The Construction of a Philosophical Textbook: Some Remarks on Nikephoros Blemmydes' *Epitome physica*

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Abstract

The *Compendium on Physics* (*Epitome physica*) by the Byzantine theologian and philosopher Nikephoros Blemmydes (13th cent.) was a very successful textbook on Natural Philosophy containing a summary of physics, meteorology and astronomy. This compendium was also conceived for being used as support for teaching. For his purposes, Blemmydes combined passages taken from different sources into a new text: Aristotle and his commentators as well as Cleomedes were his main sources. Since a manuscript with an earlier version of the text still survives, it is also possible to go deeper into the workshop of this Byzantine author and to investigate the use of the sources in both textual stages. This paper will therefore be devoted to analysing the inner structure of the *Epitome physica* and Blemmydes' activity as an author.

Keywords

Nikephoros Blemmydes – Aristotle – Cleomedes – Galen – Byzantine Philosophy

1. Within the Byzantine learning framework, the study of philosophy, and especially of Aristotle, was a core part of the educational process. Besides the direct study of his treatises with the aid of Late Antique and Byzantine commentaries, new didactic works were also produced in order to summarise the contents of his philosophy and to render them more easily accessible. Furthermore, the need to reconcile them with a Christian perspective also played an important role. In this context, the *Introductory epitome* (Εἰσαγωγικὴ ἐπιτομή) by Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197–c. 1269) constitutes probably one of the best and

most widespread examples of this scholarly practice.¹ This philosophical textbook in two books on logic and on physics, respectively – customarily known by the Latin name *Epitome logica* and *Epitome physica* – was conceived by the author for learning purposes.

The first version of the *Epitome* dates to the years 1237–1239, when Blemmydes was entrusted by the Emperor John III Doukas Batazes with the education of five young men, one of whom was the later historian George Akropolites. Subsequently, Blemmydes became the teacher of the future Emperor Theodore II Doukas Laskaris. Some Byzantine manuscripts preserve traces of this first redaction, composed by Blemmydes for his teaching duties: for the book on logic, we have the proem² and an excerpt of chs 37–38;³ on the other hand, the second book on physics is transmitted by the ms. *Vaticanus gr.* 434 (end of 13th century).⁴ During the last years of his life, in the 1260s, Blemmydes undertook a thorough revision of his textbook. This operation concerned not only the language and style, but also the structure and the content. The Vatican manuscript is therefore essential for understanding this process. In fact, it offers the rare chance to investigate how a Byzantine author composed and revised a textbook, as if one were looking over his shoulder as he sat at his desk.

2. In order to elucidate the compositional methodology and the purpose of this work, the preface to the *Epitome* offers valuable insights.⁵ As previously mentioned, this text underwent some sort of revision: in fact, Blemmydes added a dedication to the monks of his monastery to the original proem. This new *incipit* refers primarily to the part on logic. It reads as follows (688c2–689a4):⁶

ἐπειδὴ περ ἡ λογικὴ ἐπιστήμη πρὸς ἱερὰν Γραφήν καὶ πάντας τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας λόγους οὐκ ὀλίγον φέρει τὸ χρήσιμον, δεόν ἐκρίναμεν τοῖς τοῦ Λόγου φοιτηταῖς τοῦ ὄντος καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας μύσταις μικροὺς τινας ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ λογικῇ λιπεῖν ἡμετέρους ὑπομνηματισμούς, οὓς αἰτησαμένῳ βασιλεῖ, νέοι ἔτι ὄντες καὶ πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν εἰσαγωγικοί καὶ ἀνεπιστήμονες, ὅποιοι καὶ εἰς τὸ

1 On Blemmydes' life and work, see Valente 2018 with further literature. The reference edition for the *Epitome* is still the *editio princeps* by Johann Wegelin, published in Augsburg in 1605 and reprinted in vol. 142 of *Patrologia Graeca*. See also e.g. Lackner 1972; id. 1981; Valente 2017, 232–234.

2 See below, § 2.

3 See Ebbesen 1981, I 330–332, III 82–85; Lackner 1981, 363 with n. 1; Bydén 2003, 28.

4 See Lackner 1981, 353ff.; on this manuscript, see also Devreesse 1937, 162–165; Valente 2017, 233f., id. 2019, 521f. with further literature.

5 On this proem, see also Carelos 2005, 401f.; Paidas 2007.

6 All the quotation from the *Introductive epitome* refer to PG 142 (see above, n. 1).

ἐξῆς ἐκ τῆς συντρόφου ῥαθυμίας καὶ ῥυπαρίας διεμείναμεν, ἐκδεδώκαμεν οὕτω προοιμιασάμενοι.

‘Since the logical science brings a not small advantage to the Holy Writing and to all the words of truth,⁷ we estimated it necessary to leave some of our treatises concerning this logical science to the disciples of the Logos Who Is and to the initiated into the Truth. As we were still young, newly introduced into the philosophy,⁸ and ignorant – as we have remained in subsequent years due to innate laziness and sordidness –, we published them for the Emperor, on his request. The proem was the following’.

The proem of the first version of the compendium follows. According to a convention, Blemmydes opened it with a celebration of the Emperor’s political and philosophical merits.⁹ What is important for the present investigation is that some features of this treatise are mentioned at the end of this text (689c12–d5):

ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς μικροὺς μικράν τινα καὶ πρόχειρον αὐτῷ συνεισενεγκεῖν τοῦ σπουδάσματος ἐκέλευσεν (scil. ὁ ἐμὸς αὐτοκράτωρ) ἀφορμὴν, ἀποπληροῦντες τὴν κέλευσιν τοὺς ὑποτεταγμένους εἰσαγωγοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ κατ’ ἐπιτομὴν συνετάξαμεν ὀλίγους ὑπομνηματισμούς.

‘Since [our Emperor] commissioned a small and accessible subsidiary work even to us, who are of little consequence, we fulfilled his command and composed the following short treatises as an introduction to philosophy, redacted in the form of an epitome’.

Blemmydes composed this work to support his teaching activities, on the request of the Emperor (αἰτησαμένῳ βασιλεῖ). The author was still young and had

7 Also in his *Autobiography*, Blemmydes remarks the benefits of logic in religious controversies: see in particular II 67,13–16 Munitiz and, more in general, II 67–74. See also Ierodiakonou 2012.

8 The adjective εἰσαγωγικός, ‘introductory’, is peculiar when used to refer to a person, as in this case. Wegelin translates this phrase as follows: *cum adhuc ad philosophiam introduceremur*.

9 This is the beginning of the first proem (689a5f.; see also Carelos 2005, 401): Βασιλείας καὶ φιλοσοφίας πολὺ τὸ συγγενὲς καὶ ὁμοίότροπον κτλ. (‘Royal power and philosophy share many akin and analogous features etc.’). On this proem, see recently Angelov 2012, 37 and, more generally, 34–45. In many manuscripts of the *Epitome logica*, and especially in the oldest ones, the participle προοιμιασάμενοι that closes the second proem is followed by a strong punctuation mark (‘:–’) and the letter *beta* in βασιλείας is rubricated: see e.g. *Monac. gr.* 225, fol. 41^v; *Bodl. Holkh. gr.* 71, fol. 2^r (on these two manuscripts, see Valente 2019, 522f. and 524f. with further bibliography).

recently been introduced to philosophy, as he remarks with a certain understatement (... ἀνεπιστήμονες, ὅποιοι καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς ἐκ τῆς συντροφου ῥαθυμίας καὶ ῥυπαρίας διεμείναμεν κτλ.). As the author stresses, these introductory treatises to philosophy (ὑπομνηματισμοί) are written in the form of an epitome (κατ' ἐπιτομήν). This formulation also occurs in a passage of ch. 6 (*Περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς*). Roughly in the middle of the chapter, Blemmydes concludes the discussion on generation and corruption in general (ἀπλῶς) with these words (1084b13–15):

περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν κατ' οὐσίαν μεταβολῶν, ἤγουν τῆς ἀπλῶς γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς, εἰρήσθω τοσαῦτα κατ' ἐπιτομήν ὑπομνήσεως.

'Thus, let so much be said about the changes in relation to substance, that is in relation to generation and corruption in general, in the form of an epitomized investigation'.

In this case, the source Blemmydes uses in compiling this passage is Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (CAG IX 908,15–909,1 Diels). Such an operation of abridging and reshaping the sources is typical of the whole work.¹⁰ More in general, Blemmydes' goal is to compose a useful textbook for teaching and learning. This intention also emerges from a passage in the second book of his *Autobiography*, in which Blemmydes resumes his own activity as an author. Here, he lists the treatises he composed during his life, also outlining their content (II 75,1–8 Munitiz):

ἡμεῖς δε καὶ τὴν συλλογιστικὴν καὶ τὰ πρὸ ταύτης ἐν Ἐπιτομῇ θέσθαι φθάνομεν, ἥπερ ἰσχὺς σαφηνίσαντες. τὰ τε τῆς φυσικῆς καιριώτερα καὶ τὰ τῆς μετεωρολογίας ἀναγκασιότερα, καὶ τῶν διττῶν καὶ ἀντιστροφῶν περιφορῶν, καὶ τῆς τῶν αἰθερίων σωμάτων κινήσεως καὶ τῶν ταύταις ἐπομένων, ὅσα μὴ πόρρω τοῦ χρησίμου, τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον περιοδεύομεν, γύμνασμα τὴν πράξιν οἰκεῖον ποιούμενοι.

'For my part, I set about writing an *Epitome* of syllogistic and the parts [of logic] that precede it, trying to be as clear as I possibly could. I also described the most important parts of physics and what is basic in 'meteorology', the double revolution in opposite directions, and the other

10 See Valente 2017 with further bibliography. It is also common to other treatises by this author: for instance, see Nic. Blemm. *De virt. et asc.* 648f. (p. 29 Gielen) τοσαῦτα κατ' ἐπιτομήν εἰρήσθω περὶ ἀρετῆς πρακτικῆς καὶ καθαρτικῆς κτλ.

movements of the bodies that are in the heavens, also the consequences that follow from them, adopting throughout the same method and omitting all that was not really useful. For me this activity was my personal training'.¹¹

In the *Epitome*, the selection of learned materials concerning logic and physics is based on the criteria of clarity and utility. Blemmydes' approach is consistent with the cultural milieu of his age, as is testified to by, among others, a passage from the proem of Joseph Rakendytes' *Synopsis variarum disciplinarum*. This latter scholar lived between 1260 and 1330, that is, in the years immediately after Blemmydes lifetime.¹² His encyclopedic work is of particular interest because Rhakendytes borrowed entire passages not only from the *Epitome*, but from Blemmydes' *opera omnia*, often word for word. Blemmydes' passages were also expanded by inserting extracts from other treatises, for instance, from John of Damascus and George Pachymeres.¹³ In the proem, Rhakendytes explains the methodology he employed:¹⁴

ὁ γοῦν τέως κατεπράχθη μοι, τοῦτό ἐστιν· ἐνέκυψα βίβλοις σοφῶν διαφόροις πραγματείαις ἐσχολακῶτων [...] ταῦτα δὴ πάντα διελθὼν ἐγὼ μετὰ τὰς διεξοδικὰς ἀνελίζεις τῶν μαθημάτων θέλων ἐκφυγεῖν τὸ κενόσπουδον ἔνθεν μὲν τοῦτο, ἐκεῖθεν δ' ἐκεῖνο, ἄλλοθεν δ' ἄλλο, καὶ αὐθις ἀλλαχόθεν ἕτερον συνερανισάμενος καὶ συνθεὶς ὁστέα εἴποι τις προφητικῶς πρὸς ὁστέα καὶ ἁρμονίαν πρὸς ἁρμονίαν, ὁλομέλειάν τινα μίαν καὶ συνεχὴ ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ διαφόρων πραγματειῶν μίαν ταύτην συνεστησάμην καὶ ὡς εἰκόνα φιλοσοφίας καὶ μαθημάτων τὴν παροῦσαν ἀνεστήλωσα βίβλον, ἥ δὴ καὶ τις ἐνατενίζων, ὁσάκις ἐθέλοι, οὐ μακρὰν ζητήσει, οὐδὲ περιθρέξεται κύκλῳ, ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἔξει τὸ χρήσιμον.

'This is what I have made so far: I studied books of wise men who had dealt with various topics [...]. I treated all these things in accordance with the detailed expositions of (each) discipline because I wanted to avoid what is worthless: I took over a point from one text, another from another one, again another from another one, and then again another from another one. Connecting bone to bone – to speak according to the prophet – and joint to joint, I put together from many different treatises

11 Translation by Munitiz 1988, 132f. For the phrase γύμνασμα τὴν πρᾶξιν οἰκεῖον ποιούμενοι, see also Nic. Blemm. *De virt. et asc.* 694f. (p. 31 Gielen) ... τὴν πρᾶξιν ὄχημα ποιούμενη (scil. ἡ θεωρία) καὶ ταύτης ἐπιπρεπῶς ἐπιβαίνουσα.

12 See Treu 1899; Gielen 2013, ead. 2016, LXXI–LXXIV with rich bibliography.

13 See Gielen 2016, LXXIV–LXXIX.

14 The Greek text is quoted according to Treu 1899, 37,5f. and 24–32.

this present one, the result of which is uniform and coherent. Thus, I erected this book as a monument on a column, as a representation of philosophy and the sciences. Looking at it whenever one wants to, one will not search for long, or run around in vain, rather one will find what is useful promptly’.

The prophet that Rhakendytes is alluding to is Ezekiel (37,7), as Erika Gielen rightly stresses (2013, 266 n. 41):

καὶ ἐπροφήτευσα καθὼς ἐνετείλατό μοι. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐμέ προφητεῦσαι καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός, καὶ προσήγαγε τὰ ὀστά ἑκάτερον πρὸς τὴν ἀρμονίαν αὐτοῦ.

‘So I prophesied as I was commanded: and while I prophesied, there was a shaking that put the bones together, each in its own place’.

The allusion is of particular relevance: just as the prophet rejoined and gave new life to the dispersed bones of the Israelites with the help of God, so Rhakendytes collected different treatises from well-defined sources and gave them new life in a new body, that is his *Synopsis*. For his part, Blemmydes adopted a similar methodology based upon the combination of different source texts, but on a more complex and refined level: he selected some passages from his source texts and copy-pasted them anonymously but in an original way, combining them for creating a new work. By doing this, the Aristotelian tradition was actively reinterpreted and updated.¹⁵

3. Wolfgang Lackner (1981) was the first scholar to systematically engaging the identification of the sources of Blemmydes’ *Compendium on Physics*.¹⁶ Aristotle and his commentators, such as Simplicius, Philoponus and Alexander of Aphrodisia, constitute the core material, especially up to the middle of ch. 24 (*Περὶ οὐρανοῦ*).¹⁷ From that point on, the astronomical treatise of Cleomedes turns out to be the main source, in addition besides Aristotle.¹⁸ In this context,

15 See Valente 2017, 238, 246f. with further literature.

16 The identification of the source texts of the *Epitome physica* was initially undertaken by Wegelin 1606b. In the introduction to his Latin translation of the *Epitome physica*, he mentioned Plato, Aristotle and Cleomedes as the main sources (*Praefatio* pp. 2 and 4 [= *Patrologia Graeca* 142, 1017f.) and added some references to those authors in the margin of the translation itself. (In the reprint of Wegelin’s translation in the *Patrologia Graeca*, his marginal notes became footnotes).

17 For Blemmydes’ use of Simplicius’ commentaries, see Golitsis 2007. On Alexander of Aphrodisias in ch. 17, see Valente 2017.

18 See Lackner 1972, 164. The passages from Cleomedes’ *Μετεώρα* incorporated by Blemmydes in the *Epitome physica* were collected by Todd 1990, 86.

the introduction of Cleomedes, a Stoic philosopher, is particularly significant but, at the same time, is also quite typical for the early Palaeologan age, when there was a revival of his astronomic treatise.¹⁹ Moreover, occasional excerpts from other source works can be identified thanks to verbatim citations. In order to illustrate this methodology,²⁰ I will discuss some examples from the *Epitome physica*, as the Vatican manuscript allows us to compare different compositional stages of the compendium.

Let us consider the *incipit* of ch. 31, dedicated to the concept of ‘void’ (*Περὶ κενοῦ*: 1300b1–1301d12).²¹ Together with some passages from Aristotle’s *Physics*, Book 4 (6–9, 213a12–217b28), Blemmydes’ main source is Cleomedes. As is often the case, Aristotle inspires the beginning of the chapter. In the following table, Blemmydes’ sources are quoted in the left column, the Vatican version of the *Epitome* is printed in the middle, the final version on the right:²²

Sources	Vat. gr. 434: <i>Epitome physica</i> , first version	<i>Epitome physica</i> , final version (1300b2–6)
Ar. <i>Cael.</i> I 9, 279a12–14 ἐν ἅπαντι γὰρ τόπῳ δυνατὸν ὑπάρξαι σώμα· κενὸν δ’ εἶναι φασιν ἐν ᾧ μὴ ἐνυπάρχει σώμα, δυνατὸν δ’ ἐστὶ γενέσθαι.	ἐνθα μὴ ἔστι τι τῶν σωμάτων ὅλως, δύνανται δὲ γενέσθαι σώματος τόπος, ἐκεῖνο τινὲς τῶν φυσικῶν κενὸν ὀνομάζουσιν· κενὸν γὰρ εἶναι φασὶ τόπον ἑστερημένον σώματος.	ἐνθα μὴ ἔστιν ὅλως τι τῶν σωμάτων, δύνανται δὲ γενέσθαι σώματος τόπος, ἐκεῖνο κενὸν ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ φυσικοί. τόπον γὰρ ἑστερημένον σώματος οἶδασιν τὸ κενόν.
Ar. <i>Ph.</i> IV 1, 208b25–27 ἔτι οἱ τὸ κενὸν φάσκοντες εἶναι τόπον λέγουσιν· τὸ γὰρ κενὸν τόπος ἂν εἴη ἑστερημένος σώματος.		

The first sentence of this chapter contains a general definition of ‘void’: according to Bydén’s paraphrase (2003, 163), ‘the natural philosophers call void a place where there is no body, but a body can be (place deprived of body)’. This

19 See e.g. Todd 1990, xxix.

20 See also Golitsis 2007, 244–246 (on ch. 1), 246–248 (on ch. 4), 248–251 (on ch. 7), 251f. (on ch. 9); Valente 2017, 234–246 for an analysis of ch. 17, its sources and the methodology of compilation.

21 Bydén 2003, 163–168 studied this chapter in detail.

22 Following the suggestion of an anonymous peer reviewer, I have changed the Byzantine punctuation and accentuation of the Vatican manuscript (and of the final version of the *Epitome*) here and below, according to the conventions used for classical texts.

beginning seems to result from the combination of two Aristotelian passages, one from the treatise *De caelo*, the other from *Physics*.²³ The relevant information has been selected, reworked and simplified. In this case, the final redaction of the *Epitome* shows only stylistic changes.

Immediately after this sentence, Blemmydes added a doxographic digression, including Christian content, while revising his treatise. In fact, the following passage is not present in the *Vaticanus*, but in all the manuscripts of the final version (1300b7–c2):

τινὲς μὲν οὖν ὄνομα μόνον κενόν τε καὶ ἀνύπαρκτον λέγουσι τὸ κενόν· τινὲς δὲ τὸ ἔξω τῆς κυρτῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κατ' ἀλήθειαν ἀπλανοῦς οὐρανοῦ κενὸν ἀποφαινόμεναι· κενὸν σώματος, οὐ Θεοῦ· τὸ πᾶν γάρ, ἦτοι τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ τὸ²⁴ πᾶν, ἦτοι τὸ ὑπερκόσμιον, πληροὶ ὁ Θεός. τοῦτο δὴ τὸ ὑπερκόσμιον ἔφασαν τὸ κενόν· ὁ μάλιστα καὶ τόπον ἰδίως εἶπον εἶναι μόνου Θεοῦ· ἀπείρου ἅπειρον καὶ ἀσωμάτου ἀσώματον καὶ αἰωνίου αἰώνιον.

'So, some say that *void* is just a void and non-existent name. Others assert that what is beyond the convex surface of the first and truly fixed heaven is void: i.e. void of body, not of God, since God fills the Whole, that is the Cosmos, and what is beyond the Whole, that is what is beyond the Cosmos. They called this supramundane *void*, and they said that it is indeed the place especially and uniquely designated for God, an infinite, incorporeal, and eternal place for an infinite, incorporeal, and eternal God.'²⁵

The source of this doctrine is still unknown.²⁶ It may be an addition by Blemmydes himself, at least with respect to the theological part.²⁷ As Bydén (2003, 164) remarks, "[...] he [*scil.* Blemmydes] tries to show (*EP* 31.2) that extracosmic void is consistent with Christian faith [...]. My efforts to trace a Patristic source of the statement reported in *EP* 31.2 have been in vain".²⁸

23 See also *Ar. Ph.* IV 7, 214a16–19 ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ τόπου διώρισται, καὶ τὸ κενὸν ἀνάγκη τόπον εἶναι, εἰ ἔστιν, ἐστερημένον σώματος, τόπος δὲ καὶ πῶς ἔστι καὶ πῶς οὐκ ἔστιν εἴρηται, φανερόν ὅτι οὕτω μὲν κενὸν οὐκ ἔστιν, οὕτε κεχωρισμένον οὕτε ἀχώριστον. Bydén 2003, 163 n. 141 confers *Ar. Ph.* IV 6, 213b30–34 and *Cleom.* I 1,20–24.

24 The article τὸ is missing in the printed edition by Wegelin, but it is unanimously transmitted in the manuscripts.

25 Translation by Bydén 2003, 163 with some changes.

26 See also Bydén 2003, 163 with n. 142.

27 On this point, see Lackner 1981, 357ff.

28 In the final version, Blemmydes also adds this section (1300c3–10): τοιοῦτον μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενόν. σωμάτων καὶ γὰρ συμφυῶν ἀλλήλοις ἅπας ὁ κόσμος πεπλήρωται. τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶ τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν μέσῳ, πυρὸς καὶ (κ- om. Wegelin)

Cleomedes appears to be the main source for the remainder of this chapter.²⁹ The following §§ 3f. (1300c11–d11) offer a good example for visualizing how the source text is used and reshaped. The absence of void within the Cosmos is rejected on the basis of the phenomena:

Source: Cleom. I 1,68–78 Todd

Vat. gr. 434: *Epitome physica*, first version³⁰

τοιούτου δὲ ὑπάρχον τὸ κενόν, ἐν μὲν
κόσμῳ οὐδὲ ὅλως ἐστί. δῆλον δὲ ἐκ τῶν
φαινομένων.

εἰ γὰρ μὴ δι' ὅλου συμφυῆς ὑπῆρχεν ἡ τῶν
ὅλων οὐσία, οὐτ' ἂν ὑπὸ φύσεως οἶόν τ' ἦν
συνέχεσθαι καὶ διοικεῖσθαι τὸν κόσμον,
οὔτε τῶν μερῶν αὐτοῦ συμπάθειά τις ἂν
ἦν πρὸς ἄλληλα, οὔτε, μὴ ὕφ' ἐνὸς τόνου
συνεχομένου αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος δι'
ὅλου ὄντος συμφυοῦς, οἶόν τ' ἂν ἦν ἡμῖν
ὁρᾶν ἢ ἀκοῦειν.

μεταξὺ γὰρ ὄντων κενωμάτων,
ἐνεποδίζοντο ἂν ὑπ' αὐτῶν αἱ αἰσθήσεις
κτλ.

οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενὸν οὐδέν.

εἰ γὰρ ἦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενόν,
οὐτ' ἂν συμπάθειά τι<ς> οὐκ ἦν τῶν μερῶν τοῦ
κόσμου πρὸς ἄλληλα, οὐτ' αὖ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι
καὶ μάλλον τῇ ὁράσει τοσαύτη ἦν ἡ ἐνέργεια.
πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυνατὸν ὑπῆρχεν ἐξικνεῖσθαι τὴν
ὄψιν μέχρι τοῦ στερεώματος, μὴ τοῦ ἀέρος
ὄντος διόλου συνεχοῦς ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἠνωμένου
τῷ αἰθέρι κατὰ συμφυῖαν ἀδιάστατον;
ὄντων γὰρ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ κενωμάτων τινῶν,
ἤργουν αἱ αἰσθήσεις πάντως ἐμποδιζόμεναι
τοῖς κενώμασι.

ἀέρος καὶ ὕδατος σύστημά τε καὶ σύγκριμα συμφυῆς καὶ εὐάρμοστον, καὶ ἄξιον ὑπὸ τοιούτου παραχθῆναι πανσόφου καὶ παντοδυνάμου δημιουργοῦ· ὅφ' οὐ κακὰ τοῦ μηδαμῶς ὄντος ἔκτισται καὶ διακεκόσμηται. See Bydén 2003, 163 (with nn. 143f.): “Such a kind of void does not exist within the world. For the latter is entirely filled by a continuum of bodies. For this is the world: a continuous, well-fitted system of heaven, earth and the things in between, fire, air and water, such as is worthy of being created by an omniscient and omnipotent Creator, who created it out of nothing”. See also Psellos’ treatise *Περὶ τῶν ἰδεῶν ἃς Πλάτων λέγει* (*Opusc.* 33, p. 112,10–13 O’Meara): οἱ οὖν οὕτως λέγοντες ταῦτα πρῶτον μὲν τιθέασιν τὸν δημιουργὸν τοῦ παντός, ἔπειτα τὰς ἰδέας, τὰ ἐκείνου πρωτουργὰ ἐνθυμήματα, καὶ μετὰ ταύτας τὸν τῆδε κόσμον, τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν μέσῳ σύστημά τε καὶ σύγκριμα. The same definition also occurs in some Byzantine lexica: see e.g. *Suda* x 2147 A. κόσμος· τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν μέσῳ σύστημά τε καὶ σύγκριμα κτλ. (see also *Ecl. Anecd. Ox.* II 382,25 Cr.; *EM* 532,14 s.v. κόσμος; [Zonar.] 1234 s.v. κόσμος).

29 See Wegelin 1606, 368 (= *PG* 142 1299 n. 30); Todd 1990, 86; Bydén 2003, 163f. with nn. 143–147.

30 This is the text of the final version: κενὸν οὖν κατὰ τὸν κόσμον οὐκ ἔστι τὸ οἰοῖναι. εἰ γὰρ ἦν ὅλως ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ κενόν, οὐτ' ἂν συμπάθειά τις ἐφαίνετο τῶν τοῦ κόσμου μερῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα,

Source: Cleom. I 1,68–78 Todd

Vat. gr. 434: *Epitome physica*, first version

‘Since the void exists in this way, it is also not present at all within the cosmos. This is clear from the phenomena.

For if the substance of the whole cosmos were not naturally linked throughout, then: (a) the cosmos could neither be held together and administered throughout by Nature, nor could its parts have any sympathy relative to one another; (b) we would also be incapable of seeing and hearing, if the cosmos were not held together by a single tension (that is, if the pneuma were not naturally linked throughout); for if there were intervening void spaces, our senses would be impeded by them (etc.).³¹

‘So it is not possible that void is present in the cosmos.

For if there were void in the cosmos, there would not be any sympathy relative to one another nor, furthermore, the perceptions, and particularly sight, would not be active. In fact, how would it be possible for the eyes to reach the firmament if the air were not a continuous connection in itself and united to the heaven through an uninterrupted natural continuity. For if there were intervening void spaces, our senses would be inactive and impeded by the void spaces.’³²

These passages reveal that Blemmydes usually adopts the text of his source, sometimes changing the wording, sometimes simply reproducing it verbatim. Furthermore, he also expands the source text in order to better explain his own opinions. For instance, in this last passage, Cleomedes introduces the examples of seeing and hearing to clarify what would happen in case of void, while Blemmydes concentrates only on seeing, explaining the consequences the void would cause if it existed, i.e. the impossibility of perceiving the firmament. Such an innovation is likely due to Blemmydes’ aim to offer a clearer exemplification to the users of his philosophical compendium.

ταύτην τοῦ κενοῦ διακόπτοντος· οὐτ’ αὖ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι καὶ μάλλον τῇ ὁράσει τοσαύτη τις ἦν ἢ ἐνέργεια. πῶς γὰρ ἦν δυνατόν ἐξικνεῖσθαι τὴν ὄψιν μέχρι τοῦ στερεώματος, μὴ τοῦ ἀέρος ὄντος διόλου συνεχροῦς ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἡνωμένου τῷ ὑπεκκαύματι καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τῷ αἰθέρι κατὰ συμ-
φυϊαν ἀδιάστατον; ὅντων γὰρ ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ τινων κενωμάτων, ἤρχον ἂν αἱ αἰσθήσεις ἐμποδι-
ζόμεναι τοῖς κενώμασι (Wegelin changes here the text of the last sentence as follows: ...
ἤρχον ἂν αἱ αἰσθήσεις κατεναρκούντο ἐμποδιζόμεναι τοῖς κενώμασι. I print here the text of the
manuscripts).

31 Transl. Bowen-Todd 2004, 25f.

32 My translation takes account of those by Bowen-Todd 2004, 25f. and Bydén 2003, 163.

4. In general, the Vatican redaction is closer to the wording of the sources than the final version of the *Epitome*.³³ It is therefore essential for understanding Blemmydes' relationship with – and use of – his sources. Moreover, it is also fundamental in some other cases, in which the presence of marginal annotations allows us to imagine the workshop of the author. For example, let us consider ch. 9, which is dedicated to place and time (*Περὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου*). In the *Vaticanus*, the beginning of this chapter deals with the explanation of different kinds of motion (*κίνησις*). Concluding the first section, Blemmydes writes (cf. 1100a11–b2):

τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄντων, ὡς εἴρηται, κινήσεις εἰσὶ, τὰ δὲ ἀρχαὶ κινήσεων, τὰ δὲ κινούμενα, ὡς τὰ σώματα, τὰ τε ἀπλὰ καὶ τὰ σύνθετα· τὰ δὲ διὰ (*sic*) τὰ κινούμενα, ὡς τόπος καὶ χρόνος.

'So, as it has been said, some of the things that are are motions, some others are origins of motions, some others are things being moved (such as bodies both simple and compound), some others are through [*sic*] things being moved (such as space and time)'.³⁴

The reading of the *Vaticanus* διὰ τὰ κινούμενα is wrong, but it can be explained on the basis of the source of this passage, in this case Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (CAG IX 397,15–18 Diels):

ἔτι δὲ πάντα τὰ ὄντα ἢ κινήσεις εἰσὶν ὡς γένεσις καὶ ἀλλοίωσις, ἢ ἀρχαὶ κινήσεως ὡς θεὸς ψυχὴ φύσις, ἢ κινούμενα ὡς τὰ σώματα τὰ τε ἀπλὰ καὶ τὰ σύνθετα, ἢ δι' ἃ τὰ κινούμενα ὡς χρόνος καὶ τόπος.

'Also all the things that there are are either motions, such as coming to be and alteration, or are origins of motions, such as god, soul and nature, or things being moved, such as bodies both simple and compound, or the media of their change, such as time and place'.³⁵

It is interesting to note that the incorrect reading διὰ τὰ κινούμενα of the Vatican manuscript is also shared by the ms. *Marcianus gr. Z. 227* (end of 13th century), which transmits Simplicius' commentary, as Hermann Diels reports in his critical apparatus. Furthermore, this is the common reading of all the manuscripts

33 See Lackner 1981; Valente 2017, 235–238.

34 My translation takes that by Urmson 2002, 14 into account.

35 Transl. Urmson 2002, 14 with few changes.

with the final redaction of the *Epitome physica*: it must therefore be considered as the original text written by the author, even if it is wrong. The mistake can be ascribed to the manuscript source used by Blemmydes when compiling his compendium.³⁶

Moreover, in the margin of the above mentioned passage of ch. 9, the *Vaticanus* transmits the following note, written in red ink (fol. 169^r):

σχόλιον· τὸ μὲν σῶμα ἐν τόπῳ ἐστί, ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἐν τῷ σώματι, ὁ δὲ χρόνος ἐν τῇ κινήσει.

‘Comment: the body is in a place, the motion in the body, the time in the motion.’

In all the manuscripts of the final version of the *Epitome physica*, this marginal note appears as main text.³⁷ It is likely that this sentence originates from an addition made by Blemmydes himself to the text of the first redaction of the compendium. When revising it, he possibly considered this remark as necessary and thus added it. In fact, in the final redaction, the marginal note of the *Vaticanus* appears in the main text, introduced by a connective particle οὖν (1100a11–b2, § 1):

τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄντων³⁸ κινήσεις εἰσὶ, τὰ δὲ ἀρχαὶ κινήσεων, τὰ δὲ κινούμενα, ὡς τὰ σώματα, τὰ τε ἀπλὰ καὶ τὰ σύνθετα· τὰ δέ, διὰ (*sic*) τὰ κινούμενα, ὡς τόπος καὶ χρόνος. τὸ μὲν οὖν σῶμα ἐν τόπῳ ἐστί, ἡ δὲ κίνησις ἐν τῷ σώματι, ὁ δὲ χρόνος ἐν τῇ κινήσει.

Another marginal note in the *Vaticanus* is of pivotal importance for identifying a source for a given passage and thus for understanding Blemmydes’ working methodology. The case in point is in ch. 27 (§ 7), which deals with the Moon (*Περὶ σελήνης*). In the Vatican manuscript, the passage in question reads as follows (fol. 193^{r-v}):

36 For similar cases, see Golitsis 2007, 252–256.

37 As the notation σχόλιον indicates, this note should not be interpreted as a correction by the scribe in order to supplement a sentence that he had skipped while copying the main text: in such cases, he uses the conventional abbreviation κει(μενον) or just a sign linking the addition in the margin to the right place in the text.

38 It should be noted that the words ὡς εἴρηται, present in the Vatican redaction, have been suppressed.

σύνοδος μὲν οὖν λέγεται, ὁπότεν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μοίρᾳ γένηται ἡ σελήνη, ἐν ᾗ ἐστι καὶ ὁ ἥλιος· γέννα δέ, ὅταν ἀποστή τοῦ ἡλίου μοίρας πεντεκαίδεκα· ἀνατολή δέ, ὅταν νέα πρῶτον φανῇ. τῇ μὲν γὰρ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ μέχρι τοσούτου φέρεται ὑπὲρ γῆς ἡ σελήνη, μέχρις ἂν ἔτι καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς τὸ μετὰ τὴν δύσιν ὑπάρχει ἐπικρατές· ὥστ' ἐν αὐτῇ μὲν τῷ τοῦ ἡλίου συγκαταδύεται φωτί, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ προκαταδύεται. πρῶτον δὲ σαφὴς ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν ἡμερῶν φαίνεται, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν μᾶλλον, ποτὲ δ' ἦττον. τοῦτο δ' αὐτὸ συμπίπτει παρὰ τὸ ποσὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀποστάσεως· αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ποσὸν τῆς ἀποστάσεως διὰ τε τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς σελήνης γίνεται κίνησιν (οὐ γὰρ ἴσον αἰεὶ κινεῖται) καὶ διὰ τὴν τοῦ πλάτους ἐξάλλαξιν καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ζωδίων δύσιν οὐκ ἰσόχρονον οὔσαν καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἔτι διὰ τὸν τῆς προγεγονυίας συνόδου καιρόν· ὥστε οὐκ αἰεὶ ἐστὶν εἰς χρόνος ἐν ᾧ φαίνεται σαφῶς ἡ σελήνη.

'Conjunction (*sýnodos*) is therefore said to be when the Moon is located at the same degree as that of the Sun; coming forth (*génna*), when it is at a distance of 15 degrees from the Sun; first appearance (*anatolé*), when it appears new for the first time. On the first day, the Moon moves over the Earth until the moment when the light of the Sun, after setting, still prevails, so that the Moon sets on this day together with the light of the Sun, but it often sets before this. The Moon appears bright for the first time on the second day, sometimes more, sometimes less. And this very thing happens in respect to the measure of the distance from the Sun. The measure itself of the distance is a consequence (i) of the Moon's own movement (in fact, it does not always move in the same way), (ii) of the change of the orbit, (iii) of the setting of the signs of the Zodiac, which does not always happen in the same time, (iv) of the moment of the conjunction that occurred before. Therefore, there is not always only one time when the Moon appears bright'.

The source of the first sentence is a passage on the lunar phases from John Damascenus' *Expositio fidei* (21,201–203 Kotter): τὰ σχήματα τῆς σελήνης. σύνοδος, ὅτε γένηται ἐν τῇ μοίρᾳ, ἐν ᾗ ἐστὶν ὁ ἥλιος· †γέννα, ὅταν ἀποστή τοῦ ἡλίου μοίρας ιε'· ἀνατολή, ὅτε φανῇ†.³⁹ This text agrees with that transmitted in the Vatican manuscript. However, Kotter considers it erroneous on this basis (app. ad l.): "*cum astrologi priores cum γέννα coniung. μοῖραν α', cum ἀνατολή vero*

39 Also see Gemin. 8,1 ἔστι δὲ σύνοδος μὲν, ὅταν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μοίρᾳ γένηται ὁ ἥλιος καὶ ἡ σελήνη· τοῦτ' ἐστὶ περὶ τὴν τριακάδα σελήνης (and 9,16 as well).

μοίρας ιε' [...],⁴⁰ *ea quae de γέννα et de ἀνατολή praedicantur, invicem esse commutanda videntur*: γέννα, ὅτε φανῇ· ἀνατολή, ὅταν ἀποστή τοῦ ἡλίου μοίρας ιε'". Blemmydes must have found this error in the manuscript he used, while compiling this passage. Nonetheless, he changed later the text as follows (1260d9–1261a1): γέννα δέ, ὅταν ἀποστή τοῦ ἡλίου μοίραν μίαν· ἀνατολή, ὅταν νέα πρῶτως φανῇ.⁴¹ We can surmise that Blemmydes probably consulted a different source when doing this.⁴²

Concerning the following part of the passage quoted above, the *Vaticanus* transmits a precious piece of information in the margin:

[τα]ῦτ(α) Γαληνὸς ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ τοῦ περὶ [κρ]ισίμων ἡμερῶν καὶ [σ]κεπτέον περὶ αὐτῶν.

'Galen writes these things in the third book of *De diebus decretoriis* and one should consider them with attention'.

40 Here, Kotter quotes an excerpt from the treatise *De natura planetarum* of Rhetorius (in turn based upon Vettius Valens) as transmitted in ms. *Berol. Phill.* 1577 (Boll 1908, 223,25–28): γέννα δέ ἐκλήθη, ἐπεὶ παραλλάξασα αὐτὸν μοίραν μίαν ἄρχεται φαίνεσθαι οὐχ ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς· ἀνατολή δέ, ὅταν παρελθούσα μοίρας ιε' γραμμοειδὲς φῶς ἀναλαβούσα φαίνεται. See also below, n. 42.

41 This is the complete text of the final version of the passage discussed here as it appears in the *editio princeps* by Wegelin (1260d7–1261b5; I also indicate two omissions in the Greek text on the basis of my research on the text of the *Epitome physica*): σύνδοσις μὲν οὖν λέγεται, ὁπόταν ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ μοίρᾳ γένηται ἡ σελήνη, ἐν ᾗ ἔστι καὶ ὁ ἥλιος. γέννα δέ, ὅταν ἀποστή τοῦ ἡλίου μοίραν μίαν ἀνατολή, ὅταν νέα πρῶτως φανῇ. τῇ μὲν γὰρ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, μέχρι τοσούτου φέρεται ὑπὲρ γῆν ἡ σελήνη, μέχρις ἂν ἔτι καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ἔστιν ἐπικρατοῦν. ὥστ' ἐν αὐτῇ μὲν τῷ τοῦ ἡλίου συγκαταδύεται φωτὶ· ποτὲ δὲ καὶ προκαταδύεται (φωτὶ – προκαταδύεται *om.* Wegelin)· πρῶτον δὲ σαφὲς ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν ἡμερῶν φαίνεται· καὶ ποτὲ μὲν ἄλλον, ποτὲ δ' ἡττον. τοῦτο δὲ αὐτὸ συμπιπτει παρὰ τὸ ποσὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀποστάσεως· αὐτὸ δὲ τῆς ἀποστάσεως ποσόν, ἄλλοτ' ἄλλο γίνεται διὰ τε τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς σελήνης κίνησιν (οὐ γὰρ ἴσον αἰεὶ κινεῖται κατὰ πρόβασιν διὰ τὴν τοῦ πλάτους ἐξάλλαξιν τοῦ ζωδιακοῦ) καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ πάντων τῶν ζωδίων ἰσόχρονον τὴν δύσιν γίνεσθαι, ὡς τινῶν μὲν ὀρθῶς, τινῶν δὲ λοξῶς καταδυομένων· καὶ πρὸς τοῦτοις ἔτι (*om.* Wegelin) διὰ τὸν τῆς προγεγονυίας συνόδου καιρὸν εἴτ' ἀρχομένης ἡμέρας εἴτ' ἀρχομένης νυκτός, εἴτε κἀν τοῖς μεταξὺ πολλοῖς οὐσι καὶ διαφόροις, ἢ προρηγισμένη σύνδοσις ἐγεγόνει. ὥστ' οὐκ αἰεὶ ἔστιν εἰς χρόνος ἐν ᾧ φαίνεται σαφῶς ἡ σελήνη· οὐδὲ κατὰ τὰς ὅλας πρώτας φαύσεις τὸ σαφὲς ἀπαράλλακτον.

42 At this point in the research, the exact source has not yet been identified. For instance, one can consider Paul. Al. 16, p. 33,20–23 Boer καὶ σύνδοσις μὲν ἔστιν, ὅταν ἡ Σελήνη ἰσόμοιρος τῷ Ἡλίῳ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ζῳδιον τύχη, γέννα δέ, ὅταν τὸν Ἥλιον παρέλθῃ μοίραν μίαν, ἀνατολή δέ, ὅταν μοίρας ιε' παραλλάξῃ κτλ.; Lyd. *Mens.* III 12, (p. 55,3f. Wünsch) μετὰ γὰρ τὴν σύνδοσιν ἀριθμοῦσι καὶ τὴν γένναν, ὅταν μίαν μοίραν ἀποστή ἡ σελήνη τοῦ ἡλίου; Rhetor. *Cat. Cod. Astr.* VII 223,3–5 καὶ σύνδοσις μὲν ἔστιν, ὅταν ἡ Σελήνη ἰσομοίρως τῷ Ἡλίῳ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ζῳδιον τύχη. γέννα δέ, ὅταν τὸν Ἥλιον παρέλθῃ μοίραν μίαν. ἀνατολή δέ, ὅταν μοίρας ιε' παραλλάξῃ (see also above, n. 40).

In this marginal note, a passage of Galen's *De diebus decretoriis* is identified as the direct source (the relevant sentences are in italics):

(*Decret.* IX 906,7–907,5 Kühn): ἀσφαλὴς οὖν ἡ κρίσις ἀποτελεῖται τῆς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ μηνὶ γενησομένης καταστάσεως ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν ἡμερῶν, ἐν ᾗ πρώτη καὶ σαφὴς ἡ σελήνη καὶ χρόνον ἀξιόλογον ὑπὲρ γῆς ἤδη φαίνεται καὶ φῶς αἰσθητὸν ἀποπέμπει καὶ σκιὰν ἐναργῶς δείκνυσιν. ἡ πρώτη δ' ἡμέρα μέχρι τοσούτου τὴν σελήνην ὑπὲρ γῆς ἔχει φερομένην, μέχρις ἂν ἔτι καὶ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ἐπέχη τὸ μετὰ τὴν δύσιν, ὥστ' ἐν ταύτῃ μὲν τῷ τοῦ ἡλίου συγκαταδύεται φωτὶ, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ προκαταδύεται. πρῶτον δὲ σαφὴς ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ τῶν ἡμερῶν φαίνεται, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν μᾶλλον, ποτὲ δ' ἥττον. καὶ τοῦτο δ' αὐτῇ συμπίπτει παρὰ τὸ ποσὸν τῆς πρὸς ἡλίον ἀποστάσεως. αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ποσὸν τῆς ἀποστάσεως διὰ τε τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς σελήνης γίνεται κίνησιν, οὐ γὰρ ἴσον αἰεὶ κινεῖται, καὶ διὰ τὴν τοῦ πλάτους ἐξάλλαξιν, καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ζωδίων δύσιν οὐκ ἰσόχρονον οὔσαν, καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἔτι διὰ τὸν τῆς προγεγονυίας συνόδου καιρόν, ὥστ' οὐκ αἰεὶ μὲν εἰς ὁ χρόνος ἐστὶν ἐν ᾧ φαίνεται σαφῶς ἡ σελήνη.

'The judgement regarding the condition for the whole month is forecasted with certainty on the second day, when the Moon is also clear on the first one, shines for a remarkable length of time over the Earth, sends a perceptible light and clearly shows a shadow. *The first day has the Moon moving over the Earth until the moment when the light of the Sun, after setting, still prevails, so that the Moon sets on this day together with the light of the Sun, but it often sets before this. The Moon appears bright for the first time on the second day, sometimes more, sometimes less. And this happens to the Moon in respect to the measure of the distance from the Sun. The measure itself of the distance is a consequence (i) of the Moon's own movement (in fact, it does not move always in the same way), (ii) of the change of the orbit, (iii) of the setting of the signs of the Zodiac, which does not always happen in the same time, (iv) of the moment of the conjunction that occurred before. Therefore, there is not always only one time when the Moon appears bright.*

With regard to Galen, it should be recalled that Blemmydes practised the profession of medicine for seven years when he was young, between 1214 and 1221.⁴³

43 See Nic. Blemm. CV I 5,1–5 Munitiz: μείζονος δ' ἐπὶ λόγους ἐφίεμενος ἐπιδόσεως, οὐκ εἶχον τὸν ἡγήσομενον· ἐφ' ᾧ καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐνεστρεφόμεν, ἅμα καὶ ἱατρικῆς ἐπιμελόμενος λογικῶς τε καὶ πρακτικῶς (πατρικὴ γὰρ ἀσκήσις ἡ τέχνη κάμοι σύντροφος), ἄχρις ἐτῶν ἐπτά περατώσεως κτλ. For this passage, see Munitiz 1988, 15, 44.

It is likely, therefore, that he had first-hand knowledge of the medical treatise by Galen. He also mentions the *princeps medicorum* in some passages of both the *Epitome*⁴⁴ and of his treatise *De corpore*.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in relation to the marginal note in the *Vaticanus*, the precise indication of the source is striking. Even we cannot exclude the possibility of a reader who was well-versed in medical literature identifying the source of this passage in Blemmydes' compendium and writing it down in the margin of his own manuscript – be it the *Vaticanus* itself or its exemplar – it may be the easiest solution to attribute this marginal note to the author himself, or to one of his pupils. Since this manuscript may thus represent quite a reliable copy of a working manuscript with the first redaction of the *Epitome physica*, it offers precious details for understanding how this Byzantine philosophical compendium was composed and structured.

5. In conclusion, Blemmydes' *Epitome physica* is an original work within the Byzantine Aristotelianism of the 13th century. The author enriched this tradition, based upon Aristotle and his commentators, using different works, such as Cleomedes' astronomical treatise, Galen, and John of Damascus. On this basis, Blemmydes composed a handbook to support his teaching activities. This work underwent different stages of revision, and can be considered a 'work in progress', until the author produced a final version in the last years of his life. The success of his *Epitome* as a philosophical textbook can be measured, in particular, on the basis of the number of surviving manuscripts (more than hundred): the oldest codices date to few decades after Blemmydes' death, a huge number was produced during the Italian Renaissance, while the last exemplars were copied in Greece and Romania between the 18th and 19th centuries.⁴⁶ Thus, Blemmydes' *Epitome* has significantly contributed to the spread of Greek-Byzantine thought over the centuries, and is an accomplished example of a compendium for teaching and learning (mainly) Aristotelian philosophy.

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44 See Nic. Blemm. *Epit. phys.* 11,27 (1125a9) ὁ ἐν ἱατροῖς δόκιμος Γαληνός.

45 The only available edition is that by D. Boulesmas, printed in Leipzig 1784 (vol. III, pp. 1–29).

46 See also Valente 2016, 279f.

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