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Māshad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

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Philoponus, or “Yahyā al-naḥwī”. An Overview

Cristina D’Ancona*

Abstract

Thanks to the translation of his anti-eternalist works, in the Arabic-speaking world Philoponus was known as a Christian who championed the createdness of the cosmos. Also some of his commentaries on Aristotle were translated. Contemporary scholarship on Philoponus discusses the different and at times opposed attitudes that coexist in his huge literary output: indeed, he is both a commentator of Aristotle in a Neoplatonic vein and a harsh critic of the eternity and divinity of the heavens – in itself a pivot of Aristotelian-Neoplatonic cosmology. A prominent feature of the ‘Arabic Philoponus’ is that the anti-eternalist stance, far from being the expression of his genuine position, appears as a device to make an agreement with the ruling Christian faith. This article surveys the current state of research on Philoponus, on his life and works in the Arabic sources, on the works translated, and on their influence on Muslim thought.

Known in the Arabic-speaking world as “John the Grammarian, Yahyā al-naḥwī”, the Alexandrian polymath John Philoponus (ca. 490–574) owes much of his fame among the Arab cultivated audience to his arguments for creation in time and against the eternity of the cosmos. A prolific commentator of Aristotle, Philoponus has been a source of inspiration for Muslim philosophers in their understanding of Aristotelian physics and cosmology, not however without being also criticised.

Studia graeco-arabica has recently published brand-new research on Philoponus’ commentary on the *Physics*;¹ in this same volume, the acquaintance of the encyclopedic writer al-Bīrūnī (d. ca. 1050/442) with Philoponus’ ideas receives fresh attention.² In consideration of the fact that the most recent comprehensive account of the ‘Arabic Philoponus’ dates from 2012,³ the present overview is offered to the readership of the journal as a complement to the two articles mentioned above.

1. An Outline of the Current State of Research

Scholarship on Philoponus is increasingly dominated by the problem of the difference between the doctrines he expounded in his Aristotelian commentaries on the one hand and, on the other, the full-scale

* My warmest thanks go to Concetta Luna for her reading of a first draft of this paper, that saved me from errors and obscurities. All the remaining shortcomings are mine.

¹ A. Rescigno, “Nuovi frammenti del commento di Filopono ai libri V-VIII della *Fisica*”, *Studia graeco-arabica* 7 (2017), pp. 75-104.

² P. Hullmeine, “Al-Bīrūnī’s Use of Philoponus for Arguing Against the Eternity of the World”, above, pp. 183-201.

³ E. Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe”, in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques*, vol. Va, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2012, pp. 503-63. For a detailed commented bibliography, taking into account every aspect of Philoponus’ biography and works, cf. A.-Ph. Segonds - G.G. Giardina - I. Kupreeva - R. Goulet, “Philopon, Jean”, *ibid.*, pp. 455-502. Prior to Gannagé, overviews of the Arabic reception of Philoponus’ works have been offered by R. Wisnovsky, “Yahyā al-naḥwī”, in *EP*, XI (2003), pp. 251-3, and E. Giannakis, “Philoponus, Arabic”, in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011, pp. 975-8.

attack he launched mostly in his *De Aeternitate mundi*⁴ – a refutation of Proclus' own *On the Eternity of the Cosmos*⁵ – against one of the pivots of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic cosmologies: the eternity and divinity of the heavens. So great is the gulf between the attitude of Philoponus as a commentator of Aristotle and Philoponus as a polemist, that the point was noticed as something requiring explanation already in the 1916 entry of the *Paulys Realencyclopädie*. In their attempt to account for the blatant discrepancy, the authors A. Gudeman and W. Kroll went as far as to suggest that Philoponus was a convert to the Christian faith, having been before a philosopher, a pagan, and a Neoplatonist.⁶ Later on, however, it was established that at least one of the Aristotelian commentaries, that on the *Meteorologica*, was written during the alleged 'Christian' period of his life.⁷ Note, in addition, that there is no ground for doubting that John Philoponus was born a Christian.⁸

Taking all this into account, other reconstructions have been advanced to explain the coexistence in one and the same scholar of a subtle Neoplatonic commentator of Aristotle and a relentless critic of Aristotelian-Neoplatonic cosmology – a man whose works were destined to be the target of Simplicius' violent counter-attacks. In this light, the dating of Philoponus' commentaries on Aristotle has been re-examined time and again, still under the hypothesis that his long career as a writer was split into two,⁹ but no longer assuming a change in religious allegiance; rather, pointing to 529 – the year of the closure of the Neoplatonic school of Athens and also the year of the publication of the *De Aeternitate mundi* – as to the watershed of a twofold intellectual life. According to this account, before the momentous year 529 Philoponus was following in the footsteps of his teacher, the Neoplatonist Ammonius son of Hermeias (435/45-517/26);¹⁰ in 529, Philoponus leveled his objections against the eternity of the cosmos and the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic cosmology as a whole; finally and as a consequence, after 529 he felt obliged to revise the positions held in the Aristotelian commentaries.¹¹

⁴ Ioannes Philoponus, *De Aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* edidit H. Rabe, Teubner, Leipzig 1899 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), repr. Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim - Zürich - New York 1984.

⁵ Information on this treatise, lost in itself but embedded in Philoponus' *De Aeternitate mundi* and extant also in the Arabic translation – this time as an independent work, as detailed below, n. 174 – is provided by C. Luna - A.-Ph. Segonds (†), "Proclus de Lycie", in R. Goulet (ed.), *DPhA*, vol. Vb, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2012, pp. 1546-657, esp. pp. 1622-4, and G. Endress, "Proclus de Lycie. Œuvres transmises par la tradition arabe", *ibid.*, pp. 1657-74, esp. pp. 1657-61.

⁶ A. Gudeman - W. Kroll, "Iohannes Philoponos", in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung begonnen von G. Wissowa (...), IX 2 (1916), J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart 1916, coll. 1764-1795.

⁷ É. Évrard, "Les convictions religieuses de Jean Philopon et la date de son commentaire aux *Météorologiques*", *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des lettres, sciences morales et politiques*, Série 5, 39 (1953), pp. 299-355.

⁸ C. Scholten, *Johannes Philoponos. De Opificio mundi / Über die Erschaffung der Welt griechisch/deutsch*, Herder, Freiburg - Basel - Wien - Barcelona - Rom - New York 1997 (Fontes Christiani 23/1, 2, 3), vol. 1, p. 22.

⁹ The bipartition was summarised as follows by R. Sorabji, "John Philoponus", in Id. (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, Duckworth, London 1987, pp. 1-40, here p. 1: "John Philoponus, a Christian schooled in Neoplatonism in the sixth century A.D., mounted a massive attack on the Aristotelian science of his day. The attack was tailored to fit his Christian belief, a central contention being that the matter of the universe had a beginning, as the orthodox conception of creation required. (...) In the later part of his life, Philoponus turned to contentious matters of Christian doctrine".

¹⁰ Overview and up-to-date bibliography: D. Blank, "Ammonius Hermeiou and his School", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2012, II, pp. 654-66 and 1128-30 (Bibliography).

¹¹ The coincidence of the same year 529 as the date of the closure of the school of Athens and the publication of the *De Aeternitate mundi* was remarked by Évrard, "Les convictions religieuses de Jean Philopon", p. 357, and H.D. Saffrey, "Le chrétien Jean Philopon et la survivance de l'École d'Alexandrie au VI^e siècle", *Revue des études grecques* 67 (1954), pp. 396-410, esp. p. 407, but emphasis on the date 529 as Philoponus' turning point has been laid in particular by K. Verrycken,

This presentation has not been accepted in scholarship without question, though: difficulties of various kinds have been pointed to,¹² a refinement of the account summarised above has been advanced,¹³

“The Development of Philoponus’ Thought and its Chronology”, in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed. The Ancient Commentators and their Influence*, Duckworth, London 1990, pp. 233-74. Verrycken labels “Philoponus 1” the philosophical system held by Philoponus when he was working in the main stream of Alexandrian Neoplatonism, while “Philoponus 2” stands for the new vision, totally re-oriented by Christian theology: “The system of Philoponus 2 (after 529) is no longer Neoplatonic. First of all, it clearly has the concept of a supreme personal God: the creative Intellect is the highest, not the second highest, principle. Creation is no longer a necessary process: it is the result of God’s free decision. Aristotle is said now to have rejected Plato’s theory of Ideas. This means that the Aristotelian God is again considered merely as the final cause of the world’s motion and order. The ontology of the later Philoponus had become dualistic instead of hierarchical: God is independent of the world, the world is no longer divine. The ‘secularisation’ of the world applies to intellects and souls as well as to sensible reality. Philoponus 2 argues at length against the eternity of movement, time and the world, and against Aristotle’s theory of the eternal fifth element as the matter of the heavens. He even goes as far as to deny the possibility of an eternal matter” (p. 237).

¹² C. Scholten, *Antike Naturphilosophie und christliche Kosmologie in der Schrift De Opificio mundi des Johannes Philoponos*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1996 (Patristische Texte und Studien, 45), esp. pp. 116-39; Id., *Johannes Philoponos. De Opificio mundi*, quoted above (n. 8), pp. 33-35, pointing in particular to the fact that nothing in the *De Aeternitate mundi* indicates that Philoponus’ objections against eternalism were meant to promote the Christian views about the origin of the cosmos: “Man hat gemeint, das Datum der Schrift aetm. müsse etwas mit der Schließung der platonischen Akademie in Athen durch Justinian im selben Jahr 529 zu tun haben, sei es, daß sie die entsprechende Munition für diesen Schritt liefern oder daß sie die Schließung auch der alexandrinischen Hochschule – mit Erfolg – verhindern sollte, indem sie – scheinbare – Verchristlichung der dortigen Philosophie demonstrierte. Der Schrift selbst ist in dieser Hinsicht jedoch nichts zu entnehmen. Weder geschieht die Widerlegung des Proklos in aetm. aus diesem Grunde, noch täuscht Johannes Philoponos die Christlichkeit vor, um eine philosophische Karriere starten zu können, noch rechtfertigt er vor der christlichen Öffentlichkeit verklausuliert seine Beziehung zu Ammonius” (p. 33). The same view is echoed in two English translations, one complete and the other partial, of Proclus’ and Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate Mundi*. First H.S. Lang - A.D. Macro, *Proclus, On the Eternity of the World, De Aeternitate mundi*, Greek Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, University of California Press, Berkeley 2002, and then M. Share, *Philoponus, Against Proclus’s On the Eternity of the World 1-5*, Cornell U.P., Ithaca - New York 2005 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), contend that Proclus’ criticism of the idea of a first moment of the cosmos is directed against other Platonists (e.g. Atticus) rather than against the Christian creation, and that Philoponus’ reply is directed to reassess a verbatim interpretation of the γέγονεν of the *Timaeus* (“it had a beginning”). Share, however, emphasises that besides arguing as a Neoplatonic insider, Philoponus employs Neoplatonic arguments to assess the Christian position. See also R. Sorabji, *Introduction* to the 2nd edition of *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, London 2010, esp. pp. 14-18. Cf. also “Philopon (Jean). Biographie et chronologie”, in Segonds - Giardina - Kupreeva-Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), pp. 456-62, here p. 457: “(...) rien ne permet de mettre cette date [i.e. 529] en rapport avec l’interdiction de l’enseignement de la philosophie à Athènes en 529 (...) et d’en déduire une possible intention, de la part de Philopon, de se distinguer de ses malheureux contreparties d’Athènes”. See also the following note.

¹³ K. Verrycken, “John Philoponus”, in Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (above, n. 10), pp. 733-55 and 1145-7 (Bibliography). While still adhering to his 1990 presentation of the philosophy of the ‘early Philoponus’ as completely different from that of the ‘later Philoponus’, Verrycken elaborates more on the dating of the commentary on the *Physics* and what he considers to be its revisions. A discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this paper, but let me briefly say that the very notion of ‘revision’ adopted in Verrycken’s argument sounds ill-defined to me: instead of being something required by the actual form in which the text has come down to us, ‘revision’ means here something like ‘a passage containing a tenet that does not fit with the main trend of the principal text’, to the effect of having a sort of *petitio principii*: since the commentary on the *Physics* contains positions that do not fit with the idea of Philoponus’ change of mind in 529, then it was revised later, the ‘proof’ of the later revision being the presence of such a position. On a more factual ground, the idea that the commentary on the *Physics* contains later additions has been challenged, as for the so-called ‘Corollaries on place and void’, by K. Algra and J. van Ophuijsen in Philoponus, *On Aristotle’s Physics 4.1-5* trans. by K. Algra - J. van Ophuijsen, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney 2012 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), pp. 3-6: “All in all, then, the evidence seems to suggest that Philoponus’ critique of the Aristotelian theory

to arrive eventually at a modified picture of the diverging lines of Philoponus' thought.¹⁴ Individual points of doctrine which are in themselves of the highest importance, and are also apt to shed light on the question of the consistency (or lack thereof) of his position, cannot be discussed here;¹⁵ even this over-simplified picture, however, gives an idea of the key role played in the history of subsequent philosophy by Philoponus' treatment of Aristotle as the latter was read in the school of Ammonius. Of this history, the present overview explores only a tiny segment: the reception of Philoponus in the Arabic-speaking world. This will be done by means of a list of *realia* about (i) Philoponus' life and works in Arabic sources; (ii) the works that are extant in Syriac and Arabic translations; (iii) their influence on Muslim philosophy and theology.

2. *The Life and Works of John Philoponus in the Arabic Sources*

The *K. al-Fibrīst* by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995/385)¹⁶ contains information on Philoponus in a specific entry¹⁷ as well as in the entry on Aristotle.¹⁸ Subsequent bibliographical works, in particular the *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā* by Ibn al-Qiftī (d. 1248/646)¹⁹ and the '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā*' by Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a (d. 1270/668)²⁰ offer further information. Entries on Philoponus are included also in two of the compilations belonging to the so-called "*Siwān al-ḥikma* cycle of texts",²¹ namely the *Tatimmat Siwān al-ḥikma* by Zāḥir al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī (d. 1170/565)²² and the *Muntakhab Siwān al-ḥikma* now attributed to Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Nisābūrī al-Ġaznawī (d. ca. 1194/590).²³

of place originated earlier in his career and that the juxtaposition of passages that explain and defend Aristotle on the one hand, and passages that are critical of his position on the other, is to be ascribed to Philoponus' conception of the duties of a commentator on a text like this" (p. 6).

¹⁴ R. Sorabji, "Dating of Philoponus' Commentaries on Aristotle and his Divergence from his Teacher Ammonius", in Id. (ed.), *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators*, Bloomsbury, London - Oxford - New York - New Delhi - Sydney 2016, pp. 367-92, discusses the chronology of the commentaries, taking into account also P. Golitsis, *Les commentaires de Simplicius et de Jean Philopon à la Physique d'Aristote: tradition et innovation*, de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2008 (Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca et byzantina. Quellen und Studien, 3).

¹⁵ Among these, at least Philoponus' doctrine of matter should be mentioned. F.A.J. de Haas has demonstrated, in his outstanding *John Philoponus' New Definition of Prime Matter. Aspects of its Background in Neoplatonism and the Ancient Commentary Tradition*, Brill, Leiden - New York - Köln 1997 (Philosophia Antiqua, 69), that two views about matter coexist in Philoponus' works, one of them more prominent in his commentary on the *Physics*, the other one worked out chiefly in the *De Aeternitate mundi*, the latter being the properly Philoponian identification of prime matter with three-dimensional extension.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, mit Anmerkungen hrsg. von G. Flügel (...), nach dessen Tode besorgt von J. Roediger u. A. Müller, I-II, Vogel, Leipzig 1871-1872; *Kitāb al-Fibrīst li-n-Nadīm*, ed. R. Tajaddud, Marvi, Tehran 1971; English trans. B. Dodge, *Al-Nadīm. The Fibrīst, a Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, Columbia U.P., New York - London 1970.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, pp. 254.19-255.5 Flügel = pp. 314.27-315.10 Tajaddud.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, pp. 246.25-252.4 Flügel = pp. 307.9-312.20 Tajaddud.

¹⁹ Ibn al-Qiftī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā*, auf Grund der Vorarbeiten A. Müllers hrsg. von J. Lippert, Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig 1903, pp. 354.5-357.12.

²⁰ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā*', ed. I. Ibn al-Taḥḥān (= A. Müller), Cairo - Königsberg 1882-1884 (repr. F. Sezgin, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, *Islamic Medicine*, vol. 1-2), vol. 1, pp. 104.3-105.31.

²¹ For an overview of this doxographical work, in itself lost but attested by abridgments and supplements, cf. D. Gutas, "The *Siwān al-ḥikma* Cycle of Texts", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102 (1982), pp. 645-50.

²² Zāḥir al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Siwān al-ḥikma*, taḥqīq wa-ḍabṭ wa-ta'līq Rafīq al-'Aḡam, Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnāni, Beirut 1994, pp. 47.5-49.14.

²³ Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistāni, *Muntakhab Siwān al-Ḥikmah et trois traités, publiés, annotés et préfacés* par 'A. Badawī, Intisharāt-i Bunjād-i Faranj-i Irān, Tehran 1974, pp. 276.4-279.11; D.M. Dunlop (ed.), *The Muntakhab Siwān al-Ḥikmah of Abū Sulaymān as-Sijistāni, Arabic Text, Introduction and Indices*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague - Paris -

In all these pieces of information Philoponus is called “Yahyā al-naḥwī, John the Grammarian”,²⁴ a name at times completed by other epithets, most frequently “al-Iskandarānī, the Alexandrian”; also the label “*muḥibb al-tāʿb*, the lover of labour” was known by some.²⁵

2.1 Philoponus’ Life in the Arabic Sources

The sources mentioned above intermingle reliable information – like Philoponus’ allegiance to monophysite Christology or his discipleship with Ammonius son of Hermias²⁶ – with blatant chronological errors, that transform him into a contemporary of the Arab conquest of Alexandria (642/21).

According to Ibn al-Nadīm, Philoponus was the pupil of Sāwārī, namely Severus of Antioch (d. 538), to whom Philoponus is actually indebted for his Christological doctrine.²⁷ He was a follower, continues Ibn al-Nadīm, of the Jacobite church (*madḥab al-naṣārā al-yaʿqūbiyya*), sticking to heterodox doctrines about the Trinity. Though condemned by a council, Philoponus continued to hold his views and was deposed from his position as bishop of several churches in Egypt. Then the chronological mistake comes, that features also in the later accounts by Ibn al-Qifṭī and Ibn Abī Uṣaybīʿa. Ibn al-Nadīm claims that Philoponus lived until the Muslim

New York 1979, pp. 110.23-113.14 (= lines 2399-2464 in Dunlop’s numeration). However, note that Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī al-mantiqī (d. after 981/371) is no longer considered as the author of the *Šiwān al-ḥikma*: cf. esp. W. Al-Qadi, “*Kitāb Šiwān al-ḥikma*: Structure, Composition, Authorship and Sources”, *Der Islam* 58 (1981), pp. 87-124, and H. Daiber, “Der *Šiwān al-ḥikma* und Abū Sulaimān al-Mantiqī as-Siġistānī in der Forschung”, *Arabica* 31 (1984), pp. 36-68. Finally, for the proposal to identify the author of the *Muntahab Šiwān al-ḥikma* with the Ghazna scholar and belletrist Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Nisābūrī al-Gaznawī, cf. M.T. Danishpazuh, “Mukhtasar fi dhikr al-hukama al-yunaniyyin wa-l-milliyin”, *Farḥanj-i Iran Zamin* 8 (1959), pp. 311-31, a study that I know only through F. Griffel, “On the Character, Content and Authorship of *Itmām Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma* and the Identity of the Author of *Muntakhab Šiwān al-ḥikma*”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133 (2013), pp. 1-20. Griffel concurs with Danishpazuh in propounding al-Gaznawī’s authorship and advances further arguments.

²⁴ The label traces back to Philoponus himself, who in the testimony of Simplicius, *In De Caelo*, p. 119.7 Heiberg, describes himself as a ‘grammarian’: ... οὗτος ὁ Γραμματικὸν ἑαυτὸν ἐπιγράφων (cf. also Simpl., *In Phys.*, p. 1326.38 Diels: ὁ δὲ Γραμματικὸς ἐκεῖνος). This label features, transliterated into Arabic and accompanied by the translation, in Abū l-Faraġ ibn al-ʿIbrī, *Tārīḥ muḥtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. A. Šālīḥānī, Imprimerie catholique, Beyrouth 1890, p. 175.13-14: “Renowned at that time among the Muslims was John, whom we name the Grammarian (*al-maʿrūf ʿindanā bi-ġarmāṭiqūs*), i.e. the Grammarian (*ayy al-naḥwī*)”.

²⁵ On the meaning of the label ὁ φιλόπονος, that might also be interpreted as indicating the affiliation to the group of Christian militants labelled φιλόπονοι or σπουδαῖοι, cf. Segonds - Giardina - Kupreeva - Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), pp. 460-2, with discussion of previous literature. The label ὁ φιλόπονος, whose first occurrence is in the *Suda* (*ibid.*, p. 460), was known also to the Arab readership: cf. Zāḥir al-Dīn al-Bayḥaqī, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*, p. 49.4 al-ʿAġam (*muḥibb al-tāʿb*, ‘lover of labour’: al-ʿAġam has instead *yaġību al-tāʿb*). For further renderings of ‘Philoponus’ as *al-muġtabid* (‘the Diligent’) or as *al-ḥarīṣ* (‘the Zealous’) cf. J.L. Kraemer, “A Lost Passage from Philoponus’ *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965), pp. 318-37, esp. p. 321, n. 15.

²⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybīʿa, *Uyūn al-ʿanbāʿ fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʿ*, I, p. 104.9-12 Müller, quotes Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī (see above n. 22), who claims (i) that Philoponus was the pupil of Ammonius; (ii) that Philoponus made a statement about the relationship between Ammonius and Proclus: “A remark. [Abū Sulaymān] said: Yahyā al-naḥwī lived at the time of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ. [ʿAmr] visited [Yahyā al-naḥwī] who lived in Alexandria. He studied with Ammonius [son of Hermias], and Ammonius studied with Proclus. Yahyā says that he reached [the days of] Proclus, but he was an old man from whom it was impossible to benefit on account of his age”: English trans., and commentary on this passage, by J.L. Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islām. Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī and his Circle*, Brill, Leiden 1986 (Studies in Islamic Culture and History Series, 8), p. 97.

²⁷ U.M. Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century. A Study and Translation of the Arbitrator*, Peeters, Leuven 2001, p. 41.

conquest of Alexandria by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ (d. 664/23) and that this commander honoured him, granting him also a position.²⁸ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a has the same piece of information, and refers explicitly to the record by Ibn al-Nadīm.²⁹ In the *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā* by Ibn al-Qifṭī,³⁰ followed by Abū l-Farağ ibn al-Ībrī (Barhebreus, d. 1286/684),³¹ this account develops into the narrative of an exchange that ended in the burning of the Library of Alexandria by order of the Caliph 'Umar. According to this narrative, John the Grammarian, emboldened by the favour of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, asked him for permission to take from the conquered city those goods that, while useless for the conquerors, were of great value for him and his Christian community: the "books of wisdom".³² 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ replied that the advice of the Caliph had to be asked on this matter and dispatched a letter; in the reply, the famous saying by the Caliph was contained "if what is written in these books agrees with the Book of God, they are useless; if not, they are not required; in both cases, destroy them".³³

Leaving aside the legendary aspects of the narrative,³⁴ one thing is sure: it has nothing to do with John Philoponus, who, as J.L. Kraemer has it, "would have had to have been 156 years old at that time".³⁵ Towards the end of the entry by Ibn al-Nadīm, the same anachronism reappears. Referring to a passage from the commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* where Philoponus mentions the "year 233 of Diocletian's era" (corresponding to 517 A.D.),³⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm speaks instead of the year 343, namely 627 A.D., and adds the following remark: "This indicates that between us and Yaḥyā al-naḥwī there are more than three hundred years. It is reasonable to suppose that the writing of the commentary on this book was at the beginning of his life, because he lived during the days of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ".³⁷

The possible explanations of the chronological mistake, among which the homonymy with other priests or scholars named "John", have been discussed time and again, as detailed by J.L. Kraemer³⁸ and E. Gannagé.³⁹ She sides with Kraemer in considering that "Whatever the true origin of these legends, the purpose they served was to link the terminal point of ancient Greek science and philosophy with the initial stage of the succeeding Arabo-Islamic civilization. This was reinforced by making Philoponus the teacher of the first scientist of Islam, Khālīd b. Yazīd".⁴⁰

The latter piece of information does not feature in the bio-bibliographical literature listed above (Ibn al-Nadīm, Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a), rather in the *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma*.⁴¹ The

²⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 254.20-24 Flügel = pp. 314.28-315.4 Tajaddud.

²⁹ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, *Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-a'ibbā'*, I, p. 104.3-9 Müller.

³⁰ Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā*, pp. 354.14-356.2 Lippert.

³¹ Abū l-Farağ ibn al-Ībrī, *Tārīḥ muḥtaṣar al-duwal*, pp. 175.13-176.12 Šāliḥānī (above n. 24).

³² The expression is *kutub al-ḥikma*: Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā*, p. 355.3 Lippert.

³³ Cf. Ibn al-Qifṭī and Abū l-Farağ ibn al-Ībrī, quoted above n. 30 and 31.

³⁴ Cf. Q.A. Qassem, "The Arab Story of the Destruction of the Ancient Library of Alexandria", in M. El-Abbadi - O. Mounir Fathallah (eds.), *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2008, pp. 207-11; B. Lewis, "The Arab Destruction of the Library of Alexandria: Anatomy of a Myth", *ibid.*, pp. 213-17, both discussing previous literature.

³⁵ Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam* (above, n. 26), p. 97.

³⁶ Philop., *In Phys.*, p. 703.16-17 Vitelli.

³⁷ *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 255.2-5 Flügel = p. 315.8-10 Tajaddud, trans. Dodge, p. 613.

³⁸ Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, p. 98.

³⁹ Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe" (above, n. 3), pp. 504-9.

⁴⁰ Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, pp. 98-9.

⁴¹ *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma* (cf. above, n. 23), p. 276.8 Badawī = p. 111.1 Dunlop (line 2401 in Dunlop's numeration).

“zenith of the confusion”⁴² is reached by the *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*. Here al-Bayhāqī “makes him a contemporary of the fourth Caliph ‘Alī in Persia and the teacher of Khalīd b. Yazīd”.⁴³ Another baffling point is that al-Bayhāqī first claims that according to Avicenna Philoponus “deceived” the Christians, then seems to pretend that, still according to Avicenna, most of what is exposed by al-Ġazālī in the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* was derived from Philoponus.⁴⁴ The blatant impossibility of having Avicenna (d. 1037/428) commenting upon the sources of al-Ġazālī (d. 1111/504) was described by M. Meyerhof as another example of the errors that marred al-Bayhāqī’s account.⁴⁵ However, another explanation is possible: the report from Avicenna consists only in the claim that Philoponus “deceived the Christians”, while the assessment of Philoponus’ influence on al-Ġazālī is al-Bayhāqī’s own opinion – and a true one indeed, because, as we shall see below, Philoponus’ arguments for creation in time were endorsed in Muslim theology.⁴⁶ As for the remark attributed to Avicenna that Philoponus “deceived the Christians”, it drives us to a major point of interest in the entire question of the “Arabic Philoponus”: that of the alleged dissimulation on Philoponus’ part of his real ideas about the nature of the heavens and Aristotle’s doctrines.

While in the Greek sources there is no trace of doubleness lying behind Philoponus’ attack against Proclus and Aristotle, rather the violent counter-arguments of Simplicius are all directed against Philoponus’ own ideas,⁴⁷ in the Arabic sources the anti-eternalist polemics is repeatedly accounted

⁴² M. Meyerhof, “‘Alī al-Bayhāqī’s *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*. A Biographical Work on Learned Men of Islam”, *Osiris* 8 (1948), pp. 122-217, here p. 144.

⁴³ Zāhīr al-Dīn al-Bayhāqī, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma* (above, n. 22), pp. 47.7-8 and 49.6 al-‘Aḡam. S. Brock, “A Syriac Life of John of Dailam”, *Parole de l’Orient* 10 (1981-82), pp. 123-89, discusses the possibility that al-Bayhāqī’s confusion was based on his erroneous identification between “Yahyā al-naḥwī” and John of Daylam (d. 738): al-Bayhāqī labels “Yahyā al-naḥwī” also “al-Daylāmī” (p. 47.6 al-‘Aḡam).

⁴⁴ Zāhīr al-Dīn al-Bayhāqī, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*, pp. 48.10-49.3 al-‘Aḡam.

⁴⁵ Meyerhof, “‘Alī al-Bayhāqī’s *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*”, p. 144, n. 55: “As Ibn Sīnā died twenty years before al-Ghazālī was born, al-Bayhāqī’s narrative is here again erroneous”.

⁴⁶ See below pp. 230-1, 238-9 and notes 224 and 266.

⁴⁷ Simplicius’ invective is that Philoponus’ ideas are dull and he as a person is stupid, ignorant, and daring, with no accusation however of being insincere (on this, more later in this same footnote): cf. Ph. Hoffmann, “Sur quelques aspects de la polémique de Simplicius contre Jean Philopon”, in I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie. Actes du colloque international de Paris, 28 sept. - 1^{er} oct. 1985*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1987 (Peripatoi, 15), pp. 183-221 (English trans. “Simplicius’ Polemics. Some Aspects of Simplicius’ Polemical Writings against John Philoponus: from Invective to a Reaffirmation of the Transcendence of the Heavens”, in Sorabji [ed.], *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* [above, n. 8], pp. 57-83). To sum up the charges against Philoponus with Hoffmann, who carefully notes for each epithet countless references, “Simplicius excels in identifying in Philoponus a patchwork of intellectual and moral shortcomings; not only, as we have seen, a lack of both culture and education, but also superficiality, opaque reasoning, mindless folly, inattention, haste, knavery, and perversity. He is indeed in a sorry state, being drunk, mad, and crazed” (p. 64 of the English version). Dissimulation as a way to explain the discrepancy between Philoponus as a commentator of Aristotle and Philoponus as an anti-Aristotelian polemist is not supported by Simplicius’ reactions, even if he sometimes speaks also of opportunism. This, however, does not equal claiming that Philoponus, for Simplicius, was not convinced of his crazy ideas. For this reason Verricken, “The Development of Philoponus’ Thought (above, n. 11), pp. 259-61, sounds not convincing to me. Here he tentatively credits Simplicius with some sort of awareness of Philoponus’ secret allegiance to his ‘old’ ideas even after his “sudden change of position”, and this on the basis of *In De Caelo*, p. 59.13-15 Heiberg, that Verricken translates as “No one aimed in such an unserious way, because of the prevailing worthless conceptions about the demiurge of the world, only at seeming to oppose those who demonstrate the eternity of the world”. In Verricken’s interpretation, this passage elicits the possibility that “Simplicius knows more about Philoponus than he claims. If this is correct, at least one of his sneers at Philoponus might be taken to allude to the insincerity of his adversary”. However, Simplicius’ point here is that Philoponus’ objections are dictated not by scientific reasons, but by his anxiety to show off as an opponent of Aristotle.

for as an attempt on Philoponus' part to conceal his real opinions. This idea features in al-Fārābī, in Avicenna, and in the "*Šiwān al-ḥikma* cycle of texts".

On a chronological basis, the reconstruction of the genesis of this topic in Arabic literature should begin with al-Fārābī (d. 950/338) and with the question of the relationship between his version of the topic – on which more later – and that of the "*Šiwān al-ḥikma* cycle of texts".⁴⁸ However, since we have just seen that dissimulation features in al-Bayhaqī's account as a claim made by Avicenna, let's try to reconstruct the story from its end, so to speak, discussing first the relationship among the attestations of the topic in the two works issued from the *Šiwān al-ḥikma*, and in Avicenna. For the sake of clarity, let's recall the dates: the terminus ante quem of the *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma* is 1170⁴⁹ and that of the *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma*, if we accept al-Ġaznawī's authorship, is 1194⁵⁰ (in any case, no earlier than 1190⁵¹).

Both the *Tatimma* and the *Muntaḥab* claim that Philoponus' intention in challenging the eternity of the cosmos was to cheat the Christians. Just before the passage discussed above,⁵² al-Bayhaqī says that the Christians tried to kill him, and ascribes to Avicenna the claim: *huwa Yaḥyā al-naḥwī al-mumawwih 'alā l-našara*, "John Philoponus, who deceived the Christians".⁵³ This claim gets confirmation in Avicenna's *Responses to al-Birūnī*, where he maintains that Philoponus made the

The context of the passage is the following: first Simplicius claims that Philoponus presumes to make a good point against Aristotle by enumerating others' objections on the fifth element; unfortunately, he is totally in the dark about the real issue at stake (p. 59.6-10); then, Simplicius subdivides these objections into two groups: some people went completely astray about Aristotle's thought, like Philoponus himself; others understood Aristotle's point, but were baffled in comparing his doctrine with the phenomena: of these, some wanted to demonstrate that the heavens are not simple (p. 59.10-13), others "devise some other pieces of cleverness. But none of these people are frivolous the way this person is; they do not make use of the paltry ideas concerning the creator of the cosmos which are <now> dominant, limiting themselves to paying attention to seeming to be in opposition to those who demonstrate that the cosmos is everlasting (εἰς μόνον ἀπέβλεψεν τὸ ἀντιτετράχθαι δοκεῖν τοῖς αἰδίων τὸν κόσμον ἀποδεικνῦσι διὰ τὰς κρατούσας εὐτελεῖς ἐννοίας περὶ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον δημιουργήσαντος)" (trans. I. Mueller, *Simplicius: On Aristotle On the Heavens 1.2-3*, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney 2011 [Ancient Commentators on Aristotle], p. 94 slightly modified). As shown by the context, in interpreting δοκεῖν as an allusion to insincerity Verricken overstates his case.

⁴⁸ On a purely chronological basis al-Fārābī comes first with respect to the original *Šiwān al-ḥikma* – now lost – even in the case that it was the work of Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī, who, as mentioned above, died ca. 981. The chronological priority is even greater if we consider that the *Šiwān al-ḥikma* is now ascribed to authors later than al-Siġistānī (see above, n. 23 for the relevant bibliography). On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the *Šiwān al-ḥikma* is a compilation, and the materials it derives from were in all likelihood available to al-Fārābī, who participated in the Baghdad circle of Aristotelians, as Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī did later on. Thus, one cannot rule out the possibility that al-Fārābī and the compiler of the *Šiwān al-ḥikma* had independent access to some source stating that Philoponus' intention was to deceive his co-religionists.

⁴⁹ See above n. 22.

⁵⁰ See above, n. 22. Whoever was the author of the *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma*, "we can safely assume that the *Muntaḥab* was written after the *Mukhtaṣar* in the latter decades of the sixth/twelfth century or in the first decades of the seventh/thirteenth century": Al-Qadi, "*Kitāb Šiwān al-ḥikma*" (above, n. 23), p. 93.

⁵¹ As noticed by Gutas, "The *Siwan al-hikma* Cycle of Texts" (above, n. 21), the mention of al-Suhrawardī in the *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma* provides a safe *terminus post quem*: "This abridgment was made sometime between ca. 1191 A.D., the date of Suhrawardī Maqtūl's execution, which the *Muntaḥib* mentions as having recently occurred (Dunlop, p. xxv) and 1241 A.D., the date of the earliest ms." (p. 646).

⁵² See above, p. 209 and n. 44.

⁵³ Zāhir al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī, *Tatimmat Šiwān al-ḥikma*, p. 49.1 al-'Aġam. For a commentary on the meaning of *al-mumawwih* cf. Kraemer, "A Lost Passage from Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation" (above, n. 25), p. 323 n. 27.

Christians believe that he was at odds with Aristotle, while being in agreement with him.⁵⁴ Shortly after al-Bayhaqī’s *Tatimma*, the *Muntaḥab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*⁵⁵ claims that Philoponus undertook the refutation of eternalism “in order to pacify the wrath of his fellow Christians, aroused by his preoccupation with the exegesis of Aristotle’s works, and to protect himself against their threats of diverse forms of duress”.⁵⁶

All these accounts – those in the “*Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* cycle of texts” as well as Avicenna’s in the *Responses to al-Bīrūnī* – have in common the view that in his anti-eternalist works Philoponus did not express his true convictions; rather, his stance was dictated by more or less sordid reasons: one of the two versions of the story reported in the *Muntaḥab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* alludes to compensation in money.⁵⁷

Thus far, we have (a) the *Tatimma* and the *Muntaḥab* claiming that Philoponus’ attack was not sincere; (b) Avicenna’s passage in the *Responses to al-Bīrūnī*, stating the same. Not only does the *Tatimma* refer explicitly to Avicenna, but also on a chronological basis (b) should be the source of (a). Obviously, if (a) was already present in the lost *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, which either antedates Avicenna or is coeval with him,⁵⁸ then both (a) and (b) may have found in the lost *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* the topic of dissimulation. What seems to tip the scale in favour of the possibility that (b) was the source of (a) is the fact that the wording of the *Tatimma*, i.e., “John Philoponus, who deceived the Christians”,⁵⁹ looks like an abridgement of Avicenna’s more elaborate claim that “John Philoponus (...) pretended for the Christians to be in disagreement with Aristotle”.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ To the exchange between al-Bīrūnī and Avicenna about Philoponus is dedicated the article quoted above, n. 2. For the passage where Avicenna claims that Philoponus’ intention was to cheat the Christians cf. *Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī wa-Ibn Sīnā al-aṣīla wa-l-aḡwiba*, ed. M. Muḥaqqiq, English Introd. by S.H. Nasr, Anjuman-i Āthār wa-Mafāḥir-i Faranjī, Tehran 2005 (1st edition 1973), p. 13.51-52. In Hullmeine’s translation (see above, p. 187), the passage runs: “it seems to me that you [i.e. al-Bīrūnī] adopted this objection from John Philoponus, who pretended for the Christians to be in disagreement with Aristotle”. In another passage from the *Refutation of Astrology*, on which attention has been called by L. Muehlethaler, Avicenna says: “It is related of Philoponus that although he rejected Aristotle’s argument, his aim was to support the Christians of that time so that it would not be said of him that he favors Aristotle’s teachings. In fact, he was aware of the failings of the [Christians’] views and he has a statement on wisdom and science that accords with that of Aristotle, and shows that what he says does not represent his [true] opinion, and that his outer [expression] is the opposite of his inner [opinion]”, trans. Muehlethaler in his unpublished PhD dissertation, quoted by S. Harvey, “The Impact of Philoponus’ Commentary on the *Physics* on Averroes’ three Commentaries on the *Physics*”, in P. Adamson - H. Baltussen - M.W.F. Stone (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, London 2004, II, pp. 89-105, here pp. 90-91.

⁵⁵ *Muntaḥab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (cf. above, n. 23), pp. 276.10-277.5 Badawī = p. 111.2-5 Dunlop (= lines 2402-2409 in Dunlop’s numeration).

⁵⁶ Kraemer, “A Lost Passage from Philoponus’ *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation” (above, n. 25), here p. 322.

⁵⁷ *Muntaḥab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (see above, n. 23), pp. 276.15-277.1 Badawī = p. 111.6 Dunlop (= line 2406 in Dunlop’s numeration).

⁵⁸ See above n. 23. Whatever the real date of the composition of the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* – that, as we have seen, is no longer attributed to Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī al-manṭiqī (d. after 981/371) and may have been composed in a period more or less contemporary with Avicenna’s lifetime – the materials on Greek philosophy assembled in it were widely used by al-Siġistānī and, *large loquendo*, in the Aristotelian circle of Baghdad, hence the uncertainty surrounding also the relationship with al-Fārābī summarised above, n. 48, and the possibility that both Avicenna and the post-Avicennian works based on the lost *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* depend upon this text for the topic of dissimulation on the part of Philoponus.

⁵⁹ See above n. 53.

⁶⁰ See above n. 54. As detailed first by Kraemer, “A Lost Passage from Philoponus’ *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation”, p. 324, and now developed in Hullmeine’s article quoted above, n. 2, Avicenna’s claim features in the context of a comparison between Philoponus’ anti-eternalist works and his commentary on the *De Generatione et corruptione*

It is time now to introduce al-Fārābī into the picture. While it is clear that he antedates even the original *Šiwān al-ḥikma* (not to speak of its supplements and abridgements of the late 12th cent.), the materials out of which the latter was assembled might have been at his disposal; hence, it is possible that al-Fārābī found the topic of dissimulation in one or other of the sources of the *Šiwān al-ḥikma*.⁶¹ Note, however, that of the attestations of Philoponus' alleged dissimulation none antedates al-Fārābī: he is the first author known to us to surmise that Philoponus did not really believe in the truth of the anti-Aristotelian arguments he advanced.⁶²

First, the facts. The topic of Philoponus' dissimulation features in as many words in al-Fārābī's *Against John the Grammarian*, a work that has been edited by M. Mahdi in 1972.⁶³ After having himself discussed at length the real intentions of Aristotle in his *De Caelo*, arguing that by no means did Aristotle intend (*qaṣada*) "to establish the eternity of the world (*azaliyyat al-ālam*)",⁶⁴ al-Fārābī says he has a guess also about Philoponus' intentions (here too the verb is *qaṣada*). So clear is it that Aristotle did not want to put on equal footing God and the cosmos, and so evident is to al-Fārābī's eyes that Philoponus' arguments are sophisms, that he cannot believe the latter to be sincere. He suspects that Philoponus either wanted to argue for the Christian doctrine, or to protect himself against the possible consequences of heterodoxy.⁶⁵ It is tempting to see in this claim a distorted echo of Damascius' attack⁶⁶ against Ammonius for making an agreement

(on which more later, see p. 224 and notes 170-172). According to Avicenna, the latter substantiates the claim that in reality Philoponus' position was the same as Aristotle's.

⁶¹ Cf. above, n. 48.

⁶² It goes without saying that Simplicius' extended invective implies that he was convinced that Philoponus' assessments represented his genuine position: see above, n. 47.

⁶³ M. Mahdi, "Al-radd 'alā Yahyā l-Nahwī. The Arabic Text of Alfarabi's *Against John the Grammarian*", in S.A. Hanna (ed.), *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honor of Aziz Suryal Atiya*, Brill, Leiden 1972, pp. 268-85.

⁶⁴ Al-Fārābī, *al-Radd 'alā Yahyā l-Nahwī*, pp. 271.ult.-272.1 Mahdi. This point is closely related to the discussion about Aristotle's *De Caelo* in al-Fārābī's *Harmonization of the Two Opinions of the Two Sages: Plato the Divine and Aristotle*: cf. al-Fārābī, *L'armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti, il divino Platone e Aristotele*, Introduzione, testo arabo, traduzione e commento di C. Martini Bonadeo, Prefazione di G. Endress, Plus, Pisa 2008 (Greco, arabo, latino. Le vie del sapere, 3), pp. 63.1-67.3 (text) and 187-207 (commentary).

⁶⁵ Al-Fārābī, *al-Radd 'alā Yahyā l-Nahwī*, pp. 276 ult.-277.4 Mahdi, English trans. by M. Mahdi, "Alfarabi against Philoponus", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26 (1967), pp. 233-60, here p. 257: "It is unlikely that he did not understand how far removed these opinions are from the nature of the things. Therefore one may suspect that his intention from what he does in refuting Aristotle is either to defend the opinions laid down in his own religion about the world, or to remove from himself the suspicion that he disagrees with the position held by the people of his religion and approved by their rulers, so as not to suffer the same fate as Socrates". The last sentence derives either directly or indirectly from Philoponus himself, who, as pointed to by Verricken, "The Development of Philoponus' Thought" (above, n. 11), p. 261 with n. 182, claims in *De Aet. m.*, p. 331.17-25 Rabe, that Plato, while most often sticking to the true opinions he held about God (ταῖς ὀρθαῖς περὶ θεοῦ ἐννοίαις ἐπιόμενος) at times indulged in following the myths, maybe out of fear of the Athenian masses, in order not to suffer the same fate as Socrates (τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸν τῶν Ἀθηναίων εὐλαβόμενος δῆμον, μὴ καὶ κατ' αὐτοῦ τὴν τοῦ Σωκράτους ἐξενέγκωσι ψῆφον).

⁶⁶ The parallel with Damascius' criticism of Ammonius was suggested by Kraemer, "A Lost Passage from Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation" (above n. 25), p. 323 n. 26. The passage, Dam., *Vita Isidori*, fr. F316 Zintzen = fr. 118B Athanassiadi, runs: "Ammonius, who was sordidly greedy and saw everything in terms of profit of any kind, came to an agreement with the then overseer of the prevailing doctrine": trans. P. Athanassiadi, *Damascius. The Philosophical History. Text with Translation and Notes*, Apamea, Athens 1999, p. 281. On the circumstances surrounding Damascius' harsh words on Ammonius' agreement with the bishop of Alexandria (alluded to by the scornful periphrasis "the then overseer of the prevailing doctrine") cf. Hoffmann, "Sur quelques aspects de la polémique de Simplicius contre Jean Philopon" (above, n. 47), and Id., "Damascius", in R. Goulet (ed.),

with the bishop of Alexandria, even though a precise source for the reconstruction advanced by al-Fārābī has not been found.⁶⁷

The idea that Philoponus’ intention in arguing against eternalism was not that of presenting his own views, rather that of deceiving his readers, resurfaces in the Baghdad Aristotelian Yahyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974/363),⁶⁸ himself a pupil of al-Fārābī, who discusses the issue of eternalism vs creation in the “philosophical correspondence” with a learned Jew from Mosul discovered by Sh. Pines.⁶⁹ Here Yahyā ibn ‘Adī claims that either Philoponus was wrong or wanted to lead other people astray,⁷⁰ a claim that echoes al-Fārābī’s suspicion as phrased in *Against John the Grammarian*.

Thus, a tentative reconstruction might be the following: al-Fārābī – for reasons in some way connected with his own conviction of an eclipse of Aristotelianism in Alexandria due to the rise of the Christian rule⁷¹ – advanced the suspicion that Philoponus concocted an attack against Aristotle’s

DbPA, II, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 1994, pp. 541-93, esp. p. 568; cf. also R. Sorabji, “Divine Names and Sordid Deals in Ammonius’ Alexandria”, in A. Smith (ed.), *The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity. Essays in Honour of Peter Brown*, The Classical Press of Wales, Swansea 2005, pp. 203-13; M. Di Branco, *La città dei filosofi. Storia di Atene da Marco Aurelio a Giustiniano*, Olschki, Firenze 2006 (Fondazione Giorgio Cini. Civiltà veneziana. Studi, 51), pp. 162-79. Surprisingly enough in the light of Simplicius’ and Damascius’ narrative, even stronger is the criticism of Ammonius in the Christian sources, as attested by Zacharias of Mitylene’s dialogue entitled *Ammonius*. Zacharias, p. 95.27-32 Minniti Colonna (= Zacaria Scolastico, *Ammonio*, introduzione, testo critico, traduzione, commentario a cura di M. Minniti Colonna, Napoli 1973), paints an all-black picture of Ammonius: apart from his erroneous and impious doctrines (he teaches to a young audience that the universe is co-eternal with God), he is self-important, devoid of wisdom and philosophy. English trans.: *Aeneas of Gaza, Theophrastus with Zacharias of Mytilene, Ammonius*, trans. by J. Dillon - D. Russell - S. Gertz, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney 2012 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

⁶⁷ A point that cannot be developed in this survey on the Arabic Philoponus, but whose inspection is surely promising, is that of the image of Ammonius son of Hermeias in the formative stage of Arabic-Islamic philosophy. The milestones of such an inquiry are the so-called *Doxography of the pseudo-Ammonius* edited and studied by U. Rudolph, *Die Doxographie des pseudo-Ammonius. Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam*, Steiner, Stuttgart 1989 (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 49/1) – a pseudepigraphical text belonging to the age of al-Kindī, where Hippolytus’ *Refutatio omnium haeresium* is put in the service of the mu’tazilite *tauhīd*, and is attributed to Ammonius – and al-Fārābī’s account of Ammonius’ works and doctrines in his *Kitāb al-ğam’*: the point has been touched upon by Martini Bonadeo, *L’armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti* (above n. 64), pp. 206-7. In a nutshell, the strange thing is that the hideous behaviours imputed to Ammonius in the Greek sources both pagan and Christian (see above n. 66) in al-Fārābī’s account are attributed to Philoponus, while Ammonius features as the author of a survey on Greek philosophers and a reliable commentator of Aristotle.

⁶⁸ Cf. G. Endress, “Yahyā ibn ‘Adī”, in U. Rudolph - R. Würsch (eds.), *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt. Band I. 8.-10. Jahrhundert*, Schwabe Verlag, Basel 2012 (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie begründet von Fr. Ueberweg), pp. 301-24 and 355-9, with discussion of previous literature.

⁶⁹ Sh. Pines, “A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 24 (1955), pp. 103-36; the text is edited, with others, by S. Khalifat, *Yahyā ibn ‘Adī. The Philosophical Treatises. A Critical Edition with an Introduction and a Study*, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan, Amman 1988, pp. 314-36. See below p. 228 and n. 208-209 for opinions about the sources of the passage concerning Philoponus in this text.

⁷⁰ According to Yahyā ibn ‘Adī, Philoponus “went astray or led others astray”: Pines, “A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence” (above, n. 69), pp. 114-15.

⁷¹ According to al-Fārābī, in his (lost but attested doxographically) *Fī Zubur al-falsafa*, the bishops assembled in Alexandria prohibited the study of Aristotle’s philosophy beyond a certain point in the *Prior Analytics* (more on this below, n. 109); for the text and its translation cf. D. Gutas, “The ‘Alexandria to Baghdad’ Complex of Narratives. A Contribution to the Study of Philosophical and Medical Historiography among the Arabs”, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10 (1999), pp. 155-93. From a different perspective, the point is discussed also by S. Stroumsa, “Al-Fārābī and Maimonides on the Christian Philosophical Tradition: A Re-evaluation,” *Der Islam* 68 (1991), pp. 263-87. The topic

cosmology that did not reflect his genuine position. This suspicion was endorsed by Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī and resurfaces in Avicenna, this time transformed into an assessment: Philoponus made the Christians believe that he was at odds with Aristotle, while being secretly in agreement with him. That Avicenna is under the influence of al-Fārābī's *Against John the Grammarian* is suggested also by the claim of the Avicennian *Letter to Kiyā* that "the book by Yaḥyā al-naḥwī is apparently cogent but essentially weak",⁷² a claim that echoes al-Fārābī's interpretation of Philoponus' reasoning as sophisms, bearing only the appearance of philosophical arguments.⁷³ All this suggests that a turning point in the understanding of Philoponus in Arabic literature is represented by the Farabian *Against John the Grammarian*. The accounts (in chronological order) in Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's "correspondence", in Avicenna's *Responses to al-Birūnī and Refutation of Astrology*, in the *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, and in the *Muntahab Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* share an air de famille that points to al-Fārābī.

If re-considered in comparison with the puzzles and their tentative solutions that characterise contemporary research on Philoponus, the 'Farabian' explanation provides the most radical solution. The irksome problem represented by a commentator of Aristotle who both explains in detail the doctrines of the master and argues acutely against him is nullified: in the last resort, if one follows al-Fārābī's account, there is only 'one' Philoponus, who conceals his awareness of the real meaning of Aristotle's cosmology under sophisms with the intent of deceiving his co-religionists.

2.2 Philoponus' Works in the Arabic Sources

As an introduction to the overview of Philoponus' writings in Arabic that represents the main scope of this paper, let's recall that, as his nickname says,⁷⁴ Philoponus devoted an enormous amount

resurfaces in Maimonides: cf. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. with Introduction and Notes by Sh. Pines, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1963, I, 71, pp. 177-8: "Know also that all the statements that the men of Islam – both the Mu'tazila and the Ash'ariyya – have made concerning these notions are all of them opinions founded upon premises that are taken over from the books of the Greeks and the Syrians who wished to disagree with the opinions of the philosophers and to reject their statements. The reason for this was that inasmuch as the Christian community came to include those communities, the Christian preaching being what it is known to be, and inasmuch as the opinions of the philosophers were widely accepted in those communities in which philosophy had first arisen, and inasmuch as kings rose who protected religion, – the learned of those periods from among the Greeks and the Syrians saw that those preachings are greatly and clearly opposed to the philosophic opinions. Thus there arose among them this science of kalām. They started to establish premises that would be useful to them with regard to their belief and to refute those opinions that ruined the foundations of their Law. When thereupon the community of Islam arrived and the books of the philosophers were transmitted to it, then were also transmitted to it those refutations composed against the books of the philosophers. Thus they found the kalām of John Philoponus, of Ibn 'Adī, and of others with regard to these notions, held on to it, and were victorious in their own opinion in a great task that they sought to accomplish".

⁷² The translation is D. Gutas', from Avicenna's *Letter to Kiyā*: see D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition, Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, Brill, Leiden – New York – København – Köln 1988, p. 62 = D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition, Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works. Second, Revised and Enlarged Edition, Including an Inventory of Avicenna's Authentic Works*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2014 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 89), p. 56.

⁷³ This is reminiscent of the interpretation of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's claim that Philoponus "went astray or tried to lead others astray" (see above, n. 68), suggested by F. Rosenthal to Kraemer, "A Lost Passage from Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation" (above, n. 25): "The meaning of the expression 'in which he went astray himself or led others astray' can be understood in the light of what was said in some Arabic sources, among them the *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma*, to be Philoponus' intention in writing the *Contra Aristotelem*. (...) Prof. Rosenthal suggests that ḡalaṭa, translated by Pines 'led astray', should rather be rendered 'tried to lead others astray', or, perhaps, 'used sophistical arguments' (*muḡālaṭa* = sophism, sophistical argument', thus giving better sense to the word 'or'."

⁷⁴ See above, n. 24.

of work to the exegesis of Aristotle (*Categories*, *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, *De Generatione et corruptione*, *Meteorology*, *De Anima*). He also commented upon Nicomachus of Gerasa’s *Introduction to Arithmetics* and Galen’s *De Pulsibus*, and possibly upon Porphyry’s *Isagoge*.⁷⁵ In his personal works, Philoponus argued extensively for his theological convictions and cosmological doctrines. He dealt also with medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and grammar.⁷⁶

Of these many and huge works, only a few have been translated into Syriac and Arabic, but among them feature the anti-eternalist writings – a decisive fact indeed in the history of Muslim philosophy and theology. This does not mean that the rest of Philoponus’ literary output remained unknown: on the contrary, the Arab bibliographies show acquaintance with many titles and include also information on works unknown or only fragmentarily extant in Greek. Most of the titles that feature in the Arabic sources correspond to works genuinely by Philoponus; some wrong attributions are present, and there is an entire set of commentaries on Galen ascribed to him, that are either mentioned or also extant only in Arabic, whose authorship has however been challenged. This state of affairs suggests of keeping carefully distinct the information on Philoponus’ works provided in the bibliographical sources and the works extant in Arabic translations.

This section deals with the works attributed to Philoponus by Ibn al-Nadīm, Ibn al-Qifṭī, and Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a; then I will list the works extant in Syriac and in Arabic.

Philoponus’ Works in the Arab Bibliographies

Personal Works

In his entry on Philoponus, Ibn al-Nadīm refers the reader to the previous entry on Aristotle for information on the commentaries,⁷⁷ and lists Philoponus’ personal works as follows: (i) *Refutation of Proclus*, in eighteen sections,⁷⁸ (ii) *That every body is finite, so that also its power is finite*, in one section,⁷⁹ (iii) *Refutation of Aristotle*, in six sections,⁸⁰ (iv) *Commentary on Aristotle’s Mā bāl*, the

⁷⁵ This commentary is not extant in Greek, but back references have been detected in other commentaries: one is *In Phys.*, II 3, p. 250.28 Vitelli, and the other putative one features in the commentary on the *Categories* according to R. Sirkel, in *Philoponus: On Aristotle’s Categories, 1-5*, translated by R. Sirkel - M. Tweedale, J. Harris. *Philoponus: A Treatise Concerning the Whole and the Parts* translated by D. King, Bloomsbury, London 2015 (Ancient Commentaries on Aristotle), p. 41 n. 1. For the first back reference cf. Segonds, Giardina, Kupreeva, Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), p. 482, with discussion of authenticity on the grounds of previous scholarship dealing with some Greek manuscripts that contain a commentary on the *Isagoge* attributed to Philoponus. For the second putative back reference cf. Sorabji, “Dating of Philoponus’ Commentaries in Aristotle” (above, n. 14), pp. 390-1, who concurs with Sirkel in thinking that Philoponus’ wording at the beginning of his commentary on the *Categories* points to a prior commentary on the *Isagoge*.

⁷⁶ Up-to-date bibliography in Segonds - Giardina - Kupreeva - Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3). For a supplement 2012-2018 cf. the Appendix below, pp. 240-2.

⁷⁷ The separation between information on Philoponus’ commentaries on Aristotle and Philoponus’ life and personal works features also in Ibn al-Qifṭī’s *Tā’riḥ al-ḥukamā* and in Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, *Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā*.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 254.25 Flügel = p. 315.4-4 Tajaddud. In his *Tā’riḥ al-ḥukamā*, Ibn al-Qifṭī opens his entry on Proclus with the mention of Philoponus’ refutation, and says that the latter is a huge book that he possesses (*bi-kitāb kabīr ṣannafahu fī dālīka wa-huwa ‘indī*): p. 89.4-5 Lippert. On the Arabic text and its circulation see below, pp. 224-5 and n. 174-177.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.25-25 Flügel = p. 315.5 Tajaddud; on the Arabic text and its circulation see below, pp. 228-9 and n. 211-219.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 254.26 Flügel = p. 315.5 Tajaddud; on the Arabic text and its circulation see below, p. 227 and n. 197-199.

Ten,⁸¹ (v) *Refutation of Nestorius*,⁸² (vi) *Refutation of people who do not understand*, in two sections,⁸³ (vii) another treatise in one section where other people are refuted.⁸⁴

At the end of this list, Ibn al-Nadīm claims that Philoponus wrote also an explanation (*tafsīr*) of Galen's medical books, referring to his own account (*ḍikr*) of Galen.⁸⁵ However, there is no mention of such a *tafsīr* in the entry of the *K. al-Fibrīst* devoted to Galen;⁸⁶ it is rather Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a who lists 17 titles of Philoponus' alleged commentaries on Galen's works.⁸⁷ These overlap almost entirely with the Canon of the 16 books that provided the basis for the teaching of medicine at Alexandria and whose abridgment, the so-called *Ġawāmi' al-Iskandarāniyyīn* (*Summaria Alexandrinorum*), was widespread in Arabic.⁸⁸ Going back to Ibn al-Nadīm, Philoponus is indeed a major source of his account on the history of medicine,⁸⁹ which includes information on Galen in a section entitled "Mention of the First to Speak about Medicine".⁹⁰ Here, the expression "Yaḥyā al-naḥwī said" is recurrent,⁹¹ and since the last personality quoted in the history of Greek medicine is indeed Galen, the allusion previously made by Ibn al-Nadīm to the "mention (*ḍikr*)" of Philoponus in his treatment of Galen may point to this.⁹² The History (*Tārīḥ*) that Ibn al-Nadīm attributes to Philoponus⁹³ is embedded in another source: the *Tārīḥ al-aṭibbā'* (*History of Doctors*) written, according to Ibn al-Nadīm, by Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn.⁹⁴

A sceptical attitude about Philoponus' authorship of the medical works attributed to him in Arabic prevails in scholarship after a seminal article by M. Meyerhof.⁹⁵ Some credit with these works a commentator of Hippocrates and Galen named John of Alexandria (*fl.* ca. 640), known also, like Philoponus, as "John the Grammarian"; others identify this John of Alexandria and Philoponus with one another.⁹⁶

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.26-27 Flügel = p. 315.6 Tajaddud; on the real nature of the work alluded to by this title see below, p. 00 and n. 134.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 254.27 Flügel = p. 315.6 Tajaddud; this work is spurious: cf. Scholten, *Johannes Philoponos. De Opificio mundi* (above, n. 8), p. 43.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.27 Flügel = p. 315.6 Tajaddud.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255.1 Flügel = p. 315.6-7 Tajaddud.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 255.2 Flügel = p. 315.7 Tajaddud.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 288.25-291.13 Flügel = pp. 347 ult.-350.3 Tajaddud.

⁸⁷ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, *'Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, I, p. 105.19-28 Müller.

⁸⁸ Cf. H.H. Biesterfeldt, "Alexandrian Tradition into Arabic: Medicine", in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011, pp. 64-66.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 286.16-291.13 Flügel = pp. 345.16-351.3 Tajaddud.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 286.16 Flügel = p. 345.16 Tajaddud. In this section the rise of Greek medicine is Aesculapius, and its end is Galen's death.

⁹¹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 286.19-20 Flügel = p. 345.19 Tajaddud.

⁹² See above, n. 85.

⁹³ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, "According to the opinion of Yaḥyā al-naḥwī, which is found in his history", p. 286.17 Flügel = p. 345.17 Tajaddud, trans. Dodge, p. 674.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, "according to the sum of the reckoning recorded by Yaḥyā al-naḥwī and Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn subsequent to him", p. 286.19-20 Flügel = p. 345.19 Tajaddud, trans. Dodge, p. 681; this *History* is quoted as a source for the knowledge of the names and works of Greek doctors.

⁹⁵ M. Meyerhof, "Joannes Grammatikos (Philoponos) von Alexandrien und die arabische Medizin", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Instituts für Ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo* 2 (1932), pp. 1-21.

⁹⁶ For a discussion of this convoluted question cf. Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe" (above, n. 3), pp. 554-7, with reference to previous scholarship.

Commentaries

Aristotle

As detailed below, in his entry on Aristotle Ibn al-Nadīm credits Philoponus with commentaries on the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, and *De Generatione et corruptione*. The commentaries on the *De Interpretatione* and on the *Topics* (the latter being mentioned not by Ibn al-Nadīm, but by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a) feature at the end of the list below, under the heading “*Dubia* and false attributions”.

(1) *Categories*

Philoponus’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*⁹⁷ is mentioned in the *K. al-Fibrīst*⁹⁸ as well as by Ibn al-Qifṭī⁹⁹ and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a,¹⁰⁰ but one should not infer from this mention that the commentary was translated into Arabic.¹⁰¹ First Ibn al-Nadīm lists the commentators of the *Categories*, mentioning Yahyā al-naḥwī among them; then, at the end of the list, he says that “A man known as Theon (*Tāwūn*) has made both Syriac and Arabic [translations]”.¹⁰² It is not clear if this allusion refers to the translation of the *Categories* themselves or to that of its commentaries, and if so, whether to all of them, or only to some: the vagueness of the report by Ibn al-Nadīm makes the existence of a translation of this commentary highly suspect. This however does not mean that Philoponus’ exegesis of the *Categories* did not reach Arab readership: to the extent to which it is endorsed by other post-Philoponian commentaries on the *Categories* which were known in Arabic,¹⁰³ his interpretation contributed to shaping the understanding of the general aim of the *Categories* in the typical Neoplatonic vein initiated by Porphyry as a response to Plotinus’ position.¹⁰⁴ In addition, traces of Philoponus’

⁹⁷ Philoponi (olim Ammonii) *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* (...) edidit A. Busse, Reimer, Berlin 1898 (*CAG* XIII 1); cf. Segonds, Giardina, Kupreeva, Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), p. 467; for further bibliography see below, Appendix, Logic.

⁹⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 248.21 Flügel = p. 309.4 Tajaddud.

⁹⁹ Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā*, p. 36.8 Lippert (as in Ibn al-Nadīm, this and the subsequent pieces of information on the commentaries feature in the entry on Aristotle).

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-a‘ibbā*, I, p. 105.16 Müller.

¹⁰¹ As does Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), p. 511.

¹⁰² Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 248.21 Flügel = p. 309.5 Tajaddud, trans. Dodge, p. 598.

¹⁰³ On the echoes in Arabic Aristotelianism of the post-Philoponian commentaries on the *Categories* (Olympiodorus and Elias/David) in the interpretation of this work (and more in general of the *Organon*) cf. C. Ferrari, *Der Kategorienkommentar von Abū l-Faraġ ‘Abdallāh ibn at-Ṭayyib. Text und Untersuchungen*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2006 (Aristoteles semitico-latinus, 19), pp. 43-231.

¹⁰⁴ Of the conspicuous bibliography on the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Categories* after Plotinus, I limit myself to mentioning here the milestones: P. Hadot, “L’harmonie des philosophies de Plotin et d’Aristote selon Porphyre dans le commentaire de Dexippe sur les *Catégories*”, in *Plotino e il neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente*. Atti del convegno internazionale, Accademia dei Lincei, Roma 1974 (Problemi attuali di scienza e cultura, 198), pp. 31-47 (repr. in Id., *Plotin, Porphyre. Études néoplatoniciennes*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1999 [L’Âne d’or], pp. 355-82; English trans. “The Harmony of Plotinus and Aristotle according to Porphyry”, in Sorabji [ed.], *Aristotle Transformed*, quoted above n. 11, pp. 125-40); Ph. Hoffmann, “Catégories et langage selon Simplicius. La question du traité aristotélicien des *Catégories*”, in I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius. Sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie*. Actes du colloque international de Paris, 28 sept. - 1^{er} oct. 1985, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1987 (Peripatoi, 15), pp. 61-90; R. Chiaradonna, “Essence et prédication chez Porphyre et Plotin”, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 82 (1998), pp. 577-606; C. Luna, *Simplicius. Commentaire sur les Catégories d’Aristote, Chapitres 2-4*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2001 (Anagoge), containing also

interpretation of specific passages have been detected here and there in Arabic, either in exegeses of the *Categories* or in other works, as is the case with the saying “First in thought last in action”, to which attention has been called by S.M. Stern in 1962.¹⁰⁵ A detailed analysis of the Arab works that contain such traces – in all likelihood through intermediate writings or compilations – has been provided by E. Gannagé.¹⁰⁶

(2) *Prior Analytics*

Philoponus' commentary on the *Prior Analytics*¹⁰⁷ is listed by Ibn al-Nadīm among other commentaries on this Aristotelian work. According to the *K. al-Fibrīst*, this commentary ran “as far as *al-ʾaškāl al-ḡumliyya*”,¹⁰⁸ namely the “predicative figures”, corresponding to *An. Pr.* I 7. Whether or not this piece of information has anything to do with al-Fārābī's idea that the Christians did not read the *Organon* beyond *An. Pr.* I 7 for confessional reasons¹⁰⁹ is difficult to ascertain; be that as it may, Ibn al-Nadīm' claim does not match the Greek text, because Philoponus' commentary covers the two books of the *Prior Analytics* in their entirety (incidentally, Ibn al-Nadīm has the same remark also apropos Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary, that also goes beyond I 7, while being extant only as for Book I).¹¹⁰ Also in this case, as in that of the commentary on the *Categories*, the claim that Ibn al-Nadīm attests an Arabic translation of this work¹¹¹ is ill-founded. After having accounted for the translations of the *Prior Analytics*, Ibn al-Nadīm lists the commentators known to him: Alexander, Themistius, Philoponus,

detailed comparisons of Philoponus' commentary with Ammonius'; R. Chiaradonna, “Porphyry and the Aristotelian Tradition”, in A. Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion of Aristotle in Antiquity*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2016 (Brill's Companion to Classical reception, 7), pp. 321-40.

¹⁰⁵ S.M. Stern, “The First in Thought is the Last in Action: the History of a Saying attributed to Aristotle”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962), pp. 234-52 (repr. in Id., *Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Thought*, Variorum, London 1983, n. IV, same pagination).

¹⁰⁶ Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), pp. 511-13.

¹⁰⁷ Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis Analytica priora commentaria* (...) edidit M. Wallies, Reimer, Berlin 1905 (*CAG* XIII 2). This work is Philoponus' edition of Ammonius' course on the *Prior Analytics*, as shown by the title Ἰωάννου γραμματικοῦ Ἀλεξανδρέως εἰς τὸ πρῶτον τῶν Προτέρων Ἀναλυτικῶν σχολικαὶ ἀποσημειώσεις ἐκ τῶν συνοουσιῶν Ἀμμωνίου τοῦ Ἑρμείου, p. 1.2-3 Wallies. Bibliography: Segonds, Giardina, Kupreeva, Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), p. 467; for further bibliography see below, “Appendix, Logic”. As summarised above, pp. 203-6, scholars debate about the implications for Philoponus' own thought of the fact that in some commentaries he acts as a mere editor of Ammonius' courses. Since in other works, as we shall see below, the title specifies that he also added his own remarks, it has been suggested that Philoponus' evolution had, roughly speaking, three steps: one in which he was only the editor of Ammonius' courses, an intermediate one in which he added his remarks, and a third one in which he commented upon Aristotle on his own: see Sorabji, “Dating of Philoponus' Commentaries in Aristotle” (above, n. 14).

¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 249.9 Flügel = p. 309.19 Tajaddud, trans. Dodge, p. 600.

¹⁰⁹ The claim features in the lost Farabian work *Fī Zubur al-falsafa* quoted by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aʿibbāʾ*, II, pp. 134.30-135.24 Müller, and commented upon by Gutas, “The ‘Alexandria to Baghdad’ Complex of Narratives” (above, n. 71). A different explanation is offered by H. Hugonnard-Roche, “La constitution de la logique tardo-antique et l'élaboration d'une logique ‘matérielle’ en syriaque”, in V. Celluprica - R. Chiaradonna - C. D'Ancona (eds.), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici. Logica e ontologia nelle interpretazioni greche e arabe*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2004 (Elenchos. Collana di testi e studi sul pensiero antico, 40), pp. 57-83 (repr. in Id., *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque. Études sur la transmission des textes de l'Organon et leur interprétation philosophique*, Vrin, Paris 2004 [Textes et traditions, 9]), pp. 255-73).

¹¹⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 249.13 Flügel = p. 309.24 Tajaddud.

¹¹¹ Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), p. 513.

Quwayrī, Abū Biṣr Mattā and al-Kindī.¹¹² No mention is made of translations of any of the Greek commentaries.

(3) *Posterior Analytics*

Philoponus’ commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* is recorded in Greek as the edition of Ammonius’ course, and the title adds that the work contains also his own developments (ἐπιστάσεις).¹¹³ Here too, one might think that Ibn al-Nadīm attests an Arabic translation of this commentary;¹¹⁴ however, Philoponus’ work is mentioned among other commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics*,¹¹⁵ without any mention of translations. Ibn al-Qifṭī¹¹⁶ and Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a¹¹⁷ limit themselves to listing the name of Yahyā al-naḥwī among the commentators of the *Posterior Analytics*. It is true, on the other hand, that some of the points touched upon in Philoponus’ commentary are present also in one or other Arab author, a fact that deserves further investigation.¹¹⁸

(4) *Physics*

The commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*,¹¹⁹ gigantic as it is (786 pages in the *CAG* edition, plus the *Excerpta*), is not complete: only Books I-IV have come down to us in their entirety, while Books V-VIII are attested in Greek through quotations by later authors (the *Excerpta* just mentioned).¹²⁰ As summarised above,¹²¹ this commentary plays a pivotal role in our understanding of Philoponus’ attitude towards the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic cosmology: along with an extremely detailed exegesis of Aristotle’s wording and doctrines, it contains anti-eternalist claims that, due to its early date (517) that we know from Philoponus himself,¹²² do not fit the narrative of his change of mind and sudden allegiance to the doctrine of creation in time – a turn that allegedly occurred in 529; thus, revisions destined to make the commentary fit the new course of Philoponus’ thought have been maintained,¹²³ that cannot be discussed here.

¹¹² Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 249.7-8 Flügel = p. 309.18 Tajaddud; cf. H. Hugonnard-Roche - A. Elamrani Jamal, “L’*Organon*. Tradition syriaque et arabe”, in R. Goulet (ed.), *DPhA*, I, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 1989, pp. 502-28, esp. p. 518. Once again, this does not mean that Philoponus’ exegesis of the *Prior Analytics* remained unknown: the Syriac tradition attests to acquaintance with it, as detailed by H. Hugonnard-Roche, “Un cours sur la syllogistique d’Aristote à l’époque tardo-antique: le commentaire syriaque de Proba (VI^e siècle) sur les *Premiers Analytiques*. Édition et traduction du texte, avec introduction et commentaire”, *Studia graeco-arabica* 7 (2017), pp. 105-70.

¹¹³ Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis Analytica posteriora commentaria cum anonymo in librum II (...)* edidit M. Wallies, Reimer, Berlin 1909 (*CAG* XIII 3). The title runs: title Ἰωάννου Ἀλεξανδρέως σχολικαὶ ἀποσημειώσεις ἐκ τῶν συνουσιῶν Ἀμμωνίου τοῦ Ἐρμείου μετὰ τινῶν ἰδίων ἐπιστάσεων εἰς τὸ πρῶτον τῶν Ἰστέρων Ἀναλυτικῶν Ἀριστοτέλους, p. 1.1-4 Wallies. See above, n. 107.

¹¹⁴ Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), p. 514.

¹¹⁵ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 249.13 Flügel = p. 309.24 Tajaddud.

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā*, p. 36.8 Lippert.

¹¹⁷ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, *Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā*, I, p. 105.17 Müller.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Hugonnard-Roche - Elamrani Jamal, “L’*Organon*. Tradition syriaque et arabe” (above, n. 112), p. 523, and Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe”, pp. 514-16.

¹¹⁹ Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros tres priores commentaria (...)* edidit H. Vitelli, Reimer, Berlin 1887 (*CAG* XVI); Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quinque posteriores commentaria (...)* edidit H. Vitelli, Reimer, Berlin 1888 (*CAG* XVII). At variance with the commentaries on the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics* mentioned above, this commentary does not bear any title indicating a relationship with Ammonius’ courses.

¹²⁰ Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quinque posteriores commentaria*, pp. 787-908 Vitelli.

¹²¹ Cf. pp. 205-6 and n. 9-14.

¹²² Cf. above, n. 36.

¹²³ Cf. above, n. 14.

Part of a paraphrase of Philoponus' commentary on Books V-VII and two sections of the commentary on Book VIII are extant in Arabic (see below, 3.2), and this matches the information provided in the *K. al-Fibrīst*. Ibn al-Nadīm's entry on Aristotle's *Physics* is subdivided into three: (i) the *Physics* as commented upon by Alexander of Aphrodisias; (ii) as commented upon by Philoponus; (iii) as commented upon by others. The section on Philoponus is entitled *al-kalām 'alā Kitāb al-samā' al-ṭabī'ī bi-tafsīr Yahyā al-naḥwī al-Iskandarānī*, "Account of the *Book of Natural Hearing* with the commentary of John the Grammarian from Alexandria".¹²⁴ This commentary is said to have been translated in two parts: the first four books by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 912/299) and "in form of lectures (*ta'ālīm*)"; the last four books by Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī (*fl.* mid 9th/3rd cent.), "not in form of lectures".¹²⁵ As for the other bibliographers, according to Ibn al-Qifṭī the commentary on the *Physics* was translated into Arabic from Byzantine Greek; the name of the translator is not provided;¹²⁶ instead, further information is given on later readers of this work.¹²⁷ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a limits himself to listing the commentary on the *Physics* among Philoponus' works.¹²⁸

(5) *De Generatione et corruptione*

Philoponus' commentary on Aristotle's *De Generatione et corruptione* is recorded in Greek as an edition of Ammonius' course with his own developments (ἐπιστάσεις).¹²⁹ This work is mentioned in the *K. al-Fibrīst*¹³⁰ and in this case Ibn al-Nadīm attests to the existence of a translation, because he says that "Yahyā al-naḥwī wrote a complete exposition (*ṣarḥ tāmm*) of *De Generatione et corruptione*, but the Arabic is inferior in excellence to the Syriac".¹³¹ The same information features in Ibn al-Qifṭī,¹³² while Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a limits himself to listing the commentary on the *De Gen. corr.* among Philoponus' works.¹³³

¹²⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 250.18-20 Flügel = p. 311.1-3 Tajaddud.

¹²⁵ On the rendering of *ta'ālīm* by "lectures" cf. E. Giannakis, *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle's Physics*, PhD thesis, Oxford 1992, p. 97 n. 2 and Y. Arzhanov - R. Arnzen, "Die Glossen in Ms. Leyden or. 583 und die syrische Rezeption der aristotelischen *Physik*", in E. Coda - C. Martini Bonadeo (eds.), *De l'Antiquité tardive au Moyen Age. Études de logique aristotélicienne et de philosophie ... offertes à Henri Hugonnard-Roche*, Vrin, Paris 2014 (Études musulmanes, 43), pp. 415-64, here p. 432 and pp. 426-31 for a detailed analysis of Ibn al-Nadīm's piece of information, with discussion of previous literature.

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā'*, p. 39.14-15 Lippert. The passage of lines 14-19 Lippert, attests to the existence in Arabic of the entire commentary in the form of a ten-volume work: cf. the translation provided by G. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn 'Adī. An Analytical Inventory*, Reichert, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 35: "Johannes Grammaticus (Yahyā al-Nahwī, i.e. Johannes Philoponus) also commented on [the *Physics*]; his work was translated from Greek (*al-rūmī*) into Arabic – a great book in ten volumes, which I acquired all at a time".

¹²⁷ Arzhanov - Arnzen, "Die Glossen in Ms. Leyden or. 583" (above, n. 125), p. 433, n. 90, account for Ibn al-Qifṭī's information that on this volume the doctor Ġurġīs al-Yabrūdī (who was a pupil of Ibn al-Tayyib) added annotations taken from Themistius' paraphrase of the *Physics*. For further information on owners of the volume cf. Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe" (above, n. 3), p. 518.

¹²⁸ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, *Uyūn al-anbā' fi tabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, I, p. 105.18 Müller.

¹²⁹ Ioannis Philoponi *In Aristotelis libros de generatione et corruptione commentaria* (...) edidit H. Vitelli, Reimer, Berlin 1897 (*CAG* XIV 2). In this case, as in that of the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, the notes taken from Ammonius' course on the *De Gen. corr.* are completed by Philoponus' own remarks. The title runs: Ἰωάννου Γραμματικοῦ Ἀλεξανδρέως σχολικαὶ ἀποσημειώσεις ἐκ τῶν συνοσιῶν Ἀμμωνίου τοῦ Ἐρμείου μετὰ τινῶν ἰδίων ἐπιστάσεων εἰς τὸ πρῶτον τῶν Περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς Ἀριστοτέλους, p. 1.1-4 Vitelli. See above, n. 107.

¹³⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 251.7 Flügel = p. 311.20 Tajaddud.

¹³¹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, trans. Dodge, p. 604.

¹³² Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā'*, pp. 40.21-41.2 Lippert.

¹³³ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a, *Uyūn al-anbā' fi tabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, I, p. 105.18-19 Müller. For a useful comparative overview of the three accounts cf. Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe", pp. 531-2.

Pseudo-Aristotle, Problemata Physica

The work quoted under the title *Mā bāl* (“Why...?”) listed among Philoponus’ works in the *K. al-Fibrīst*¹³⁴ refers to the *Problemata Physica* attributed to Aristotle.

Porphyry

As mentioned above, a commentary on the *Isagoge* is mentioned by Philoponus himself,¹³⁵ but this work is no longer extant. This title features also in Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a’s entry.¹³⁶

Galen

We have seen before that Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a lists 17 commentaries on Galen by Yaḥyā al-naḥwī.¹³⁷ Some of these, plus other works on medicine attributed to Philoponus in the Arab tradition, are also extant: an inventory of the manuscripts has been provided by F. Sezgin,¹³⁸ and E. Gannagé offers a survey of each title with reference to the relevant scholarship;¹³⁹ she provides also information on the abridgments of Galen’s *Theriaca* and *De Usu partium* attributed to Philoponus in the Arabic sources, as well as on a paraphrase (*talḥīs*) of the *Ġawāmi’ al-Iskandarāniyyīn*.¹⁴⁰

Dubia and false attributions

Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a lists among Philoponus’ works a commentary on the *Topics*¹⁴¹ to which Philoponus’ alludes in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*.¹⁴²

A commentary on the *De Interpretatione* is attributed to him in the *K. al-Fibrīst*¹⁴³ and by Ibn al-Qiftī,¹⁴⁴ but this information is wrong: Philoponus did not comment upon the *De Interpretatione*. In any case, the Arab bibliographies do not claim that the work mentioned was

¹³⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 254.26-27 Flügel = p. 315.6 Tajaddud. Attention on this item was called as early as in M. Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi (Alpharabius), des Arabischen Philosophen Leben und Schriften mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Geschichte der griechischen Wissenschaft unter den Arabern, nebst Anhängen Joh. Philoponus bei den Arabern, Darstellung der Philosophie Platos, Leben und Testament des Aristoteles von Ptolemaeus, grösstentheils nach handschriftlichen Quellen*, Mémoires de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint Petersburg, VIII^e série, tome XIII, No. 4, 1869 (repr. Philo Press, Amsterdam 1966), pp. 161-2; for further information cf. L.S. Filius, “La tradition orientale des *Problemata physica*”, in R. Goulet (ed.), *DPhA*, Supplément, CNRS-Éditions, Paris 2003, pp. 593-8, here p. 594, and Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), p. 535.

¹³⁵ For further information that includes discussion of previous scholarship cf. Segonds - Giardina - Kupreeva - Goulet, “Philopon, Jean” (above, n. 3), p. 482.

¹³⁶ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, I, p. 105.32-33 Müller (*ṣarḥ kitāb Isā’ū ḡī li-Furfūriyūs*); cf. Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), pp. 516-17.

¹³⁷ See above, p. 216 and n. 87.

¹³⁸ F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, Band III: Medizin-Pharmazie, Zoologie-Tierheilkunde. Bis ca. 430 H*, Brill, Leiden 1996, pp. 15-60.

¹³⁹ Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe”, pp. 556-61.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 561-3.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Abī Uṣaybī’a, ‘*Uyūn al-anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā’*, I, p. 105.17 Müller.

¹⁴² The passage, in *Aristotelis Analytica posteriora commentaria* I 1, p. 3.4 Wallies, runs: ὅτι μὲν γὰρ ἔπεσθαι τοῖς Τοπικοῖς ὀφείλουν, ἐν ἐκείνοις ἀπεδείξαμεν. Discussion by W. Kroll in “Ioannes. 21”, *Supplement to Gudeman - Kroll*, “Ioannes Philoponus” (above, n. 6), col. 1177.

¹⁴³ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 249.2 Flügel = p. 309.12 Tajaddud.

¹⁴⁴ Ibn al-Qiftī, *Tārīḥ al-ḥukamā’*, p. 35.18 Lippert.

translated;¹⁴⁵ first Ibn al-Nadīm deals with Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, claiming that it was translated into Syriac by Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq and into Arabic by Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥunayn, then he lists the commentators, without any mention of translations.¹⁴⁶

3. Works Extant in Syriac and in Arabic Translation

3.1 Translations into Syriac

A prominent feature of the Syriac translations of Philoponus' works is that they concern almost exclusively his theological writings. It is true that A. Baumstark published three fragments from a Syriac manuscript that he tentatively traced back to Philoponus' commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*,¹⁴⁷ but in modern scholarship scepticism prevails on this attribution.¹⁴⁸ Instead, some theological treatises – and among them no less an important work than the *Arbiter* – have come down to us in a Syriac version that should be prior to the 8th cent., because the earliest manuscripts containing some of these treatises trace back to this century; there is also a manuscript that contains *inter alia* the *Arbiter*, which dates to the 8th cent. for some, to the early 10th for others.¹⁴⁹

In Syriac is attested also a fragment of the *Refutation of Aristotle*.¹⁵⁰ This fragment, discovered in a 7th cent. manuscript,¹⁵¹ mentions an "eighth book" of the work.¹⁵² Although this piece of information does not match the Greek and Arabic sources, where the *Refutation of Aristotle* is said to fall into six books, the fragment has been accepted as genuine in scholarship.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ As maintained by Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe", p. 513.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fibrīst*, p. 249.2-4 Flügel = p. 309.12-15 Tajaddud.

¹⁴⁷ A. Baumstark, *Aristoteles bei den Syrern vom V. bis VIII. Jahrhundert. Syrische Texte herausgegeben, übersetzt und untersucht. 1. (erster) Band. Syrisch-arabische Biographien des Aristoteles. Syrische Commentare zur ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ des Porphyrios, Neudruck der Ausgabe Leipzig 1900*, Scientia Verlag, Aachen 1975, pp. 171-81; cf. Gannagé, "Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe", (above, n. 3), pp. 516-17.

¹⁴⁸ Chr. Hein, *Definition und Einteilung der Philosophie. Von der spätantiken Einleitungsliteratur zur arabischen Enzyklopädie*, P. Lang, Frankfurt - Bern - New York 1985 (Europäische Hochschulschriften: Philosophie, 177), pp. 37-8, and H. Daiber, "Ein vergessener syrischer Text: Bar Zo'bi über die Teile der Philosophie", *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985), pp. 73-80, esp. p. 75.

¹⁴⁹ Lang, *John Philoponus and the Controversies over Chalcedon in the Sixth Century* (above, n. 27), pp. 15-20. Edition: A. Šanda, *Opuscula Monophysitica Ioannis Philoponi*, Beryti Phoeniciorum 1930; English trans. of the *Arbiter*: Lang, pp. 173-217.

¹⁵⁰ *Philoponus. Against Aristotle, on the Eternity of the World* translated by Ch. Wildberg, Cornell U.P., Ithaca - New York 1987 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle), no. 134. The fragment runs: "The title of the second chapter of the eighth book of John the Grammarian's *Contra Aristotelem*: Our argument affirms that that which is subject to resolution into not-being is not wicked on its own and by itself, and that that into which the world will be resolved is not not-being. From the second chapter: However, the world will not be resolved into not-being, because the words of God are not resolved into not-being either, and we clearly speak of new heavens and a new earth" (trans. Wildberg, p. 148).

¹⁵¹ T. Hermann, "Johannes Philoponos als Monophysit", *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 29 (1930), pp. 209-64.

¹⁵² The relevance of this point is highlighted by Wildberg, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle* (above, n. 150), p. 26: "It is commonly believed that Philoponus' treatise *Contra Aristotelem* consisted of six books against Aristotle's theory of aether and against his arguments for the eternity of motion and time. The reason for this belief is that Simplicius discusses the arguments of six books only, and that the Arab bibliographers like Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, Ibn al-Nadīm, and Ibn al-Qifṭī list the *Contra Aristotelem* as a treatise in six books. However, although to my knowledge no fragments of the seventh book survive, the existence of an eighth book is established by a fragment in Syriac (fr. 134) which appears in an anonymous manuscript of the British Library. The manuscript dates from the seventh century and contains extracts from the writings of the Church Fathers. In spite of the Arabic evidence, there are no good reasons for doubting the authenticity of fragment 134. It ought to be accepted that the *Contra Aristotelem* consisted of more than six and of at least eight books".

¹⁵³ See above, p. 215 and n. 80; cf. Ch. Wildberg, "Prolegomena to the Study of Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem*", in

3.2 Translations into Arabic

Commentaries on Aristotle

Physics

As mentioned above, the information provided in the *K. al-Fibrīst* matches to a large extent the textual evidence.¹⁵⁴ We have just seen that Ibn al-Nadīm mentions a translation of the *Physics* with Philoponus’ commentary, and in the unique manuscript of the Arabic *Physics* that has come down to us also the commentary by Philoponus is partially included, under the form of glosses.¹⁵⁵ Sh. Pines¹⁵⁶ and G. Endress¹⁵⁷ demonstrated that the glosses attributed to “Yahyā” in this manuscript were extracted by the Baghdad Aristotelian Yahyā ibn ‘Adī¹⁵⁸ from Philoponus’ commentary.¹⁵⁹ Later on, the entire dossier was studied in detail by E. Giannakis,¹⁶⁰ who implemented the list of parallels between the glosses and the page and line of Philoponus’ commentary established by Endress.¹⁶¹ It has thus been possible to ascertain that Yahyā ibn ‘Adī had access to the commentary in its entirety, including those parts that in Greek are attested only by the *Excerpta*.¹⁶² However, the Arabic quotations reflect the various parts of Philoponus’ commentary at a very uneven rate: the great majority of them come from the commentary on Book IV. The source of the glosses to Books III and IV is occasionally mentioned under the form “from the translation of Qusṭā”;¹⁶³ this source is described by Giannakis as “a free and rather summary version by Qusṭā”¹⁶⁴ possibly based on a Greek epitome now lost, rather than on Philoponus’ original commentary. Yahyā ibn ‘Adī also raised objections against Philoponus’ corollaries “On Place” and “On Void”, which implies acquaintance with these developments, that are embedded in Philoponus’ treatment of Book IV.¹⁶⁵ As for the

Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (above, n. 8), pp. 197-209, esp. pp. 198-200.

¹⁵⁴ See above, p. 220 and n. 124-128. The passage from Ibn al-Qifṭī quoted above, n. 126, attests also to the existence of the translation, which Ibn al-Qifṭī declares he possesses.

¹⁵⁵ These glosses have repeatedly attracted scholarly attention: cf. Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn ‘Adī. An Analytical Inventory* (above, n. 126), pp. 35-8; E. Giannakis, *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle’s Physics* (above, n. 125), pp. 75-82; Id., “The Structure of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣṭī’s Copy of Aristotle’s *Physics*”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 8 (1993), pp. 251-58; P. Lettinck, *Aristotle’s Physics and its Reception in the Arabic World*, with an Edition of the Unpublished Parts of Ibn Bājja’s Commentary on the *Physics*, Brill, Leiden - New York - Köln 1994 (Aristoteles semitico-latinus, 7), pp. 5-6; Arzhanov-Arnzen, “Die Glossen in Ms. Leyden or. 583” (above, n. 125), pp. 432-4.

¹⁵⁶ S. Pines, “Un précurseur Bagdadien de la théorie de l’impetus”, *Isis* 44 (1953), pp. 247-51 (repr. in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines, II, Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Medieval Science*, The Magnes Press - Brill, Jerusalem - Leiden 1986, pp. 418-22).

¹⁵⁷ Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn ‘Adī. An Analytical Inventory* (above, n. 126), pp. 36-8.

¹⁵⁸ See above, n. 68.

¹⁵⁹ It is remarkable that some of these glosses match the hitherto unknown fragments detected in MS Paris, BnF, *Coislin* 166 by Rescigno, “Nuovi frammenti del commento di Filopono ai libri V-VIII della *Fisica*” (above, n. 1).

¹⁶⁰ Giannakis, *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle’s Physics* (above, n. 125); Id., “Yahyā ibn ‘Adī against John Philoponus on Place and Void”, *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 12 (1998), pp. 245-302.

¹⁶¹ Endress, *The Works of Yahyā ibn ‘Adī. An Analytical Inventory* (above, n. 126), pp. 36-38; Giannakis, *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle’s Physics*, pp. 152-82 (Appendix IV).

¹⁶² Cf. p. 219 and n. 120.

¹⁶³ Cf. Giannakis, *Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle’s Physics* (above, n. 125) p. 103, and see above, p. 219-20.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁶⁵ Giannakis, “Yahyā ibn ‘Adī against John Philoponus on Place and Void” (above, n. 160); cf. also Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), pp. 518-19.

quotations taken from Books V-VIII, Giannakis thinks that they “derive from a translation of Philoponus’ commentary made or revised by Dimashqī”.¹⁶⁶ A doctor, translator and key figure in the transmission of Greek legacy to the Arabic-speaking world, Abū ‘Uṭmān al-Dimašqī (d. after 914/302)¹⁶⁷ possibly revised the translation that the *K. al-Fihrist* ascribes to Ibn Nā‘ima al-Ḥimṣī.¹⁶⁸ The glosses that Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī extracted possibly from this revised translation are available in English translation; most of them refer to Books V-VII, and two to Book VIII.¹⁶⁹

Commentary on the De Generatione et corruptione

Although nothing comparable to the glosses on Aristotle’s *Physics* has been found to confirm Ibn al-Nadīm assessment that this commentary was translated into Syriac and into Arabic,¹⁷⁰ a manuscript of the Arabic version is tentatively indicated,¹⁷¹ and acquaintance with it in Arab readership has been suggested.¹⁷²

Personal Works

De Aeternitate mundi

As mentioned above,¹⁷³ Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate mundi* is not only an important work in and by itself, but also the only source for Proclus’ *On the Eternity of the Cosmos*, which no longer exists in Greek as an independent text.¹⁷⁴ An Arabic version of Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate mundi* must have existed, yet it has not been found. As noticed by Endress,¹⁷⁵ Ibn al-Qifṭī claims to possess a copy of

¹⁶⁶ See above, n. 163.

¹⁶⁷ G. Endress, “Sa‘id b. Ya‘qub al-Dimašqī”, in *EF* VIII (1995), pp. 858-9.

¹⁶⁸ See above, p. 220 and n. 125.

¹⁶⁹ *Philoponus. On Aristotle’s Physics 5-8 with Simplicius. On Aristotle on the Void*, trans. by P. Lettink and J.O. Urmson, Cornell U.P., New York 1994 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle). See also P. Lettink, “Problems in Aristotle’s *Physics* I 1 and their Discussion by Arab Commentators”, *Journal for the History of Arabic Science* 10 (1994), pp. 91-109.

¹⁷⁰ See above p. 220 and n. 130-133.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe”, (above, n. 3), p. 531.

¹⁷² Averroes’ acquaintance has been maintained by S. Kurland, *Averroes. On Aristotle’s De Generatione et Corruptione. Middle Commentary and Epitome* (Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem. Versio Anglica), Cambridge U.P., Cambridge (Mass.) 1958, *passim*; contrary to this, for H. Eichner, “Ibn Rushd’s Middle Commentary and Alexander’s Commentary in their Relationship to the Arab Commentary Tradition on the *De Generatione et corruptione*”, in C. D’Ancona -G. Serra (eds.), *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodizia nella tradizione araba*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2002 (Subsidia medievalia patavina, 3), pp. 281-97, Averroes was not acquainted with this commentary. For M. Rashed, Philoponus’ commentary in Arabic version was one of the sources of the commentary that he attributes to al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbaḥṭī. Cf. Al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbaḥṭī, *Commentary on Aristotle De Generatione et corruptione*, Edition, Translation and Commentary by M. Rashed, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 2015 (Scientia graeco-arabica, 19), p. 77.

¹⁷³ See above, p. 203 and n. 5.

¹⁷⁴ Instead, two Arabic translations of Proclus’ arguments as an independent work are extant. As discovered by G.Ch. Anawati, “Un fragment perdu du *De Aeternitate mundi* de Proclus”, in *Mélanges de philosophie grecque offerts à Mgr. Diès*, Vrin, Paris 1956, pp. 223-7 (repr. in Id., *Études de philosophie musulmane*, Vrin, Paris 1974, same pagination), the Arabic translation attests the first argument, that, due to the physical damage of the unique Greek manuscript of Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate mundi*, is no longer extant in Greek. Cf. also G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in Arabischer Übersetzung*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1973 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 10), p. 15; Id., “Proclus de Lycie. Œuvres transmises par la tradition arabe” (above, n. 5), pp. 1657-61; E. Walkenig, “The Other Arabic Version of Proclus’ *De Aeternitate mundi*. The Surviving First Eight Arguments”, *Oriens* 40 (2012), pp. 51-95.

¹⁷⁵ Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, p. 15.

a refutation (*radd*) of Proclus by John the Grammarian, a work which he describes as a huge book;¹⁷⁶ this remark points to the existence of an Arabic translation of the entire work. This version, however, is known to us only indirectly, via quotations, silent borrowings, and perhaps abridgments.¹⁷⁷

As early as in 1869, in his seminal work on al-Fārābī M. Steinschneider commented upon Averroes’ partial acquaintance with the *De Aeternitate mundi*,¹⁷⁸ but the starting point of modern research on its circulation in Arabic dates from the mid-20th cent. The two milestones are the discovery by Father G.Ch. Anawati O.P. of Proclus’ first argument¹⁷⁹ and the study of al-Kindī’s philosophical treatises by R. Walzer.¹⁸⁰ Walzer compared the arguments against eternalism advanced in the *De Aeternitate mundi* with those which feature in al-Kindī’s *On First Philosophy*,¹⁸¹ thus paving the way for further developments by H.A. Davidson.¹⁸² As demonstrated by D. Gimaret, in the Arabic-speaking world it was not only Proclus’ first argument that was known, but also Philoponus’ response to it.¹⁸³

Then another turning point came: in 1994 A. Hasnawi¹⁸⁴ discovered that several short texts attributed in Arabic to Alexander of Aphrodisias are in reality sections of arguments IV and IX of Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate mundi*. These pseudo-Alexandrian “treatises” share the features of other productions of the so-called “circle of al-Kindī”¹⁸⁵ and convey key ideas in support of creation in time and against eternalism.¹⁸⁶ The fact that it was in the context of the “circle of al-Kindī” that parts

¹⁷⁶ Cf. above, n. 78 for the passage in Ibn al-Qifī.

¹⁷⁷ See below, p. 229 and n. 219.

¹⁷⁸ Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi (Alpharabius), des Arabischen Philosophen Leben und Schriften* (above, n. 134), pp. 162-3.

¹⁷⁹ Anawati, “Un fragment perdu du *De Aeternitate mundi* de Proclus” (above, n. 174).

¹⁸⁰ R. Walzer, “New Studies on al-Kindī”, *Oriens* 10 (1957), pp. 203-32 (repr. in Id., *Greek into Arabic. Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Cassirer, Oxford 1962, in part. § 3b, “Al-Kindī and John Philoponus”, pp. 190-6).

¹⁸¹ See below, n. 224.

¹⁸² H.A. Davidson, “John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969), pp. 357-91 (repr. with modifications as Chapter IV, “John Philoponus’ Proofs of Creation and Their Entry into Medieval Arabic Philosophy”, in Id., *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, Oxford U.P., New York - Oxford 1987, pp. 86-153; unless otherwise indicated, the quotations are taken from this reworking of the 1969 article).

¹⁸³ D. Gimaret, “Un traité théologique du philosophe musulman Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfīzārī”, *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 50 (1984), pp. 209-5. This gets confirmation in Giannakis’ recent article quoted below, n. 192, showing that al-Šahrastānī echoes Proclus’ argument 13, which is not attested to in the Arabic translation. Of course, this is only a possibility, the alternative one being that Proclus’ arguments as an independent work were translated in their entirety, that al-Šahrastānī had them all at his disposal, and that they have come down to us only in incomplete form because of an accident in the textual transmission.

¹⁸⁴ A. Hasnawi, “Alexandre d’Aphrodise vs Jean Philopon: notes sur quelques traités d’Alexandre ‘perdus’ en grec, conservés en arabe”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), pp. 53-109 (abridged English version: “Alexander of Aphrodisias versus John Philoponus in Arabic: A Case of Mistaken Identity”, in Sorabji [ed.], *Aristotle Re-Interpreted* [above, n. 14], pp. 477-502).

¹⁸⁵ 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*, CNWS Editions, Leiden 1997, pp. 43-76.

¹⁸⁶ Hasnawi, “Alexandre d’Aphrodise vs Jean Philopon”, pp. 53-4: “L’un des aspects les plus fructueux de la recherche sur Alexandre d’Aphrodise en arabe a consisté dans l’effort pour faire surgir de cet ‘Alexandre’ les *membra disjecta* d’un ‘Proclus arabus’. Ce dernier, il est vrai, faisait siennes déjà, ici ou là, des propositions dont la source est dans Philopon. Il convient désormais de tenir compte d’un ‘Philoponus arabus’ portant directement les habits d’Alexandre. Il se trouve que par là même nous recouvrons, pour la première fois à notre connaissance, des fragments non négligeables du *De Aet. Mundi c. P.* en version arabe. Les trois textes dont nous traiterons ont pour caractéristique commune d’être des traductions ano-

of the *De Aeternitate mundi* were adapted to become “Alexander’s” writings helps to explain how al-Kindī got acquainted with the Philoponian anti-eternalist arguments that feature in his *On First Philosophy*.¹⁸⁷

A list of passages of various authors later than al-Kindī referring to the *De Aeternitate mundi* (Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, al-Bīrūnī, al-Āmirī), with discussion of each item, is provided by E. Gannagé.¹⁸⁸ M. Rashed has detected a fragment quoted by the Melchite theologian of the 11th/5th century Ibn al-Faḍl ‘Abdallāh al-Antākī,¹⁸⁹ and another fragment quoted by Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.¹⁹⁰ Additional hints that the *De Aeternitate mundi* was available to the Arab readership in its entirety¹⁹¹ feature in a recent article by E. Giannakis on al-Šahrastānī.¹⁹² Finally, P. Hullmeine shows in the present volume that al-Bīrūnī makes use of an argument derived from the *De Aeternitate mundi* in his geographical treatise *K. taḥdīd nihāyat al-amākin*.¹⁹³

Contra Aristotelem

That Philoponus authored another polemical work on the eternity of the cosmos, now lost, results from cross-references in his *De Aeternitate mundi*, where this writing is announced,¹⁹⁴ and from many quotations by Simplicius in his commentary on the *De Caelo*.¹⁹⁵ When the Arab bibliographical sources list a *Refutation of Aristotle*, they allude to this work.¹⁹⁶ No mention is made in these sources of a translation, but the Arab readership must nevertheless have been acquainted with it in some way: a long fragment expanding upon a passage that features also in Simplicius’ *In De Caelo* (now fr. 78

nymes et de relever par leur lexique, leur ‘phraséologie’ autant que par leur style de traduction libre, de ce que l’on a proposé d’appeler ‘le cercle d’al-Kindī’”. Hasnawi alludes to Endress, *Proclus Arabus* (above, n. 174), where Endress detected parallels between the Arabic reworkings of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* (i.e., both Proclus’ propositions whose Arabic adapted translation he has edited in this volume, and the *Liber de causis*) and Philoponus’ own doctrines: see *Proclus Arabus*, pp. 230-32.

¹⁸⁷ See below, pp. 229-36, “4.1 Proofs for Creation and Arguments against Eternalism”.

¹⁸⁸ Gannagé, “Philopon, Jean. Tradition arabe” (above, n. 3), pp. 535-7.

¹⁸⁹ M. Rashed, “The Problem of the Composition of the Heavens (529-1610): A New Fragment of Philoponus and Its Readers”, in P. Adamson - H. Baltussen - M.W.F. Stone (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, London 2004, II, pp. 35-58; Id., “Al-Antākī’s Use of the Lost Arabic Version of Philoponus’ *Contra Proclum*”, *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 23 (2013) pp. 291-317.

¹⁹⁰ M. Rashed, “Nouveaux fragments antiprocliens de Philopon en version arabe et le problème des origines de la théorie de l’‘instauration’ (*hudūth*)”, in G. Federici Vescovini - A. Hasnawi (eds.), *Circolazione dei saperi nel Mediterraneo. Filosofia e scienze (secoli IX-XVII). Circulation des savoirs autour de la Méditerranée. Philosophie et sciences (IX^e-XVII^e siècle)*, Edizioni Cadmo, Firenze 2011, pp. 323-60 (reprinted in *Les études philosophiques* 105 [2013], pp. 261-92; English version: “New Arabic Fragments of Philoponus and their Reinterpretations: Does the World Lack a Beginning in Time or Take no Time to Begin?”, in Sorabji [ed.], *Aristotle Re-Interpreted* [above n. 14], pp. 503-40).

¹⁹¹ See above, n. 78.

¹⁹² E. Giannakis, “Proclus’ Arguments on the Eternity of the World in al-Shahrastānī’s Works”, in D.D. Butorac - D.A. Layne (eds.), *Proclus and his Legacy*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - Boston 2017 (Millennium Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr., 65), pp. 335-51.

¹⁹³ See above, n. 2.

¹⁹⁴ The cross-references in the *De Aeternitate mundi*, referring to the *Contra Aristotelem* as a future work, are listed by Wildberg, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle* (above n. 150), p. 24, n. 34. The title is given by Philoponus, *De Aet. mundi* p. 258.24-25 Rabe: ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλην περὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου αἰδιότητος ἀντιρρήσεων.

¹⁹⁵ English trans. by Wildberg, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle* (above n. 150).

¹⁹⁶ See above, n. 80 and notes 150-153 on the Syriac version.

Wildberg¹⁹⁷) was discovered in 1965 by Kraemer in the *Muntaḥab Šiwān al-ḥikma*.¹⁹⁸ Subsequently, M. Mahdi detected three further fragments in al-Fārābī’s *Against John the Grammarian*.¹⁹⁹ Finally, a quotation that al-Bīrūnī declares he has found in Philoponus’ treatise “against Proclus”, i.e. the *De Aeternitate mundi*, has been ascribed by M. Rashed, instead, to the *Contra Aristotelem*.²⁰⁰

Other (?) writings on creation in time vs eternalism

Abstracts from three sections (*maqalāt*) of a work entitled in Arabic *On Philoponus’ Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos* (*K. Yahyā al-naḥwī fī l-dalāla ‘alā ḥadaṭ al-‘ālam*) have been found in a Christian Arabic manuscript of the Bodleian Library²⁰¹ and in another of the Vatican Library: here the text is embedded in a theological treatise by the 13th-cent. Christian scholar Hibat Allāh ibn al ‘Assāl.²⁰² The Arabic text, accompanied by French translation, has been edited by G. Troupeau in 1984,²⁰³ but an English translation based on the collation of the two manuscripts had already been provided in 1972 by Sh. Pines. As noticed by both Pines and Troupeau, these summaries match the report of the Christian scholar Ibn Suwār (d. ca. 1017/407) who, in a short writing studied and translated by B. Lewin, had recourse to Philoponus for proofs of the createdness of the cosmos: Ibn Suwār declared that Philoponus’ proof was to be preferred over the arguments advanced by Muslim theologians.²⁰⁴ The same topic occurs in an epistolary treatise of the teacher of Ibn Suwār (and pupil

¹⁹⁷ Wildberg, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle*, p. 89 = Simpl., *In De Caelo*, p. 141.11-19 Heiberg.

¹⁹⁸ Quoted above, n. 25. The passage (= fr. 79 Wildberg) quoted and translated by Kraemer *ibid.*, pp. 325-6, corresponds to p. 112.6-19 Dunlop [= lines 2430-2443 Dunlop] = pp. 276.12-279.11 Badawī (see above, n. 23).

¹⁹⁹ The passages are as follows: (i) fr. 3 Wildberg, i.e. § 9-14, pp. 277-80 Mahdi (above, n. 63) (§ 15, included in this ‘fragment’ of Philoponus’ *Contra Aristotelem* by Wildberg following the lead of Mahdi, “Alfarabi against Philoponus” (above n. 65), p. 259, is in reality al-Fārābī’s own statement); (ii) fr. 62 Wildberg = first part of § 7, p. 275 Mahdi, corresponding to lines 1-6 of this § in Mahdi’s edition; (iii) fr. 76 Wildberg = § 7 Mahdi, *ibid.*, p. 276 (second part of § 7, corresponding to lines 6-14 of this paragraph in Mahdi’s edition).

²⁰⁰ Even though in his treatise on mineralogy *al-Ġamābir fī l-ġawābir* al-Bīrūnī labels Philoponus’ work he is quoting from as “against Proclus”, according to M. Rashed, “Nouveau fragment arabe du *De Aeternitate mundi* contra Aristotelem de Jean Philopon”, *Elenchos* 33 (2012), pp. 291-300 the quotation comes from the *Contra Aristotelem*.

²⁰¹ A.F.L. Beeston, “An Important Christian Arabic Manuscript in Oxford”, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 19 (1953) pp. 197-205.

²⁰² Sh. Pines, “An Arabic Summary of a Lost Work of John Philoponus”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), pp. 320-52 (repr. in Id., *Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Medieval Science* [above n. 156], pp. 294-326).

²⁰³ G. Troupeau, “Un épitomé arabe du *De Contingentia mundi* de Jean Philopon”, in E. Lucchesi - H.D. Saffrey (eds.), *Antiquité païenne et chrétienne, Mémoires André-Jean Festugière*, P. Cramer, Genève 1984, pp. 77-88; the Arabic text is edited from the Bodleian manuscript.

²⁰⁴ B. Lewin, “La notion de *muhdat* dans le *kalām* et dans la philosophie. Un petit traité inédit du philosophe chrétien Ibn Suwār”, *Orientalia Suecana* 3 (1954), pp. 84-93; the passage concerning Philoponus, p. 91: “L’argument présenté par Jean le Grammarien est plus acceptable. Il dit: chaque corps est limité; le monde est un corps; donc le monde est limité. Chaque corps a une puissance limitée; la puissance des choses éternelles n’est pas limitée; donc le monde n’est pas éternel. Cet argument est plus acceptable que celui des théologiens, car il est tiré des faits essentiels, tandis que le leur est tiré des accidents. En outre, Jean a apporté d’autres arguments prouvant la contingence du monde; si on les avait étudiés, on aurait abandonné cet argument corrompu pour accepter les siens”. This passage summarises pp. 79.23-80.6 (Arabic text) and 84-85 (trans.) Troupeau = pp. 324-5 (298-9) in Pines’ English translation. Later on, the text has been examined by Davidson, “John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation” (above, n. 182), pp. 135-7 (of the 1987 issue); on the relationship between this work and the treatise by Yahyā ibn ‘Adī on the same topic see above, n. 69; cf. also P. Adamson - R. Wisnovsky, “Yahyā Ibn ‘Adī on a *Kalām* Argument for Creation”, *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 5 (2017), pp. 213-39.

of al-Fārābī) Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī.²⁰⁵ Since *On Philoponus' Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos* presents itself as an abstract,²⁰⁶ the question arises whether its source is one of Philoponus' anti-eternalist works already known – the *De Aeternitate mundi* and the *Contra Aristotelem* – or a third one. At the beginning of the first section, the 'Arabic Philoponus' claims to have already written against Proclus, Aristotle, and other eternalists (*ahl al-dabr*)²⁰⁷ – a claim that according to H.D. Davidson points to a third treatise, lost in Greek.²⁰⁸ Although concurring with Davidson that such a treatise did exist, Pines mentions also the possibility that the source of the summaries was the *De Opificio mundi*,²⁰⁹ and aptly remarks that “a considerable part of the contents of our Summaries may be shown to have a counterpart in the *De Aeternitate*”.²¹⁰

This applies also to the next item, namely the writing listed in the Arab bibliographies as *That every body is finite, so that also its power is finite*.²¹¹ This title may point to the first section of *On Philoponus' Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos*;²¹² it is in fact this section that contains the argument destined to be labelled as *omnis corporis potentia est finita*.²¹³ In this first section as well as in Ibn Suwār's

²⁰⁵ See above n. 69.

²⁰⁶ And a free one indeed, because the title runs “Ideas (*ma'ānī*) of the First Chapter of the book by John the Grammarian on the Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos”, p. 79.1 Troupeau.

²⁰⁷ The passage runs: “I have already composed books before in order to refute the sophistries and the equivocal statements by means of which Proclus, Aristotle and others among the Eternalists put the case in favour of the eternity *a parte ante* of the world. Now, however, in this book I wish to demonstrate that the world is created in time (*muḥḍat*), having come into existence after not having existed (*kāna ba'd an lam yakun*)” (Arabic text, p. 79.2-4 Troupeau; English trans. by Pines, p. 321 [295]).

²⁰⁸ While in the 1969 article Davidson, “John Philoponus as a Source” (above, n. 182), pp. 358-9, had argued for the existence of this ‘third work’, in the 1987 issue (see n. 182) he limits himself to directing the reader to that argument, and reaffirms (pp. 93-4) his conviction that the source of the *Summaries* was “a separate work that might possibly have been written as an appendix to the *Contra Aristotelem*. This other work was also available to the medieval Arabs”. Davidson's arguments are: (i) In his commentary on the *Physics*, Simplicius first claims that from Book VI onwards Philoponus' *Contra Aristotelem* dealt with eschatological matters, but later on reports the argument that *omnis corporis potentia est finita*, thus making one suspect that the latter was drawn “from a separate treatise by Philoponus or at the very least from an appendix to the larger work” (p. 358); (ii) Elsewhere Simplicius quotes the same argument as coming from Book IV of the *Contra Aristotelem*; now, “That would be a strange way for an author to make cross references within a single work” (*ibid.*); (iii) The argument that *omnis corporis potentia est finita* is indicated in the Arab bibliographies as the topic of a separate work by Philoponus. None, however, seems to be conclusive, nor their sum.

²⁰⁹ See above n. 8; Pines, “An Arabic Summary”, p. 340 (314 of the reprint) makes a good point in comparing the first words of the Arabic abstract quoted above, n. 202, with the beginning of the *De Opificio mundi*; in doing so, he follows the lead of É. Évrard who, in his unpublished PhD thesis which he shared with Pines, had pointed to the relationship between some allusions in the *De Aeternitate mundi* to a future treatise, and the beginning of the *De Opificio mundi*.

²¹⁰ Pines, “An Arabic Summary”, p. 341 (315 of the reprint).

²¹¹ See above, n. 79. The close relationship of the two items, *On Philoponus' Proofs of the Createdness of the Cosmos* and *That Every Body is Finite*, is posited by Pines, “An Arabic Summary”, p. 343 (317 of the reprint).

²¹² Pines, “An Arabic Summary”, p. 344 (318 of the reprint).

²¹³ Cf. C. Steel, “*Omnis corporis potentia est finita*. L'interprétation d'un principe aristotélicien: de Proclus à S. Thomas”, in J.P. Beckmann - L. Honnefelder - G. Schrimpf - G. Wieland (eds.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, F. Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 1986, pp. 213-24. The topic resurfaces in Thomas Aquinas: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis (...) *Opera Omnia* (...) *Tomus Tertius. Commentaria in libros Aristotelis De Caelo et mundo, De Generatione et corruptione et Meteorologicorum* ad codices manuscriptos exacta cura et studio fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum, Romae ex typographia polyglotta S. C. De propaganda fide 1886, Lib. I *lectio* 6, 3, p. 23: “Sciendum est autem circa primum, quod quidam posuerunt corpus caeli esse generabile et corruptibile secundum suam naturam, sicut Ioannes Grammaticus, qui dictus est Philoponus. Et ad suam intentionem adstruendam, primo utitur auctoritate Platonis, qui posuit caelum esse genitum et totum mundum. Secundo inducit talem rationem. Omnis virtus corporis est finita, ut probatur in VII *Physic.*;

quotation, Philoponus argues that since no body can possess an infinite power, and since the cosmos is a body, the cosmos is finite too, hence its movement cannot be eternal. This argument is presented as the sound philosophical way to account for creation in time, and Ibn Suwār insists that it ought to be preferred over the ill-argued proofs of the theologians.²¹⁴

Once again the question of the origin of the text arises: for some, the work known in the Arabic sources²¹⁵ under this title derives from the *Contra Aristotelem*;²¹⁶ others think of the third treatise mentioned above as the putative source of the other work, namely *On Philoponus’ Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos*.²¹⁷ To discuss the issue in depth would go beyond the limits of this survey; however, it is worth noting that the argument for creation based on the intrinsic finitedness of the power of a body features in the *De Aeternitate mundi*.²¹⁸ It is true that Simplicius mentions the argument that *omnis corporis potentia est finita* in the context of his replies to the *Contra Aristotelem*, but this is not enough to rule out the possibility that the ‘treatises’ known in Arabic as *On Philoponus’ Proof of the Createdness of the Cosmos* and *That every body is finite, so that also its power is finite* derive from compilations or abridgments of the *De Aeternitate mundi*.²¹⁹

4. The Influence of Philoponus on Muslim Philosophy and Theology

Philoponus was the tacit source for proofs of creation widespread in Arabic philosophy and theology, and also, from al-Fārābī onwards, the explicit source of a major problem for Muslim philosophers: they had to face sharp objections against Aristotle’s cosmology, framed however in Aristotelian terms and based upon Aristotelian arguments. On the other hand, as a commentator of the *Physics* Philoponus influenced the Arab understanding of crucial topics in Aristotle’s account of the physical world, like movement, matter, space, and void.

4.1 Proofs for Creation and Arguments Against Eternalism

H.A. Wolfson initiated a promising line of research when, in 1943, he argued that the Jewish theologian Saadia Gaon (d. 942/330), Averroes, Maimonides, and even Thomas Aquinas made use of Philoponian arguments in their wish to prove creation out of nothing via rational demonstrations.²²⁰

sed virtus finita non potest se extendere ad durationem infinitam (unde per virtutem finitam non potest aliquid moveri tempore infinito, ut ibidem probatur): ergo corpus caeleste non habet virtutem ut sit infinitum tempore”.

²¹⁴ Lewin, “La notion de *muḥdat* dans le *kalām* et dans la philosophie” (above, n. 204).

²¹⁵ See above n. 79 for the *K. al-Fihrist*, and n. 69 for the mention of this work by Yahyā ibn ‘Adī.

²¹⁶ Kraemer, “A Lost Passage from Philoponus’ *Contra Aristotelem* in Arabic Translation” (above, n. 24), p. 320.

²¹⁷ See above, n. 208; cf. also H.A. Davidson, “The Principle that a Finite Body Can Contain Only Finite Power”, in S. Stein - R. Loewe (eds.), *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, University of Alabama Press, London 1979, pp. 75-92.

²¹⁸ Cf. in part. p. 235.4-19 Rabe.

²¹⁹ As a starting point of such an inquiry stand the parallels indicated by Pines, “An Arabic Summary”, pp. 342-3 (316-17 of the reprint) between the Arabic passages and the *De Aeternitate mundi*. Pines’ conclusion is worthy to be quoted in full: “These parallels, to which others could be added, indicate that in all the three Treatises whose Summaries have been translated above some passages and some arguments have a close connection with passages and arguments in the *De Aeternitate*” (p. 343, 317 of the reprint).

²²⁰ H.A. Wolfson, “The Kalam Arguments for Creation in Saadia, Averroes, Maimonides and St. Thomas”, in *Saadia Anniversary Volume of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, New York 1943, pp. 197-245, also in Id., *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard U.P., Cambridge (MA) - London 1976, Chapter V, Sections II-III, pp. 373-465 (further quotations from this reprint).

Later on, R. Walzer pointed to al-Kindī's acquaintance with such arguments,²²¹ and in a research that still counts as the reference book on the topic H.A. Davidson detected their influence on early Mu'tazilism, al-Kindī, Avicenna, Averroes, and Jewish speculative theology.²²²

For the sake of the present argument, Philoponus' attack against eternalism can be summarised in the following three main points: (i) the impossibility for an infinite to be passed through; (ii) the finitedness of the body of the universe, hence of its duration (*omnis corporis potentia est finita*), and (iii) the reply to the eternalist argument that creation would imply a change in the First Principle. While points (i) and (ii) are characterised by the fact of being arguments against Aristotle that make use of Aristotelian principles, point (iii) depends upon another line of reasoning, purely Neoplatonic. In what follows I will first survey the 'Aristotelian' arguments and their impact on Muslim thought; then I will briefly deal with point (iii).

Point (i) infers from the Aristotelian tenet that an actual infinite magnitude is impossible because of intraversability (e.g. *An. Po.*, I 22, 83 b 6-7; *Phys.*, VIII 9, 265 a 19-20) the conclusion that a first moment of time must have existed, otherwise the present instant could never have been reached, over an infinite stretch of time. This argument is endorsed by al-Kindī²²³ as well as by subsequent authors mostly in the theological camp, as detailed by Wolfson and Davidson.²²⁴ Point (ii) infers

²²¹ As mentioned above, the influence on al-Kindī of Philoponus' argument of intraversability of an infinite was first detected by Walzer, "New Studies on al-Kindī" (above, n. 180), pp. 218-19: "Al-Kindī's argument can be reduced to the assertion that there cannot be infinite time and, since time, body and movement are closely interlocked and interdependent, the world and the movement of the stars etc. must be limited in duration as well. There is an eternal God, and temporal creation for limited periods. If we look for parallels in Arabic philosophy, we find them only in Al-Ghazzālī's concentrated attack on Al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's philosophies which contain a very subtle and elaborate discussion of the Will of God and a refutation of the eternity and incorruptibility of the world and of time and motion. Al-Kindī does not come up to the level of Al-Ghazzālī – his assertions are more primitive and more dogmatic – but his attitude is substantially the same. It has been claimed, rightly I think, that Al-Ghazzālī was familiar with the late Alexandrian Christian neo-Platonic Aristotelian philosopher John Philoponus (...) and his attempt to demonstrate the Christian dogma of the creation of the world from nothing. (...) I think we have sufficient evidence to show that Al-Kindī was familiar either with John Philoponus' actual works or, as I consider more likely, with some summary of his main tenets". Although citing the use of this argument by the mu'tazilite theologian of al-Kindī's age al-Nazzām (d. ca. 845/230), Wolfson did not extend his analysis to the latter.

²²² Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation" (above, n. 182).

²²³ As detailed by Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation" pp. 106-16 (of the 1987 issue); on the influence of Philoponus on al-Kindī see the pertinent remarks of A.L. Ivry, *Al-Kindī's Metaphysics. A Translation of Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī's Treatise On First Philosophy (Fī al-Falsafah al-Ūlā) with Introduction and Commentary*, SUNY Press, Albany 1974 (Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science), pp. 25-6: "Thus, in an adaptation of one of Philoponus' proofs of the generation of the universe based on the impossibility of eternal motion, al-Kindī as well as al-Iskāfī (d. A.D. 854) and al-Nazzām (d. A.D. 845) are shown to have argued that the present moment could never have been reached if it were preceded by infinite time, on the principle that an infinite time (or series of events) cannot be traversed (...). It ought to be borne in mind that these similarities of al-Kindī's views with the views of John Philoponus do not obviate the important differences which exist in the philosophies of the two men. True, both men insist upon the finitude of time and motion, the corporeality and hence perishable nature of all body, and creation from nothing by the will of God. Yet though al-Kindī argues, in the *First Philosophy* and elsewhere, for the finitude and hence corruptibility of all body, in still other treatises, some subsequent to *On First Philosophy*, he apparently accepts the Aristotelian description of the fifth element as a simple, ceaselessly moving substance; and agrees with Aristotle's description of the supra-lunar spheres as not having generation and corruption, being perfectly circular and concentric. This means, apparently, that al-Kindī accepts in principle John Philoponus' contention that celestial and terrestrial phenomena have identical natures, and proves to his own satisfaction, and following Philoponus both directly and indirectly, that all the universe is subject to the same laws of finite time and space; but that he rejects much of the Alexandrian's specific arguments (...)". For a synthesis of previous literature, cf. also P. Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2007, pp. 84-88.

²²⁴ Wolfson, "The Kalam Arguments for Creation" (above n. 220), pp. 410-34, surveys the examples of this argument in

from the Aristotelian tenet that the power of a body, which by definition is limited, cannot be infinite (*Phys.*, VIII 10, 266 b 25-26) the conclusion that the body of the universe cannot have the power to last forever.²²⁵ Together with point (i), this objection has puzzled philosophers who, from al-Fārābī onwards, became more and more aware of the potentially destructive impact of objections raised by a respected commentator of Aristotle against Aristotle's cosmology.

To sum up a complicated question with Davidson's words, "The proofs of creation (...) presented a challenge to the medieval Aristotelians. The Aristotelians had to explain how (a) although Aristotle too had denied the possibility of an infinite number, he could nevertheless have advocated the eternity of the world, thereby implying the existence of infinite numbers of past objects and motions; how (b) although Aristotle had denied the possibility of an infinite magnitude, he could have affirmed infinite past time, and how (c) although he had denied the possibility of an infinite series of causes and effects existing together, he could yet have affirmed the existence of an infinite series of causes and effects that succeed one another through time and do not exist together".²²⁶

These baffling points cannot be dealt with as they deserve in the present paper, for obvious reasons of space and also because this would imply embarking on a reconstruction of arguments that are in part based on later testimonies from texts now lost;²²⁷ however, a sketch of al-Fārābī's *Against John the Grammarian*, which is extant,²²⁸ is permitted.

the Kalām (al-Nazzām, al-Ġuwaynī [d. 1085/477], Ibn Ḥazm [d. 1064/456]), in Jewish theology (Saadia Gaon, Judah Halevi [d. 1141/535], Maimonides [d. 1204/600]). Attention is paid also to Averroes' refutation of this argument. Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation", (above n. 182), pp. 117-27, extends the research also to other theologians, and his conclusion is worthy to be quoted in full: "Thus far we have been examining medieval proofs of creation from the impossibility of an infinite number. At an early date the proofs were adapted by Arabic writers to serve fresh purposes, in particular to establish the finiteness of the body of the universe. (...) Kindi was seen to have proved the finiteness of every body through a recasting of Philoponus' second proof of creation. Kindi's reasoning was basically that magnitudes are subject to increase whereas the infinite cannot be increased; hence neither magnitudes nor bodies, which are a species of magnitude, can be infinite. Similar argumentation appears in Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Jabbār, and Shahrastānī. The same line of reasoning, that is, the recasting of Philoponus' second proof of creation to establish the finiteness of bodies, is to be found in Avicenna too, despite his rejection of the original use of the proof to establish creation" (pp. 125-6).

²²⁵ See above, pp. 228-9 and n. 211-214.

²²⁶ Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation" (above n. 182), pp. 127-8.

²²⁷ First Wolfson, "The Kalam Arguments for Creation" (above, n. 220), pp. 433-4 and then Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation" (above, n. 182), p. 128, pointed to Maimonides' allusion to a lost work by al-Fārābī entitled *On Changing Beings*, where the argument of intraversability of the infinite was countered; also Averroes knows of a response by al-Fārābī to this argument. As Davidson has it, "From Maimonides and Averroes we learn that the first two of the three difficulties were dealt with by Alfarabi in a work, now lost, entitled *On Changeable Beings* (*Fi al-Mawjūdāt al-Mutaghayyirā*). Maimonides' report refers specifically to the problem of infinite past individuals and motions. These, Alfarabi explained, continue to exist only 'in imagination'; since they do not exist together in actuality, they cannot be properly enumerated and therefore are not affected by the absurdity of an actual infinite number. According to Averroes' report, Alfarabi offered a similar solution to the problem of infinite time (...). The reports of Maimonides and Averroes, taken in combination, indicate that arguments against infinite numbers of objects or an infinite extension are operative, in Alfarabi's view, only when two conditions are met: The objects in question and the parts of the purported infinite extension must exist together in actuality; and they must possess position. Averroes and Maimonides do not reveal, however, precisely which arguments against the infinite Alfarabi wished to restrict through the two conditions nor what the import of the two conditions is".

²²⁸ See above, n. 63 and 65. In what follows, al-Fārābī's *Against John the Grammarian* is referred to by page and line (of the main text, not of the critical apparatus, which follows each paragraph) of Mahdi's edition and in square brackets by the page of his English translation.

In this work, that counts as the first testimony of acquaintance with the *Contra Aristotelem* in Arab readership,²²⁹ al-Fārābī begins by surveying various possible interpretations of Aristotle's *De Caelo*²³⁰ and moves to the *Physics*²³¹ in order to alert the reader on the fact that different statements may depend upon the different topics dealt with in these two works; this accounts also for the differences among their commentators.²³² The doxographical context of Aristotle's utterances is highlighted: in pre-Aristotelian philosophy the four elements were usually considered to be simple, and for this reason Aristotle made use of them in his comparison between the sublunar and celestial beings;²³³ now, Philoponus failed to see that Aristotle did not really consider the four sublunar elements as simple substances properly speaking, but only "as analogues (*miṭālāt*)" of the simple substances: due to this misunderstanding, Philoponus mounted a contradiction between the *De Caelo* and the *De Generatione and corruptione*.²³⁴ All this prepares for the point that al-Fārābī wants to establish in this part of the treatise: Philoponus failed to see that in the *De Caelo* Aristotle makes use of many doctrines whose truth has been argued for in the *Physics*, avoiding from repeating the demonstrations provided there.²³⁵ Then the first quotation from the *Contra Aristotelem* comes.²³⁶ According to al-Fārābī, Philoponus contends that Aristotle attributes to the entire cosmos the incorruptibility of one single part of it, the heavens. But it was not Aristotle's intent to credit the entire cosmos with incorruptibility, rather only the part which moves in a circle; either Philoponus failed to understand this difference – but this strains credulity for al-Fārābī – or he made use of sophistry.

This point is so relevant for the general picture of Philoponus in post-Farabian Muslim philosophy, that the passage is worthy to be quoted in full: "How, then, did he permit himself to speak of the entire world in place of this part of the world (for what is made evident about certain parts of the world, either a state or anything else, need not necessarily be true of the entire world), and not distinguish between the two, and this either unintentionally, or intentionally as someone who employs sophistry? For to shift one's ground from the particular to the universal and from one particular to another is one of the topics of sophistry, as he explained in *Topics* II and subsequently in *Sophisticā*".²³⁷

²²⁹ See above n. 68-69; Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī and Ibn Suwār are later than al-Fārābī: to recap, the chain master-disciple is: al-Fārābī → Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī → Ibn Suwār.

²³⁰ *Against John the Grammarian*, pp. 271.ult.-272.12 [253-4] Mahdi.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 272.13-273.3 [254] Mahdi.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 273.4-8 [254] Mahdi.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 273.9-274.12 [254-5] Mahdi.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 274.13-275.2 [255] Mahdi.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 275.3-8 [255] Mahdi: according to al-Fārābī, "John Philoponus, either unintentionally or intentionally, seeks to destroy them [i.e., Aristotle's assessments in the *De Caelo*] as used here generally, without attaching to them the qualifications that are given in the *Physics*". For the topic "either unintentionally or intentionally" see below n. 237.

²³⁶ See above, n. 199.

²³⁷ *Against John the Grammarian*, p. 276.4-10 [256] Mahdi. By his use of quotation marks (accounted for in fn. 29 of p. 256), Mahdi, followed by Wildberg, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle* (above, n. 150), p. 87, considers that this is Philoponus' charge against Aristotle, but the final part of the passage shows that it is rather al-Fārābī's indignant reply. This is not the place to go deeper into this question, but note the identical expression "either unintentionally or intentionally (*immā ḡafla wa-immā ta'ammudan*)" referred at p. 275.8 to Philoponus, and also here, p. 276.8-9, not to speak of the incongruity of having 'Philoponus' accuse Aristotle either of being unaware of what he himself says, or of producing a sophistical argument. Such a harsh alternative is rather presented by al-Fārābī to Philoponus. Therefore, as I understand the passage, the quotation from the *Contra Aristotelem* ends with l. 276.4, and what follows (i.e., the quotation above in the main text) is al-Fārābī's counter-attack. The resemblance is striking with the general attitude exhibited by al-Fārābī in his *K. al-ḡam'* to counter the charge of conflict between Plato and Aristotle, as explained by and large in Martini Bonadeo (above, n. 64).

A generalisation of Philoponus’ attitude follows. In many of his objections Philoponus is not sincere: he is guided by the opinions laid down in his religious community. In al-Fārābī’s eyes, it is hardly believable that he did not understand Aristotle’s real point.²³⁸ Then al-Fārābī presents a list of Philoponus’ anti-Aristotelian objections that account for the issue of the four elements mentioned above; the core of Philoponus’ position as al-Fārābī understands it, in fact, lies in that the alleged difference between the celestial and sublunar beings is not one: “he claimed that it does not follow that what moves in a circle and what moves in a straight line should have different natures, but can have the same nature even though their movements are different in the species”.²³⁹ With this, says al-Fārābī, the summary of Philoponus’ objections comes to an end, and his main counter-attack begins. Philoponus’ account of Aristotle’s doctrine of the elements is false: contrary to what he contends, the elements do not share in the same kind of movement, even though one might be inclined to think so on occasional observation of similarities in their behaviour,²⁴⁰ nor is it true that all the elements move with the same movement if not obstructed.²⁴¹ From all this al-Fārābī derives the following conclusion: “If this is so, then there are no bodies at all possessing [different] simple substances which move with a movement that is one in the species, as he thought with respect to water and earth, and air and fire. The End”.²⁴² This *prima facie* enigmatic conclusion becomes clear if read in the light of Simplicius’ reactions to the same portion of the lost *Contra Aristotelem*. What Philoponus wants to establish, according to Simplicius, is that different elements can share the same movement; therefore, different movements do not necessarily point to different natures; as a consequence, that which moves in a circle and that which moves straightforward are of one and the same nature: they are generated, hence corruptible²⁴³ – a reasoning that is doomed to failure, in Simplicius’ opinion. This reasoning, however, does not feature in al-Fārābī, who contents himself first to advancing the suspicion that Philoponus was not sincere in his attack, and then to challenging his interpretation of Aristotle’s doctrine of the elements.

A different kind of response is worked out by Averroes. He is aware of the intrinsic force of Philoponus’ arguments,²⁴⁴ based as they are on genuine Aristotelian tenets, but feels confident he has

The solution of the apparent conflict consists in explaining each time the doctrines that the dull or tendentious followers oppose to each other in the light of the specific context of Plato’s and Aristotle’s utterances, and with the due qualifications. In the *K. al-ḡam’* al-Fārābī does so, as here, also apropos the question of eternalism and the interpretation of the *De Caelo*.

²³⁸ See the passage quoted above, n. 65.

²³⁹ *Against John the Grammarian*, pp. 279.ult.-280.2 [258] Mahdi.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 280.5-282.15 [259-60] Mahdi.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.1 (of the main text)-11 [260] Mahdi.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 284.1-4 [p.260] Mahdi. T. Kukkonen, “On Aristotle’s World”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 46 (2014), pp. 311-52, highlights al-Fārābī’s intent to establish that the world is made up of different substances, and aptly compares *Against John the Grammarian* with another work, the *Principles of Beings*, where al-Fārābī states that “the world (*al-‘ālam*) is a collection made up of six kinds of bodies in total (*al-jumlat al-mujtama’ at min ḥādhibi l-ajnas al-sittat min al-ajsām*): these are, in descending order of nobility, (1) the celestial spheres, (2) the rational and (3) irrational orders of animals, (4) plants, (5) minerals, and – on the simplest level – (6) the four sublunary elements” (p. 328).

²⁴³ Simpl., *In De Caelo*, p. 28.6-11 Heiberg, whose crucial point I quote here from Wildberg’s translation, *Philoponus. Against Aristotle* (above, n. 150), pp. 44-5, modified: “If <bodies> that are different in nature like earth and water can move with the same movement, <then,> converting with negation (σὺν ἀντιθέσει ἀντιστρέφω), he says, you will say: there is nothing to prevent different <bodies> which do not move with the same movement from being of the same nature, so that, even if the heavens move in a circle but the <bodies> below the moon <move> in a straight <line>, still there is nothing to prevent the heavens from being of the same nature as the sublunary <bodies> and perishable like them”.

²⁴⁴ Averroës, *Tafsīr mā ba’d at-tabī’at*, ed. M. Bouyges, S.J., Dar el-Machreq éditeurs, Beyrouth 1953, p. 1628.10-12: “John the Grammarian has raised a grave and difficult doubt (*shakk: quaestio*) against the Peripatetics concerning this problem. He says: if every body has only a finite force and the heaven is a body, then the heaven has only a finite force. But

a solution. Once again, dealing with this issue as it deserves would go beyond the limits of this paper, but an overview is warranted: the survey that follows is made under the guidance of A.H. Wolfson and G. Endress.

Wolfson takes into account the *Great Commentary on the Metaphysics*, where Averroes discusses what he presents as Alexander of Aphrodisias' way to deal with this difficult point. Averroes' argument develops as follows, in Wolfson's summary: "The gist of his own solution is his adoption of the tentative solution" – i.e., the claim attributed to Alexander that the heavens acquire incorruptibility from an eternal incorporeal force outside them – "and its rebuttal of the refutation of that tentative solution by his contention that, according to Aristotle one is to distinguish between the eternity of the motion of the celestial sphere, which is due to the Prime Mover, and the eternity of the existence of the celestial sphere, which is due to its own nature, for according to Aristotle, he maintains, the celestial sphere, not being composed of matter and form, contains within it no possibility of corruption".²⁴⁵

Averroes' point is made clear in his discussion of Aristotle's *De Caelo*. G. Endress points to the *Middle Commentary*; here too Averroes confronts the tentative solution attributed to Alexander: "In the *Middle Commentary* Averroes starts from the final chapters of Book I, where Aristotle had proved that eternal things had no capacity for corruption. Yet since the celestial body, as every other body, is finite in dimension, it must have a limited force and hence 'the celestial body must have a capacity for corruption in virtue of itself, and be incorruptible in virtue of an infinite force which is not in matter, i.e., the force moving it. Alexander has declared this explicitly in one of his treatises, and Ibn Sīnā fell in with his opinion, saying that the necessary being is of two kinds: that which exists necessarily in virtue of itself, and that which is contingent in virtue of itself and necessary in virtue of another' (*Talkhīṣ*, 178:3-6). (...) Averroes argues in reply (...) that the term 'infinite' may be applied in two senses – infinite in force and velocity or infinite in continuity and duration – and that the movement of the celestial bodies is infinite in the latter sense only. This requires a moving force, itself infinite in time, but not bound up with the finite body moved by it as form is bound

anything finite is corruptible. Therefore, the heaven is corruptible", trans. Wolfson, "The *Kalām* Arguments for Creation" (above, n. 220), p. 376.

²⁴⁵ Wolfson, "The *Kalām* Arguments for Creation" (above, n. 220), p. 378. Wolfson makes no attempt to identify the source in Alexander, who of course did not treat in any of his works eternity as a feature bestowed to the heavenly substance from an external cause. Averroes may point to the Arabic *Treatise on the Principles of the All* attributed to Alexander: Arabic text and English trans. in Ch. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln 2001 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 44), French version: Ch. Genequand, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*. Introduction, texte arabe, traduction et commentaire, Vrin, Paris 2017 (Sic et Non). For the topic of an incorporeal power (*quwwa rūḥāniyya*) permeating the cosmos cf. § 129 Genequand (in both editions). Averroes' report of Alexander's position may derive – either directly or via Avicenna – from a fusion of the topic of the *quwwa rūḥāniyya* with another argument that features in the Arabic Alexander, surely based on tenets of the genuine Alexander, but also bearing the traces of debates and developments posterior to him: "By this kind of organization and government, the universe remains eternal and unperishable (*azālī gayr fāsīd*): part of it is such in number, and part of it is in this state in species because of the continuous motion, ordered according to its diversity and variety (...). Therefore, we should not at all fear that the world might perish because of its incapacity to exist continuously. This kind of perishability existing in the universe is not something happening to it by the will and resolution of some being, I mean by the divine things, but is something inherent in its proper nature. For it does not fit the divine nature to will that which is not possible, just as it is not possible either, according to the opinion of those who profess the doctrine of creation (*ḥadaṭ*), that perishability should attach to what has not been generated at all" § 136-140, English trans. Genequand, pp. 117-9). Note, in the last part of the quotation, the reworking of Alexander's original point, which was surely a development of Aristotle's criticism of the *Timaeus*.

up with matter. (...) The moving form in the celestial body is a separate form (*ṣūra muḥāriqa*), not a form-in-matter. (...) Alexander’s erroneous interpretation provokes Averroes’ exclamation: ‘No wonder that this escaped Ibn Sinā – but how strange that it should have escaped Alexander!’ (*Talkhīṣ*, 183:12-14).²⁴⁶

On a more general count, the philosophers who got acquainted with Philoponus’ objections seem engaged in demonstrating that even if Aristotle’s cosmology does not support a first instant of time in creation, this does not imply that he disavowed the dependence of the entire cosmos from the First Cause for its existence. This line of reasoning is apparent in all the *falāsifa*, before and after the ‘discovery’, so to speak, that Philoponus had challenged Aristotle. This drives us to the topic that I have summarised above as point (iii). In itself derived from Philoponus, the idea that creation did not produce any change in the Creator is grounded in a Neoplatonic notion of cause with which Aristotle himself is credited from the beginnings of the *falsafa* (early 9th/3rd century).

The starting point of this idea in Arabic-Islamic philosophy is as early as the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, the well-known adapted translation of conspicuous parts of the *Enneads* that was produced, and attributed to ‘Aristotle’, at the dawn of the *falsafa*, in the “circle of al-Kindī”. In this Arabic adaptation of the *Enneads* the heritage of the Plotinian doctrine of causality gives room also to developments based on Philoponus. The First Principle creates the entire universe all at once, by its sole being, with no steps: to this creationist adaptation of genuine Plotinian ideas about the causality of the intelligible principles²⁴⁷ is added in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* the specific point that this creation takes place in no time – a point derived from Philoponus.²⁴⁸

As a consequence, since the beginnings of the *falsafa* Aristotle was credited with the argument labelled by Davidson “from the unchangeability of the cause of the universe”.²⁴⁹ Indeed, even if one may find ‘Aristotelian’ credentials of various kinds, all based upon the pure actuality that characterises the Unmoved Mover, the issue at stake in this argument is no longer the heavenly motion, but the existence of the whole cosmos: hence, it is clear that the argument, shaped in this form, belongs to a different context: that of the struggle between creation and eternalism. Philoponus’ *De Aeternitate mundi*, with its meticulous quotations from Proclus’ *On the Eternity of the Cosmos*, attests that the necessary unchangeability of the cause of the universe was advocated by both sides involved. It is true that perplexities about God’s causality that seemingly implies change of mind or activity after remaining idle are as old as (at least) Cicero’s *De Natura deorum* (I IX, 22), but in Proclus’ *On the Eternity of the Cosmos* they transform into a whole battery of arguments against Christian creation, thus eliciting Philoponus’ response. The latter contains the repeated

²⁴⁶ 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, here pp. 34-6; Id., “‘If God will grant me life’. Averroes the Philosopher: Studies on the History of his Development”, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), pp. 227-53. See also J. Puig Montada, “Averroes y el problema de la eternidad del movimiento”, *Ciudad de Dios* 212 (1999), pp. 231-44.

²⁴⁷ More details in my article “The *Timaeus* Model for Creation and Providence. An Example of Continuity and Adaptation in Early Arabic Philosophical Literature”, in G.J. Reydamas-Schils (ed.), *Plato’s Timaeus as a Cultural Icon*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame (IN) 2003, pp. 206-37.

²⁴⁸ Plotino, *La discesa dell’anima nei corpi* (*Enn. IV 8[6]. Plotiniana Arabica* (pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele, capitoli 1 e 7; ‘Detti del Sapiente Greco’), a cura di C. D’Ancona, Il Poligrafo (Subsidia mediaevalia patavina, 4), Padova 2003, pp. 237.7-238.8 and comm., pp. 314-17. with discussion of the source in Philoponus. The Arabic adaptation of Plotinus traces back to the middle of the 9th/3rd cent.

²⁴⁹ Davidson, “John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation” (above, n. 182), pp. 56-61.

charge of having discarded the true notion of cause that Proclus, as a Platonist, should never have forgotten. This typically Philoponian move, analogous to his attitude to counter Aristotle with Aristotelian principles, forms the backbone of the *De Aeternitate mundi* and, due to the early acquaintance of Arabic-speaking scholars with it,²⁵⁰ became part and parcel of the philosophical understanding of creation. Philoponus had countered Proclus' eternalist argument that creation would imply a change in the Creator by the remark that the nature of the cause is not affected by that of the effect: exactly as an immaterial cause – say, a Form – produces material effects without ceasing to be an immaterial cause, an intemporal cause can produce the visible cosmos falling under time, without becoming itself subject to time for this. This argument, directed from a philosopher in the Neoplatonic camp²⁵¹ to another philosopher of the same allegiance, was endorsed at the dawn of Arabic-Islamic philosophy as 'Aristotle's' own remark, and this in a highly significant context: that of the alleged 'Aristotelian' exegesis of the real meaning of Plato's doctrine of 'creation'.²⁵² It comes as no surprise that the argument resurfaces as the real meaning of Aristotle's ideas about the First Cause, and this from al-Fārābī, as shown by C. Martini Bonadeo,²⁵³ to al-Bīrūnī, as shown by P. Hullmeine in this same volume.²⁵⁴

All in all, one may conclude that for the *falāsifa* creation does not occur in time even if the created cosmos falls under time, at least only in its sublunar part; the objections raised against the 'Aristotelian' account of creation are all resolvable, and the key to the solution is invariably that creation it is an action accomplished in no time. This is the main legacy of Philoponus for Arab philosophical theology.

²⁵⁰ See above, n. 248.

²⁵¹ See above, n. 12. Philoponus' objections to Proclus are dictated less by creedal tenets than by the philosophical incongruities that he detects in Proclus' exegesis of the *Timaeus* and, more in general, in his doctrine of causality. This obviously does not prevent the *De Aeternitate mundi* from being the work of a Christian author.

²⁵² The passage indicated above, n. 248, is worth quoting in full (remember that 'Aristotle' is speaking, and the 'Philosopher' he is commenting upon is Plato): "How well and how rightly does this philosopher describe the Creator when he says 'He created mind, soul and nature and all things else', but whoever hears the philosopher's words must not take them literally and imagine that he said that the Creator fashioned the creation in time. If anyone imagines that of him from his mode of expression, he did but so express himself through wishing to follow the custom of the ancients. The ancients were compelled to mention time in connection with the beginning of creation because they wanted to describe the genesis of things, and they were compelled to introduce time into their description of genesis and into their description of creation – which was not in time at all – in order to distinguish between the exalted first causes and the lowly secondary causes. The reason is that when a man wishes to elucidate and recognize cause he is compelled to mention time, since the cause is bound to be prior to its effect, and one imagines that priority means time and that every agent performs his action in time. But it is not so; not every agent performs his action in time, nor is every cause prior to its effect in time. If you wish to know whether this act is temporal or not, consider the agent; if he be subject to time then is the act subject to time, inevitably, and if the cause is temporal so too is the effect. The agent and the cause indicate the nature of the act and the effect, if they be subject to time or not subject to it", trans. G. Lewis, *Plotiniana Arabica* ad codicum fidem anglice vertit G. Lewis, in *Plotini Opera II, Enneades IV-V* ediderunt P. Henry et H.-R. Schwyzer, Desclée de Brouwer - L'Édition Universelle, Paris-Louvain 1959 (Museum Lessianum, Series philosophica, 34), p. 231.

²⁵³ Martini Bonadeo, al-Fārābī, *L'armonia delle opinioni dei due sapienti* (above, n. 64), pp. 189-202. Also scholars who do not concur with Martini Bonadeo in considering the *Harmonization* a Farabian work acknowledge that the idea of creation as the production of a temporal being from an intemporal cause is Neoplatonic in origin: cf. D. Janos, "al-Fārābī, Creation *ex nihilo*, and the Cosmological Doctrine of *K. al-Jam' and Jawābāt*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129 (2009), pp. 1-17.

²⁵⁴ See above, in Hullmeine's article, pp. 183-201.

A Revised Aristotelian Physics: Movement, Matter, and Nature

Philoponus’ impetus theory²⁵⁵ in the Arabic-speaking world was studied first by S. Pines,²⁵⁶ who discovered among the glosses on the Arabic translation of the *Physics*²⁵⁷ the presence of the Philoponian account of projectiles motion, namely the idea that if a projectile continues to move when detached from its mover, this is due to the fact that the force imparted by it is in the projectile, rather than in the medium, as Aristotle had maintained. In subsequent studies, Pines detailed his view that the idea of a “violent inclination” (*mayl qarī*) that features in Avicenna alongside the notion of “power received” (*quwwa mustafāda*) was indeed derived from his acquaintance with Philoponus’ explanation.²⁵⁸ The latter has for Pines a distinctive Neoplatonic ring,²⁵⁹ implying as it does the transmission of

²⁵⁵ As detailed by M. Wolff, “Philoponus and the Rise of Preclassical Dynamics”, in Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (above, n. 8), pp. 84-120, here p. 84 and n. 1, Duhem introduced this label in his 1906-1913 work *Études sur Léonard de Vinci*. Because of its pivotal role in the subsequent understanding of Philoponus in the history of modern science, I deem it useful to quote in full the statement by P. Duhem, *Le Système du monde. Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, Librairie scientifique A. Hermann et fils, Tome I, Paris 1913, pp. 397-8: “Au sujet de la chute accélérée des graves, la vérité n’était aucunement apparue aux philosophes grecs. (...) Au sujet des deux autres problèmes qui les ont préoccupés, du mouvement du corps dans le vide et du mouvement des projectiles, ils ne sont pas demeurés dans une ignorance aussi complète. (...) Cependant (...) il s’est trouvé des mécaniciens hellènes pour formuler, au sujet du mouvement des corps, dans le vide ou en milieu plein, des principes sensés. Ces principes, c’est dans les écrits de Jean Philopon, et là seulement, que nous en trouvons l’énoncé formel. De ces principes, Philopon était-il l’inventeur? Si oui, Jean d’Alexandrie, dit le Chrétien, mériterait d’être compté au nombre des grands génies de l’Antiquité, d’être célébré comme un des principaux précurseurs de la Science moderne. Il est plus probable, cependant, que le Grammairien n’a point créé la Dynamique qu’il professe, qu’il l’a reçue de l’enseignement d’autrui, qu’il a continué la tradition des mécaniciens alexandrins. Il n’en a pas moins le mérite d’avoir, seul parmi les commentateurs de la *Physique* d’Aristote, compris combien cette Dynamique contenait de pensées justes, combien celle des Péripatéticiens était erronée, d’avoir défendu la première aussi fermement, aussi sensément qu’il combattait la seconde. Un tel mérite n’est pas mince”.

²⁵⁶ Sh. Pines, “Les précurseurs musulmans de la théorie de l’impetus”, *Archeion* 21 (1938), pp. 298-306 (repr. in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines* [above n. 156], pp. 409-17). In this short article Pines laid the foundations of subsequent scholarship on the topic. First he recalled Duhem’s emphasis on the pivotal role of the doctrine of imparted force for the development of modern science, not without mentioning A. Koyré’s caveats; then he presents Aristotle’s doctrine of the movement of projectiles, the so-called ‘*antiperistasis*’ that assigns to the medium the role of imparting movement; on the contrary, “L’explication de Jean Philopon dénie à l’air ou à l’eau tout rôle important dans la persistance du mouvement des projectiles. D’après elle, cette persistance est due à une force motrice communiquée par le moteur au projectile. Contrecarrée par le milieu – c’est là l’unique fonction réservée à celui-ci – cette force s’épuise également d’elle-même au cours du mouvement. Par conséquent, elle s’épuiserait même si le projectile se mouvait dans le vide, en supposant que l’existence de ce dernier fût possible. La force communiquée, δύνναμις ἐνδοθεῖσα dont parle Jean Philopon correspond à la *vis impressa* des scolastiques: terme employé comme l’équivalent de l’*impetus*” (p. 299, 410 of the reprint). While Duhem was unable to find the link between Philoponus and the Latin thinkers who, following the lead of Buridan’s objections to the Aristotelian dynamics, adopted the theory of the *vis impressa*, Pines pointed to Avicenna: “Avicenne et (...) tous les philosophes de l’Orient musulman (...) ont professé une théorie apparentée ou identique à celle de l’*impetus* et à celle de Jean Philopon” (p. 31, 412 of the reprint).

²⁵⁷ See above, 3.2. “Commentary on the *Physics*”, and Sh. Pines, “Un précurseur Bagdadien de la théorie de l’impetus” (above, n. 156).

²⁵⁸ More on this in A. Hasnaoui, “La dynamique d’Ibn Sīnā. La notion d’‘inclination’, *mayl*”, in J. Jolivet - R. Rashed (eds.), *Études sur Avicenne*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1984, pp. 103-23; see also Id., “La théorie avicennienne de l’*impetus*. Ibn Sīnā entre Jean Philopon et Jean Buridan”, in M.A. Mensia (ed.), *Naẓẓarāt fī falsafat Ibn Sīnā wa-Mullā Ṣadrā al-Šīrāzī*, al-Mağma al-Tūnisī li-l-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ādāb wa-l-Funūn, Tunis 2014, pp. 25-42.

²⁵⁹ Sh. Pines, “Saint Augustin et la théorie de l’*impetus*”, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 36 (1969), pp. 7-21 (repr. in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines* [above, n. 156], pp. 394-408), drawing from his analysis of a passage of Augustine’s *De Quantitate animae* the conclusion that “(...) la notion d’*impetus* de saint Augustin comme

power from one agent to another thing, that becomes endowed with it though not possessing it by its own nature.

Attention to the role of Philoponus' revision of Aristotle's dynamics in Arabic philosophy has been aroused also by E.A. Moody in a famous study dealing with Ibn Bāḡḡa as the forerunner of Galilei's dynamics.²⁶⁰ As Moody has it, "it seems probable that Avempace derived his argument from sources in the Arab tradition which had antecedent links with the late Alexandrian school, and with the ideas of Philoponus. The explanation of projectile motion by an 'impressed force', whose Greek originator seems to have been Philoponus, was reflected in a passage from Al-Bitrogi's *Theorica Planetarum*, cited by Duhem".²⁶¹ F.W. Zimmermann recaps his overview of Philoponus' impact on the Arab dynamics saying that "Apparently, Arab Aristotelians were less than completely aware of Philoponus' influence in their reading of Aristotle, and reluctant to say that they were following Philoponus even when they knew they were. The result is a medieval tradition of Philoponan impetus theory with little credit given to Philoponus".²⁶²

Alongside his ideas on the transmission of force, also Philoponus' vision of prime matter and place, as well as his arguments against Aristotle's ideas on void²⁶³ and aether²⁶⁴ had an important role in undermining the Aristotelian dichotomy between the celestial and sublunar worlds. As a result, a force divinely impressed is the cause of motion both in the heavens and in the world of coming-to-be and passing away; the heavenly bodies are no longer divine everlasting entities endowed with self-motion; eventually, the entire visible cosmos will come to an end.²⁶⁵ These views were endorsed to some extent by Muslim theologians.²⁶⁶ S. Harvey remarks that Averroes did not fail to see that the

celle élaborée par les Arabes dérive du néoplatonisme grec qui ainsi, grâce à ces intermédiaires, est la source des doctrines analogues du XIV^e siècle. En fin de l'Antiquité Jean Philopon ne fut donc pas le seul philosophe ni le premier qui ait eu cette notion: il a eu un précurseur néoplatonicien" (p. 19, 406 of the reprint).

²⁶⁰ E.A. Moody, "Galileo and Avempace: The Dynamics of the Leaning Tower Experiment", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951), pp. 163-93; 375-422 (repr. in Id., *Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Science, and Logic. Collected papers 1933-1969*, University of California Press, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1975, pp. 203-86).

²⁶¹ Moody, "Galileo and Avempace", p. 233 (of the reprint). While disagreeing on some points, Sh. Pines, "La dynamique d'Ibn Bāḡḡa", in *Mélanges Alexandre Koyré*, I, Paris 1964, pp. 442-67 (repr. in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, pp. 442-66) concurs with Moody in this evaluation. On the acquaintance of Ibn Bāḡḡa with Philoponus' commentary on the *Physics* (or extracts from it) cf. P. Lettinck, *Aristotle's Physics and Its Reception in the Arabic World, with an Edition of the Unpublished Parts of Ibn Bāḡḡa's Commentary on the Physics*, Brill, Leiden 1994 (Aristoteles semitico-latinus, 7), in part. p. 549, and D. Wirmer, *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens. Ibn Bāḡḡas Theorie der Potenz als Grundlegung der Psychologie*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - München - Boston 2014, in part. pp. 314-15.

²⁶² F.W. Zimmermann, "Philoponus' Impetus Theory in the Arabic Tradition", in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science*, Duckworth, London 1987, pp. 121-9, here p. 124. See also A. Hasnawi, "La définition du mouvement dans la *Physique* du *Shifā'* d'Avicenne", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 11 (2001), pp. 219-55.

²⁶³ See above, n. 160.

²⁶⁴ Ch. Wildberg, *John Philoponus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Aether*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 1988.

²⁶⁵ Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation", (above, n. 182), p. 204 (of the 1987 issue): "His (= Philoponus') contention was that since neither the matter of the sublunar world nor the matter of the celestial region can by nature retain a form permanently, 'nothing [composed] of matter and form' can be 'indestructible', and the physical universe cannot have existed from eternity".

²⁶⁶ In addition to the ground-breaking studies on the influence on the *Kalām* of Philoponus' cosmology quoted above, n. 220-222, cf. S. Sambursky, "Note on John Philoponus' Rejection of the Infinite", in S.M. Stern - A. Hourani - V. Brown (eds), *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented by his Friends and Pupils to R. Walzer*, B. Cassirer, Oxford 1972 (Oriental Studies, 5), pp. 351-3, who points to the argument from the *Contra Aristotelem* apud Simpl., *In Phys.*, p. 1179.15 Diels, and remarks: "By *reductio ad absurdum*, he attempts to prove that a universe without a beginning necessarily involves the existence of different actual infinities representing the relative numbers of the revolutions

mutakallimūn took over from Philoponus their anti-Aristotelian objections apropos motion and the eternity of the heavens.²⁶⁷ At one and the same time, such objections resulted hardly palatable for philosophers. Avicenna challenged Philoponus' understanding of Aristotle's *Physics* and *De Caelo* on several specific points;²⁶⁸ as for Averroes, Endress observes that in his eyes "both John Philoponus through his faulty understanding of the motive force in the heavens, and Ibn Sīnā, with his faulty understanding of the first principle, subjected philosophy to criticism and refutation".²⁶⁹

Finally, Philoponus' commentary on the *De Anima* is not reported to have been known, but according to D. Gutas Avicenna was acquainted with some ideas held in it.²⁷⁰ However this may be, Philoponus' commentary features among the sources of the Arabic Neoplatonic paraphrase of the *De Anima* edited by R. Arnzen.²⁷¹ This work was translated within the "circle of al-Kindī",²⁷² and this was at least one of the channels of some elements of Philoponus' interpretation of the *De Anima* since the earliest formation of Arabic-Islamic philosophy.

of the planets. (...) this proof of Philoponus was used later by Islamic philosophers e.g. al-Ghazali, in their refutation of the eternity of the universe" (p. 353). See also H.M. Eldīn al-Alousī, *The Problem of Creation in Islamic Thought. Qur'an Hadith, Commentaries, and Kalam*, The National Printing and Publishing, Baghdad - Cambridge 1965, pp. 307-10; for similar arguments in Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210/606) cf. M. Iskanderoglu, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Thomas Aquinas on the Question of the Eternity of the World*, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln 2002 (Islamic Philosophy Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 48), pp. 59-161.

²⁶⁷ S. Harvey, "The Impact of Philoponus' Commentary on the *Physics*" (above, n. 54).

²⁶⁸ On Avicenna's criticism of the Philoponian views on elemental motion cf. C. Cerami, "The *De Caelo et Mundo* of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Šifā'*: An Overview of its Structure, its Goal and Its Polemical Background", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 28 (2017), pp. 273-329; referring also to unpublished research by A. Hasnawi, Cerami draws attention on Avicenna's approach to the *De Caelo* in the anti-Philoponian aim to show that "any simple body – whether it is a part of the sublunary world of the supralunary world – is endowed with a power that though displaying a multi-layered nature, remains a unitary principle. (...) It is undeniable that Philoponus' criticism of elemental motion shapes the larger polemical setting of Avicenna's doctrine" (pp. 289 and 296). All this is reminiscent of the discussion outlined above apropos al-Fārābī (see above, p. 233 and n. 239-243). On Avicenna's criticism of the Philoponian idea of 'nature' as a power permeating through the bodies cf. A. Lammer, "Defining Nature: Aristotle - Philoponus - Avicenna", in A. Alwishah - J. Hayes (eds.), *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2015, pp. 121-42, in part. p. 139: "With his criticism, Avicenna intended to put an end to a long-lasting tradition of aligning soul and nature". The anti-Philoponian stance becomes in some sense the red herring of Lammer's *The Elements of Avicenna's Physics. Greek Sources and Arabic Innovations*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin - Boston 2018 (Scientia graeco-arabica, 20): see in part. pp. 213-306.

²⁶⁹ Endress, "If God will grant me life" (above n. 246), p. 248.

²⁷⁰ D. Gutas, "Philoponus and Avicenna on the Separability of the Intellect", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 (1986), pp. 121-9 (repr. in Id., *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition*, Variorum, Aldershot 2000, no. XI, same pagination); Id., "Avicenna's Marginal Glosses on *De Anima* and the Greek Commentatorial Tradition", in Adamson - Baltussen - Stone (eds.), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries* (above, n. 54), II, pp. 77-88.

²⁷¹ R. Arnzen, *Aristoteles' De Anima. Eine verlorene spätantike Paraphrase in arabischer und persischer Überlieferung. Arabischer Text nebst Kommentar, quellengeschichtlichen Studien und Glossaren*, Brill, Leiden - New York - Köln 1998.

²⁷² See above, n. 185.

Appendix

This appendix lists the studies in various areas of Philoponus' thought published since 2012 (see above, n. 3), that are known to the present writer. Preference has been given to a self-contained list over avoiding overlaps with the footnotes of the main article.

General

G. Gabor, "Philoponus and His Development: Four Recent Translations on Nature, Knowledge, and the Physical World", *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 9 (2015), pp. 89-98.

P. Golitsis, "Simplicius and Philoponus on the Authority of Aristotle", in A. Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion of Aristotle in Antiquity*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2016 (Brill's Companion to Classical reception, 7), pp. 419-38.

M. Griffin, "Ammonius and the Alexandrian School", in Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion of Aristotle in Antiquity*, pp. 394-418.

R. Sorabji, "Dating of Philoponus' Commentaries on Aristotle and his Divergence from his Teacher Ammonius", in Id. (ed.), *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of the Ancient Commentators*, Bloomsbury, London - Oxford - New York - New Delhi - Sydney 2016, pp. 367-92.

K. Verrycken, "John Philoponus", in L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2012, II, pp. 733-55 and 1145-7 (Bibliography).

Logic

Translations

Philoponus. On Aristotle's Categories, 1-5, translated by R. Sirkel, M. Tweedale, J. Harris, with *Philoponus: A Treatise Concerning the Whole and the Parts*, translated by D. King, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney 2015 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

Philoponus. On Aristotle's Categories 6-15, translated by M. Share, Bloomsbury, London - New Delhi - New York - Sydney 2019 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

Studies

Ch. Erismann, "John Philoponus on Individuality and Particularity", in J. Zachhuber - A. Torrance (eds.), *Individuality in Late Antiquity*, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham 2014, pp. 143-59.

L. Gili, "Il confronto di Giovanni Filopono con Alessandro di Afrodisia intorno al problema della conversione delle proposizioni", *Elenchos* 36 (2015), pp. 317-39.

H. Hugonnard-Roche, "Un cours sur la syllogistique d'Aristote à l'époque tardo-antique: le commentaire syriaque de Proba (VI^e siècle) sur les *Premiers Analytiques*. Édition et traduction du texte, avec introduction et commentaire", *Studia graeco-arabica* 7 (2017), pp. 105-70.

R. Sirkel, "Philoponus on the Priority of Substances", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54 (2016), pp.351-72.

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