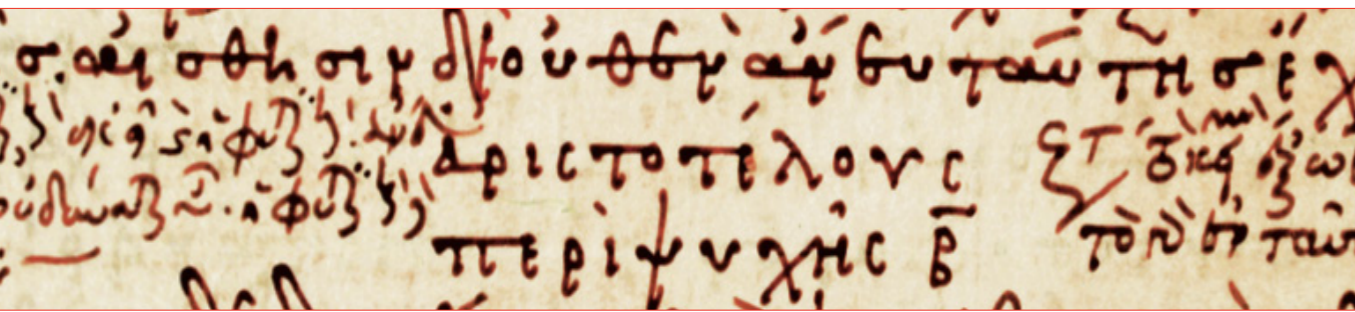
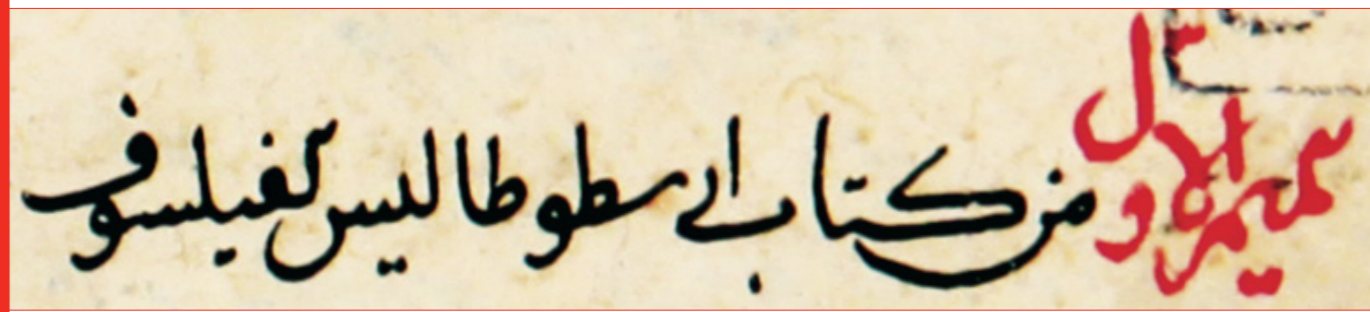


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Greek Sages on the Tawhīd

Ancient Philosophy in Accord with the Islamic Doctrine of the Oneness of God

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present and put into context a curious little treatise preserved in a Tehran manuscript with the intriguing title *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwahhidīn wa-l-ā lām al-mādiyīn*, *The Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing the Oneness of God and of the Authorities of the Past*. The treatise contains a collection of sayings of the ancient Greeks like Hermes, Pythagoras and Plato and of the Alexandrians related to the central doctrine of Islam, the Oneness of God (*tawhīd*). The material recalls the first Christian apologies addressing the pagans in an attempt to win them over to the new religion by demonstrating that already their authorities of the past had believed in only one God. The treatise is, however, strikingly different from other Arabic texts which link Greek philosophers to the *tawhīd* as I want to show by excerpts from Christian apologies and the philosophical tradition of al-Kindī.

By the time Islam arose, the ancient Greek philosophers had long passed away. Their legacy, however, was still very much alive. New intellectual approaches rooted in their doctrines had emerged and enjoyed widespread acceptance. The rise of Christianity had already sparked several differently motivated attempts to accord the cultural heritage of the Greeks with the new religion and resulted in various types of literary production in a number of languages, from Greek, Latin and Syriac to Arabic, Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopic. As early as in the second century Athenagoras pleaded for a fair treatment of the Christian religion in his *Plea* or *Embassy for the Christians* addressed to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus and devoted an entire chapter to the opinions of the philosophers on the one God to show similarities between them and the Christians in order to refute the charge of atheism against the latter.¹ Athenagoras' contemporary Clement of Alexandria used Greek philosophy for the opposite purpose, namely to prompt pagans to convert to Christianity in his *Protrepticus*, the *Exhortation of the Greeks* and he preserved even more Greek philosophical material in his *Stromateis*.² Hippolytus' *Refutation of all Heresies* presented different Greek philosophical schools and their doctrines in order to refute them.³ At about the same time Latin

¹ See chapter 6 of the *Plea*, in Athenagoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, ed. W.R. Schoedel, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1972, pp. 12-15. On Athenagoras and his *Plea*, see D. Rankin, *Athenagoras. Philosopher and Theologian*, Ashgate, Surrey 2009, in part, pp. 101-27.

² See E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2005, where he describes the *Exhortation* as "a handbook for Christians as missionaries, taking the gospel to those who do not believe" and adds "the chief recipients of the *Stromateis* are those who are on the way of becoming Christian teachers themselves" (pp. 14-15).

³ On his Greek material, see J. Mansfeld, *Heresiography in Context. Hippolytus' Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy*, Brill, Leiden - New York - Köln 1992.

writers grappled with the ancient philosophical heritage as the writings of Tertullian show.⁴ About a century later Eusebius of Caesarea devoted the eleventh book of his *Preparation for the Gospel* to demonstrating the agreement of Plato as the most eminent representative of Greek philosophy with the Hebrew scriptures.⁵ In the fifth century Cyril of Alexandria still felt the need to prove that Greek culture and philosophy was not only to be found among the pagans. He showed the accord between Christian doctrine and the ancient sages by quoting the monotheistic views of Hermes, Pythagoras, Plato and others in his *Contra Julianum*.⁶ Theodoret of Cyrus rendered the title of his *Cure of the Greek Maladies* more precise by adding the subtitle “Proof-recognition (*epignôsis*) of the Gospel from Greek philosophy”.⁷ The occurrence and reoccurrence of certain quotations attributed to the ancient sages in these and similar works suggest the existence of compilations of philosophical sayings ascribed to the Greeks of the past. One unique sample of such a Greek collection is the so-called *Tübingen Theosophie* which contains even oracles ascribed to pre-Christian authorities prophesying the new religion and its doctrines. However, there exist similar texts, or at least evidence for their former existence, in Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopic.⁸

With the awakening interest of Muslim scholars for the scientific achievements of the ancient Greeks the challenge of harmonising the latter’s metaphysical doctrines with monotheistic beliefs reached Islam. Al-Kindī, who is considered to be the first philosopher of the Arabs, made it his mission to prove the compatibility of Greek philosophy with the Islamic religion. In his *On First Philosophy* he particularly centred on establishing philosophically sound proofs for the divine unity, the fundamental doctrine of Islam, known as *tawhīd*, i.e. professing the oneness of God. Al-Kindī and the philosophers in his tradition were thus concerned with showing that the ancient philosophy they were studying in the form of Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian, Neoplatonic treatises had already provided for the belief in the oneness of God. A similar approach was taken by the Christian apologetic ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī whose interest lay in making Aristotelian philosophy an accepted mean for proving his theological tenets, divine unity and, particularly, trinity. Thus it was scientific interest which motivated al-Kindī, the Muslim philosophers upholding his tradition, and ‘Ammār to find convergences in thought between the philosophical works they were reading and the religious beliefs

⁴ See H.B. Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy exemplified by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria*, Van Gorcum and Comp., Assen 1973, pp. 40-58.

⁵ See *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae praeparationis libri XV*, ed. and tr. E.H. Gifford, Typographeo - H. Frowde, Oxonii - Novi Eboraci 1903, vol. III, p. XXII.

⁶ Cyrille d’Alexandrie, *Contre Julien*, ed. P. Burguière - P. Évieux, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1985, pp. 20 and 174-95.

⁷ See Y. Papadogiannakis, *Christianity and Hellenism in the Fifth-Century Greek East. Theodoret’s Apologetics against the Greeks in Context*, Center for Hellenic Studies - Harvard U.P., Cambridge Mass. - London 2012 (Hellenic Studies, 49), p. 23.

⁸ In general, see S. Brock, “A Syriac Collection of Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophers”, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 14 (1983), pp. 203-46, in part. p. 204. For the “theosophical” literature in Coptic in particular, see R. Van Den Broek, “Four Coptic Fragments of a Greek Theosophy”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 32.2 (1978), pp. 118-42, in part. 141-2, where he has described the purpose of these Coptic texts as follows: “originally composed with the intention of winning hesitating Greeks for the Christian religion by explaining the uprooting of the pagan cults as a historical necessity which had already been foretold by pre- and anti-Christian Greeks, they finally became a Christian argument in the Jewish-Christian controversy in so far as they showed that the Greeks had done what the Jews were still refusing to do: to believe the prophecies of their own prophets”. For a possible florilegium of Platonic passages used by Theodoret, see P. Canivet, *Histoire d’une entreprise apologetique au V^e siècle*, Bloud & Gay, Paris 1957, pp. 272-87, in part. p. 273: “Peut-être même ces recueils étaient-ils anonymes, composés par des générations de controversistes qui avaient spontanément groupé les passages les plus souvent invoqués dans la controverse, tant par les païens que par les chrétiens, pour en faire de véritables manuels scolaires destinés à enseigner aux jeunes gens la philosophie chrétienne”.

they were adhering to. A different motivation has to be assumed in the field of popular philosophy where words of wisdom were attributed fairly randomly to various authorities either within pseudonymous treatises and dialogues or collections of sayings, gnomologia and doxographies. There is so far a sole known Arabic example of such a text of popular philosophy which presents the sayings of Greek sages on the *tawhīd* and related issues, the *Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing God's Oneness and of the Authorities of the Past*. It shares some similarities with a Christian Syriac collection of prophecies of pagan philosophers and with the doxographical material used in al-Kaskarī apologetic *Treatise of the Unity and Trinity of God* that it seems reasonable to suspect a Christian origin. Yet, in contrast to the Syriac collection which aimed at persuading the pagans of Ḥarrān to convert to Christianity and to al-Kaskarī who wanted to demonstrate the untenable nature of pre-Christian beliefs, the purpose of the *Most Precious Words* remains doubtful. A likely guess may be that it was meant to promote the image of Greek sages in Islamic society at a time when the Graeco-Arabic translation movement was at its peak and that it was addressed to the educated Muslims who did not have any particular training in philosophy.

In what follows I shall present and provide samples of three different types of philosophical literature in which the Greek sages are pictured as professing the *tawhīd*: Christian apologies, the scientific tradition of al-Kindī and popular philosophy.

I. Christian apologies

Christian Arabic apology may have already begun in the Umayyad period, yet the use of logical and philosophical argumentation forcefully emerged in the Abbasid time when the interest in Greek philosophy arose and theological debates between Muslims and Christians became more frequent.⁹ However, even then explicit reference to any given ancient thinker hardly occurred, since Aristotelian methodology was practically applied and not theorised about. And whereas quoting the testimonies of ancient Greek authorities on the divine unity and trinity might have convinced the Hellenistic pagans to convert to Christianity, the Muslims were most unlikely to be in the least impressed by those. Thus it will come as no big surprise that after my perusal of Christian Arabic apologetic literature I can only list two treatises actually quoting Greek philosophers on the oneness of God, namely 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's *Book of Proof* and Isrā'īl al-Kaskarī's *Treatise of the Unity and Trinity of God*.

⁹ Samir suggests different interpretations for dating the treatise *On the Triune Nature of God (Fī taṭlīṭ Allāh al-waḥīd)* preserved in MS Sinai Arabic 154 which range from 737/8 to 770/771. In the former case it would still belong to the Umayyad Period. See S.Kh. Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (c. 750)", in S.Kh. Samir - J.S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1285)*, Brill, Leiden-New York-Köln 1994 (Studies in the History of Religions, 63), pp. 56-114, in part. p. 63. For an attempt at periodisation of Christian apology which comprises a first phase of biblical and homiletical approach from around 750 to 850, a second phase of a mixed biblical and philosophical approach from around 850 to the beginning of the 10th century, a third phase of a very philosophical approach in the 10th century and a fourth phase of a spiritual humanistic approach from the 11th to the 13th century, see *ibid.*, pp. 109-114. For the rising interest in philosophy for theological debates, see S.T. Keating, *Defending the "People of Truth" in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'īṭah*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006 (The History of Christian-Muslim Relations, 4), pp. 9, 24-32 and esp. p. 50, where she states: "Similar to earlier apologists such as Justin and Origen, Christians identified the fortuitous budding interest in the Islamic scholarly community in Greek philosophy towards the end of the eighth century as just such an opening through which to enter into debate and defend their faith. By appealing to logically constructed arguments about the being of God and His relationship to creation, (...) they aimed to show that Christian teachings were not irrational, but rather eminently complex and subtle".

I.1. 'Ammār al-Baṣrī's Kitāb al-Burhān, the Book of Proof

'Ammār al-Baṣrī is known as the author of two treatises still extant today, the *Kitāb al-Burhān*, that is the *Book of Proof* and the *K. al-Masā'il wa-l-aḡwiba*, that is the *Book of Questions and Answers* both preserved in a single manuscript which was edited by Hayek some thirty years ago.¹⁰ In the introduction to his edition, Hayek has assumed that although 'Ammār's mother tongue was Syriac, his intellectual formation must have happened in Greek which may be inferred from his logic, his methodology and even his syntax.¹¹ He probably flourished at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century and was, together with Theodore Abū Qurrah and Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, one of the most important Christian *mutakallimūm* in the first Abbasid century.¹² His apologetic method was philosophical and highly indebted to Aristotle.¹³ This may, at least partly, explain why he presented the Greek philosopher as a believer in the unity of God in his *Book of Proof*. The treatise was, according to Hayek, composed around 838 and, according to Griffith, meant "to be a compendium of ready reference for Christians who are involved in religious controversy with Muslims on a day to day basis."¹⁴ In twelve chapters various Christian doctrines are defended against possible Muslim objections and proven to be true, namely their proofs for the existence of God and the true religion, reasons for accepting Christianity, authenticity of the scriptures, the Trinity, the Divine unity, the incarnation, the crucifixion, the baptism, the Eucharist, the veneration of the cross and the bodily pleasures in Paradise.¹⁵ As the single manuscript is incomplete at the beginning and Hayek has assumed that one or two folios are missing,¹⁶ it is difficult to know exactly how 'Ammār wanted to start his book. The first mention of Plato and Aristotle occurs in a text added by a later hand in order to make up for the loss of the beginning and must thus be considered as inauthentic. The initial argumentation seems to have run from stating all the adversities threatening human life culminating in death to the fact that the existence of death points towards the existence of the Giver of life Who also provides for the afterlife.¹⁷ Then the creation is taken as indication for the existence of the Creator and His oneness (pp. 22.16-23.18 Hayek):¹⁸

¹⁰ 'Ammār al-Baṣrī, *Apologie et Controverses*, ed. M. Hayek, Dar el-Machreq, Beyrouth 1986 (Recherches publiées sous la direction de l'Institut de lettres orientales de Beyrouth, Nouvelle Série; B. Orient Chrétien, Tome V). The translation by M. de Fenoyl which Samir ("The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity" [quoted above, n. 9], p. 112, n. 238) had announced for *Sources Chrétiennes* has not yet been published.

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 41: "Ammār est même imbu de la culture 'des premiers Hellènes qui ont ébloui les esprits et séduit les cœurs par les subtilités qu'ils ont inventées' (ما اخترعته عقول اليونانيين الاولين من اللطائف التي ابهرت العقول وفتنت القلوب) (...). Il cite Platon et se réfère à la *Physique*, à la *Métaphysique*, au *De Cœlo* et au *De Generatione et Corruptione* d'Aristote (...); celui-ci lui fournit, comme aux autres Pères qui l'ont précédé et suivi, les bases philosophiques de son élaboration théologique. Cette formation grecque transpire à travers sa logique, sa méthodologie et jusque dans sa syntaxe même".

¹² See S.H. Griffith, "'Ammār al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Burhān*: Christian *Kalām* in the First Abbasid Century", *Le Muséon. Revue d'Études Orientales* 96 (1983), pp. 145-81, in part. p. 146; and Keating, *Defending* (quoted above, n. 9), p. 51.

¹³ T.W. Ricks, *Early Arabic Christian Contributions to Trinitarian Theology. The Development of the Doctrine of the Trinity in an Islamic Milieu*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2013, p. 12: "His work is characterized by an almost exclusively philosophical (as opposed to scriptural) approach, using a highly developed Aristotelian metaphysical apparatus".

¹⁴ See Hayek, *Apologie* (quoted above, n. 10), p. 20; and Griffith, "Christian *Kalām*" (quoted above, n. 12), p. 155.

¹⁵ See Ricks, *Early Arabic Christian Contributions* (quoted above, n. 13), pp. 139-40; and the more detailed description of contents given by Griffith, "Christian *Kalām*" (quoted above, n. 12), p. 158-81 and by Hayek in his edition, *Apologie* (quoted above, n. 10), pp. 48-83.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 50; and Griffith, "Christian *Kalām*" (quoted above, n. 12), p. 160.

¹⁸ The dots occur in the edition and indicate illegible words in the manuscript.

فإذ وضع وجود الخالق من شواهد خلقه عليه فاني ... يجتمع أيضاً إلى اجتماع العالم كله مع اختلافهم على الإقرار بإله واحد ، إذ كان الاجتماع لا يكذب أبداً . فقد نرى هذه الملل الثلاثة التي هي أكبر الملل أعني النصرانية واليهودية والإسلامية قد تشهد مع اختلافها بإجماع على أن الله واحد . ونرى المجوس والمنانية والديسانية ونظراءهم مع شركهم ، إذ يشهدون بأن إثنين أزليين قد يقولون إن أحدهما إله والآخر شيطان ، فلم يؤمنوا مع غلطهم ألا بإله واحد لأنهم لم يسموا الآخر إله بل سموه رجساً لعيناً . ونرى حكماء اليونانيين مثل افلاطون وارسطو قد يشهدان بأن الإله واحد . فإن ارسطو يقول في كتابه في أمر العالم والسماء بعد | كلامه في السماء والأرض والهواء والماء والنار وغير ذلك من جواهر العالم إذ يقول : ينبغي الآن أن نتكلم في الذي هو علة هذا كله . فإنه لا يحسن إذ يكلمنا على هذه الأشياء كلها أن يدع الكلام في الذي هو علتها . وقال بعد ذلك بقليل : هو الإله الحق ... المدبر الحكيم ... ، ومن قوته يقبل السماويون ، ثم شيء بعد شيء إلى أن ينتهي إلى هؤلاء الأرضيين . ويقول في كتاب له آخر يعرف بكتاب "الكون والفساد" ، بعد قوله في الشمس والكواكب إنها تحرك وترتي كل شيء : إن فوق هذه آخر هو يدبرها فهو لا يدبر ولا يهيجه شيء ، وهو دائم غير متغير ولا متبدل وواحد في العدد .

وقال افلاطون : إن صور الأشياء كلها كانت في علم المنعم مثل النقش في الخاتم ، وبعد أن خلق كل شيء فذلك مثل النقش على الطين الذي إذ هو لا ينفصل عن الخاتم فهو في الطين ينظر إليه . فأما عباد الأصنام فمع تسميتهم أصنامهم آلهة فهم يقولون فوقها إله ليس فوقه شيء . فإذا كان أهل العالم كله إنما هم نصارى ومسلمون ويهود ومجوس وزنادقة وفلاسفة وعباد أصنام وقد اجتمعوا جميعاً على غير التقاء ولا اصطلاح على توحيد جوهر الإله ، فمن أجهل ممن خالف اجتماع العالم كله مع شواهد الخلائق أيضاً على خالقها . وما ذلك إلا كمن قال إنه لا نور للشمس وخالف العالم في ذلك كله .

Since the existence of the Creator has become apparent due to the evidential examples of (His existence) among His creation, so ... in spite of (the people's) differences a consensus of the whole world has yet been reached to acknowledge that god is one. Since the consensus has never been misleading, we certainly see these three religious communities, which are the largest ones, that is Christianity, Judaism and Islam, attesting, in spite of their differences, unanimously that God is one. We see the Magians, the Manicheans¹⁹, the Daysanites²⁰ and their likes certainly saying, in spite of their polytheism as they attest that there are two eternal (principles), that one of these two is a god and the other a devil. So they do not, in spite of their error, believe that god is not one, as they do not call the other a god, but they call him a cursed evil. We see the sages of the Greeks like Plato and Aristotle certainly attesting that the god is one. For Aristotle [says]²¹ in his *Book on the Matter of the World and the Heaven* after his discourse on heaven, earth, air, water, fire and other worldly substances than these, then says: it is now necessary that we talk about Him Who is the cause of this all. For it would not be good that when he has talked to us

¹⁹ Griffith ("Christian *Kalām*" [quoted above, n. 12], p. 161), in his discussion of the passage, seems to read *Zanādiqa* instead of *Manāniya*, but does not explain his implicit emendation. The term occurs later on, on p. 23 of Hayek's edition, see below. There, Ammār seems to subsume the Manicheans and the Daysanites under the category "heretics" (*zanādiqa*).

²⁰ *Dayṣāniya* is the Arabic term for the disciples of Bardesanes, i.e. Bar Diṣān or Ibn Dayṣān, of Edessa (d. 201) to whom Arabic writers ascribe "a somewhat general dualism". See A. Abel, "Dayṣāniyya", *EI*², II, p. 199.

²¹ There is either a complement missing or one of the verbal forms must be disregarded.

about all these things he omitted the discourse on Him Who is their cause.²² A little while after that he says: He is the true god ... the wise Director ... and to His power the heavenly beings submit themselves, then one thing after the other until these earthly beings are reached. He says in another book of his which is known as the *Book of Generation and Corruption* after his saying that the sun and the planets move and let grow everything, that there is another One above these Who directs them, whereas He is not directed and nothing agitates Him, He is eternal, unchanging and unalterable, and one in number. Plato says that the forms of all things have been in the knowledge of the Bestower like the engraving in the seal-ring, and after He has created everything, it is like the engraving on the clay which is then not separated from the seal-ring, yet regarded in the clay.

As for the idol worshippers, together with their calling their idols gods, they yet say that above them there is a god above Whom there is nothing.

So all the inhabitants of the world are nothing but Christians, Muslims, Jews, Magians, heretics, philosophers and idol worshippers and all of them agree, without fear or convention, on the oneness of the substance of the god. So who would be more ignorant than he who differs with the consensus of the whole world along with the evidential examples the created beings also (provide for the existence of) their Creator? That is only comparable to him who says that the sun has no light and differs with the world in regard to all that.

The apologetic nature of ‘Ammār’s passage is evident, as it can be read as a refutation of the most fundamental accusation which Muslims may bring forth against the Christians, namely that they believe in three gods, without mentioning it explicitly. ‘Ammār states that there is a universal belief in the unity of God which is even shared by the dualists and idolaters. For the former clearly consider only one of their eternal principles as god, whereas the other is evil, and the latter may call their idols gods, yet state that above these there is another one god who is above all the others. So if even in these two most obvious forms of heresy the belief in the divine unity may be found, the Christians will be clearly above suspicion. The explicit mention of the philosophers and the extensive alleged quotations from Aristotelian writings however merit to be singled out, especially as they are not imperative to the argument. In doing so ‘Ammār redeems the Greek philosophers whose achievements he widely uses in his own works and thus makes them and his application of their philosophical methods acceptable to his co-religionists and Muslims alike. He further demonstrates his great familiarity with the Aristotelian writings, which may have earned him the esteem of his scholarly colleagues, particularly in the Islamic society with its blossoming interest in the Greek sciences.²³ The precise versions of Aristotle’s *On the Heavens*, called *On Heaven and Earth* in Arabic, and *On Generation and Corruption* which ‘Ammār had at his disposal are difficult to ascertain. The oldest extant Arabic version of *On the Heavens* was based on a Syriac model which is not known to be extant and made, without recourse to the Greek text, probably by Yaḥya ibn al-Biṭrīq at the beginning of the ninth century. The second complete Arabic version extant is a revision of the first version using the Greek text and, according to Endress, undertaken by Ibn al-Biṭrīq himself at a later stage of his life. A third version which only covers the first book may be

²² By changing some punctuation it would be possible to read this sentence as still belonging to Aristotle’s statement, namely: For it is not good that when we have talked (*takallamnā*) about all these things we omit (*nada’ā*) the discourse on Him.

²³ On the intellectual climate of his time, see Ricks, *Early Arabic Christian Contributions* (quoted above, n. 13), p. 1: “The fervent desire for the works of Greek antiquity, and especially, for Aristotelian philosophy, brought Christians and Muslims into near proximity and frequent collaboration with each other”.

Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's revision of the second version also taking the Greek text into consideration.²⁴ Chronologically it seems safer to suggest that 'Ammār had access to either one of Ibn al-Bīṭrīq's Arabic versions or a Syriac version. However, the quotations of the *Book of Proof* occur neither in one of al-Bīṭrīq's versions nor in the revised version by Ḥunayn which has been edited by Badawī.²⁵ Thus 'Ammār might not have used the Aristotelian original at all, but relied on a source paraphrasing Aristotle. Otherwise it is also conceivable and even highly probable that he extrapolated *On the Heavens* to let the philosopher claim God's oneness more vigorously than he had actually done. The two passages which 'Ammār had most likely in mind and elaborated on are 279 a 30-35 and 279 b 17-31. The first reads in Badawī's edition (pp. 194.17-195.7) with Endress's emendations and translation as follows:²⁶

وقد بيّنا في كتبنا في الفلسفة | الخارجة ، أعني التي وضعنا للعامّة ، فقلنا إنه قد ينبغي للشيء الروحاني أن <لا> يتغيّر ويفسد اضطراراً لأنه علة كل علة من عللها وليست من ورائها علة أخرى ، وهو علي هذه الصفة التي وضعت لا يتغيّر ولا يستحيل ، تامّ كامل دائم إلى الأبد ، وذلك أنه ليس فوقه علة أخرى معلومة [معلولة Badawī] حتى تحركه ، فإن تكن علة أخرى كانت هي أيضاً ثابتة قائمه دائمة ليس من خلفها أفضل منها .

We have explained in our books on exoteric philosophy, i.e. those which we wrote for the general public, that the spiritual must be unchanging and indestructible by necessity, because it is the cause of all of the heaven's causes, there being no other cause beyond it. It is, as has been stated, unchanging and unalterable, perfect, complete, and perpetual in eternity, because above it there is no other intelligible cause which moves it; and if there were another cause, this in its turn would be enduring and eternal, and nothing more excellent would be beyond it (tr. Endress).

After his first Aristotelian citation 'Ammār continues stating that Aristotle talks a little later about God as arranging the order of the world by His power. This may be inspired by the following passage of *On the Heavens* which reads in the Arabic version (pp. 197.7-198.12 Badawī) as follows:

فنقول نحن الآن : إن قول القائل إن السماء <و> هي العالم كوّنت ، وهي دائمة لا فناء لها ولا بدء محال . وإنما نقرّ ونصدّق بالصفة إذا رأيناها في جميع الأشياء ، أو في أكثرها . فأما هذه الصفة أعني من وصف السماء وقال إنها مكوّنة وإنها لا تفسد في زمان ولا تقع تحت الفساد فإننا نرى خلاف ذلك في الأشياء ، فإن جميع الأشياء المكوّنة تفسد وتفنئ . ونقول أيضاً إن الشيء الذي ليست فيه قوّة ليستحيل من حاله التي هو عليها لا يمكن أن يستحيل | من تلك الحال أبداً . فإن كان قوّة ليستحيل بها من حالة كانت لا محالة لاستحالة علة قبل أن يستحيل . فنقول الآن : إن

²⁴ See G. Endress, *Die arabischen Übersetzungen von Aristoteles' Schrift De Caelo*, Inaug.-Diss.-Frankfurt a.M. 1966, pp. 31-45 and 87-137.

²⁵ G. Endress who is preparing an edition of all three versions has informed me (personal communication, 12th of February, 2015) that 'Ammār's alleged quotations are not found in any of the Arabic versions. See also 'A. Badawī, *Aristotelis De Coelo et Meteorologica [sic]*, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriya, al-Qāhira 1961 (Islamica, 28). For an assessment of Badawī's edition, see Endress, *Die arabischen Übersetzungen* (quoted above, n. 24), pp. 21-22.

²⁶ See G. Endress, "Averroes' *De Caelo*. Ibn Rushd's Cosmology in his Commentaries on Aristotle's *On the Heavens*", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 5 (1995), pp. 9-49, in part. p. 15.

كان العالم ركب من أشياء كانت حالاتها أولاً على غير حال العالم، ولم يمكن أن تبدل تلك الحالات، فإنه لا يمكن أن يكون منها العالم البيّنة. فإن كانت الأشياء يمكن أن تستحيل وتتغير اضطراراً ولا تكون على حال واحدة دائمة أبداً، فإن كانت على ذلك فإنها إذا استحالت تلك الأشياء أمكنت أن تتحلل وتنتقض أيضاً. وإذا انتقضت وتحللت ركبت أيضاً، فتكون على هذه الصفة، أعني أنها تتحلل وتركب إلى ما لا نهاية له. فإن كان هذا على ذا فالعالم إذن واقع تحت الفساد وليس هو كما قالوا خارجاً من الفساد والفناء.

Now we say: if someone says that the heaven and that includes the earth is generated, and that it is eternal and has neither corruption nor beginning, that is impossible. We acknowledge and confirm a description when we see it (correct) in all things or most of them. As for this description, I mean (the description of) him who describes the heaven and says that it is generated and that it does not corrupt in time and does not fall under corruption, we see that to be different in the things, as all generated things corrupt and perish. We also say that the thing which does not have a power in it to change from the state in which it is, is never able to change from that state. If there is a power through which to change from a state, there is necessarily a cause for (this) change before the change happens. Now we say: the world is composed of things the states of which are at first different from the state of the world. If it is not possible to alter those states, then it is not possible that the world is generated from them at all. If the things exist, it is possible that they change and alter by necessity and do not always exist in one single eternal state. If it is like that, then when those things change they can also disintegrate and vanish. When they vanish and disintegrate, they have been also composed. So they are according to this description, I mean that they disintegrate and are composed indefinitely. If it is like that then the world thus falls under corruption and is not, like they say, beyond corruption and perishing.

It is conceivable that the mention of composition and power may have triggered ‘Ammār’s statement that Aristotle has talked about the Director of the universe and how His creation is submitted to His power. However, without knowing ‘Ammār’s source and having only the edited Arabic version of *On the Heavens* for comparison the quotation of the *Book of Proof* seems rather farfetched. As no Arabic version of Aristotle’s *On Generation and Corruption* is known to survive and as ‘Ammār’s reference to it is most probably as remote from the Aristotelian text as in the case of *On the Heavens* it may suffice to point to 337 a 18-22 as the probable source of ‘Ammār’s inspiration.

I. 2. *Isrā’īl al-Kaskarī’s* Risāla fī Taṭbīt waḥdānīyat al-bari’ wa-taṭlīt ḥawāṣṣihī, *the* Treatise of the Unity of the Creator and the Trinity of His Properties

The *Risāla fī Taṭbīt waḥdānīyat al-bari’ wa-taṭlīt ḥawāṣṣihī*, the *Treatise of the Unity of the Creator and the Trinity of His Properties* had long been attributed to Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, but its editor Holmberg has argued for the authorship of the ninth-century Nestorian bishop of Kashkar, Isrā’īl al-Kaskarī, who died 872.²⁷ It is divided into three parts the first of which deals with the doctrine of oneness of God (*al-qawl fī l-tawḥīd*) and the second with the doctrine of the One (*al-qawl fī l-wāḥid*). The last one for which no separate chapter heading appears in the Arabic text discusses the Christian doctrine

²⁷ For a discussion of authorship and the little we know about al-Kaskarī, see B. Holmberg, *A Treatise on the Unity and Trinity of God by Israel of Kashkar (d. 872), Introduction, Edition and Word Index*, Plus Ultra, Lund 1989 (Lund Studies in African and Asian Religions, 3), pp. 17-106.

of divine unity held by the author. The first two parts contain a lot of doxographical material mainly attributed to Greek philosophers and sages such as Hermes, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, but also to Muslim scholars.²⁸ Daiber has assumed that al-Kaskarī's source was an Arabic doxography of Neoplatonic flavour with some astrological and Aristotelian strands and that the bishop's aim in including this material in his treatise was to make the absurdity of non-Christian beliefs evident.²⁹ Thus his approach to Greek philosophy must have been in stark contrast to 'Ammār's and probably instigated by a general popularity of and interest in the ancient philosophers among his co-religionist as well as his Muslim contemporaries which he himself considered unduly. Although the title of al-Kaskarī's treatise suggests an almost exclusive treatment of the divine unity and trinity, the doxographical material covers a wide range of subjects and there is thus only one passage which is relevant to our discussion of the Greek sages on the *tawhīd*. It is the following Hermetic saying (passages 70-72, p. 22.9-21 Holmberg):

وقال هرمس في كتاب رأيه في المقالة التي أقرّ فيها بوحدانيّة البارئ جلّ وعزّ: أو من بالله الواحد وابنه الكبير وطبيعته الخالقة. وهذه من نصّه نجز بهذين المعنيين من البِنوة الدالة على عين النطق المتولد من الناطق ومن الطبيعة الخالقة الدالة على وجود الحياة له جلّ وعزّ، معما تقدّم له من إقراره وعلوّه عن القسيم والنظير منبثاً عن إيجابه إيّاه "واحد في الجوهر ثلاث في الحواص". وإلا فقد جحد ما أقرّ به وسلب ما أوجبه وناقض بين قوليه من إقراره بالوحدانيّة ابتداءً، وإيجابه أشباهها متباينين في الذوات ونظراء متغايرين في الجوهر أخيراً، وهذه من أشنع المحال.

Hermes says in the book of his opinion, in the chapter in which he acknowledges the unity of the Creator, to Whom belong majesty and might: I believe in the One God and His great son and His creative nature. He completed these of his wordings by these two notions of the sonship indicating the essence of the speech generated by the Speaker and of the creative nature indicating the existence of life for Him to Whom belong majesty and might.³⁰ (These are uttered) together with the acknowledgement of Him and His exaltedness above partner and like which have been revealed³¹ to (Hermes) announcing his affirmation of Him: "One in substance, three in properties".³² But if not, he would have refused what he had acknowledged, denied what he had affirmed and contradicted the concord of his two sayings through his acknowledgement of the unity at the beginning and his affirmation of resemblances of (entities) differing in essence and of equals different in substance at the end, and these are among the abominable unthinkable things.

Hermes is mentioned by some Church Fathers in a positive light as he is depicted as having acknowledged the unity of God and even predicted His son. In the *Suda* his sobriquet Trismegistos is

²⁸ For the structure of the treatise and a detailed list of contents, see *ibid.*, pp. 130-8.

²⁹ See H. Daiber, "Nestorians of 9th Century Iraq as a Source of Greek, Syriac and Arabic. A Survey of Some Unexploited Sources", *Aram* 3 (1991), pp. 45-52, in part. pp. 49-52. For a more detailed presentation of this doxographical material, see below pp. 230-1.

³⁰ For the term *'ayn*, see B. Holmberg, "The Trinitarian Terminology of Israel of Kashkar (d. 872)", *Aram* 3 (1991), pp. 53-81, in part. pp. 71-2. For *nuṭq*, *nāṭiq*, and *hawāṣṣ* (translated as "particularity"), see Griffith, "Christian *Kalām*" (quoted above, n. 12), pp. 168-72. Cf. also 'Ammār's passage dealing with speech and life in his *Book of Proof*, quoted *ibid.*, p. 170.

³¹ Literally *q-d-m V. li-* means "offered to, presented to".

³² For this Cappadocian Trinitarian Formula, see Holmberg, "Trinitarian Terminology of Israel of Kashkar" (quoted above, n. 30), pp. 70-71.

even explained as deriving from his praise for the trinity.³³ In comparison al-Kaskarī's criticism seems, at least at first glance, particularly harsh and unwarranted. However, at a closer look his passage may be interpreted as cautioning against an uncritical reading of the Hermetic testimony and as pointing out the pitfalls which may hide in it, yet without stating explicitly what he thinks that Hermes' position has been. So even if al-Kaskarī is not as positive about Greek philosophy as 'Ammār, he still seems to grant it some value if it is correctly interpreted. This fits well with the assumption that he lived and wrote in an intellectual environment in which Greek culture was valued by Christians and Muslims alike.³⁴

II. *The philosophical-scientific tradition of al-Kindī*

The beginning of genuine Islamic philosophy is tied to the figure of al-Kindī who lived in the ninth century. It was his aim to integrate Greek philosophy within the Arabic-Islamic society and he applied philosophical methods to prove the most fundamental tenets of Islam. A most striking example of this is his *On First Philosophy* which is devoted to demonstrating the oneness of God, the *tawhīd*, as it has been already formulated in the list of al-Kindī's works assembled by Ibn al-Nadīm in the *Fihrist*, the famous bio-bibliographical inventory of the tenth century (I, p. 255.27 Flügel):³⁵

كتاب الفلسفة الأولى فيما دون الطبيعيات والتوحيد

The book *First Philosophy* on what is beyond natural matters and the oneness of God.

II.1. *Al-Kindī's Kitāb fī l-Falsafa al-ūla, On First Philosophy*

The work is a crucial part of al-Kindī's endeavour of bringing together philosophy and Islam which has been characterised by Endress saying:

Al-Kindī's treatise 'On the First Philosophy' defends the rational sciences by demonstrating their consistency with the true creed: with the *tawhīd* Allāh. It is a reply to the question most urgent for a Muslim who took his faith as seriously as he took his science: the question if the rational activity and research was vindicated by the *sharī'a*. To what extent was the divine gift of reason at the disposal of the faithful? In attempting a reply to this question, the philosopher joined the rationalist theologians of his day, in defending reason against the apodictic traditionalism of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. But his programme was different, a programme represented by the translations from the Greek philosophers commissioned

³³ For Hermes as a witness of the unity of God, His son and His creation, see particularly Cyril of Alexandria, *Contre Julien* (quoted above, n. 6), pp. 190-3, 202-207 and 266-7. For the Latin tradition, see A. Löw, *Hermes Trismegistos als Zeuge der Wahrheit. Die christliche Hermesrezeption von Athenagoras bis Laktanz*, Philo, Berlin - Wien 2002 (Theopha- neia, 36), in part. pp. 66 and 128-48 on Hermes on the unity of God in Ps-Cyprianus and Lactantius. In general, see also G. Sfameni Gasparro, 'L'ermetismo nelle testimonianze dei Padri', *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 7 (1971), pp. 215-51. For the *Suda* quotation, see *Suidae Lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, Teubner, Leipzig 1931 (Lexicographi Graeci, 1), II, p. 413.33-34: ἐκέκλητο δὲ Τρισμέγιστος, διότι περὶ τριάδος ἐφθέγγετο εἰπὼν, ἐν τριάδι μίαν εἶναι θεότητα οὕτως. B.P. Copenhaver's English translation reads: "He was called Trismegistus on account of his praise of the trinity, saying that there is one divine nature in the trinity". See his *Hermetica. The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English Translation, with Notes and Introduction*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1992, p. xli.

³⁴ Al-Kaskarī's attitude towards his Greek doxographical material certainly deserves some further research.

³⁵ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 2 vols, Vogel, Leipzig 1871-1872.

by him and made under his supervision. His treatise ‘On the First Philosophy’ demonstrates in an elaborate deduction, dependent directly or indirectly on the Platonic *Theology* of Proclus ..., the absolute unity of the First Cause. Philosophy is engaged to defend the *tawhīd*, the creed of Islamic monotheism, against the temptation of dualism. ... al-Kindī’s programme *de propaganda philosophia* was a programme of integration within the social frame of the Muslim Arab administration, and carried on by his disciples in the Muslim East – Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-‘Āmirī –, finally to be fused with Avicenna’s new metaphysics.³⁶

The version of al-Kindī’s *On First Philosophy* available to us today is unfortunately incomplete which can be inferred from the concluding remark of the extant text³⁷ and contains no mention of Greek philosophers on the *tawhīd*. Yet, according to the evidence of Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. Sa‘īd ibn Ḥazm (994-1064), al-Kindī must have quoted some ancient sages in the now lost part of his work.³⁸ Ibn Ḥazm alleges that the only truth contained in *On First Philosophy*, which he interestingly calls *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, the *Book on the Oneness of God* are the sayings of the ancients professing the oneness of God. He explicitly refers to Aristotle, Plato and Hippocrates (pp. 213.19-214.1 ‘Abbās):

فلعمري ما أرى الكلام الصحيح الذي قدّمه في كتاب “التوحيد” والذي يجري في داخل كلامه في هذا الكتاب، إلا ما حفظ من كلام غيره من الأوائل الموحدّين: أرسطاطاليس وأفلاطون وابقراط | ومن وُحّد منهم، ...

Upon my life, I do not see the correct discourse which he would have presented in the *Book on the Oneness of God* and which would occur in (that which) belongs to his discourse in this book, except for what he has preserved of the statements of others among the first professors of the oneness of God, Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates and who professed the oneness of God among them.

The negative evaluation of al-Kindī’s work is blatant.³⁹ It is, however, remarkable that Ibn al-Ḥazm shows such a high esteem for the Greek philosophers and that he refers to them as professing the oneness of God (*al-muwahḥidūn*). All this makes the partial loss of *On First Philosophy* even more

³⁶ G. Endress, “The Circle of al-Kindī. Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy”, in G. Endress - R. Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences: Dedicated to H.J. Drossaert Lulofs on his ninetieth birthday*, Research School CNWS, Leiden 1997, pp. 33-76, in part. pp. 66 and 75. See also, Id., “The Defense of Reason: The Plea for Philosophy in the Religious Community”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 6 (1990), pp. 1-49.

³⁷ It reads (*Rasā’il al-Kindī al-falsafiya*, ed. M. Abū Rīda, Dār al-fikr al-‘arabi, Miṣr 1950, I, p. 162.17-18): *تمّ الجزء الأوّل*: من كتاب يعقوب بن إسحاق الكندي والحمد لله ربّ العالمين وصلواته على محمد النبي وآله أجمعين. For extant fragments of the supposedly missing part of the work in other authors, see J. Jolivet - R. Rashed (eds.), *Ceuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d’al-Kindī, V. 2: Métaphysique et cosmologie*, Brill, Leiden - New York 1998 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science, 29).

³⁸ See H. Daiber, “Die Kritik des Ibn Ḥazm an Kindīs Metaphysik”, *Der Islam* 63 (1986), pp. 284-302, in part. p. 285, n. 9. The edition to which he refers is Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *al-Radd ‘alā Ibn al-Naḡrīlah al-Yahūdī wa-rasā’il ubrā*, ed. I. ‘Abbās, Maktabat Dār al-‘Urūbah, al-Qāhira 1960. The text in which the refutation of al-Kindī is found is entitled *al-Radd ‘alā al-Kindī al-faylasūf* by the editor, on which see Daiber, *ibid.*, p. 284, n. 4.

³⁹ A similar evaluation of the *Kutub al-tawhīd* composed by al-Kindī and al-Isfizarī who adhered to the Kindian tradition is found in the *K. Uṣūl al-Dīn* of Abū l-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 1099), for which see D. Gimaret, “Sur un passage énigmatique du *Tabyīn* d’Ibn ‘Asākir”, *Studia Islamica* 47 (1978), pp. 143-63, in part. p. 143.

regrettable, as one would have liked to know how al-Kindī presented the material, which sources he used and which particular passages he quoted. May we assume that he devoted a separate section entirely to the Greek philosophers and their opinions on the *tawhīd* as he did with regard to their psychological views in *al-Qawl fi l-Nafs al-muhtaṣar min kitāb Aristū wa-Falātun wa-sā'ir al-falāsifa*, i.e. the *Saying(s) on the Soul summarised from the Book(s) of Aristotle, Plato and other Philosophers* in which he cited mainly Plato and Aristotle?⁴⁰ As for the material which may have been ascribed to Aristotle in *On First Philosophy*, the most obvious source seems to be the corpus of *Proclus Arabus* consisting of selections from Proclus' *Elements of Theology* which are, in the Arabic manuscript, often presented as alleged excerpts by Alexander of Aphrodisias from Aristotle's *Theology*.⁴¹ Other possibilities are Aristotle's *Metaphysics* translated for al-Kindī by Uṣṭāṭ and the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* which is in fact a paraphrase of Plotinus' *Enneads* IV-VI.⁴² In this context it may also be worthwhile mentioning an alleged book of the Aristotelian commentator Ammonius listed in the *Fihrist*, even if we do not know to what the title could be referring (I, p. 253.23 Flügel):

امونيوس ... كتاب حجة ارسطاليس في التوحيد

Ammonius ... the *Book of the Aristotle's Argument on the Oneness of God*

The same must be said about a *Book on the Oneness of God* which Ibn al-Nadīm lists among Plato's books in the *Fihrist* (I, p. 246.4-17 Flügel):

ما أَلْفَه من الكتب على ما ذكر ثاون ورتبه ... ومن غير حكاية ثاون مَّا رأيتُه وخبرني الثقة أنه رآه ... كتاب التوحيد ...

The books which he has composed according to the mention and arrangement of Theon ... and apart from the report of Theon (Plato's books) which I have seen or someone trustworthy has informed me that he has seen them ... *Book on the Oneness of God* ...

The fact that the book is not mentioned among Theon's list, but among the works for the existence of which Ibn al-Nadīm seem to vouch makes it more probable that it has actually existed in Arabic. Yet, that does still not tell us anything about its possible contents.

Apart from Aristotle and Plato, Ibn al-Ḥazm also mentions Hippocrates among the ancients which al-Kindī has allegedly quoted in his *On First Philosophy*. It seems probable that the intended person is the physician Hippocrates of Cos who is depicted in the *Fihrist*, based on the report of Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī, as a physician as well as a philosopher.⁴³ A possible link between Hippocrates and

⁴⁰ For the Arabic text, see Abū Rīda, *Rasā'il al-Kindī* (quoted above, n. 37) I, pp. 272-80.

⁴¹ See Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī" (quoted above, n. 36), p. 54. For parallels to al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy* in Proclus Arabus, see G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, Steiner, Beirut-Wiesbaden 1973 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 10), pp. 242-5; and in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, see J. Jolivet, "Pour le dossier du Proclus Arabe: al-Kindī et la *Théologie platonicienne*", *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979), pp. 45-75.

⁴² See Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī" (quoted above, n. 36), pp. 52-3.

⁴³ See *Fihrist* (p. 287.14 Flügel): *al-ṭabīb al-faylasūf*. One may further think of Hippocrates of Chios who is mentioned in Aristotle's *Meteorology* (p. 16.4 Badawī: أبو قراطس), or, least probable, of a Hippocrates who might have been a Peripatetic of the third century B.C. On the three Hippocrates, see R. Goulet, "Hippocrate", P.P. Fuentes González, "Hippocrate de Chios", J. Jouanna - C. Magdelaine, "Hippocrate de Cos" in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2000, III, respectively H 150, H151 and H 152, pp. 761, 762-70, 771-90.

the *tawhīd* may present itself if we accept Dodge's identification of a certain Diyāfarāṭīs mentioned in the *Fibrīst* and credited with a *Treatise on Proving the Maker* with Hippocrates.⁴⁴

II.2. The tradition of al-Kindī and al-Ṭabarī's al-Mu'ālağāt al-Buqrāṭiyya, the Hippocratic Treatments

The understanding that Greek philosophers were important witnesses to the Islamic doctrine of *tawhīd* and therefore worth studying also in that regard was passed on in the tradition of al-Kindī as can be seen in al-ʿĀmirī, the student of al-Kindī's student al-Balḥī and al-ʿĀmirī's contemporary al-Ṭabarī.

In his *Kitāb al-Amad' alā l-abad*, the *Book on the Afterlife* al-ʿĀmirī summarises the history of ancient philosophy in chapter 3, presents the doctrines of Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato in chapter 4 and then moves on to Aristotle about whom he says at the end of chapter 4 (pp. 88-89 Rowson):⁴⁵

فأما مذهب ارسطاطاليس فقد أوردنا جملة في كتابنا الملقب بالعناية والدراية وأوضحنا طريقه في التوحيد والمعاد.

As for the teaching of Aristotle, we have given a summary of it in our book called *Care and Study*, and have made clear his approach to (the questions of) the Unity of God (*al-tawhīd*) and the Hereafter (tr. Rowson).

Unfortunately al-ʿĀmirī's *Care and Study* is lost today, so it is impossible to say more about his understanding of the Aristotelian discussion of the oneness of God. However, his contemporary the physician Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī wrote a chapter *On the Knowledge of the Creator and the Oneness of God* which is extant and which may give us a better idea of how Greek philosophy and the *tawhīd* were combined in the tradition of al-Kindī.⁴⁶ The chapter is among the fifty which form the first of the ten sections of his medical compendium known as *al-Mu'ālağāt al-Buqrāṭiyya*, the *Hippocratic Treatments*. The first section provides a philosophical introduction of concepts with which the physician who is not a philosopher should still be familiar. Among these concepts the cognition of the Creator and His oneness (*tawhīd*) are dealt with at particular length and are worth being quoted here in full.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ See B. Dodge, *The Fibrīst of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-century Survey of Muslim Culture*, Columbia U.P., New York 1970, II, p. 612, n. 66. See also *Fibrīst*, I, p. 254.12-13 Flügel.

⁴⁵ E.K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-Amad' alā l-abad*, American Oriental Society, New Haven, Connecticut 1988 (American Oriental Science, 70).

⁴⁶ It is known that al-Ṭabarī had access to al-ʿĀmirī's treatises and most probably to the same Greek philosophical works in Arabic translation which were also read and used by Miskawayh. On Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarī and his ties to al-ʿĀmirī and Miskawayh, see E. Wakelnig, "al-Ṭabarī and al-Ṭabarī. Compendia between Medicine and Philosophy", in P. Adamson - P.E. Pormann (eds.), *Philosophy and Medicine in the Islamic World*, Warburg, London (forthcoming).

⁴⁷ The Arabic text is based on F. Sezgin's facsimile edition of MS Tehran, Malik, 4474 in *The Hippocratic Treatments. Al-Mu'ālağāt al-Buqrāṭiyya by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad*, Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic Islamic Science, Frankfurt a.M. 1990 (Series C, 47, 1-2), pp. 27-29; and on MS Oxford, Bodleian, *Marsh* 158, fols 19b-21a. If the readings of the two manuscripts differ, I use the better one and only give the alternative reading in cases in which the better reading is not certain. I have adopted modern *hamza* orthography. In the footnotes I provide parallels to a number of texts of mainly *mutakallimūn* authors as al-Ṭabarī explains at the end of his chapter that in it he has combined the discourses of the people of the law and of the philosophers. They are the above mentioned Christian *mutakallim*

الفصل السابع والعشرون في معرفة البارئ والتوحيد

يجب أن يعتقد الطبيب أن الشيء المصنوع يقتضي بالاضطرار صناعاً، المؤلف يقتضي مؤلفاً وبديهة العقل أن كل حركة تقتضي محرراً باضطرار⁴⁸ فإذا اعتقد ذلك فقد لزمه أن يعلم أن العالم مؤلف تأليفاً ظاهراً لأن أجسامها وحيوانها ونباتها مؤلفة من أعضاء كثيرة مختلفة ومن عناصر أربعة، ما كان منها حيواناً وما كان غير حيوان فمن العناصر الأربعة وهي الأسطقسات والأمهات وأن الأفلاك والكواكب مرتبة ترتيباً يناسب التأليف، مصنوعة على صنعة عجيبة وأشكال بديعة. فقد اقتضى العالم من هذا الوجه أن يكون له مؤلفاً وصانعاً وأما من جهة الحركة فإن الأجسام الطبيعية تتحرك إثنان منها من المركز إلى خارج الدائرة كالنار والهواء وإثنان من خارج المحيط إلى المركز كالماء والأرض والأفلاك كلها متحركة حركة إلى جهة يخالفها الكواكب المتحركة في جهة حركتها، فقد اقتضى العالم من هذا الوجه أن يكون له محرر. فإن زعم زاعم أن التأليف الموجود في الأجسام والحيوان هي من الطبائع الأربعة أعني من الأمهات قبل هذا خطأ لأن الأمهات هي أربعة يضاد بعضها بعضاً والمتضادات لا تجتمع بأنفسها ولا يكون منها اتفاق حتى يكون منها كون.⁴⁹ فيدل من هذا الوجه على أن لها مؤلفاً قاهراً يجمعها بالغبلة والقهر على معنى من الجمع.⁵⁰ فإن زعم أن الصانع والفاعل لهذه الأشياء هي الأفلاك والكواكب قلنا الأفلاك والكواكب يضاد بعضها بعضاً في ذاتها وأفعالها، فهذا حارٌّ وهذا بارد وهذا سعد وهذا نحس والأشياء إذا ضادت بعضها بعضاً لم يكن منها اتفاق ومع هذا فإنها مصنوعة من حيث هي

Theodore Abū Qurrah (around 740-820), al-Hayyāt (around 835-913), an important representative of the Baghdad Mu'tazila and al-Māturīdī (before 873 - about 944), the founder of one of the orthodox Sunni *Kalām* schools, the *Māturīdīya*. I have further included parallels to al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī's encyclopaedia *Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-tārīḥ*, the *Book on Creation and History* as it was written around 966 at the demand of a Sāmānid minister and thus in a similar learned milieu and at about the same time as al-Ṭabarī lived and worked. On all of these authors, see *s.v.* in *EP*.

⁴⁸ Cf. al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-bad' wa-l-tārīḥ*, *Le livre de la création et de l'histoire*, ed. et trad. C. Huart, Leroux, Paris 1899, I, p. 58.7-9 (French tr. p. 52): ... إذ غير مفهوم ولا موهوم أثر من غير مؤثر ولا صنع من غير صانع ولا حركة من غير محرر ...

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 84.4-6 Huart (French tr. p. 76) on one of the different incorrect opinions on the being of God: وقد قال قوم إنه هو الطبائع ومنه حدث العالم وتركبه فالطبائع أشياء متنافرة متضادة مقهورة مجبورة ...

⁵⁰ Cf. Ṭāwḍūrus Abū Qurra, *Maymar fi Wuḡūd al-bāliq wa-l-dīn al-qawim*, ed. I. Dick, Librairie Saint-Paul - PIO, Jounieh - Roma 1982 (Patrimoine Arabe Chrétien, 3), pp. 185.10-186.2: نقول: إنه لا يخفى أن النار والهواء والماء والأرض متضادة في الطبيعة، تأكل بعضها بعضاً. وما نحن نراها هكذا مجتمعة في هذه الطبائع المركبة على غير طبيعتها، مصطلحة وعداوتها فارة. من أنا نراها هكذا قد علمنا أن هذا الشيء القوي هو الضابط لها بقوته، والقاهر لها في كل شيء Cf. also al-Hayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intisār*, *Livre du Triomphe et de la réfutation d'Ibn al-Rawandī l'hérétique*, ed. H.S. Nyberg, trad. A.N. Nader, Éditions Les lettres orientales, Beyrouth 1957 (Recherches de l'Institut de Lettres orientales de Beyrouth, VI), pp. 40.20-41.5 (French tr. pp. 42-3) citing Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām: وجدنا الحرّ مضادا للبرد ووجدت الضدين لا يجتمعان في موضع واحد من ... فأما جمع من سوى الله بين النار والماء والتراب والهواء فذلك دليل أيضا على حدثها غير أن محدثها ليس هو الإنسان الذي جمعها، لأن الإنسان يجري عليه من القهر ما يجري عليهما The passage is cited in English translation by F. Kholeif in the introduction to her edition of al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, Dar el-Machreq Éditeurs, Beyrouth 1986, p. xxii. For a discussion of Theodore's and Nazzām's passages, see H.A. Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89.2 (1969), pp. 357-91, in part. pp. 373-4. Cf. further al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, p. 18.1-2 Kholeif: المتضادة التي من طبيعتها التنافر لم يجز أن يكون بنفسه يجتمع، ثبت أن له جامعا، والله الموفق.

الأجسام ومبدعة معلولة من حيث هي متناهية فقد اقتضى من هذا الوجه أن يكون لها علة ومن حيث هي متحركة اقتضت أن يكون لها محرك فإن زعم أن النفس الكلية علة حركة الكواكب وعلة كونها قلنا النفس تامة جسم طبيعي آلي بالقوة أي حي وليست هي فاعلة للأجسام وهي غير تامة من طريق أنها مفتقرة إلى العقل للترتيب والتميز وإدراك الشيء بحقائقها ألا ترى أفضل قوى النفس أنها تلتقط صور الأشياء الموجودة، فأما أن يدركها بحقائقها أو ترتبها فليس ذلك من قواها. ألا ترى أن المجنون وهو ذو نفس إذا فسد عقله يحس ويتحرك ثم لا يميز ولا يرتب لفساد عقله، وإن جميع الحيوان لها نفس وليس لها عقل. فإن زعم أن علة جميع ذلك كلها العقل قلنا العقل مفتقر في معرفة الأشياء وتعريفه إلى النفس ألا ترى أنه لو ولد الإنسان مكفوفاً وهو عاقل كامل العقل لا يمكنك أن تفهمه ما الأسود وما الأحمر وما الأبيض وإن لم يكن له حس المذاق لم يمكنك أن تفهمه ما الحامض وما الحلو وما المر وهو عاقل. فإذا صح ذلك فقد صح أنه مفتقر إلى النفس في معرفة هذه الأشياء التي ذكرناها، فإن كان مفتقر إلى شيء فلا يجوز أن يكون علة ومحركه إلى الفضيلة فإذا صح ذلك وجب بالاضطرار أن يكون لهذه الأشياء كلها صناعاً ومؤلفاً ومرتباً كاملاً غير مفتقر إلى شيء بته، محرك لهذا الأشياء تحريكاً يكون نيتها الفضيلة وهو البارئ تبارك وتعالى. فإن زعم أنكم قلتم إن كل حركة تقتضي محركاً وكل محرك فمتحرك وهذا يمر بغير نهاية، قلنا إن الحركة في الجسم يدل على محرك لأنه حركة لا تمام وكل محرك فمتحرك إذا كان غير تمام في الفضيلة وقد بينا أن النهاية في الفضيلة والتمام هو البارئ. وإذا قلنا إنه التمام والنهاية فلا يجوز ورائه تمام ولا نهاية. وإن زعم فقال فما تقول في تحريكه أليس يقتضي أن يكون محركاً قلنا ليس الأمر على ما ذكرتم من جهة أنا قلنا إنه الأتم الأفضل فهو يحرك الأشياء كلها ولا يتحرك، وفي أصناف المحركات يوجد محرك لا يتحرك كحجر المغناطيس فإنه يحرك الحديد ولا يتحرك وكالشعير يحرك الدابة ولا يتحرك وكالطعام يحرك الجائع وفي الحيوان فكالمحبوب يحرك حبيبه من غير أن يتحرك. فكذا تقول إن البارئ يحرك ولا يتحرك وتكون فائدة تحريكه الأشياء كلها...⁵¹ إلى آتم أحوالها وأفضلها لأنه مبدعها والمتفضل بإخراجها من العدم إلى الوجود. ويقال لهذا التحريك تشويق بمعنى أنه لشوق بعضها إلى بعض ليكملها ولا يجوز أن يكون الا واحداً من طريق أن الإثنين أو الثلاثة أو أكثر من ذلك لا يخلو[1] من أن يكون بعضهم مخالف للبعث مخالفة كلية أو جزئية. فلا يتم أن يكون ما بينهما شيء تام البتة ولا تأليف ولا صنع ثم لا يخلو[1] إذا وقعت مضادة بعضها بعضاً أن يكون الكلي متساوية في القوة فكل واحد منها يمانع صاحبه بمساواة القوة أو يكون بعضاً أقوى من بعض فيمنع بفضل قوته عن أن يكون شيء⁵² والأشياء كائنة كون تمام منتظمة نظام

⁵¹ Both manuscripts are illegible here. The *Marsb* MS seems to have الاسرها and the *Malik* MS اسوائها

⁵² Cf. al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, p. 21.7-14 Khōleif: يسره. وكذلك الله سبحانه منه ، فإن قدرا جميعا ملك كل واحد منهما تجهيل الآخر ، وفي ذلك زوال الربوبية ، وإن لم يقدر عجز كل واحد منهما ، والعجز يسقط الألوهية ، أو قدرا أحدهما دون الآخر فهو الرب والآخر مربوب ، مع ما كان علم الغيب علم الربوبية ، فمن ليس له فهو مربوب . ثم لا يخلو أيضا من قدرة كل واحد منهما على غيره في منع ما يروم الفعل بغيره ويريده أو لا ، فيكون فيها إمكان خروج كل عن القدرة وتحقيق عجز وذلك يسقط الربوبية ، أو يقدر الواحد خاصة فيكون فإذا الدلائل: (French tr. pp. 78-79): Cf. also al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-ḥad wa-l-tārīḥ*, I, pp 86.15-88.1 Huart (French tr. pp. 78-79): هو الرب سبحانه على وحدانيته بإزاء [كذا] الدلائل على إثباته وذلك أنه لو كانا الإثنين لم يخل من أن يكونا متساويين في القوة والقدرة والعلم والإرادة والقدم والمشيئة حتى لا يفرق بينهما بصفة من الصفات فإن كانا كذلك فهذه صفة الواحد لا يثبت في العقول غيره أو يكون أحدهما أقدم من الآخر وأقدر فالإله إذا القديم القادر إذ العاجز الحادث لا يستحق الإلهية أو يكونا معا متقامين

حكمة فصانعها إذا واحد وتكون متفقة اتفاقاً كلياً وجزئياً حتى لا يكون بينها البتة خلاف ولا مضادة ولا تغاير فما هذه صورته فهو واحد، وإنما يغلط المخالف في العبارة فإن النار واحد ولو أنها في ألف موضوع وكذلك الماء والهواء والأرض، كل واحد منها وإن كثر وجوده في مواضع مختلفة فإنه واحد وإنما كثر بالعبارة لا بالمعنى ويكون منزلته منزلة الأسماء فإنه يقال لشيء واحد السيف والصمصام والصارم والباتر وهو واحد وكذلك يقول الله والرحمن الرحيم وأسماء أخر كثيرة وهو واحد، فكذاك يكون قول من يقول إن الآلهة كثيرة وهي متفقة في جميع الجهات دالة على معنى واحد في التكوين والإبداع وإنما يغلط في العبارة وهو الواحد لأن الأشياء المتفقة كلها في جميع الجهات شيء واحد. وفي دلائل التوحيد كلام كثير بعضه سهل وهو كلام أهل الشريعة وبعضه صعب وهو كلام الفلاسفة. وهذا الذي اتيناه به متوسط بين الكلامين يسهل على الطبيب معرفته ولو لا حشية الإطناب⁵³ لأثبت بالكلامين جميعاً على استقصاء وهذا المقدار كفاية لمن أراد الله التوفيق والخير. وأظهر وأحسن من تكلم في الثالوجيا وهو الربوبية والتوحيد ارسطوطاليس ثم برقلس وما من فيلسوف إلا وقد تكلم في هذا المعنى بكلام مقنع.

The twenty-seventh Chapter on the Cognition of the Creator and the Oneness of God

It is necessary that the physician believes that the made thing requires necessarily a maker, the composite requires a composer and, by the insight of intellect, that every motion necessarily requires a mover. For if he believes that he is compelled to know that the world is obviously composite, because its bodies, animals and plants are composites of many different parts and of four components. The living beings and the non-living beings are of the four components which are the elements and the fundamentals. The spheres and the planets are arranged in a way that corresponds to the composition, are made according to a wonderful creation and are unique shapes. So, on that account, the world requires having a composer and maker. In respect of motion two of the natural bodies move from the centre towards the outside of the sphere as fire and air and two move from the outside of the circumference towards the centre as water and earth. All the spheres moving in a sideward motion are different from the planets moving on the spot of their motion. So, on that account, the world requires having a mover. If someone claims that the composition existent in the bodies and living beings is caused by the four natures, I mean by the fundamentals, he has to admit that this is an error. For the fundamentals are four which oppose one another and opposites are not brought together by themselves and do not cause conformity so that they would cause generation. So, on that account, there is the indication that they have an overpowering composer who brings them together by power and force according to a notion of assemblage. If someone claims that the maker and doer of all these things are the spheres and the planets we say: the spheres and the planets oppose one another in their essences and actions. For this one is hot and the other one cold, this one brings good fortune and the other one misfortune and when the things oppose one another they do not cause conformity. For they are, in spite of all, made with regard to their bodies and originated and caused with regard to their being finite and so, on that account, they require having a cause. With regard to their being moved they

متضادين فإذا لا يجوز وجود خلق ولا أمر لأنه لو كانا كذلك لم يخلق أحدهما خلقاً إلا أفناه الآخر ولم يحي حياً إلا أماته الآخر فليما وجدنا الأمر بخلافه علمنا أنه واحد قدير وهذا ضمن قول الله تعالى لو كان فيهما آلهة >إلا الله< لفسدنا فسبحان الله رب العرش عما يصفون وقال قل لو كان مع آلهة كما يقولون إذا لابتغوا إلى ذي العرش سبلاً [سبلاً م: سبلاً ق] ولو كانا إثنين لكانا قادرين على التمانع والتقاوم أو عاجزين عن ذلك فإن كانا قادرين لم يتصل تدبير ولم يتم وجود خلق وإن كانا عاجزين فوجود الخلق عن العاجز محال أو كان أحدهما عاجزاً والآخر قادراً فهو كما قلناه آنفاً.

⁵³ The Malik MS reads التطويل.

require having a mover. If someone claims that the universal soul is the cause of the motion of the planets and the cause of their generation we say: the soul is the perfection of a natural instrumental body in potentiality that is of a living one, but it is not acting for the bodies being incomplete by needing the intellect for the classification, distinction and truthful perception of the thing. Indeed you consider that the best of the soul's powers is receiving the forms of the existing things. As for perceiving (things) truthfully or classifying them, that is not caused by (the soul's) powers. Indeed you consider that when the fool who possesses a soul loses his mind, he has sense perception and moves, (but) then he does not distinguish nor classify due to the loss of his mind. Even if all living beings have soul, they do not have mind. If someone claims that the cause of all that is the intellect we say: the intellect needs the soul for recognising the things and its getting to know (them). Indeed you consider that if a man is born blind, yet is intelligent and has a perfect intellect, you will not be able to make him understand what black is, what red is and what white is. If he has no sense of taste, you will not be able to make him understand what sour is, what sweet is and what bitter is, while he is intelligent. So if that is correct, it is correct that (the intellect) needs the soul in recognising these things which we have mentioned. And if it needs a thing it not possible that it is its cause and its mover towards excellence. If that is correct, it is absolutely necessary that all these things have a perfect Maker, Composer and Organiser Who needs nothing at all, a mover therefore moving the things in a motion which results in them becoming excellent. He is the Creator, the Blessed and Sublime. If someone claims that you have said that every motion requires a mover, that every mover is thus moved and that this will endlessly go on, we say that the motion in the body indicates a mover. For it is a motion for the imperfect, and every mover is thus moved if it is imperfect in excellence. We have already explained that the end lies in the excellence and perfection which is the Creator. When we say that He is perfection and end, no perfection nor end is possible beyond Him. If someone claims and says that what you say about His moving, does it not require that there is a mover?, we say: the matter is not as you have mentioned it with regard to that we have said that He is the most Perfect and most Excellent and He moves all things, whereas He is not moved. Among the types of movers there is (the type of) a mover which is not moved like the magnet, for it moves iron and does move; like barley moves the beast and is not moved; and like foods moves the hungry. Among the living beings it is like the loved one moving his lover without being moved. Thus in that way you (may) say that the Creator moves and is not moved. The good of His moving all things is ...⁵⁴ towards the best and most excellent of their conditions. For He is their Originator and the (One Who) grants their being brought out from non-existence to existence. This moving is called arousing of longing meaning that it is due to the longing of some of them for another so that (the other) may render them complete. It is not possible that there is not only one in the way that the two or three or more of that would not escape (the fact that) one of them were different from the other either generally or particularly. So it does not happen that between these two there is a perfect thing at all, a composition and a creation. Then, if an opposition between them happens, they would not escape (the fact) that (either) the two were equal in power and each one of them would hinder the other through equality in power or one would be more powerful than the other and would thus hinder (the other) through the superiority of its power from bringing something into being. The things exist in a perfect way of being and are ordered in wise order, so their Maker is then one and they are generally and particularly in conformity so that there is absolutely no difference, opposition and dissimilarity between them. So what is in this way is one. He who differs in expression errs. For fire is one, even if it is in a thousand places and likewise water, air

⁵⁴ Here one or two words are illegible in both MSS.

and earth. Each one of them, even if its existence is multiplied in different places, is one and only many through expression, not through meaning. Its condition is the condition of names. For one single thing is called a sword, a sharp sword, a cutting (sword) and a very sharp (sword), while it is one, and likewise one says God, the Merciful, the Compassionate and many other names, while He is one. Likewise is the saying of him who says that the gods are many, while they are in conformity in all aspects indicating one meaning in creation and origination, he only errs in the expression. He is the One because all things which are in conformity in all aspects are one single thing. On the indications of the oneness of God there are many discourses, some of them easy, namely the discourses of the people of the law, and some of them difficult, namely the discourses of the philosophers. This which we offer to (the reader) is a medium between both (types of) discourses which may make it easier for the physician to recognise it. If it were not for the fear of prolixity I would keep firmly to a thorough examination by means of the two (types of) discourses together. This extent is sufficient from him to whom God may grant success and blessing. It is Aristotle followed by Proclus who speaks most clearly and best about theology, i.e. the Divine and the oneness of God. Only he who talks convincingly about this topic is a philosopher.

The three proofs for the existence of God which al-Ṭabarī provides for the physicians are straightforward: a thing made needs a maker, a composite a composer and a motion a mover. He then sets out to refute all incorrect assumptions of what this maker, composer and mover might be, namely the four elements, the spheres and planets, the universal soul and the intellect. He denies an infinite regress in the causality of motion by stating that only the motions of the bodies need a mover as bodies are imperfect and that there are types of motion which do not require the mover to be moved. Al-Ṭabarī then disproves the assumption of two or more creators as they would be either opposed to each other, then hinder each other in their actions and thus not be the most powerful principle or not be different at all, in which case they were only one. He proves the first assumption wrong by using the known Kalām argument of mutual hindrance (*tamānuʿ*) which is particularly applied by *mutakallimūn* to refute dualists.⁵⁵ Then al-Ṭabarī argues that the elements may occur in many places, but are still one and that many different names may be given to one single thing. However, he shortens the argumentation considerably so that it becomes almost incomprehensible.⁵⁶ Al-Ṭabarī's final claim that he fused the argumentations of the people of the law (*ahl al-ṣarīʿa*) and of the philosophers deserves to be more thoroughly studied than can be done in the present article. Yet, it is interesting to notice that even in this claim and undertaking we may detect al-Kindī's legacy and the "growing tendency to include disciplines of the *'ulūm al-sharʿiyya*" into the system of the sciences among his students' students.⁵⁷ Al-Ṭabarī's chapter on the *tawḥīd* may thus present us with a good example of a philosophically inspired discussion in the spirit of al-Kindī. It even uses the hypothetical dialog style, i.e. "if someone claims ... we say ...", which can be observed in, for example, the *Theology of Aristotle* and the *Sayings of the Greek Sage* which belong to the Arabic version of Plotinus' *Enneads* originating in the circle of al-Kindī. Al-Ṭabarī's references to Aristotle and Proclus at the end are most intriguing. Whereas linking Aristotle to the *tawḥīd* can,

⁵⁵ See D. Gimaret, "Tawḥīd", and G. Monnot, "Thanawiyya", in *EP*, X, p. 389 and pp. 439-441, in part. p. 441.

⁵⁶ Cf., for example, al-Kindī's lengthy discussion of the attribution of unity in which he also takes water as an example, in *Rasāʾil al-Kindī* (quoted above, n. 37) I, pp. 127 and 131 Abū Rīda; and for synonymous names referring to one single thing for which he uses the example of a knife, *ibid.*, p. 155 Abū Rīda.

⁵⁷ Endress, "The Defense of Reason" (quoted above, n. 36), p. 25.

as we have seen, already be traced back to al-Kindī, the name of Proclus does normally not occur in this context, even if the *Fihrist* (I, p. 252.16 Flügel) lists a *Kitāb al-Ṭālūḡiya*, a *Book on Theology* among the Proclean works.⁵⁸

Two further scholars which we may count among the adherents of the Kindian tradition have so far been little more than shadowy figures. There is al-Isfizarī of whom we know, thanks to the testimony of al-Bazdawī, that he wrote a *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, a *Book on the Oneness of God*.⁵⁹ It is not known to be extant, yet his preserved *Kitāb fi Masā'il al-Umūr al-ilāhīya*, the *Book of the Questions on Metaphysical Matters* also deals with proving the existence and oneness of God. Al-Isfizarī describes the cognition of the *tawḥīd* even as the final aim of philosophy. Although he makes abundant reference to Aristotle he does not cite him, or any other ancient sage, on the very topic of the oneness of God.⁶⁰

An even later testimony of al-Kindī's philosophical legacy may be found in the *Risāla fi l-Tawḥīd*, the *Treatise on the Oneness of God* by Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz, who lived in the 11th century and was probably a student of al-Āmirī.⁶¹ He shares a number of sources with al-Kindī and must have been inspired by the latter's *On First Philosophy*. However, he does not refer to a single Greek philosopher by name. Even if he quotes sayings attributed to various ancient authorities in other sources, like al-Āmirī, he only mentions them anonymously.

The metaphysics or first philosophy which the philosopher has to pursue as his highest aim is, according to the understanding of al-Kindī and the scholars in his tradition, “not the popular ethics of the *nawādir al-falāsifa*, but the privilege of a small intellectual élite, representing the ‘class-consciousness’ of al-Kindī's scientific community”.⁶²

The text we will now turn to belongs to this genre of *nawādir al-falāsifa* and the differences in approach to Greek Sages on the *tawḥīd* in it and in the Kindian philosophy are strikingly obvious.

III. Popular Philosophy

Nawādir al-falāsifa, *Most Precious Words* or *Anecdotes of the Philosophers* is the literary genre of collections of words of wisdom attributed to famous men of the past which may be quoted as such or be embedded in a story which provides the context for their uttering. The contents are in most cases ethical, topics range from friendship, dietary advice and virtues to the purification of the soul. The principal aim is to provide moral exhortation for the readership. The *tawḥīd* is a rather unusual topic for a treatise of this genre, yet other characteristics argue for considering the treatise which we will now consider as belonging to it.

III.1. *The Treatise Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-l-a'lām al-māḍiyīn*, The Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing the Oneness of God and of the Authorities of the Past

The treatise *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwaḥḥidīn wa-l-a'lām al-māḍiyīn*, *The Most Precious Words of the Philosophers Professing the Oneness of God and of the Authorities of the Past*

⁵⁸ On this and other references of al-Ṭabarī to Proclus, see Wakelnig, “al-Ṭabarī and al-Ṭabarī” (quoted above, n. 46).

⁵⁹ See above, n. 39.

⁶⁰ See D. Gimaret, “Un traité théologique du philosophe musulman Abū Ḥamid al-Isfizarī (IV^e – X^e s.)”, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joséph* 50 (1984), pp. 209-52, in part. p. 220.5.

⁶¹ His treatise has been edited by V. Kaya in this journal, see V. Kaya, “*Kalām* and *Falsafa* Integrated for Divine Unity. Sa'īd b. Dādhurmuz's (5th/11th century) *Risāla fi l-Tawḥīd*”, *Studia graeco-arabica* 4 (2014), pp. 65-123.

⁶² Endress, “The Circle of al-Kindī” (quoted above, n. 36), p. 67.

is preserved at beginning of a collection of philosophical material in a Tehran manuscript⁶³ and clearly set off as a separate entity from the rest of the collection. The author of the *Most Precious Words* addresses his treatise to his brother in God who has allegedly asked him to pass on to him “the most precious words of the philosophers professing the oneness of God and of the authorities of the past”.⁶⁴ He further states that it is difficult to know the names of those Greek philosophers who have professed the oneness of God due to their having lived a long time ago and the loss of their books in the meantime. However, he continues, there are old Syriac books which preserve some of their sayings. The author gives no further specifics on these books, but we may assume that they have been either entire translations of Greek originals or Syriac compilations of selected and translated excerpts from various Greek sources. It thus remains unclear whether a selection process had already taken place at the stage of the rendering of Greek into Syriac or not. As for the following stage, the author of the *Most Precious Words* explains that he translated directly from Syriac into Arabic and that he chose particular chapters from his sources. It further seems reasonable to allow for some liberty the compiler may have taken with his sources as he explicitly states that he corrected the meaning of what he had translated. The ability to translate from Syriac into Arabic makes it probable that the author was a Christian. The criterion for the selection of particular passages from his sources must have been the request addressed to him and he must thus have extracted remarkable sayings (*nawādir*) which demonstrate that the philosophers who had uttered them had professed the oneness of God (*muwahhidūn*). However, when having a proper look at the material the author of the *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwahhidīn*, the *Most Precious Words* compiled one does not get the impression that the presented sayings are particularly apt to illustrate a belief in the oneness of God. The first half of the text is devoted to sayings showing that God cannot be known or described as He is, but only through His actions. The second half is more noticeably structured as the compiler uses the Arabic expression *ammā ... fā* (as for ...) for introducing each of the following six topics: indications for the oneness of God, the Divine names, exhortations to do good, the afterlife, moral laws and the prophets. The Greek philosophers and authorities of the past are presented as having held uniform views on these issues. It is striking that the compiler, or his source, always takes a friendly stance on their views and even defends their shortcomings, such as not having believed in the afterlife or not having accepted prophetic revelations.

The philosophers who are cited in the *Most Precious Words* are, at the beginning of the treatise, divided into two groups, the Ancients (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) and the Alexandrians (*al-Iskandarānīyūn*). Whereas the identification of the former, among whom Hermes, Pythagoras, Empedocles,⁶⁵ Socrates and Plato are listed, poses no problem, I have not been able to identify any of the mentioned

⁶³ On which, see below.

⁶⁴ As the treatise has no clearly indicated title, it is from this sentence that I have taken the name to be used for reference.

⁶⁵ Empedocles is the only one among the five mentioned whose name appears in various forms: امورفسس on p. 2 is the most distorted one, whereas امقودقليس on p. 3 and امفودقليس on p. 10 can be easily interpreted as transcriptions of Ἐμπεδοκλῆς. However, these transcriptions are different from the more common Arabic transcription as أنبادقليس.

Alexandrians, whose names may be read as B-x-crates,⁶⁶ Themistius and Demetrius.⁶⁷ While there are no well-known Alexandrian philosophers of these names, it is, of course, possible that these references are to either lesser known philosophers or non-philosophers at all, but, for example, to Christian church fathers.⁶⁸ However, it seems also worth considering that the compiler or his source may have used “Alexandrian” in a less exact sense, simply referring to philosophers who lived after the ancients. In that case Themistius may be the well-known Aristotelian commentator of the fourth century and Demetrius the Cynic philosopher of the first century.⁶⁹ The only other Alexandrian, *ḥngīlāws* who is mentioned later on in the *Most Precious Words* as a transmitter of a Hermetic saying does not help in deciding our question.⁷⁰ The compiler further cites two authorities whom he has not listed in his introductory division, namely Thales and *ʿksīfūn*. As Thales is mentioned twice, the first time of which in connection with Socrates commenting on him, and as *ʿksīfūn* is said to be one

⁶⁶ A possible emendation of *بکستراتیس* might be Nicostratus *نکستراتیس* or, with more changes to the *rasm*, Philostratus, two Athenian philosophers of the second and third century. There are, however, also the lesser known Nicostratus of Alexandria and Philostratus of Egypt, both around the first century BC. On them all, see Goulet, *DPhA* IV (quoted above, n. 43), pp. 698-701 and Va, pp. 563-76. The name Nicostratus appears also in the *Fihrist* (I, p. 255.16 Flügel), at the end of the section on the Greek philosophers, where Ibn al-Nadīm lists names he found in an ancient manuscript as commentators of Aristotle on either logic or other branches of philosophy. See also the translation of Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (quoted above, n. 44) II, p. 614.

⁶⁷ The spelling of the names varies slightly throughout the text, with only the dubious B-x-crates (*بکستراتیس*) being always spelt identically (p. 2, p. 8). Themistius appears in the following forms: *مسطنوس* on p. 2, *تمسطیوس* on p. 4 and *ثمسطیوس* on p. 10, and Demetrius as *دمطرون* on p. 2 and *دمطرونس* on p. 4.

⁶⁸ In the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques* there are listed three Demetrius of Alexandria of whom all no writings have survived (see Goulet, *DPhA* II [1994] = D 46, D 47, D 47a, p. 624). As for the Christian milieu one may think about the school of Alexandria linked to which there is a bishop Demetrius of Alexandria in the 2nd/3rd century and a deacon Themistius of Alexandria in the 6th century. It is interesting to note that the Byzantine church historian of the early 14th century Nicephorus confounds the philosopher Themistius with the deacon Themistius of Alexandria: see T. Hermann, “Monophysitica”, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 32 (1932), pp. 277-93, in part. pp. 292-3. For Themistius’ belief in the unity of God we may, of course, think of his paraphrase of Aristotle’s *Book Lambda*, but even in his orations to Christian emperors he “made extensive use of monotheistic conceptions of divinity” as Sandwell states. See I. Sandwell, “Pagan Conceptions of Monotheism in the Fourth Century: the Example of Libanius and Themistius”, in S. Mitchell - P. van Nuffelen (eds.), *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, Peeters, Leuven - Walpole MA 2010 (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion, 12), pp. 101-26, in part. p. 104.

⁶⁹ It is, of course, also conceivable that the names had immensely suffered during the transmission process of the text, were thus changed beyond recognition and corrected into known Greek names by a later copyist.

⁷⁰ He is mentioned (spelt with *qāf* instead of *ḡayn*) among the seven Alexandrians who had, according to Ibn Buṭlān, put together Galen’s sixteen books. See Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a’s *Kitāb ‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, ed. A. Müller, al-Qāhira - Königsberg 1882, I, p. 103.26-30: قال المختار بن الحسن بن بطلان إن الاسكندرانيين الذين جمعوا كتب جالينوس الستة عشر وفسروها كانوا سبعة وهو أصطفن وجاسيوس وثاودوسيوس وأكيلاوس وانقبلاوس وفلاديوس ويحيى النحوي وكانوا على مذهب المسيح وقيل إن انقلوس الإسكندراني هو كان المقدم على سائر الإسكندرانيين وإنه هو الذي رتب الكتب الستة عشر لجالينوس. He also occurs in this function in the *Fihrist* and in Ibn al-Qifṭī who has a lengthy entry on him. On the possible identification of him with Asclepius, a medical student (*didascalus*) from the circle of Ammonius in the 5th/6th century, see W. Wolska-Conus, “Sources des commentaires de Stéphanos d’Athènes et de Théophile le Prôtospaithaire aux Aphorismes d’Hippocrate”, *Revue des études byzantines* 54 (1996), pp. 5-66. If we accept the correction of *ḥngīlāws* (انغيلأوس) to Asclepius (اسقلابيوس), it might explain the link to Hermes, as Asclepius is presented as Hermes’ disciple in the Greek Hermetica and in the Arabic tradition. See K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes. From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2009, pp. 127, 158, 161, 185. Or may we have to think of Nicolaus نيقولاوس whose summary of the Ps.-Aristotelian *De Plantis* seems to have reached Shemtov Falaquera with an ascription to the Alexandrians (on which, see H.J. Drossaert Lulofs and E.L.J. Poortman, *Nicolaus Damascenus De Plantis*, North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam 1989, pp. 348-52)?

of the seven sages,⁷¹ it seems safe to assume that our compiler understood them as belonging to the Ancients. Having thus mentioned all the Greek philosophers referred to in the *Most Precious Words* it becomes apparent that one major authority is conspicuously absent and that is Aristotle. This is particularly striking as he is often quoted in the rest of the compilation preserved in the manuscript.

A brief summary of the discussed characteristics paints the following picture of the treatise: it is a compilation of philosophical sayings on the (un)knowability of God and related issues drawn from Graeco-Syriac material which the probably Christian compiler rendered directly into Arabic during the composition process. It reads, by and large, like an apology of the Greek philosophers who are divided into the Ancients and the Alexandrians and among whom Pythagoras and Socrates figure most prominently, whereas Aristotle is completely absent.

III.2. Possible Sources of the Most Precious Words

If based on this characterisation we start looking for possible sources in Greek and Syriac, we might think of “a particular genre of early Christian literature” described by Brock as “collections of sayings thought to be prophetic of certain aspects of Christian teachings, culled from the works of Greek pagan philosophes by highly educated converts to Christianity who wished to justify, perhaps to themselves as much as to their friends who still remained pagan, their own action, abandoning the ancestral religion for a *superstitio barbarica*”.⁷² As an early example of this literary genre Brock quotes Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromateis* and infers that “by the 4th century loose collections must have been available for wide circulation, since related groups of sayings turn up in such works as Ps. Justin’s *Cohortatio ad Graecos*, Lactantius’ *Divinae Institutiones*, Didymus’ *De Trinitate*, Theodoret’s *Graecarum affectionum curatio*, and Cyril of Alexandria’s *Contra Julianum*”. As a particularly influential specimen of the genre Brock considers the *Theosophia*, the *Tübinger Theosophie* which was composed, maybe in Alexandria, at the end of the fifth century.⁷³ Its second book has, according to Beatrice, dealt “with the theologies of the Greek and Egyptian sages” and should therefore in his reconstruction of the text lost in its entirety “gather together all the theological sentences currently scattered, with repetitions and variations of different extent, in the Tübingen manuscript and other minor collections of sayings by Greek sages and Hermetic extracts, especially the *Symphonia*”.⁷⁴ The *Theosophia* had the apologetic project of “showing that the oracles of the Greek gods, the theologies of the Greek and Egyptian sages, and the oracles of the Sibyls agree with the Sacred Scriptures about God, the cause and beginning of all things, and about the Trinity in the one Godhead (*Epit.* 1)”.⁷⁵ The same holds true for the entire genre of apologetical oracle-anthologies, which Fowden characterises as follows: “The point of these collections was to convince by pagan revelation pagans who were immune not only to reason but also to Christian revelation that the gospels were true. To this end fraudulent oracles foretelling the Incarnation and so on were attributed to pagan gods, heroes and

⁷¹ *ksīfūn* اكسيفون may be tentatively emended to read (انكسيمونس) *’nksīmūn(s)*, i.e. Anaximenes. This emendation is suggested with reference to the *Doxography* of Pseudo-Ammonius who makes Anaximenes one of the seven sages. However, in the *Doxography* the name is transcribed as انكسينمايس *’nksīmāys*.

⁷² Brock, “Syriac Collection of Prophecies” (quoted above, n. 8), pp. 203-4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 204. More recently Beatrice has narrowed the composition date down to around 502/3 and suggested Severus of Antioch as the possible author, see P.F. Beatrice, *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia. An Attempt at Reconstruction*, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln 2001 (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 56), pp. xli and xlv-L.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

sages both ancient (such as Hermes, Solon or Plato) and modern (for example Iamblichus)".⁷⁶ The interesting parallel to our text is that it also uses ancient and modern sages. Interestingly, not only the Christians fabricated such collections, but the pagans as well so that Speyer even speaks of a dispute between the Christian and pagan forgers.⁷⁷

Material of these or similar collections was translated into Syriac, as is well documented by the *Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophers in Abbreviated Form* edited by Brock.⁷⁸ These prophecies form a short work directed at the pagans of Ḥarrān who are prompted to convert to Christianity. As an effort to such a conversion is attested for under the rule of Maurice (582-602), Brock has tentatively linked the *Prophecies* to this event, either as a first non-violent attempt or as a later fictional work justifying having used force after the alleged verbal persuasion had failed.⁷⁹ The anonymous author explains his use of Greek authorities as follows: "Since a person is likely to believe testimonia from his own background rather than anything alien or from outside, we have diligently taken care to introduce, lay before you and show you testimonia from certain wise men and philosophers who belong to the same religion as you; for they too, in no less a manner spoke, as it were in prophecy, about the holy Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, about the birth of the Son of God from a virgin, about his passion and his death, and about his resurrection and ascension to heaven. Even the true prophets did not speak in any more informed or distinct way than they did concerning (trinitarian) theology (or) the economy of Christ".⁸⁰ Whereas in this introduction the compiler evidently focuses on the specific Christian topics, some of the passages he quotes also give evidence for God's oneness and thus provide a parallel to our Arabic text. Among the quoted authorities we find Hermes, Pythagoras and Plato as in the *Most Precious Words*, but also Apollo, Orpheus, Sophocles, Plotinus, Porphyry and Amelius. At the end of the *Prophecies* the prophet of the pagans of Ḥarrān, Baba, is cited at length.

There must further have existed a large number of Syriac pseudepigrapha, gnomologia and other collections which either had or did not have a specific topic, most prominently among the former the ones entitled *On the Soul*.⁸¹ These may have been possible sources for the *Most Precious Words*,

⁷⁶ G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*, Princeton U.P., Princeton New Jersey 1993, pp. 180-1.

⁷⁷ W. Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum. Ein Versuch ihrer Deutung*, Beck, München 1971 (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, 1. Abt. 2. Teil), pp. 250-1: It "entspann sich auch hier ein regelrechtes Streitgespräch zwischen den christlichen und den heidnischen Fälschern. Den christlichen Orakeln der Sibylle, griechischer Götter und Weisen stehen ähnliche Erfindungen der Heiden gegenüber. Wenngleich die zeitliche Priorität dabei nicht leicht zu bestimmen ist, so darf man jedoch auch hier wieder von Gegenfälschungen sprechen".

⁷⁸ See Brock, "Syriac Collection of Prophecies" (quoted above, n. 8), where he states that "Syriac preserves a number of small collections of sayings of Greek philosophers, though the majority of those hitherto published do not describe themselves as collections of prophecies" (pp. 204-5). Brock further mentions two small collections "which are adduced as 'prophecies'" and which he translated and discussed in his "Some Syriac Excerpts from Greek Collections of Pagan Prophecies", *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984), pp. 77-90.

⁷⁹ See Brock, "Syriac Collection of Prophecies" (quoted above, n. 8), p. 209, where he explains (n. 21) that the *post eventum* composition has been suggested to him by A.N. Palmer.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁸¹ On pseudepigrapha and collections, see S. Brock, "Syriac Translations of Greek Popular Philosophy", in P. Bruns (ed.), *Von Athen nach Bagdad. Zur Rezeption griechischer Philosophie von der Spätantike bis zum Islam*, Borengässer, Bonn 2003 (Hereditas. Studien zur Alten Kirchengeschichte, 22), pp. 9-28, in part. pp. 14-15. On Syriac gnomologia in particular, see N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst, "Une gnomologie d'auteurs grecs en traduction syriaque", *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 205 (1978) (Symposium Syriacum, 1976), pp. 163-77.

but are unfortunately largely lost today.⁸² Whether they were made by Syriac-speaking Christians or pagans cannot always be determined.⁸³ Evidence that there once existed a pagan Syriac milieu interested in popular philosophy may, for example, be derived from the “Syriac original [of the *Nabatean Agriculture* which] might stem from pagan circles not much earlier than the sixth century and definitely not much later”.⁸⁴ In the *Nabatean Agriculture* the alleged ancestor of the Nabateans, Yanbūšād is even linked to professing the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).⁸⁵

III.3. *The Intended Readership of the Most Precious Words*

Now turning to the question of what may have been the interest in composing the *Most Precious Words*, Hämeen-Anttila’s characterisation of the milieu in which the *Nabatean Agriculture* was composed could provide a hint as he says “The 9th- and 10th-century interest in pagans, both those of Harran and earlier ones, is abundantly documented in Ibn an-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* (...) The intellectual climate in which Ibn Waḥshiyya worked was full of interest in finding, or forging, traces of ancient wisdom and Late Antique philosophy”.⁸⁶ The *Fihrist* does indeed mention a *Book on the Oneness of God* by Plato, as we have already seen above, and *Chapters on the Oneness of God* by Hermes according to al-Saraḥsī’s report on the Ṣābians (I, p. 320.7-9 Flügel).⁸⁷

وقال الكندي إنه نظر في كتاب يقرّ به هؤلاء القوم وهو مقالات لهرمس في التوحيد كتبها لابنه على غاية من التقانة في التوحيد لا يجد الفيلسوف إذا اتعب نفسه مندوحة عنها والقول بها.

Al-Kindī said that he regarded a book which these people acknowledged. It is the *Chapters of Hermes on the Oneness of God* which he wrote for his son on the oneness of God according to the utmost perfection. No philosopher after having exerting himself will find an alternative to them and the statement in them.

⁸² See Brock, “Syriac Translations” (quoted above, n. 81), p. 9: “an astonishingly large number of translations from Greek into Syriac were made, especially during the three centuries from approximately 400 to 700 AD. Although biblical and patristic texts feature prominently among the texts chosen for translation from Greek into Syriac, there was also a considerable body of secular Greek literature that was translated, chiefly in the areas of philosophy and medicine. What survives today of Syriac translations of Greek secular texts is definitely only a small proportion of what is known to have existed, but which is now lost, apart from quotations”. Among the preserved material Brock (*ibid.*, pp. 11, 14-15) mentions two orations of the fourth-century pagan orator and philosopher Themistius, ps-Platonic and Pythagorean material.

⁸³ See *ibid.*, p. 18. As much of the remaining material is preserved in monastic anthologies which contain Greek philosophical sayings, yet mainly pertaining to spiritual life, i.e. the ideal of silence, the virtues and the vices, the nature of the soul, it may not be surprising that passages of pagan origin on the oneness of God did not survive. On the monastic anthologies and their contents, see *ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

⁸⁴ J. Hämeen-Anttila, *The Last Pagans of Iraq. Ibn Waḥshiyya and his Nabatean Agriculture*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2006, p. 32. The composer of the Arabic *Nabatean Agriculture*, Ibn Waḥšiyya claims in the preface to have been working with Syriac material preserved in manuscripts he had got from the rural population. See *ibid.*, pp. 15-16. For other pagan Syriac/Aramaic texts, see *ibid.*, p. 18, n. 37.

⁸⁵ On Yanbūšād, see *ibid.*, p. 20 and on his monotheism, pp. 141-2. For mentions of the *tawḥīd*, see index of T. Fahd’s edition of *L’agriculture nabatéenne. Traduction en arabe attribuée à Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Kasādānī connu sous le nom d’Ibn Waḥshiyya (IV/X^e siècle)*, 3 vols, Institut Français de Damas, Damas 1993-1998.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸⁷ See also Van Bladel, *Arabic Hermes* (quoted above, n. 70), pp. 89-90.

Unfortunately it is impossible to know whether al-Kindī may here refer to the same treatise as al-Kaskarī does in the above quoted passage from his *Treatise of the Unity and Trinity of God*.

However, we do know that in the 9th century Hermes was even held at high esteem by the caliph al-Ma'mūn. This becomes clear from the following praise addressed to him by one of his viziers:

O Commander of the Faithful! If we take up medicine as our subject, you are Galen incarnate in your familiarity with it; if astrology, you are Hermes [Trismegistos] in your calculations; or if religious knowledge, you are 'Alī ibn-Abī-Ṭālib (God's prayers upon him) in mastering it.⁸⁸

It is the same caliph al-Ma'mūn to whom Aristotle appears in a dream and with his parting words prompts him to keep to the belief in the *tawhīd*.⁸⁹

In the 11th century Hermes was still known as an advocate of the oneness of God as can be seen from his entry in the *Muhtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim*, the *Selection of Wisdom and Good Words* by Mubaššir ibn Fātik.⁹⁰

The choice of the *Most Precious Words* to mention Hermes, Empedocles⁹¹ and Plato thus fits well with the references to them discussing the *tawhīd* which we find in Arabic literature of the 9th and 10th centuries. So it comes as no surprise that someone who may have come across such references would have become interested in reading these texts for himself and asked our compiler to compose a sample for him.⁹²

III.4. Similar Arabic Texts

As I have stressed so far, our text seems to be quite unique in the Arabic literature. However, there are at least two writings which share some similarities. There is the *Kitāb Ammūniyūs fī Ārā' al-falāsifa* <al-mawsūm> *bi-ḥtilāf al-aqāwil fī l-mabādi'* <wa-> *fī l-bāri'*, Ammonius's *Book on the Opinions of the Philosophers* <entitled> *The Different Teachings about the Principles and the Creator*,⁹³ the so-called *Doxography* of Ps-Ammonius which shares the following characteristics with our text:

⁸⁸ I have cited the passage in Gutas's translation as I have not been able to get hold of the two Arabic texts which cite it, the *Kitāb Baḡdād* by Ṭayfūr and al-Bayhaqī's *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī'*. See D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and the Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)*, Routledge, London - New York 1998, p. 101.

⁸⁹ On the dream, see Gutas, *ibid.*, pp. 97-100 and Endress, "The Defense of Reason" (quoted above, n. 36), pp. 2-3.

⁹⁰ See Mubaššir ibn Fātik, *Muhtār al-Ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim*, ed. 'A. Badawī, al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Naṣr, Bayrūt 1980², p. 9.1-2: *ارميس ... ودعا إلى دين الله والقول بالتوحيد وعبادة الخلق وتخليص النفوس من العذاب*.

⁹¹ A reference to a *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* attributed to Empedocles is found in our manuscript, 40 pages further down than our text, on p. 59.

⁹² The inverse case, namely that the *Most Precious Words* triggered all these references seems highly unlikely, as in that case one would expect the existence of a larger number of manuscripts containing the treatise or at least similar texts.

⁹³ On the title, see U. Rudolph, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonius. Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam*, Franz Steiner, Stuttgart 1989 (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes XLIX, 1), pp. 33, 80, 115-6; and E.K. Rowson, *Al-'Amiri on the Afterlife: A Translation with Commentary of His "Al-Amad 'ala al-Abad"*, Ph.D.-Yale 1982, p. 257.

- a probable origin in the Greek apologetic milieu as Rudolph has established the *Refutatio omnium haeresium* of the Church Father Hippolytus of Rome (d. after 235) as a main source of the *Doxography*⁹⁴
- a similar language
- a number of common authorities (Pythagoras, Empedocles, Socrates, Plato and maybe Anaximenes, one of the seven sages)
- the addition of more recent philosophers than the Presocratics, Socrates and Plato as our text adds the Alexandrians, whereas the *Doxography* adjoins Proclus
- a unifying, monotheistic, Neoplatonic philosophy which is ascribed to the majority of the cited authorities and which most probably is in line with the beliefs of the Arabic compiler of each text⁹⁵
- a tendency to redeem the ancient philosophers either by ascribing to them views which the compiler considered more favourable⁹⁶ or by explaining why they could not have held the opinions the compiler feels they should have⁹⁷
- a not very high esteem of Aristotle which is either shown by completely ignoring him as does the *Most Precious Words* or by describing him less favourable than his predecessors as does the *Doxography*.⁹⁸

This last point is probably closely connected to the first, as it is in particular the Late Antique milieu of the Church Fathers in which Aristotle was distrusted.⁹⁹

A striking difference between the *Doxography* and the *Most Precious Words* occurs in scope, as the former covers topics, among them matter and soul, not discussed in the latter.

The second Arabic text which shows some similarities to the *Most Precious Words* is al-Kaskarī's *Treatise of the Unity and Trinity of God* or rather the underlying doxography which has been assumed as his source. The Greeks quoted by Kaskarī and thus by his source, if we accept the assumption, are Hermes, Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, Asclepiades, Ptolemy, Galen, Proclus and the Sophists. Instead of the more recent Greek authorities who are cited in the *Most*

⁹⁴ In his edition of the text Rudolph summarises the three different hypotheses which have so far been put forward about the text – “die spätantike, islamische und gnostische Hypothese” –, but concludes that the text was probably composed around 850 in Arabic, using mainly ancient sources, yet also betraying a gnostic origin. See Rudolph, *Doxographie* (quoted above, n. 93), pp. 14-16. For a similar evaluation of the text, see Rowson, *Al-Amiri* (quoted above, n. 93), who speaks of a “Christian, apologetic, half-learned milieu that produced these pseudepigrapha [i.e. Ps-Ammonius, *Proclus Arabus, Theology of Aristotle*] sometime between 600 and 805 [which, acc. to Rudolph, *Doxographie*, p. 15, must read 850] A.D.”. He further assumes “that the author is working under the pressure of monotheistic dogma, probably Christian, and trying to “redeem” Proclus” (pp. 260-1). Neither Rudolph nor Rowson consider any possible Syriac contribution to the text.

⁹⁵ For Ps-Ammonius, see Rudolph, *Doxographie* (quoted above, n. 93), p. 12, who concludes that whereas some philosophers, such as Zarathustra and Epicurus, are shown to hold refutable views, all serious philosophers largely hold the same acceptable view.

⁹⁶ As in the case of Ps-Ammonius who exempts Proclus from believing in the eternity of the sensible world, see Rudolph, *Doxographie* (quoted above, n. 93), p. 13.

⁹⁷ As in the case of the *Most Precious Words*, in which the lack of belief in the afterlife and especially in the prophets is discussed in a rather placable way.

⁹⁸ See Rudolph, *Doxographie* (quoted above, n. 93), p. 72 and 198.

⁹⁹ See R. Arnou, “Platonisme des Pères”, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 12.2, Paris 1935, pp. 2258-392, in part. p. 2258: “Aristote, pour eux [la plupart des anciens Pères], est le ‘physicien’, quand il n’est pas l’athée; Platon est le ‘philosophe’, un voyant supérieur chez qui on se plaît à retrouver l’écho des croyances chrétiennes”.

Precious Words, namely the Alexandrians, al-Kaskarī cites groups and persons pertaining to the epoch of Islam as the Ṣabians, the Mu'tazila, Ḥiṣām ibn al-Ḥakam and al-Nāṣi' al-Akbar. The doxographical material in the *Treatise of the Unity and Trinity of God* covers a wide range of topics such as the eternity of the world, matter, the seven planets, twelve zodiacal signs, ten spheres, four elements, the necessary, possible and impossible, the soul and the unity of God in genus, species and person.

There is one other text worth mentioning in this context which is, as al-Kaskarī's treatise, not similar to the *Most Precious Words* in itself, but may have used a source comparable to it. This is the anonymous *Philosophy Reader*, a philosophical compilation from the circle of Miskawayh in which the following passage on the Stoics occurs (passage 20, p. 78 Wakelnig).¹⁰⁰

والفرقة الثانية أصحاب الرواق وهم الرواقيون . فإنهم وافقوهم في التوحيد وخالفوهم في أنه ليس بجسم، وقالوا إنه جسم إلا أنه ليس بشيء من الأجسام الباقية وإنه من اللطافة والرفقة في أقصى الغاية، فهو ينفذ في كل جسم وكل جزء من جسم بلا دافع ولا مانع وهو في كل مكان على هذه الجهة .

The second sect are the people of the porch, who are the Stoics. They agree with them on the *tawhīd*, but disagree with them on His noncorporeality. They say that He is a body, yet He is not [like] any of the rest of the bodies and that He is of utmost fineness and delicacy. So He permeates every body and every part of the body without resistance or hindrance and in this way He is everywhere.

The indication that the *Philosophy Reader* used a probably doxographical source here is the reference to the Stoics as the second group, although no first group is mentioned. The topic is the *tawhīd* and the passage may thus derive from a doxographical section on the oneness of God. The Stoics also figure prominently in Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography*, yet with their doctrines on the corporeality of the soul, not of the body.¹⁰¹

III.5. *The Manuscript*

The treatise *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwahhidīn*, the *Most Precious Words* is preserved in the philosophical collection of the Tehran manuscript, Kitābhāna-i Markazī-i Dāniṣgāh 2103 which may be tentatively dated to the 13th/14th century.¹⁰² The entire manuscript

¹⁰⁰ See E. Wakelnig, *A Philosophy Reader from the Circle of Miskawayh*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2014. The *Philosophy Reader* also has quotations of Hermes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Themistius as the *Most Precious Words*.

¹⁰¹ See Rudolph, *Doxographie* (quoted above, n. 93), pp. 60, 99-100.

¹⁰² I have had a reproduction of the entire manuscript in form of scans at my disposal. It is thanks to Dr. Marco Di Branco and Prof. Gerhard Endress that I had obtained this reproduction and I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to them. For a description of the manuscript and a preliminary list of contents, see M.T. Dāniṣpažūh, *Fibrīst-i Kitābhāna-i Markazī-i Dāniṣgāh-i Tihārān*, vol. 8, Čāphāna-i Dāniṣgāh-i Tihārān, Tihārān 1339 h.š./1960, pp. 730-33.

is entitled *Rasā'il ḥikmat*,¹⁰³ *Treatises of Wisdom* on the first recto page.¹⁰⁴ However, this title as well as the one page long treatise which follows it may have been added to the manuscript at a later stage as they have been written by a different hand. A second title which thus refers to the entire manuscript except for the first recto page is added on the top of the first verso page (p. 1) in very small script and by yet a different hand. It reads *Nawādir al-falāsifa*, *The Most Precious Sayings of the Philosophers* and could have been derived from the description of our text as *Nawādir min Kalām al-Falāsifa al-Muwahhidīn wa-l-ā'lām al-mādiyīn* which occurs several lines below. This title may be the reason why Dānišpažūh lists the manuscript as *Adāb al-falāsifa wa-nawādirhum*, *Aphorisms and Most Precious Sayings of the Philosophers* in his catalogue, ascribes it to Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq and suggests that the latter's son translated the work from Syriac into Arabic.¹⁰⁵ Yet, the contents of the manuscript have only a small number of overlaps with the remnants of Ḥunayn's work surviving in al-Anṣārī's *Ādāb al-falāsifa*, *Aphorisms of the Philosophers* and are in general more philosophical than the latter.¹⁰⁶ The text of the manuscript starts with the *basmala*, then praises God and finally starts with the introduction of the *Most Precious Words*.¹⁰⁷ The treatise covers pp. 1-15 and ends on the upper half of p. 16 with the words "Amen. The treatise has come to an end" and an invocation of God. The next line starts without providing any title or introduction with the words "Pythagoras says". The entire rest of the text is obviously compiled from a number of various sources, but no other section is as clearly marked off as a separate entity with introduction and conclusion as the *Most Precious Words*. The compilation contains philosophical material mainly ascribed to Greek authorities such as Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen and Hippocrates. The individual contributions are set off by rubricated introductory phrases, for example "Discourse on knowledge and the known, Aristotle says" and "he says in the treatise of the gold" and "Plato describes the three souls saying". The text ends abruptly and in mid-sentence on p. 167 which indicates that the manuscript is incomplete and missing pages at the end.

In 1974 'A. Badawī published the compilation's passages attributed to Plato in his *Aflātūn fī l-Islām - Platon en pays d'Islam* and announced an edition of the entire text which he entitled *Risāla fī Ārā' al-Ḥukamā' al-Yūnāniyīn*, *Treatise on the Opinions of the Greek Sages* and ascribed to an anonymous author (*maḡbhūla al-mu'allif*). As far as I know, Badawī's promised edition has never been published and his reference to the manuscript in his edition of the *Ādāb al-Falāsifa* by Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq, *abridged by Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī* (1985, p. 10) is caused by a simple confusion with MS Dānišgāh 2165.

¹⁰³ *ḥikma* is not spelt with a *tā' marbuta*, but with an ordinary *tā'* which may hint at a Persian scribe for at least the first page. However, this is not conclusive as the *tā'* is written on a tiny piece of paper glued to the manuscript probably during some later conservation work, and next to this tiny piece two almost erased dots can be made out. These may indicate that the original spelling may have been correct.

¹⁰⁴ The first recto page of the manuscript is unpaginated, as the pagination starts with "1" in Arabic numerals on the first verso page. The pagination is placed in the middle of the top of the page and consistent throughout the manuscript (1-167).

¹⁰⁵ See Dānišpažūh, *Fihrist* (quoted above, n. 102), p. 731.

¹⁰⁶ For Ḥunayn's and al-Anṣārī's philosophical collections, see M. Zakeri, "Ādāb al-falāsifa: The Persian Content of an Arabic Collection of Aphorisms", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 57 (2004), pp. 173-90, in part. pp. 175-80.

¹⁰⁷ It is most probable that the *basmala* and the praise of God are integral parts of the treatise and that the compiler of the manuscript did not add any introduction of his own to the entire collection.

III.6. *The Arabic Text of the Most Precious Words presented here with Translation*

The text is copied in clear *nash* and dotted throughout with occasional vocalisation, *šadda* and *hamza*. It is written in monochrome black ink with frequent rubricated phrases to mark of the beginning of a separate passage. Further break markers are one dot, three dots arranged triangularly and final *hā*¹⁰⁸ which all are in most cases rubricated. I have adopted standard *hamza* orthography and indicated the few substantial emendations I have made in footnotes. However, as I plan an edition of the entire manuscript in the near future, I have not specified cases in which words are written above the line or in the margin but with clear indication of where to insert them into the text. I have changed punctuation in proper names in cases in which the correct form was obvious and reproduced it as it appears in the manuscript in case of doubtful reading. As I have rarely changed the punctuation of other words I have proceeded in the same way as for proper names and only indicated the original *rasm* in addition to my changed reading in cases in which the changes seem debateable or the original reading is, for some reason, interesting. Some editorial additions and deletions are marked in the Arabic text using <> and [].

I have added the most striking parallels I have found in other Arabic texts and added them in footnotes to the translation.

¹⁰⁸ These are indicated in the Arabic text as هـ.

نوادير الفلاسفة

[1]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لمن تفرّد بوحده أنبيته في أزل الآزال وتقدّس في صمد أنبيته عن النظائر والأمثال وتعالى عن ادراك الأفهام وتخيل الأوهام وتكليف اهل السلا...محيط فن^١ خلق فلا يعزب عن علمه مثقال . نحمده على ما امدنا من النعم والأفضال ونشكره على ما أولانا من طوله المترادف المتواليه 5 ونصلي على سيّدنا محمد الذي أنقذنا الله به من ظلمات الكفر ودركات النكال . صلى الله عليه وآله وأصحابه خير صحب وأكرم آل .

سألتنى أيها الأخ في الله أن أمنحك بنوادير من كلام الفلاسفة الموحّدين والأعلام الماضين . فإن من تمرّن بدراسته الحكمة لطفَ فهمه لمعرفة الإشارات والرموز فضلاً عن الكلام في غوامض الأمور . وأنا أتوصّل إلى إجابتك أدام الله سعادتك بما أرجو[!] أن يكون ذلك مُقنعاً وللحقّ موضحاً وفي 10 العقل كافياً إن شاء الله وبه الثقة هـ

أما أسماء الموحّدين من أعلام فلاسفة اليونانيين فمتعذّر تحصيله بحقه وصدقه^٢ غير أنّ منهم من انتشر ذكره ونُقِلت [2] كتبه من النوناني إلى السرياني، فدلت على استفادة وشهدت له بإظهار التوحيد والاعتراف بالله عزّ وجل^٣ والإقرار بأنّه علة كل ما يرى وما لا يرى ومبدع الكل ومدبّره مثل هرمس وفيثاغورس وامعورفس وسقراطيس وافلاطن من المتقدمين ومن الإسكندرانيين بكسقراطيس 15 ومسطيوس ودمطرانون وشيعتهم^٤ فإن كل واحد من هؤلاء قد تبعه خلق كثير من أهل عصره من الفلاسفة وغيرهم نسبوا إليهم وتخلّوا بأسمائهم واعتقدوا مذاهبهم مثل الفوثاغورية والسقراطية والافلاطونية وغيرهم قد باد ذكرهم لبعد عهدهم وذهاب كتبهم وأما استدلالهم على معرفة البارئ جلّ وعزّ فإنه من لم يعرف الله تبارك وتعالى بدليل العقل <...>^٥ ومشاهدة الحسّ ويعلم أنّه واحد ليس كمثله شيء مبدع الخلق ومدبّره بما نشاهده من الصنعة ونراه من اختلاف الحركات وائتلاف 20 المتضادات فهو عندي بإفادة حسّ أحقّ منه بإفادة علم هـ

ومع هذا فما أحسن ما استدل فيثاغورس [3] على معرفة البارئ جلّ وعزّ من العقل حيث قال لما رأى العقل حيث إنّه لا يملك ذاته علم أن له صناعاً يملكه، فأدرك معرفة صانعه من إطلاعه على ذاته . سبحان من خصّ هذا الرجل بلطافة الفكر وجودة التمييز حتى بعثه عقله على النطق بمثل هذه الحكمة الجليلة والمعاني الدقيقة .

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^١ Here some words of the manuscript are illegible.

^٢ These two words (*bi-haqqibi wa-şidqibi*) are partly illegible in the manuscript.

^٣ The eulogy is not completely legible in the manuscript.

^٤ The punctuation of the manuscript reads وسبعتهم.

^٥ To avoid contradiction within the text it has to be assumed that here some text has dropped out.

Anecdotes of the Philosophers

In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate

Praise be to Him Who alone possesses uniqueness in His being (*annīya*) in the eternity of all eternities, Who is, in His everlasting being, far removed from having equals and likes and Who is exalted above the perception of intelligence, the imagination of mind and the specification of the people ...¹ He has created, no (little) weight escapes His knowledge.² We praise Him for the benefits and favours He provides us with and we thank Him for His consecutive and uninterrupted beneficence which He renders to us and we pray for our lord Muḥammad through whom God rescues us from the afflictions of unbelief and the abodes of punishment in hell. God bless him and his family and his companions who are the best companions and the noblest family.

O brother in God, you have asked me to give you the most precious words of the philosophers professing the oneness of God (*muwahhidūn*) and of the authorities of the past. For the intelligence of him who is accustomed to studying is favourable to the cognition of pointers and allusions, not to speak of the discourse of the subtleties of matters. And I arrive at responding to you, may God cause your good fortune to last, by that which I hope is convincing, expounding the truth and intellectually sufficient, so God will and in Him (we have) trust.

As for the names of those who have professed the oneness of God among the authorities of the Greek philosophers it is difficult to obtain them correctly and completely. However there are some among them whose memory has been spread and [2] whose books have been rendered from the Greek into Syriac. (These books) indicate and give witness that (these some philosophers) have proclaimed the oneness (*tawhīd*) and acknowledgement of God to Whom belong might and majesty and the affirmation of His being the Cause of everything seen and unseen, the Creator and Director of the universe, like Hermes, Pythagoras, Empedocles (?),³ Socrates and Plato among the Ancients and among the Alexandrians Bksqrātīs (?), Themistius (?) and Demetrius (?),⁴ and their adherents. For each of these was followed by a great number of their contemporaries from among the philosophers and others who were linked to them, were given their names and adhered to their doctrines like the Pythagoreans, the Socratics, the Platonists and others. Their memory has perished due to the remoteness of their time and the loss of their books. As for their search for a way towards the cognition of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might, I am of the following opinion: he who does not recognise God the Blessed and Sublime through intellectual indication <... but through>⁵ sensory observation and knows that He is one, that nothing is like Him and that He is the Originator and Director of creation through the (Divine) work observed, the differing of motions and the harmonisation of opposites we see, is more correct through the benefit of sense perception than he (who does this) through the benefit of knowledge.

How excellent is nevertheless [3] the cognition of the Creator to Whom belong might and majesty which Pythagoras infers from intellect when he says: since the intellect discerns where it does not master its being, it knows that it has a maker who masters it. Thus (Pythagoras) perceives the cognition of his Maker from his examination of his being. How extraordinary is the peculiar distinction of this man by the delicateness of thought and the excellence of discernment so that his intellect incited him to the pronouncement of such clear wisdom and delicate notions as these.

¹ Here at least three Arabic words are not entirely legible.

² Cf. the Koran (tr. M.A.S.; Abdel Haleem), 10: 61 “Not even the weight of a speck of dust in the earth or sky escapes your Lord” (وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ) and 34: 3 “Not even the weight of a speck of dust in the heavens or earth escapes His knowledge” (لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ).

³ The name is undotted and distorted, as it seems to read Amfürfīs. However, the further mentions ascertain the reading Empedocles, see above, n. 65.

⁴ For the problem of identifying these Alexandrians whose names are here at their first occurrence highly distorted, see above, nn. 67-69.

⁵ To avoid a contradiction within the statement of the author we must assume that some text has dropped out.

وقال امقودقليس تلميذه لما كان من الوجب في العقل أن يكون البارئ جلّ وعلا مخالفاً جوهره لجوهر خلقه علّم من ابتداء خلقه وانتهائه وتغيّره وفساده أنه لا ابتداء له ولا انتهاء ولا تغيير ولا فساد. وأمّا ما وصفوا به البارئ جلّ وتعالى فإنّ هرمس وهو أقدم القوم عندهم قال فيما نقله عنه انغيلوس الإسكندراني لا يجوز أن يوصف جوهر البارئ جلّ وعزّ بغير إشارة القلب بأنّه القديم الذي لم يزل. وقال فيثاغورس لا يمكن أن يوصف جوهر البارئ جلّ [وعزّ به] 5 جلاله بغير الهوية كقولنا هو. وقال سقراطيس ليس يمكن وصف جوهر البارئ جلّ ذكره بغير الأزلية كقولنا إنّه لم يزل وهكذا قال افلاطون [4] لا يشار إلى جوهر البارئ جلّ وتعالى بشيء سوى انه [و]هو فإنّ هاتين اللفظتين ليس فيهما تجزئة من الزمان ولا معنى من أقسامه وقال أيضاً في موضع آخر ليس يمكن معرفة جوهر البارئ جلّ وعزّ بما هو به بل بما ليس هو به كقولنا إنّه لا ابتداء له ولا انتهاء ولا أوّل ولا آخر ولا حدّ ولا نهاية ولا زمان ولا مكان ولا كيفية ولا كمية 10 وإنّه غير مائت ولا متحرّك ولا مدرّك ولا متناه. وقال تمسطيوس يعرف الله تبارك وتعالى بأنّه جوهر بسيط نوريّ ولا نعلم بعد هذا شيئاً مما هو به. وقال دنمطرتوس الجوهر البسيط الذي لا أوّل له ولا آخر ولا حدّ ولا نهاية هو البارئ تقدّس اسمه وتعالى مبدع الخلق ومصوّره ومنشئ الكل ومدبّره. فهذه الأوصاف أيّدك الله كما ترى متقاربة المعنى ولم يمكن الفلاسفة أن يتوصّلوا بعقولهم إلى معرفة جوهر البارئ جلّ وتعالى ويشيروا إلى وصف ذاته بأكثر من هذا القول لأنّ 15 جميع من عرف الله جلّ وعزّ من المتديّنين والمتفلسفين مجمعون على أنّه لا يجوز معرفة البارئ جلّ [5] ذكره بما هو به. وقد أوضح [صح] سقراطيس الحجّة المنطقية في ذلك فقال معرفة البارئ جلّ وتعالى بما هو به غير ممكنة لأنّ المائية أحد الحدود الأربعة التي يفحص بها عن المخلوقات وهي هل الشيء وما هو وكيف هو ومن أجل أيّ شيء هو. فيقال في الفحص هل الشيء أوّلاً موجوداً^٦ أم لا، فإن كان موجوداً^٧ يشهد به الحواسّ، قيل ما هو فيوصف مائيته وهو ما يشاهد 20 من جوهره. ثم يقال كيف هو فيوصف حينئذ كفيته وهي ما يشاهد من أحواله المعلومة.

^٦ The manuscript reads موحداً .

^٧ The manuscript reads, with remarkable consistency, موجداً .

Empedocles, his disciple, says: as it is intellectually necessary that the Creator to Whom belong majesty and exaltedness differs in His substance from the substance of His creation, it is known from the beginning, end, change and corruption of His creation that He has neither beginning, nor end, nor change nor corruption. As for their way of describing the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness, Hermes, who is the most ancient amongst their crowd, says in the quotations which ḥnihilāws the Alexandrian⁶ reports from him: it is not permissible to describe the substance of the Creator to Whom belong might and majesty by an allusion of the mind other than that He is the eternally Pre-existent Who will never cease (to exist).⁷ Pythagoras says: it is not possible to describe the substance of the Creator Whose majesty is absolute by anything other than His being Him (*huwīyya*) like we say: He is (He) (*huwa*). Socrates says: it is not possible to describe the substance of the Creator Whose mention is absolute by anything other than eternity like we say that he does not cease (to exist).⁸ Likewise Plato says:⁹ [4] The substance of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness is not alluded to by something other than that He is (He). For in these two terms there is no division by time and no notion of (time's) parts. He also says somewhere else: cognition of the substance of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might is not possible by what He is, but only from what He is not, like we say that He has neither beginning nor end nor first nor last nor definition nor limit nor time nor space nor quality nor quantity, and that He is immortal, immovable, imperceptible and indefinite. Themistius says: God the Blessed and Sublime is recognised by that He is a simple, luminous substance¹⁰ and after that we do not know anything else about what He is. Demetrius (?) says: the simple substance which has neither first nor last nor definition nor limit is the Creator Whose Name is blessed, the Sublime, the Originator and Former of the creation and the Producer and Director of the universe. Thus, as you – may God strengthen you – see, these descriptions are approximate in meaning, and it is not possible that the philosophers intellectually arrive at the cognition of the substance of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness, and allude to the description of His being by saying more than this, because all of the religious (scholars) and philosophers who have recognised God to Whom belong majesty and might agree that no cognition of the Creator [5] Whose mention is absolute is possible by what He is. Already Socrates has displayed the logical argument for that. Thus he says: the cognition of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness by what He is not possible, because quiddity (*mā'īya*) is one of the four definitions by which one examines the created things, and they are: if the thing is, what it is, how it is and due to what (other) thing it is.¹¹ Thus in the examination it is first stated whether the thing exists or not. If it exists, the senses will attest to it. It is stated what it is, so its quiddity is described and it is the substance which is observed of it. Then it is stated how it is, so at that point its quality is described, that is the factual conditions which are observed of it.

⁶ On this Alexandrian, see above, n. 70.

⁷ Cf. the somewhat similar Hermetic passage which occurs in Ibn Durayd and the *Philosophy Reader* (5). See Wakelnig, *Philosophy Reader* (as quoted above, n. 100), p. 343.

⁸ Cf. a similar passage attributed to Plutarch in Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography*, III, 1, p. 35.5 Rudolph: قال فلوطرخس إنَّ الباريُّ جل وعلا لم يزل بالأزليَّة التي هي أزليَّة الأزلِّيَّات .

⁹ This and the following quotations attributed to Plato have already been edited by Bādawī, *Platon*, pp. 306ff., see above.

¹⁰ Cf. 'Alī b. Rabban al-Ṭabari, *Firdaws al-ḥikma*, ed. M. al-Ṣiddiqī, Berlin 1928, p. 70.17-18, where Pythagoras defines the intellect in exactly the same way: وقد قال فيثاغوروس الفيلسوف إنَّ العقل جوهر بسيط نورِّي محيط بكل شيء .

¹¹ The notion that the four originally Aristotelian types of inquiry into a thing (whether, what, how, why) do not apply to God is Neoplatonic. See Rudolph, *Doxographie*, pp. 120-1 for further discussion and references. Two passages similar to the above are worth quoting. The first is Ps-Amm., *Doxography*, II, 1-4, p. 34.3-6 Rudolph: قال تاليس ... لأنَّ قِبَل الإبداع إنما هو . وإذا كان إنما هو فقط فليس يقال حينئذ جهة وجهة بل هو وكيف هو وبما هو وعلى ما هو داخل في هو هو . فقط والصفات كلها في هو هو . The second is Ps-Gāhiz, *Kitāb al-Dalā'il wa-l-ītibār 'alā al-ḥalq wa-l-tadbīr*, ed. M.R. al-Ṭabbāḥ al-Ḥalabi, al-Maṭba'a al-'ilmīya, Ḥalab 1928, p. 77.5-13: قلنا إنَّ الذي تطلب معرفته من الأشياء أربعة أوجه أولها أن ينظر أوجود هو أم ليس موجودا والثاني أن يعرف ما هو في ذاته وجوهره والثالث أن ينظر كيف هو وما صفته والرابع لماذا ولأية علة فليس في هذه الوجوه شيء يمكن المخلوق أن يعرفه من الخالق حق معرفته خلا أنه موجود فقط فأما ما هو وكيف هو فيمتنع عليه كنهه وكمال المعرفة به . وأما لماذا فهو ساقط في صفة الخالق لأنه علة كل شيء وليس شيء بعلة . ثم ليس علم الإنسان بأنه موجود وجب له أن يعلم ما هو وكيف هو كما أن علمه بوجود النفس لا يوجب له أن يعلم ما هي وكيف هي وكذلك الأمور الروحانيَّة اللطيفة . For an English translation, see A. Altmann - S.M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, London U.P., London 1958, p. 22. In contrast to these texts, in the *Most Precious Words* even the applicability of the first question 'whether' seems to be in doubt, as it is linked to evidence of the senses and the senses do not perceive God, but only His actions.

ثم يقال [ثم] من أجل أي شيء هو فيقال خلق لتكوّن^أ منه ما يوصف بوقف عليه من غاية أمره وتمايه. والبارئ جل وتعالى فلا يجوز أن تدركه الحواس ويحيط به العقول ولأوهام. ولهذه العلة تعذر على الحكماء صفتة إلا من جهة أفعاله. وقد أقام افلاطن أيضا البرهان العقلي على هذا فقال إن كل مخلوق يجمعه حدان الزمان الذي ينبى عن ابتداء كونه والمكان الذي ينبى عن نهايته والمكان منتاه بما أنه محدود من الشيء والشيء محدود به ولا يمكن أن يقع تحت 5 المتناهي إلا متناه [6] ليس له شيء خارج عن حد التناهي. فلما كان كل شيء للمتناهي متناه كانت معرفة الإنسان متناهية هـ ووجب ضرورة ألا يحفظ معرفته إلا بالمتناهيات وما كان غير متناه فإنه يعجز عن علمه فالإنسان على ما أوضحناه متناه ومعرفته متناهية والله جل وعز غير متناه فالإنسان إذن يعجز عن إدراك معرفة البارئ بما هو به ضرورة هـ وفي تفهّم هذا البرهان أسعدك الله كفاية وقد أغنى وضوحه في معناه عما سواه لأنه قد شرحه وأوضحه وبحق فاق أهل 10 عصره وتقدم على نظرائه. وقال أيضا في موضع آخر لما كان الإنسان جزئيا وكانت معرفته جزئية وإرادته جزئية لم يمكن أن يعرف الكلّيات ولذلك لا يمكن أن يعلم كل شيء يريد يقدر عليه وإلا لم يكن بينه وبين الخالق فرق. وقال فيثاغورس العجب لقوم يعجزون عن معرفة ما يحس ويرى وهم يحاولون معرفة ما لا يحس ولا يرى، يعني بما يحس ويرى الفلك والكواكب وبما لا يحس ولا يرى البارئ جل وتعالى والدليل على أنه أراد بما يحس ويرى الفلك والكواكب قول 15 [7] سقراطيس من العجب أن أهل الأرض لا يكملون لمعرفة أمور الأرض وهم يريدون معرفة علم ما في السماء وبلغه أن تاليس بيما يرصد بعض الكواكب وبمشي بإزائه حتى سقط في بئر فمات، فقال من حاول إدراك ما لا يدرك لم يبصر ما يبصر. ففيثاغورس استعجز من حاول معرفة مائية البارئ جل وعز وهو لا يقدر على معرفة علم النجوم ومائية الفلك المشاهد بالبصر. وسقراطيس استعجز من حاول إدراك علم النجوم وهو لا يكمل لمعرفة جميع الأرضيات هـ 20 أنظر أعزك الله إلى هولاء القوم ما أبين فضلهم وأعلى درجتهم في الحكمة في اعترافهم بالعجز عما لم يعلموه هذا مع تقدمهم على نظرائهم وأهل عصرهم في العلم والحكمة هـ وأحدنا إذا نظر في بعض العلوم المدّة اليسيرة ظنّ أنه قد استغنى عن النظر في العلوم السالفة وحقا أقول الو عاش أضعاف عمره مستفرغا لوسعه في قراءة الكتب ودراسة العلم لما خلا طول مدته من معرفة مزيدة بفائدة محمودة مجددة. وقال اكسيفون احد الحكماء السبعة إن الله تبارك وتعالى 25 حجب ما [8] في السموات عن الأبصار ليلا يتعلّق به همم الناس وأفكارهم لأنه علم أنه لا يليق بهم معرفته ولا يصلح لجوهرهم مطالعته يعني لعجزهم وضعفهم عن إدراك ما في العالم الأعلى.

^أ The manuscript reads *li-* and a verbal form (ليكون), yet I think the meaning of *li-* must be causal here, so I have changed the form to a verbal noun.

Then it is stated on account of which thing it is, so (its) creation (process) is stated because it generates the utmost of (the created thing's) condition and its completion which are described and applied to it. It is not possible that the senses perceive the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness and that the intellects and minds encompass Him. Therefore it has been too difficult for the sages to describe Him unless they describe Him with regard to His actions. Plato has also already furnished the intellectual proof for this. Thus he says that every created thing is determined by two defining limits, the time which has elapsed since the beginning of its generation and the space which covers the distance to its limit. The space is finite by being defined by the thing and the thing is defined by it. It is not possible to fall under the finite except for something finite [6] which has nothing outside the defining limit of finitude. Thus when everything which belongs to the finite is finite, cognition of man is finite. It is absolutely necessary that he only retains his cognition of finite things, whereas he is unable to know what is infinite. Thus man is, according to what we have shown, finite and his cognition is finite, whereas God to Whom belong majesty and might is infinite. Thus man is consequently by necessity unable to perceive the cognition of God by what He is. May God help you sufficiently in understanding this proof. The clarity he applies in his expression has yet rendered any other thing than that needless, because he has already explained and shown it. He has rightly surpassed his contemporaries and preceded his equals. He has also said somewhere else: since man is particular and his cognition and will are particular, it is not possible that he recognises the universals. Therefore it is not possible that he knows everything he wishes to be able (to know), otherwise there would be no difference between him and the Creator. Pythagoras says: how strange a crowd is that is not able to recognise what is heard and seen, and yet attempts to recognise what is not heard and not seen. He means by that which is heard and seen the sphere and the planets and by what is neither heard nor seen the Creator to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness. It is the (following) saying of Socrates that indicates that he means the sphere and the planets by what is heard and seen: [7] it belongs to the strange things that the inhabitants of the earth are not accomplished for recognising the matters of the earth, yet wish to recognise the knowledge of what is in heaven. It came to his knowledge that while Thales had observed some planets walking facing them, he had fallen into a well and died. Thus he said: he who attempts to perceive the unperceivable, does not even see the visible. Pythagoras deems deficient him who attempts to recognise the quiddity of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might, while he is unable to recognise the knowledge of the stars and the quiddity of the sphere observable by vision. Socrates deems deficient him who attempts to perceive the knowledge of the stars, while he has not accomplished to recognise all earthly matters.

Look, may God help you, at these ones of the crowd! How obvious is their excellence and how high their rank of wisdom in their acknowledgement of what they are unable to know together with their precedence over their equals and their contemporaries in knowledge and wisdom!¹² When one of us looks into some branches of knowledge for a little while, he assumes that he is already able to dispense with looking into the preceding branches of wisdom. Yet I, in fact, say: even if he lived multiple lifetimes spending all his efforts, due to his ability, on the reading of books and the study of knowledge, no length of a single moment of his (life) would be free from increasing cognition by some praised and extended benefit. 'ksifūn, one of the seven sages¹³ has said that God, the Blessed and Sublime has hidden from sight what is [8] in the heavens so that the ambitions and thoughts of people may not be devoted to it. For He had known that recognising it would not befit them and studying it would not be appropriate for their substance, that is for their inability and weakness to perceive what is in the upper world.¹⁴

¹² Al-Kaskarī reports a similarly favourable evaluation, yet not for the Greek sages in general, but for Plato in particular, passage 49, p. 16.10-11 Holmberg: ... [أما] افلاطون مع شهادة العامة له بزجاجته في فلسفته وإقرارهم له بعلمه درجته في حكمته ...

¹³ Cf. Ps-Ammonius, *Doxography*, XI, 1, p. 45.1 Rudolph where Anaximenes is referred to as *ahadu l-hukamā' al-sab'a* who are called the columns of wisdom (*asāṭin al-ḥikma*), whereas Thales is said to have been *ahadu l-nafar al-sab'a*, XIII, 1, p. 48.17.

¹⁴ Al-Kaskarī uses similar wording (*daḥḥawāṣṣibim ... wa-'ağz 'uqūlibim*) when referring to the knowledge the ancient philosopher in general had of the soul, passage 45, p. 15.5-6 Holmberg.

وقال سقراطيس يظنّ قوم عجزوا عن معرفة الأرضيات أن بالكلام يدركون علم السماويات، وحقاً أقول إنهم يكثرون الفحص والتفتيش ولا يخرجون بالمعرفة عن الموضوع الذي جعل منتهاهم إليه من تفرّد بمعرفة الكلّ وبالقوة التي يهب بها الخيرات لمن يريد هـ ما أعجب كلام هذا الرجل الفاضل وأوضحه وأشدّ تحصيله وأحسن معرفته بالله جلّ جلاله وبحقّ سمى في عصره معلم الخيرات وأقرأه⁹ افلاطون وهو رئيس دهره في الفلسفة بالأستاذية. وقال ثاليس بنو الأرض لا يمكنهم أن يرتفعوا عن علم الأرضيات ومن أجل هذا خلّقوا من الأرضيات. وقال بكسقراطيس إنّما يدرك الشيء من جهة علته فإذا لم يكن للشيء علة فلا محالة أنه غير مدرك هـ وفيما احتجّوا به في الاعتراف بالعجز عن إدراك معرفة البارئ [9] ووصفه بما هو به كفاية هـ وأكثر ما اتّسع للحكماء الكلام في صفة البارئ جلّ وعزّ من جهة أفعاله التي تشاهدها الحواسّ وتدّل عليها العقول. وهكذا قال فيثاغورس البارئ جلّ وعزّ بما أنه هو غير موصوف إنّما يوصف من نحو الفعل. وقال هرمس إنّ الله قريب من كلّ بالقدرة بعيد من كلّ بالتشبيه حال في كلّ يعلمه معتزل عن كلّ بعلوه. ذكر سقراطيس هذا الفصل عن هرمس وقال لما ارتفع البارئ عن الأوصاف وُصف من جهتنا عمّا تدركه عقولنا. وقال فيثاغورس سبيل العقل أن يدرك ما أدته الحواسّ الخمس ويميّز كمّيات الأشياء وكيفياتها ويعرف الأشياء بوسائط الحسّ وكلمة عرفه العقل من غير أن تدركه الحواسّ <...>،¹⁰ فمن أفعاله وآثاره التي يشاهدها الحسّ يوصف عرفه ويدرك وجوده ولو أدرك العقل معرفة البارئ بما هو به لكان المدرك أعلى مرتبة من المدرك والله تبارك وتعالى مبدع العقل وصانعه فليس يجوز في الترتيب أن يدركه ويعرفه بغير الإيمان به والاعتراف ببروبيّته من وجود [10] صنّعه ومشاهدة آثار حكمته فيما أبدع من خلقه. وقال تلميذه امفودقليس صدق الحكيم أنّ الذي لا يقع تحت الحواسّ والحاسة دالة عليه فبدليل الحسّ علم لأنّ البصر أدّى إلى العقل مشاهدته حركات الفلك والأجرام العلوية وقد أجمعنا أنّ لكلّ حركة محرّك، وقولنا إنّهم جماعة محرّكين باطل لأنّه يؤدّي إلى التغير والاضطراب والحركة العلوية في غاية الاستواء والانتظام والقوة والدوام، وقولنا للمحرّك محرّك باطل لأنّه يؤدّي إلى ما لا نهاية له فيبطل، وبقي أن يكون المحرّك واحداً غير متحرّك وهو الله تعالى محرّك الكلّ وممسكه بالقوة التي لا نهاية لها. فقد دلّت الحاسة بوجود ما شاهدته وأدته إلى العقل على وجود ما يرتفع عن الوقوع تحت الحواسّ وذلك ما أردنا بيانه. وقال ثمسطيوس اتّسع¹¹ المتضادات بالطبع من التنافر بالفعل دليل على مدبّر جبرها¹² على الائتلاف هو أملك بها من ذاتها¹³ وأقدر عليها من طباعها وكذلك من عرف الله جلّ وعزّ من جهة النبوة والكتب الإلهية فليس يمكنه أن يصفه بعد الأزلية والوحدانية [11] بأكثر من اتّسع القدرة وكمال الحكمة والرحمة وما شاكل هذه الأوصاف من الحلم والفضل وأشباهه، وكلّ هذه الأوصاف فمشتقة من أفعاله جلّ وتعالى.

⁹ واقرله Here the manuscript reads.

¹⁰ Here it is necessary to assume that some text has dropped out as the author would otherwise contradict himself.

¹¹ The manuscript seems to have اساع here.

¹² The *rasm* is undotted (حرها).

¹³ The manuscript reading is ذابها.

Socrates says: the crowd who is unable to recognise the earthly matters assumes to perceive the knowledge of the heavenly matters by discourse. Yet I, in fact, say that they multiply the examination and inquiry, but do not lead cognition away from the place which has been made the utmost limit they can reach by Him Who alone possesses the cognition of the universe and the power by which He gives the goods to whom He wishes. How wonderful and how clear is the discourse of this virtuous man, how strong is his perception and how excellent his cognition of God Whose majesty is absolute. He was rightly called the teacher of the goods in his time and he taught it to Plato who was the head in philosophy of his epoch due to mastery. Thales says: the sons of the earth cannot become raised above the knowledge of earthly matters and therefore they are created from earthly matters. Bksqrātīs says: the thing is only perceived from its cause, so if the thing has no cause, it is most certainly imperceptible. This is enough on what they have advanced as arguments for acknowledging the inability of perceiving the cognition of the Creator [9] and His description by what He is.

It is for the most part sufficient for the sages to discuss the description of the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might with regard to His actions which the senses observe and the intellects indicate. In this manner Pythagoras says: as the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might is indescribable He is only described as far as action is concerned. Hermes says that God is near to everything through power, but distant from everything through comparison and present in everything through His knowledge, yet separated from everything through His exaltedness.¹⁵ Socrates mentions the following passage according to Hermes and says: since the Creator is raised above descriptions, He is described from our side according to what our intellects perceive. Pythagoras says: it is the way of intellect to perceive what the five senses convey to it, to distinguish the quantities and qualities of things and to recognise the things by the intermediaries of sense-perception. Whatever the intellect recognises without the senses perceiving it <...>.¹⁶ Thus His existence is described and perceived through His actions and His traces observed by sense-perception.¹⁷ If the intellect perceived the cognition of the Creator by what He is, the perceiver would be higher in rank than the perceived. Yet God, the Blessed and Sublime is the Originator and Maker of intellect. Thus in the rank order it is not possible that it perceives and recognises Him without belief in Him, acknowledgement of His lordship through the existence [10] of His doing and observation of the traces of His wisdom in the creation He has originated. His disciple Empedocles says: the sage has spoken truly that something which does not fall under the senses, yet is sensorily indicated, is known by the indication of sense perception. For vision conveys its observation of the motions of the sphere and the celestial bodies to the intellect. We have already agreed that every motion has a mover, yet our statement that they are a group of movers is false, because it amounts to change and unrest whereas celestial motion is in the utmost steadiness, order, power and permanence. Our statement that the mover has a mover is also false, because it amounts to something infinite and that is untenable. So it remains that the mover is one and unmoved and He is God the Sublime, the Mover of the universe Who holds it with infinite power. Thus through the existence of that which the sense has observed and conveyed to the intellect the sense has already indicated the existence of that which is raised above falling under the senses. That is what we have wished to explain. Themistius says: the abundance of natural opposites due to discordant action indicates a Director Who compels them to concord. He has more mastery over them than their essence and has more power over them than their natures. Likewise he who recognises God to Whom belong majesty and might from prophecy and the divine books, cannot describe Him in addition to eternity and oneness [11] by more than abundance of power, perfection of wisdom and compassion and what resembles these description of clemency, excellence and the like.

¹⁵ The description of God as near and distant also occurs in Ps-Ġāhīz, yet it is explained differently and ascribed to Aristotle, p. 77.16-19 al-Halabī: الطبيعة الذي سماه ما بعد الطبيعة [كذا] في الجواب شبيها بهذا القول في كتابه الذي سماه ما بعد الطبيعة. فأنه وصفه بهذه الصفة فقال هو قريب بعيد فأنه من جهة كالأوضح لا يخفى على أحد ومن جهة كالعالم لا يدركه أحد.

¹⁶ Here some text must be missing.

¹⁷ Cf. the following passage on the imperceptibility of God and the traces by which He may be perceived in Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography* which attributes it to Thales, XIII, 22-4, p. 50.6-7 Rudolph: وكان يذكر أن لهذا العنصر مبدعاً لا تدرك صفته ولا تدركه العقول إلا من جهة آثاره فأما من جهة جوهرية هوئته فغير مدرك من جهة من الجهات.

وأما أدلتهم على التوحيد فكثيرة وقد لطف كل واحد منهم بوصف دليل لاح في خاطره. فقال فيثاغورس إن كان الذي لا يملك ذاته كثيرًا <أ> فالذي يملك ذاته واحد <أ>. وقال سقراطيس إن كان البدو إثنين فقد لزمهما الحركة والمكان لأنَّ الفصل بين قد حدَّهما. وقال افلاطون لا يكون إثنان بلا نهاية لأنَّ كل واحد منهما يحدُّ صاحبه لأنَّ هويته نهاية الآخر هـ

5 وأما بأيّ الأسماء سموا البارئ جل وعزَّ فإنَّهم اعترفوا بأنَّه لا اسم له إلا من جهة أفعاله والإشارة بالعقل بأنَّه لم يزل كما هو هو لأنَّ رسم كل اسم عندهم فمن موضوعه أو أفعاله يسمى ، ولذلك سماه هرمس مدبّر الكل وسماه فيثاغورس واهب الحياة وسماه سقراطيس علة العلل هـ ومعنى قول هرمس مدبّر الكل أنه أبداع جميع المخلوقات بتقدير وتدبير فهي جارية على سنن تقديره وتدبيره ماضية على ما سبق من علمه [12] وإرادته . ومعنى قول فيثاغورس واهب الحياة أن حياة كل شيء منه وبه وبقوته هـ ومعنى قول سقراطيس علة العلل أنه العلة الأولى لجميع 10 الكلِّيات والجزئيات وأن كانت بينه وبينهما ^{١٤} وسائط . وقد أوضح افلاطون هذا المعنى بقوله إن علة كون الابن الأب إنَّ الله أحقُّ بعلة الكون من الأب لمكان القوة التي زرعه في طباع الأب يعني قوة النسل فقد تبين أن الله أول علة الابن بوساطة الأب ، وكذلك كل كون فالله جل وعزَّ العلة الأولى في كونه . والفلاسفة تقول إنَّه ما كان في العوالم العالية فبغير واسطة وما كان في العالم الأدنى فبوسائط . وأرجو [1] أن تستغني بما شرحته من كلام هولاء القوم واختصرته من 15 معانيهم عن الزيادة في الإيضاح إن شاء الله .

فأما العلة في حضمهم الناس على فعل الخيرات ورفض الشهوات فإنَّه لما كان العقل عندهم حسناً والعقل قبيحاً وكان كلما استحسن في العقل عندهم حسناً وكلما استقبح في العقل عندهم قبيحاً وكانت الفضائل [13] حسنة في العقل والردائل قبيحة في العقل أمروا الناس باكتساب الفضائل واجتناب الردائل إيثاراً لما وافق العقل وأظهره ونفى الجهل وابطله هـ وأجمعوا أيضاً أن 20 النفس الحيوانية تولد الشهوات الجسدانية فإذا استعملت تلك الشهوات قويت الأخلاق السبعية من الغضب والظلم والبطش والوثوب وحب الغلبة والانتقام وضعفت النفس العقلية التي تولد الأخلاق الرضية من إيثار العدل والحق والصفح والعفو ، فلهذه العلة أمروا بفعل الخيرات التي تحدث عن أفعال النفس العقلية وتجنّب الشهوات التي تتولد عن النفس الحيوانية هـ

وأما العلة في تركهم الإيمان بمعاد أو ثواب أو عقاب فإنَّ إعادة الأجساد لم يقل بها أحد منهم 25 بتةً ولا وضحت في عقولهم .

^{١٤} The manuscript is not entirely clear here, but seems to have بينهما and not وبينهما.

Each of these descriptions derives from the actions of Him to Whom belong majesty and supreme exaltedness. As for their indications of the oneness of God (*tawhīd*), there are many and each one of (the philosophers) favours describing an indication which has appeared in his own mind. Thus Pythagoras says: if there are many who do not master their (own) essence, then He who masters His essence is one. Socrates says: if the beginning were two, time and place would necessarily belong to these two, because the distinction would already have made clear their two defining limits. Plato says: there are no infinite two, because each one of them would be defined by its other, for its being would be the end of the other.

As for the kind of names by which they name the Creator to Whom belong majesty and might, they acknowledge that He has no name except from His actions and intellect's pointing at that He does not cease to be like He is,¹⁸ as there is (already) a trace of every name among them. So He is named by His attribute or His actions. Therefore Hermes calls Him the Director of the universe,¹⁹ Pythagoras calls Him the Giver of life and Socrates calls Him the Cause of causes.²⁰ The meaning of Hermes saying "the Director of the universe" is that He has originated all created things by ordainment and direction, so they have happened according to the course of His ordainment and direction and proceed according to what is preconceived by His knowledge [12] and His will. The meaning of Pythagoras saying "the Giver of Life" is that the life of everything is from Him and through Him and due to His power. The meaning of Socrates saying "the Cause of causes" is that He is the First Cause for all universals and particulars and that there are intermediaries between Him and them. Already Plato has shown this meaning by his saying: if the cause of the generation of the son is the father, God is more deserving (to be said) to (be) the cause of the generation than the father due to the power which He has planted in the nature of the father, that is the power of procreation. Thus he has been clear that God is the First Cause of the son by the intermediary of the father. Likewise God to Whom belong majesty and might is the First Cause for the generation of every being. The philosophers say that what is in the elevated worlds is without intermediary²¹ and what is in the lower world is through intermediaries. I hope that you are satisfied with the discourse of these people which I have explained and with their views which I have, God willingly, shortened by omitting excessive elucidation.

As for the reason they have incited people to do good and abandon desires, it is as follows: since the intellect is in their opinion good (as well as) bad, (since) whatever is deemed good in respect of the intellect is in their opinion good and whatever is deemed bad in respect of the intellect is in their opinion bad, and (since) the virtues are [13] good in respect of the intellect, whereas the vices are ugly in respect of the intellect, they have ordered the people to obtain virtues and to avoid vices out of preference for what agrees with and manifest intellect and refutes and abolishes ignorance. They also agree that the animal soul engenders the bodily desires. When it makes use of those desires, it strengthens the beastly character like anger, injustice, violence, aggressiveness, love of domination and revenge and weakens the rational soul which engenders the approved character out of preference of justice, truth, forgiveness and kindness. For this reason they have ordered to do good (deeds) which occur due to the actions of the rational soul and ward off the desires which are engendered due to the animal soul.

As for the reason they have neglected the belief in the afterlife, reward or punishment, the resurrection of the bodies has been held by absolutely none of them nor has it appeared in their intellects.

¹⁸ In Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography* the sages are quoted with a similar statement, XVII, 4, p. 61.1-2 Rudolph: وكان رأيهم: وقولهم الخالص أنّ الباريّ الأوّل واحد محض وهو هو أنّ فقط.

¹⁹ Cf. the Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography* in which Anaximenes refers to God as the *mudabbir hādā kullihī*, XI, 17, p. 46.4 Rudolph.

²⁰ For the appellation "cause of the causes", cf. al-Kaskarī who mentions that some groups of ancient Greeks called the Maker like that and, a little further down, ascribes it also to Aristotle in his *Theology*, passage 65, p. 20.13-14 Holmberg and passage 76, p. 23.16-20: فقالت طائفة ممن أقرّ به من اليونانية القدماء بوجود الصانع إنّ الذي هو علّة علة موجود بالسؤال ... وقال أرسطوطاليس في كتاب تاولوجية إنّ علة العلة التي كلّ علة مختصرة منها موجودة بالسؤال خلا الصفتين اللتين أوجبت إحداهما الإقرار له بالابتداع وألزمنا الثانية الاعتراف له بالحكمة وإنّ سلبها عنه يوجب عدمه.

²¹ The concept of the intermediaries between God and His creation following intellect and soul also occurs on various occasions in Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography*, XVII, 4; XIX, 30; XX, 17; XXVI, 25f Rudolph.

وأجمعت هذه الطائفة على رجوع النفس بعد مفارقة هذا الجسد إلى عالمها الأوّل وأنّ الحياة والعلم من ذاتها وغير مفارق لها، وأشار بعضهم إلى مجازاة النفس بما عملت . فقال افلاطون في الإشارة إلى أمر المعاد أنّ العوالم ينظر الرفيع [14] منها إلى ما دونه لأنّ بعضها يؤثّر في بعض . فإذا صارت إلى النشأة الثانية نظر الوضيع إلى الرفيع فبلغت الأنفس غاياتها ووجدت لذاتها واستقرّت في عوالمها ونظرت إلى نور بارئها . فحينئذ يستمدّ العوالم العالية بعضها من بعض النور التام لأنّها 5 تشتغل عن الرذائل بنظرها إلى الفضائل ويستمدّ العالم الأعلى من نور الواحد الأوّل الذي له ملك كلّ شيء وهو محيط بكلّ شيء، ويستمدّ كلّ عالم مما فوقه حتّى يصل النور الأعلى إلى العوالم جزائر الطوبى فيسكن في نعيم وسرور بلا غمّ ولا همّ . وقال سقراطيس مبدع الكل ومدبّره يسمع ويرى الكل ويحرس الأخيار ويبيد الأشرار وكلّ تحت سلطانه وقبضته، ومن لم يتقرب بفعل الخير 10 لكنه هلك . ولم أقبلوا [غير هذين الرجلين في هذا المعنى شيئاً . ولو كان عندهم للمعاد حقيقة لتكلّموا عليه كما تكلموا على سائر الأشياء .

وأما كيف توجه لهم الكلام على وضع السنن والنواميس فإنّهم [15] اعتمدوا فيه على ما استحسنوه في عقولهم فأمرهم بفعله، وأما ما استقبحوه في عقولهم فأمرهم بالعدول عنه . وكانت عقولهم صافية وأخلاقهم وافية وكان كل واحد منهم يدرس حكمة من تقدّمه ويتدرّب بعلمه وينتج له 15 الفكر وجودة القريحة بما يضعه من الحكمة والسنن والنواميس للعامّة .

وأما امتناعهم من قبول الأنبياء عليهم السلام فإنّه لم يظهر في اليونانية نبيّ سمع بذكره ولا أحد عمل عندهم معجزة إلهية . وكان القوم يدفعون الأخبار بما لا يجوز في العقول ولم يظهر فيهم معجزة فيلزمهم الحجّة بالمشاهدة والمعينة ، فلهذه العلة امتنعوا من قبول الأنبياء عليهم السلام وكتبهم هـ 20

وأما حكاية ما عندي فيما سألته وشرح أقوالهم فيه فإنّي وجدت في كتب قديمة سريانية، قد نقلت من اليونانية من كلامهم أشياء انتزعت^{١٥} منها هذه الفصول ونقلتها إلى العربية، ونسبت كل فصل إلى صاحبه على ما وجدته بعد أن صححت المعاني بأوضح ما قدرت عليه من ألفاظ العربية . وأسألك الله أن يرزقنا وأياك السلامة [16] في الدين والدنيا والخلاص من الإثم والعار والنجاة مع الفائزين الذين عرفوه بقلوبهم وعبدوه بعقولهم بصلوات الأخيار الإبرار آمين هـ تمت 25 الرسالة وحسبنا الله ونعم المعين .

^{١٥} The manuscript reads انتزعت.

However, this group have agreed on the return of the soul to its previous world after the separation from this body,²² on that life and knowledge are of (the soul's) essence and inseparable from it. Some of them have pointed to the recompense of the soul for what it had done. Thus Plato says in pointing to the matter of the afterlife²³ that the high ones [14] among the worlds look at what is below them, because some of them produce effects on others. When they come to the moment of the second creation,²⁴ the low looks at the high, thus the souls reach their ends, exist due to their essence, settle in their worlds and look at the light of their Creator. Thus at that point one elevated world takes the perfect light from another, because they become diverted from the vices by their looking at the virtues and the uppermost world takes from the light of the First One Who has mastery over and Who encompasses everything. Every world takes from what is above it until the uppermost light reaches all the worlds and so they become light in light. He also says somewhere else: he who does good in this world comes, when he separates from it, to the islands of eternal life and thus dwells in felicity and joy without grief and sorrow. Socrates says: the Originator and Director of the universe hears and sees the universe, He protects the good and destroys the bad. Everything is under His reign and His hold and he who does not seek to approach unto God by doing good, he perishes. I have not preserved anything else on this topic by anyone other than these two men. If in their opinion, there had been any truth to the afterlife, they would have spoken about it like they have spoken about the other things.

As for how they faced the discourse about setting up rules and laws, they [15] relied for it upon what they deemed good in their intellects and thus ordered them (i.e. the people for whom they set up rules and laws) to do it. As for what they deemed bad in their intellects, they ordered them to refrain from it. Their intellects were pure and their character perfect. Each one of them would study wisdom from him who had preceded him, become devoted to his knowledge and bring forth, due to him, thinking and the excellent faculty to present the wisdom, rules and laws he set up for the common people.

As for their refusal to accept the prophets, upon them be peace, there appeared no prophet who made his message be heard in Greek, and no one performed a divine miracle amongst them. The crowd would reject the reports of that which was not possible according to the intellects, and no miracle appeared amongst them, so that the evidence would have compelled them to accept it by having observed and seen it with their own eyes. Therefore they refused to accept the prophets, upon them be peace, and their books.

As for the account of what I have available on what you have asked for and the explanation of their sayings therein, I have found it in old Syriac books. Parts of their sayings have already been rendered from Greek from which I extracted these chapters and rendered them into Arabic. I have ascribed each chapter to its author according to what I had found after having corrected the meanings by the clearest Arabic expressions of which I had been capable. I ask God to grant us the means of subsistence and you soundness [16] in religious and worldly (affairs), deliverance from sin and shame and salvation with the blessed who recognise Him with their hearts and serve Him with their intellects through the prayers of the best and pious. Amen. The treatise has come to an end. Our sufficiency is God and the beneficences of the Helper.²⁵

²² The same idea of the soul returning to its world, yet in the context of erring and cleansing is cited in al-Kaskarī under the refutable tag of transmigration which is strikingly absent in the *Most Precious Words*, passage 47, p. 15.14-19 Holmberg: وسائر من قال بالتناسخ يذكر أنها كانت في العالم العقلي فأزيلت عن مرتبتها (...) فألقبت إلى هذه الأجسام (...) رجعت إلى عالمها (...)

²³ Cf. al-Kindī's similar account of the soul's afterlife attributed to Plato and most of the other philosophers in *al-Qawl fī l-Nafs al-muḥtaṣar min kitāb Aristū wa-Falātun wa-sā'ir al-falāsifa*, p. 274.1-5 Abū Rīda. For an English translation and discussion of the passage, see Endress, "The Defense of Reason" (quoted above, n. 36), p. 9. For the concept of several worlds and the light of the Creator, see Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography*, VIII, 5; XI, 11; XIII, 16; XIV, 15; and XXV Rudolph.

²⁴ The same term occurs in the Ps-Ammonius' *Doxography*, XIII, 14 and 21; XX, 13 Rudolph.

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