن الأجرام السماوية تفيض قواها على جميع الأجرام الأرضية المستحيلة على نحو تهبط قبول كل واحد منها؛ أعني أن كل جرم، يقوى «على» أن يكون متنفساً، فإنما يكون متنفساً من تلك القوة. وكل جرم، يقوى على أن يكون حيواناً، فإنما يكون حيواناً من تلك القوة. وكل جرم، يقوى على أن يكون ذا عقل، فإنما يكون ذا عقل من قبل قوة ذلك الجرم. فإن هذه الأجرام المستحيلة تختلف اختلافاً كثيراً، فعلى حسب قبولها لتلك القوة، كذلك تفيض تلك القوة فيها. والأجرام السماوية مختلفة أيضاً.

It should also be borne in mind that in Plotinus' metaphysics, the proceeding of the 'divine power', the *fluxus* ('ὁρή'), comes to be from the Intelligence's contemplation of the power of the One. The intermediaries are, in fact, the 'Noûs' and the "ψυχή." The same emanationist structure is preserved in the Arabic Plotinus (the *Theology of Aristotle*). By contrast, the Kindī-circle Alexander considers the stars to be the real agents of this emanative process that reaches the world of becoming. They are intermediaries not only of Creation, but also of the order of becoming. Moreover, whilst, in the Greek Alexander, divine power is almost a 'second physis' which is added to the own essence of every substance so relating everything to the First Cause, in the Kindī-circle Alexander, divine power becomes a "primary nature" instead. Indeed, it coincides with the single form given by Nature which is understood as the overall arrangement defining the motions of the stars and generation, becoming and dissolution of the sublunary substances.

The peak of this 'Neoplatonic rationalism' is reached in a peculiar analogy between the father taking care of his son and Nature (divine power) taking care of the cosmos by arranging everything in its place so that it can potentially get the most out of what it receives:

[Likewise,] Nature also takes care of us by predisposing us to several nourishments beneficial for our lives and suitable for us. Moreover, Nature lets us use the intellect and reason that are in us with what we lack for perfection, e.g., things like garment and clothing that protects us from anything harmful that can be brought to our bodies from outside. For it would not be possible for us to be endowed with the rational soul, which differentiates us from all the other bodies and allows us to excel over all of them, and to possess sturdy and claws, massive bodies, similar to the bodies of animals without or to have hard skin or rough hair on us, like the fur of the beasts. But since we lack them, we have produced clothes for our bodies by means of our intellect, by which we protect from heat and cold and from that which harms us.²⁶

26 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrātī al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, ff. 82r 20–82v 1:

وكذلك فعلت بنا أيضاً بأنّها هيأت لنا أغذية مختلفة نافعة لحياتنا ملائمة لها. ثم تركتنا نحتال بما فينا من العقل والنطق بما نقص بنا من التمام، وذلك شبه الثياب واللباس المانع عنا الآفات الواقعة من خارج على أبداننا. لأنّه لم يكن ليتمكن أن نكون ذوي نفس ناطقة، نخالف بها سائر الأجسام ونعلو بها عليها وأن تكون لنا أبدان جاسية كثيفة، شبه أبدان الحيوان الحافية، أو يكون علينا جلود جاسية أو شعر عليها غليظ كشعر السباع. فلمّا فقدنا ذلك، فعلنا بعقولنا لأبداننا لباساً يمنع عنها الحرّ والبرد والآفات الضارة لها.

Reason is what divine providence gives us in order to compensate for deficiencies due to the material bodies. Given the deficiencies, the universal rationality, of which everything is pervaded due to being derived from the First Cause, provides ways out to all substances. The rational soul (*al-naḥs al-nāṭiqā*) is what Nature gives us as way out for the weakness of the human body in relation to the body of the beasts. Human intellect, indeed, derives directly from the First Cause and is the utmost expression of that “divine power” which flows from the stars over the earthly bodies. The role of the heavenly bodies as mediators between the First separate Cause and the sublunary substances is required precisely because of the notion of divine power since it needs agents to be transmitted from one body to another. However, such an infinite force, like the divine power, could not be present within a finite body as the heavenly body is. To the rescue of the Kindī-circle’s adaptor and the createdness (and derivativeness) of the stars, John Philoponus intervenes. The anti-Aristotelian Christian Neoplatonist of the 6th century CE was widely translated in the Islamic lands so as to bring the fruitful thought of the Platonic school of Alexandria into *falsafa*.

Among Philoponus’ arguments inherited by the Kindī-circle Alexander is the anti-Aristotelian one defending the presence of an infinite power within a finite (created) body. Given this, stars, even though created by God, preserve the divine power, and let it flow over the simple body constituting the sublunary substances. This allows both motions and eternity of the heavenly bodies, but also the overall ordering and becoming of the earthly world to be. But let us see this interesting passage:

Indeed, there he [Aristotle] says that there is no such thing as an unending body (*jirm lā nihāya lahu wa-lā ghāya*), neither linear nor circular, and if there is no such thing as an infinite body, then for every finite body there is a finite power (*quwwa mutanāhiya*), since it is not possible for a finite body to possess an unlimited power (*quwwa la-nihāyata la-ha*). Therefore, if it is so and the heaven is a finite body, then it does not possess an infinite power, and and if it is finite, then one day it will stop. And once it has stopped, it will vanish (*fa-idhan waqafat, baṭalat*).²⁷

27 [ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS], *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya*, in San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, ms. Árabe 798, f. 81v 24–82r 1:

قال هنالك أنه لا يكون جرم لا نهاية له ولا غاية، لا جرم مستو ولا مستدير. فإن كان لا يكون جرم غير متناه، كان لكل جرم متناهي، قوة متناهية، لأنه لا يمكن أن يكون للجرم المتناهي قوة لا نهاية لها. فإن كان هذا هكذا وكانت السماء جرمًا متناهيًا، لم تكن قوتها غير متناهية، فإن كانت متناهية، فإنها ستقف يوما ما، فإذا وقفت، بطلت.

Here, clearly pseudo-Alexander refers the createdness and corruptibility of the cosmos to Aristotle. Independently from the single arguments adopted, the Philoponian argumentation has at least three Aristotelian principles: (i.) the world is finite in magnitude;²⁸ (ii.) the principle “*omnis corporis potentia est finita*”;²⁹ and (iii.) a finite power cannot cause infinite motion in time.³⁰ The development of these passages is clearly Philoponian as for defending the createdness of the cosmos.³¹ Therefore, the notion of divine power becomes the key to understand how the First Cause creates the entire cosmos and governs it without having a direct contact with the lower sublunary substances. As said, through the Kindī-circle Alexander and for Arabic Aristotelianism (e.g., Ibn Sīnā, the Latin Avicenna), the heavenly bodies play the main role and their agency fill the cosmological gap between the two radically different realms of the cosmos.

To sum up and conclude, it can be said that Arabic Aristotelianism, far from being alien to Western thought, pursues the path of Hellenic Neoplatonism, and fits well into the history of ideas as having the kernels of its Rationalism. Nonetheless, the essential contribution of the translation movement and the circle of al-Kindī to the dissemination of Hellenic philosophy in the Mediterranean basin and for the preservation and subsequent development of the scientific thought must be emphasised. Contributing to this, albeit in small way, was the Kindī-circle Alexander’s *Fī l-tadbīrāti al-falakiyya* which aptly integrate within the acme of the ‘Kindī-circle’s metaphysics’ the doctrine of divine governance over the entire cosmos.

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28 ARISTOTELES 1965, I.5–7.

29 ARISTOTELES 1950, VIII.10 266a 23–26. See STEEL 1987, 213–224.

30 ARISTOTELES 1950, VIII.10 266a 12–13.

31 PHILOPONUS 1909, 6.29. PHILOPONUS 1987, IV, fr. 80. PHILOPONUS, *De contingentia mundi*, in PINES 1972, 320–352 (also in PINES 1986, 294–326); Arabic text in TROUPEAU 1984, 77–88.

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