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The lecture will be devoted to three main concerns: (1) The description of the textual tradition of the corpus of the Arabic science of weights (‘ilm al-athqāl), a corpus of about sixty texts dating from the 9th-19th centuries and centered around theoretical and practical problems related to the description, functioning and use of various types of balances, especially the steelyard. (2) The interpretation of this corpus as a transformation in the history of mechanics represented by the creation of an independent theoretical branch of mechanics that evolved from ancient Greek contributions and nourished the debate in physics until the advent of modern science. (3) In this light, a new interpretation of the history of medieval mechanics establishes tight links between the Arabic science of weights and the Latin scientia de ponderibus that emerged in the works of Jordanus (13th century). Hence, beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries, it becomes possible to write a unified and intercultural history of pre-modern mechanics.

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