

Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate, Providence and Nature

David Torrijos-Castrillejo

Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso
dtorrijos@sandamaso.es

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Abstract

To study the influence of divinity on cosmos, Alexander uses the notions of ‘fate’ and ‘providence,’ which were common in the philosophy of his time. In this way, he provides an Aristotelian interpretation of the problems related to such concepts. In the context of this discussion, he offers a description of ‘nature’ different from the one that he usually regards as the standard Aristotelian notion of nature, i.e. the intrinsic principle of motion and rest. The new coined concept is a ‘cosmic’ nature that can be identified with both ‘fate’ and ‘divine power,’ which are the immediate effect of providence upon the world. In the paper it is exposed how the conception of providence defended by Alexander means a rejection of the divine care of the particulars, since the divinities are only provident for species. Several texts belonging to the Middle Platonic philosophers will convince us that such thinkers (and not directly Aristotle) are the origin of the thesis that will be understood as the conventional Aristotelian position, namely that divinity only orders species but not individuals.

CONTENTS

1 Alexander on Nature as Divine Power or Fate	8
2 Middle Platonic Roots of the Alexandrian Notion of Fate and Providence	11
3 Conclusions	14
Notes	15

Alexander of Aphrodisias, the commentator of Aristotle *par excellence*, tries to answer to the scientific questions arisen in his time using the contributions of the philosophy of the head of the Peripatetic school. So, he tries to explain new themes such as fate and providence. Although in fact he integrates foreign ideas from other schools, his conception of fate and providence pretends to be strict Aristotelism. By studying these themes, he identifies both ‘destiny’ and ‘divine power’ with ‘nature.’ In turn, he unfolds ‘nature’ in two: on the one hand, a type of ‘general cosmic nature,’ which is responsible for the generation and conservation of sublunary entities; on the other hand, the individual nature of each being, that is, its intrinsic principle of movement and rest. Nature in the first sense will be the cause of nature in the second sense.

The nature of the sublunary entities will then be produced by a ‘divine power’—identifiable with ‘fate’—which will be due to the action of the gods over the heavens. Alexander will maintain that the cosmos as we know it is shaped by the gods, whose will would be to benefit the sublunary world and causes every good in it. However, this beneficent intention is reduced to the species of beings, while particular providence is expressly denied (i.e. a providence which takes care of every individual). Moreover, this providence belongs only to the gods subordinated to the first immobile mover, who only knows himself and is completely inert.

We will study this question by taking into account some treatises of Alexander where he studies these subjects, especially *De providentia*, transmitted to us only in Arabic. In addition, *De fato*, *De principiis* and *De anima mantissa*, as well as some of his *Quaestiones* would be important for our purpose. In second place, we shall try to show how the Middle-Platonic philosophers influenced Alexander’s conception of providence and, consequently, his ideas about nature as a fruit of the divine power.

1 ALEXANDER ON NATURE AS DIVINE POWER OR FATE

In his treatise *On providence*, Alexander affirms that every good cooperates with the good of other things by virtue of its mere presence. According to him, the supreme good—the god—does not benefit only some things, like the rest of the goods, but its presence extends to all things to the extent that they are able to participate in it.¹ When he refers once again to the divinity as the supreme good, a theme known to us from the book *De mundo* (397b24-398a1) appears: the different degrees in which different entities are able to partici-

pate in divine goodness (*De prov.*, 69, 9-11, *De princ.*, 116²). There is a single divine power (*δύναμις*) which, on the other hand, is participated in a different way by the various entities in function of their disparate distance from the divinity present in the sky, as it had also been declared in *De mundo*. According to Alexander, incorruptible beings act upon corruptible beings in a similar way as a corruptible thing can interact with another one. In this way, the divine power is transmitted from heaven to the lower entities and thus Alexander can corroborate the words attributed to Thales (Aristot., *De an.*, 411a8, DK 11A22), taken up by the treatise *De mundo* (397b17), namely that all things have something divine within; Aristotle already held this idea,³ but for him the divine in the sublunary entities would be represented mainly by their form itself (*Phys.*, 192a17).

The presence of the divine in all things is also sustained by Alexander (*De prov.*, 74, 11-75, 2) but he harmonizes the understanding of *De mundo*, which focuses on the notion of 'divine power,' and the Aristotelian conception that identifies the divine in entities with their form. Hence he concludes that the nature of things is a "divine *techne*" (*De prov.*, 75, 6). For Alexander, therefore, the divine power is who shapes the form of each thing making of it a work of the intelligence and the will of the gods. However, although the intelligence and the will of the divinity decided the presence of this divine power in all things, this does not mean that each concrete generation is the fruit of an independent deliberative act; rather, the divine power present in all things, which can be simply called 'nature,'⁴ produces the generation of each thing according to the divine rational program, but without an individual reasoning of the divine power itself at each time. It consists, ultimately, in an effect of the movement of the sky that the gods execute.⁵

It is very significant that not only 'divine power' but also 'fate' is identified with 'nature.'⁶ With this in mind, it can be perfectly deduced that providence will be the cause of fate, as some Middle Platonic authors had already asserted.⁷ Separating himself from the Stoics, who identify providence and destiny, Alexander, by subordinating destiny to providence, prefers to associate himself with this other movement.

This 'nature' has then a cosmic sense, which, as we say, coincides with the divine power itself and with fate; but, at the end of the day, it is identified with its effect on things: the individual nature of each entity.⁸ It is a concurrent cause in the generation of every thing and ultimately depends on the heavenly motion; however, it is not an immediate product of divine reason, but it is only a consequence of the heavenly motion predicted by the gods.

In this way, providence would deal with species to the extent that the

‘program’ of generation of each composite species is inscribed in the divine power produced by the motion of the heaven. Yet it is not possible that the result of each singular generation is also ciphered there, because individuals are different from each other; it is due to the hazardous coincidences which occur in their respective generations, coincidences occasioned by matter (*De prov.*, 89, 3 – 91, 4).⁹ Therefore, it would be impossible for the gods to know the individuals that will arise but only their species.

Such disregard of individuals is linked to the peculiar conception of Unmoved Mover’s causality supported by Alexander, a theory which will enjoy great fortune in along the centuries.¹⁰ His interpretation is based on a controversial text of *Metaphysics Lambda* where Aristotle affirms that the first motor immobile moves as the object of the intellect and the object of the appetite move (1072a26). According to Alexander, the first Unmoved Mover would live by contemplating Himself and He would not exercise any external activity at all. The souls of the heavenly spheres would be who, by virtue of their desire to imitate His immobility, would produce the circular motion of the heaven as an imitation of such a contemplative life.¹¹ Thus, although it seems that the gods—that is to say, the heavens animated by such souls¹²—do not fail to know the species which they produce in the sublunary world (*De prov.*, 65, 8-9), the first Unmoved Mover, because of His excellency, does not know nothing but Himself.¹³

A final feature of Alexander’s conception of providence is his conception of God’s provident government as a law. Already the author of *De mundo* conceived God as the law governing the whole universe (400b11-31). According to this work, the law permeates all social life and, by remaining itself immutable, achieves different results in each of the members of the polis. As Aristotle had asserted (*De philosophia*, ed. Ross, fr. 13), the whole world may be compared to a well-governed city. In addition, he had already linked the concept of law with a conception of ‘divine power’ in a very similar way to that found in *De mundo* and in Alexander: “Law is a system of order; and good government must therefore involve a general system of orderliness. But an unlimited number cannot partake in order. That is a task for the divine power which holds together the whole [of this universe].”¹⁴ In short, Aristotle himself had provided a basis for sustaining a theory that would link the divine power that governs the universe with divine intellect, by also using the notion of ‘law.’

The divine power, which, according to Alexander, coincides with ‘nature,’ can be understood then as a law which orders the mode of production of all things. However, when Alexander explains the presence of the divine power in the world as a law, he is forced to accept the Platonic tenets that

the author of *De mundo* already accepted, namely, that divine disposition determined the general factors, while the multiplication of individuals was due to matter. Likewise, Alexander admitted, as the author of *De mundo*, that the least influence of divine power in the sublunary world is due to matter, which prevents the reception of divine power in all its purity; in fact, he asserted that divine power was extended to all things, and the greater or lesser extent in which it occurred depended on their capacity to participate in it.

All these features of Alexander's conception of providence do not contribute to sustain particular providence. Individuals would not be enclosed in providential plans because they cannot be understood by divine intelligence and because, ultimately, they would be a certain type of degraded reality. These highly sophisticated prejudices lead us to ask whether there has been any non-Aristotelian font that oriented Alexander's thought in this sense. The best candidates to fill this position could be the Middle Platonic thinkers, since some of them denied the existence of particular providence, that is, a providence that also considers individuals.¹⁵

2 MIDDLE PLATONIC ROOTS OF THE ALEXANDRIAN NOTION OF FATE AND PROVIDENCE

The reason why we seek a source to find out a font for the negation of particular providence is based on the fact that we do not find this doctrine categorically denied in the treatise *De mundo*,¹⁶ which can be a Peripatetic candidate to orient Alexander's thinking in this sense. It is thus possible to conclude that there must have been a period in which the Peripatetics merely held the thesis that divine providence was restricted to heaven, but they did not deny particular providence or, at least, they did not do it by appealing to the impossibility of knowing the individuals. The main Aristotelian thesis was that providence was confined in heaven, but such dictum admits different interpretations. We can find a testimony of our hypothetical transitional state of Peripatetic doctrine of providence in Epictetus, who enumerates various theories of providence. Indeed, he distinguishes between the typically Aristotelian theory (providence limited to heaven) and a theory that would deny particular providence and only admit a general one:

With regard to the gods, [1] there are some who say that the divine doesn't even exist, [2] while others say that it does exist, but that it is inactive and indifferent, and exercises no providential care; [3] while a third set of people maintain that it both exists and exercises providential care, but only with regard to important matters relating to the heavens, and in no way

to affairs on earth; [4] a fourth set declare that it does take thought for earthly and humans affairs, but only in a general fashion, without showing concern for each particular individual; [5] while a fifth set, to which both Odysseus and Socrates belonged, say, ‘*Not a movement of mine escapes you.*’¹⁷

In addition to atheism (1), he mentions the Epicurean theory (2) and Plato’s one, which is also sustained by Epictetus himself (5). The first of the other two (3) is very close to the Aristotelian dictum on providence that limits it to heaven, while the second one (4) emphasizes the very question of divine knowledge restricted to the general aspects. It is significant that both theories are separate, although they seem to possess some similarity. Indeed, the theory which I am calling ‘Peripatetic’ confines providence to the supralunar world and insists that providence would deal only with ‘important’ things. Such an aspect makes it similar to the doctrine of *De mundo*, where God is compared to a great ruler who only rules the supralunar world in a direct way and places the administration of the rest in the power of his subordinates. However, as we said, such an approach did not compel the author to deny that God is concerned with the sublunary world, unlike what we see attributed here to the fourth theory that expressly rejects the care of individuals. A doctrine close to that of the author of *De mundo* was also defended by the peripatetic Critolaus, who has sometimes been accused of denying the knowledge of the particulars.¹⁸ In fact, Critolaus could be one of the first peripatetics who expressly defended that providence only reaches the sphere of the moon (ed. Wehrli, fr. 15), and furthermore he taught that divinity would only deal with important matters, while he would entrust the rest to intermediaries.¹⁹ Now, we also have no notice about Critolaus where he expressly denies the divine knowledge and care of the inferior. His theory is, as we say, similar to the one of *De mundo*, which also refers to certain ‘collaborators’ of providence for lesser important matters. Consequently, the neglect of the singulars corresponds, then, to a precise philosophical theory that we will find formulated in certain authors who will not be related to the Peripatetic but rather to Middle Platonism. It does not surprise us that Alexander is inspired by these authors since he himself declares that they have a doctrine close to his own one: the first divinity (God) would not deal with the world, entrusting providence to the remaining divine beings (gods).²⁰ Therefore, he expressly states that the conception “of Plato” (that is, the one of the Middle Platonists) and the doctrine “of Aristotle” (i.e., his own teachings) agree in this respect. Let us then look at some texts which help us to verify how these authors propose the doctrine of providence.

The first document to which we refer is the treatise *De fato* attributed to Plutarch. This also refers to the comparison of divine providence with a law; something that remembers the exposition of *De mundo* and is also found in Alexander. Indeed, in another treatise devoted to the influence of the divinity on the cosmos, Alexander says:

This nature and power are the cause of the unity and order of the world. In the same way as happens in one city having one ruler residing in it, not separated from it, we also say that a certain spiritual power penetrates the whole world and holds its parts together. Since the city is ruled by one authority only which is its leader or established law, so is the one world, since it is one body, continuous, eternal, imperishable, containing and encompassing all things, and comprehending them (*De princ.*, 112).

To identify the divinity with a cosmic law is a comparison also present among the Stoics, but it is precisely the way that allows the Middle Platonists to develop their conception of providence, namely, that of a providence confined in a higher sphere, which takes care of the universal good by overlooking the sublunary world.²¹ We find this approach, as we said, for instance in Pseudo-Plutarch:

Even this treatment, then, I venture to say, shows the quality of fate, except that it does not tell of that fate which is particular or individual. What, then, is the quality of this fate, considered in turn as this kind of formula? It is, we may conjecture, of the quality of the law of a state, which in the first place promulgates most, if not all, of its commands as consequents of hypotheses, and secondly, so far as it can, embraces all the concerns of a state in the form of universal statements.²²

In fact, first Plato and later Aristotle himself said that the law cannot deal with all concrete cases, but it only takes into account the situations of life in general.²³ On the basis of this generic way of approaching reality, the Middle Platonists developed a notion of divine intellect that would know only species but not individuals, which are, after all, something derived from the species. They are insignificant and its existence is due to the multiplicity of matter. At the end of the day, it is the very conception of knowledge that Alexander defends in his argumentation of *On Providence* against particular providence.

Let's see another Middle Platonist testimony now taken from Alcinous:

Fate, in fact, has the status of a law. It does not say, as it were, that such and such a person will do this, and that such and such another will suffer

that, for that would result in an infinity of possibilities, since the number of people who come into being is infinite, and the things that happen to them are also infinite; and then the concept of what is in our power would go out of the window, and so would praise and blame, and everything like that. But fate consists rather in the fact that if a soul chooses a given type of life and performs such-and-such actions, such-and-such consequences will follow for it.²⁴

In this text of Alcinous, we find the main points of Alexander's argument for free will—which, as we know, must ultimately refer to Carneades—as sustained in his *De fato* (34-36): if it is admitted that fate controls everything, then the freedom of human beings and with it all praise and reproach would be suppressed. On the other hand, in his treatise *On Providence*, the core of the argumentation against the knowledge of the particulars by the divinity arises from the impossibility of doing an infinite number of different acts of knowledge at the same time; this impossibility is due to the infinity of objects of knowledge present in the world.

In a similar way, also Apuleius (*De Platone*, I, 12) understands that providence acts by defining a 'law' that must be followed by all entities and it is not always fulfilled, since, despite the exact obedience of the subordinate gods, there are also some things that depend on human beings.²⁵ However, unlike other authors close to him, he clearly expresses that providence deals with all things even singularly (*Asclepius*, 39-40), but it seems clear that Apuleius conceives that God does not accomplish directly this care of everything, but he counts on the intermediate gods which are the ones truly engaged in it. For this reason, in his paraphrastic translation of the treatise *De mundo*, he does not hesitate to deny that the first God personally takes care of all the details of the cosmos (*De mundo*, 25). A similar conception of providence is testified by Nemesius of Emesa, who attributes it to Plato and rejects it, precisely for this very reason: according to him, it is difficult to accept that God is provident of every singular aspect of the things if all singulars arise only by virtue of the necessity of the fate, thought it is subordinated to providence.²⁶ Likewise, Calcidius will give us this same vision of such 'Platonic' providence as a law which commands only in general by omitting particular details.²⁷

3 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout these pages, we have tried to present the conception of Alexander of nature which emerges by speaking about providence and fate. His

discussion is inspired by Aristotelian principles, mostly in the very idea of the unmoved mover and its action upon the world. We could appreciate a twofold nature, namely, one in the cosmos as a whole, which can be identified with the ‘fate’ and the ‘divine power’; and another one, which is the ‘standard’ Aristotelian nature, i.e., the first principle of change in things.

The nature as ‘divine power’ is linked with the notion of ‘providence.’ Alexander tries to defend the ‘Aristotelian thesis’ that providence is enclosed in the heavens. Such a thesis is founded on the doctrine of Aristotle, but could be coined by Critolaus; later, it was developed by the author of *De mundo*. Alexander admits that providence affects the sublunary world too, but only in a global way. So, he converted definitively the Peripatetic conception of providence in a ‘general providence’ by denying expressly for the first time all ‘particular providence.’ Maybe it was due to Alexander that such position became the Aristotelian thesis *par excellence*.²⁸

For these reasons, it seems to me difficult to admit that—as Sharples thinks—Alexander tries to ‘respond’ to Atticus, by showing that divine providence affects in some way the sublunary world too.²⁹ It is probable that Atticus did not discard this global influence, since not even Peripatetic philosophers did it (we have a good testimony of this in *De mundo*). Alexander’s discussion seems to run in parallel to Atticus’ one, because he wanted to solve other problems. If he wished to refute the accusations of Atticus, or at least his line of argumentation, then he should have explained why it is necessary to seek moral rectitude, even though divinity does not reward either bad or good people. But this issue is absent from *De providentia* and other similar treatises such as *De fato*, his *Quaestiones* or *De principiis*.

Our comparison with Middle Platonists lead us to think that this interpretation of the dictum attributed to Aristotle, instead of being a faithful reception of him, is influenced by gnoseological and metaphysical presuppositions foreign to his thought. This would recommend the interpretation of other Aristotelian authors who developed his thought in other ways; I am referring to interpreters like Boethius or Aquinas among the Latins, and John of Damascus among the Greeks, who sustained particular providence by using Aristotelian principles.

NOTES

1. “[...] so gilt von Gott, der alles andere im Gutsein für bestimmte Dinge übertrifft und überragt, daß er nach seiner spezifischen Natur das Gute tut und deshalb allen Dingen in jeder Hinsicht nützt [...] vielmehr verursacht Gott, als Sachwalter des Alls und der Natur alles Existierenden, für alle Dinge, soweit sie zur

- Teilhabe am den agathá überhaupt fähig sind” (*De prov.*, 57, 1-11; I quote *De prov.* from the edition and translation of Hans-Jochen Ruland, *Die arabischen Fassungen von zwei Schriften des Alexander von Aphrodisias: Über die Vorsehung und Über das liberum arbitrium*, Diss. Phil. Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken 1976; the eventual English translations are based on this translation and on the one of Mauro Zonta in Alessandro di Afrodisia, *La provvidenza. Questioni sulla provvidenza*, ed. Silvia Fazzo, BUR, Milano 1999). The last part of the quoted text seems to recall *De an.*, 415a29 and its parallel *De gen. an.*, 731b25-28.
2. For the text and translation of *De principiis*, I follow Charles Genequand (ed.), *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, Brill, Leiden 2000.
 3. See *Eth. Nic.*, 1153b32; *De part. an.*, 645a16-22.
 4. See *De prov.*, 77, 12. See also: ἦν [sc. θεία δύναμις] καὶ φύσιν καλοῦμεν (*De an. mantissa*, CAG 172, 19).
 5. See *Quaest.*, II.3, CAG 47, 30.
 6. εἶναι ταῦτὸν εἰμαρμένην τε καὶ φύσιν (*De fato*, 6, CAG 169, 19).
 7. See Ps. Plutarchus, *De fato*, 9, 573A-B; 10, 574B; Nemesius Emesenus, *De nat. hom.*, 38, ed. Morani, p. 109, 16-18.
 8. See Silvia Fazzo, in Alessandro di Afrodisia, *La provvidenza. Questioni sulla provvidenza*, p. 196.
 9. Matter is principle of irregularity in the sublunary world; it precisely determines the low capacity to receive the influence of the providence that characterizes this sphere of the cosmos: see Paul Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*, 3. Band, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 2001, p. 277.
 10. About this subject, see Enrico Berti, “Il movimento del cielo in Alessandro di Afrodisia,” in Aldo Brancacci (a cura di), *La filosofia in età imperiale: le scuole e le tradizioni filosofiche (Atti del colloquio Roma, 17-19 Giugno 1999)*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2000, pp. 225-243.
 11. See *Quaest.*, I.25, CAG 40, 17-23; II.19, CAG 63, 20; *De princ.*, 54.82-84.96.
 12. See *De fato*, 6, CAG 169, 26; *In meteor.*, CAG 6, 4-7; *Quaest.*, II.3, CAG 47, 30; 49, 29ss., etc.
 13. See *De an. mantissa*, CAG 109, 23 – 110, 3; *De princ.*, 106. Sharples inclines to deny the providence to the first unmoved mover and leave it only in the hands of the subordinate gods to him: see Robert W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence: Two Problems*, «The Classical Quarterly», 32 (1982), pp. 206-207.
 14. ὁ τε γὰρ νόμος τάξις τίς ἐστι, καὶ τὴν ἐννομίαν ἀναγκαῖον εὐταξίαν εἶναι, ὃ δὲ λίαν ὑπερβάλλων ἀριθμὸς οὐ δύναται μετέχειν τάξεως θείας γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο δυνάμει ἔργον, ἥτις καὶ τόδε συνέχει τὸ πᾶν (*Pol.*, 1326a29-33; trans. Ernest Barker in Aristotle, *Politics*, Oxford UP, Oxford 1995, pp. 261-262).
 15. “Alexander’s connection of providence with the preservation of *sublunary species* by the motion of the heavens does provide a point of contact with Middle-Platonist discussions of providence” (Sharples, “Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence: Two Problems”, cit., p. 204; my italics).

16. André-Jean Festugière, *L'idéal religieux des grecs et l'évangile*, Gabalda, Paris 1981, pp. 226-228 seems to think that the author of *De mundo* denied particular providence and so he affirms: "La Providence se désintéresse donc, quant à elle-même, des choses terrestres" (ibid., p. 228). However, a few years later Moraux asserted: "In der Schrift von der Welt, wo die Frage nach der göttlichen Vorsehung ausführlich erörtert wird, findet sich zwar kein ausdrücklicher Hinweis darauf, daß Gott das Allgemeine regelt und sich nicht um das Individuelle kümmert" (Paul Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias*, 2. Band, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1984, p. 499).
17. *Περὶ θεῶν οἱ μὲν τινές εἰσιν οἱ λέγοντες μηδ' εἶναι τὸ θεῖον, οἱ δ' εἶναι μὲν, ἀργὸν δὲ καὶ ἀμελὲς καὶ μὴ προνοεῖν μηδενός τρίτοι δ' οἱ καὶ εἶναι καὶ προνοεῖν, ἀλλὰ τῶν μεγάλων καὶ οὐρανίων, τῶν δὲ ἐπὶ γῆς μηδενός τέταρτοι δ' οἱ καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, εἰς κοινὸν δὲ μόνον καὶ οὐχὶ δὲ κατ' ἰδίαν ἐκάστου πέμπτοι δ', ὧν ἦν καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς καὶ Σωκράτης, οἱ λέγοντες ὅτι "οὐδέ σε λήθω | κινύμενος"* (Diss., I, 12, 1-3; trans. Robin Hard in Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, Oxford UP, Oxford 2014, p. 30).
18. "The idea that the divine is not involved in the management of every detail is attributed to Critolaus in [ed. Wehrli, fr. 37a: however, see the text quoted in the following note]" (Robert W. Sharples, *Peripathetic Philosophy 200 BC to AD 200*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 2010, p. 209). Sharples does not insist on the ignorance of individuals but he ascribes mainly to this Peripatetic philosopher the theory that the divinity would completely disregard the sublunary world (id., *Aristotelian Theology after Aristotle*, in Dorothea Frede, André Laks [ed.], *Traditions of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its Background and Aftermath*, Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln 2002, p. 14). According to this scholar, although this teaching does not follow necessarily from what we know of him, it would not be in contradiction with the notices at our disposal: see ibid., p. 23, note 109.
19. *πρὸς τὰς μεγάλας χρείας ἐπιδιδούς, τὰλλα δὲ φίλους καὶ ἐταίρους ῥήτορας καθεῖς ἔπραττεν* (ed. Wehrli, fr. 37b).
20. *ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πλάτων ἀσώματον ἡγεῖται τὸν πρῶτον θεόν, καὶ μένειν αὐτόν φησιν ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ περιωτῇ τε καὶ νοήσει, εἶναι δὲ τινος θεοῦ δευτέρου τοῦς τῆν τῶν ἄλλων γένεσιν τε καὶ οὐσίαν ἐπιτροπεύοντα, ὧν συνάδει καὶ τὰ ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους εἰρημένα* (Alexander, in Girolamo Vitelli, *Due frammenti di Alessandro di Afrodizia*, in *Festschrift Theodor Gomperz*, Hölder, Wien 1902, p. 93). It seems that Alexander believes that the following Middle Platonic doctrines are consistent with his own 'orthodox' Aristotelianism: the immaterial and intellectual nature of the first unmoved mover (presumably, he also takes for granted that it is inert), as well as the subordination to it of other divinities that do take care of the generation and the existence of the sublunary entities.
21. Already Antiochus of Ascalon linked divine providence with "law of nature": see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, Cornell UP., Ithaca 1996, p. 80. This doctrine seems to be inspired in Plato: *νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους εἶπεν αὐταῖς* (*Tim.*, 41e; quoted by Calcidius, 143).

22. Σχεδὸν μὲν οὖν καὶ τοῦτο δηλοῖ, ὁποῖόν τι τυγχάνει ἢ εἰμαρμένη, πλὴν οὐχ ἢ γε κατὰ μέρος οὐδ' ἢ καθ' ἕκαστα. ποία τις οὖν καὶ ἦδε κατ' αὐτὸ δὴ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ λόγου· ἔστι τοίνυν, ὡς ἂν τις εἰκάσαι, οἷος ὁ πολιτικὸς νόμος, 'ὅς' πρῶτον μὲν τὰ πλεῖστα, εἰ καὶ μὴ πάντα, ἐξ ὑποθέσεως προστάττει, ἔπειτα μὴν καθόλου τὰ πόλει προσήκοντα εἰς δύναμιν περιλαμβάνει (*De fato*, 4, 569D; trans. Phillip H. de Lacy and Benedict Einarson in *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 7, Loeb Classical Library 405, Harvard UP/Wiliam Heinemann, Cambridge/London 1959, pp. 319.321).
23. See for instance Plato, *Polit.*, 295a; Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.*, 1094b20-21; 1137b13-19.
24. Ἡ γὰρ εἰμαρμένη νόμου τάξιν ἐπέχουσα οὐχ οἶον λέγει διότι ὄδε μὲν τάδε ποιήσεται, ὄδε δὲ τάδε πείσεται (εἰς ἄπειρον γὰρ τοῦτο, ἀπείρων μὲν ὄντων τῶν γεννωμένων, ἀπείρων δὲ τῶν περὶ αὐτοὺς συμβαινόντων), ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν οἰχθήσεται καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ψόγοι καὶ πᾶν τὸ τούτοις παραπλήσιον, ἀλλὰ διότι ἦτις ἂν ἔληται ψυχὴ τοιοῦτον βίον καὶ τάδε τινὰ πράξῃ, τάδε τινὰ αὐτῇ ἔψεται (*Didascalicon*, 26, 1, ed. Whittaker, p. 51; trans. John Dillon in Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, Clarendon, Oxford 1993, pp. 34-35).
25. See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, cit., pp. 320-326.
26. See Nemesius Emesenus, *De nat. hom.*, 43, ed. Morani, p. 126, 15-18.
27. See Jan den Boeft, *Calcidius on Fate. His Doctrine and Sources*, Brill, Leiden 1970, pp. 24-30.
28. Some testimonies of the predominance of this interpretation could be, among others, Tatianus, *Ad graecos*, 2; Nemesius Emesenus, *De nat. hom.*, 43, ed. Morani, p. 127, 15-21.
29. See Atticus, ed. des Places, fr. 3, 7-10. See also Robert W. Sharples, *Peripatetics*, in Lloyd P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, vol. 1, Cambridge UP., Cambridge 2010, p. 154.

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