Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Anaxagoras, Origen, and Neoplatonism. The Legacy of Anaxagoras to Classical and Late Antiquity*, Vol. I and II, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 128/I and 128/II, Berlin–Boston, De Gruyter 2016, XIX + IX + 1793 p., ISBN: 978-3-11-041946-7

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This massive book, with no less than 1822 pages, published in two volumes, aims to narrate how Anaxagoras, one of the most enigmatic Presocratics, indirectly influenced patristic thinking beyond what current scholarship would expect. The overall work has four parts. The first volume covers the *Philosophy of Anaxagoras* (the first part) and the *Legacy of Anaxagoras to Classical and Late Antiquity* (the second part), while the second volume is dedicated to *Origen* (the third part), and to the *Theory of the Soul: from Anaxagoras to Antiquity* (the fourth part). The author intends to provide a comprehensive study on two difficult ancient intellectuals who belong to two historically, culturally, and even geographically, different areas. The book has so far received little attention,¹ and one would imagine a possible reason is that the reader of such an ambitious study should be equally proficient both in Presocratic philosophy and Patristics thought.

The author announces epic goals as he aims to provide an overview of Anaxagoras' philosophy and its heritage – in itself a considerable endeavor – and argues for the idea that Origen can be best understood through an Anaxagorean lens. The Presocratic philosopher is well-known for his theory that 'everything is in everything', and for arguing that the *Mind* is the cause of the universe. Both Plato and Aristotle were not satisfied with his philosophy, but not Origen, who, according to Tzamalikos (T.), found inspiring points in Anaxagoras's philosophy. Throughout the book, T. advances his thesis in an almost dogmatic manner, to the point that he labels Origen "a pupil of Anaxagoras".

T. insists that the history of ancient philosophy that he provides here challenges W. K. C. Guthrie and his now classic *A History of Greek*

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¹ So far, I identified only two reviews in the English-speaking scholarship: Mark J. Edwards, review of *Anaxagoras, Origen, and Neoplatonism. The Legacy of Anaxagoras to Classical and Late Antiquity*, by Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 69, no. 3 (July 2018): 610–12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046918000507>, and Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, review of *Anaxagoras, Origen, and Neoplatonism. The Legacy of Anaxagoras to Classical and Late Antiquity*, by Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *Gnomon* 92, no. 2 (2020): 109–13, <https://doi.org/10.17104/0017-1417-2020-2-109>.

Philosophy. The book under review is based on “an entirely different methodology” (p. 69) that evokes many elements elaborated by Harold Cherniss – especially in *Aristotle’s criticism of the Presocratics*. Cherniss’ methodology, T. caustically remarks, was avoided by Guthrie since “this would have been a far more demanding undertaking” (p. 69). While Guthrie *et al.* regarded Aristotle as receptive to historical facts, and, consequently, a reliable source on the Presocratics, Cherniss and Tzamalikos place little value on Aristotle as a trustworthy historian of philosophy. T.’s methodology for reading Anaxagoras (explained at p. 42–55) is therefore based on the principle that it should not follow Aristotle’s explicit testimonies, “but also what he said of him implicitly, which calls for study of all of Aristotle’s commentators”. The key commentator in T.’s new methodology is Simplicius, an author completely ignored by present-day scholarship on Anaxagoras, as the author claims.

I find this dichotomy (Cherniss *versus* Guthrie) too exacting and exclusivist.² One of the ensuing results for this methodological choice is that T. deliberately ignores modern scholarship, since it “has almost entirely relied on Aristotle’s parochial report” (p. 41). T. challenges not only the Guthrie’s apparent apology of Aristotle, but also the relevance of ‘the precarious’ Diels-Kranz fragments. Thus, T. is “introducing a different methodology, which is much more difficult to pursue compared to deciphering ‘D-K’-passages”. The attempt to avoid Aristotle’s testimony and to minimize Diels-Kranz fragments is unaccounted for in the scholarship on Anaxagoras, and T.’s arguments are too feeble and inconsistent in order to be taken seriously. T. equally ignores the immense work that has been done on Origen. A little before T.’s book was issued, an important survey of recent publications on Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition was published,³ but almost none of the surveyed titles are present in T.’s book. All scholars must have felt, at some point, the fatigue of imposed controlled reading by the immense corpus of scholarship and the desire to read primary sources without the constant reference to other readings. Nevertheless, the unwillingness to enter into dialogue with current scholarship on Origen and on Anaxagoras is one of the book’s major weaknesses. As it is also the stated principle of its methodology, it casts a shadow across the whole enterprise. It would have been

² Guthrie himself expressed his “general admiration and appreciation of the fact that [Cherniss’ work] it is a permanent contribution with which all future scholarship will have to reckon.” W. K. C. Guthrie, “Aristotle as a Historian of Philosophy: Some Preliminaries,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77 (1957): 35–41, 35.

³ Lorenzo Perrone, “Pubblicazioni recenti su Origene e la tradizione alessandrina,” in *Adamantius* 21 (2015): 425–94.

more honest and convincing if the author argued for a reading of Anaxagoras without referring to modern scholarship in a manner closer to philosophical commentaries rather than to exegetical ones.

Despite the huge influence that Origen had on the development of Christian theology, several essential aspects concerning his philosophical and theological identity require further clarifications. Several of Origen's views remain uncanonical and his heresies were considered to be caused by the inherent Platonism of his theology. And indeed, he regularly uses Plato and develops his theology in a platonic mold. For T., this Platonism is readily apparent, while Origen's thinking was fundamentally Anaxagorean. Despite there being no evidence that Origen ever alluded to Anaxagoras – although some tenets of his philosophy could have been known by Origen –, Origen was an Anaxagorean, and less of a Platonist, to the point that T. labelled him as an anti-Platonist. Furthermore, T. argues, if Origen used Plato in any way, he did so only to interpret his ideas through Anaxagorean principles.

But which one of the Origenes is he actually speaking about? The pagan one or the Christian one? T. claims that both of them are the same person, although he presents no evidence, ignoring, once again, and with no justification, the extant literature on the issue. How then can he accommodate the anti-Platonist Origen with the pagan Platonist Origen, the student of Ammonius Saccas? The author does not even start to discuss the problem.

One of T.'s factual arguments in describing Origen as Anaxagorean, is that Proclus mentioned Origen in the *Platonic Theology* as one of those, and above all others, who affirmed *Mind (Nous)* as the supreme principle – a statement which would indeed make Origen a disciple of Anaxagoras, and not of Plato. Proclus criticized Origen “as being an anti-Platonist who dismissed the Plotinian pattern”. But T. points out that “the guardians of the imperial orthodoxy accused him of making the Christian Trinity a Plotinian Triad” (p. 823). T. struggles to show that “the ‘object’ that the Father created in the Logos/Wisdom was not any Platonic Ideas: it was the *logoi*” (p. 868). This is an important feature, since T. reasons that Origen's concept of the Body of the *Logos* was Anaxagorean in its essence. According to T., Origen's *Theory of the Logoi* is also evident for Gregory of Nyssa, an admirer of Origen, and even for Maximus Confessor, who avoids mentioning the *forms*, but does make reference to the *logoi* (p. 874).

For T., Plato's “failure” and “Aristotle's ‘obscurity’” in explaining how the supreme principle relates to sensible objects drives Origen's attention to the *Theory of the Logoi*, a theory which is “the most spectacular and stunning influence of Anaxagoras upon Late Antiquity” (p. 867). According to T., the Anaxagorean *logoi* make possible the link between the *Mind* and the world.

Conceptualizing the *logoi* of Anaxagoras, and not those developed by stoicism, Origen took up the *Theory of the Logoi* in his philosophical theology (p. 891).

Ironically, in T.'s aggressive attempts to purge Origen's thought of platonic elements, I could not help the feeling that the hidden protagonist of this book is actually Plato. The author uses pejorative affirmations on Plato, such as "[Plato] was too confused to have an opinion of its own" (p. 1524) on the theory of metempsychosis. In another fragment, the author claims that "it would be good to bear in mind how much of Plato's work is the product of inconsistently adapted plagiarism" (p. 1524). Additional examples include: "the *Republic* was allegedly a product of plagiarism from Egypt" (p. 1530), and "Plato was the most notorious plagiarist of all history" (p. 1181). Plato's thought is too complex, and cannot be reduced to plagiarism in such simple terms. Other victims of alleged cases of ancient plagiarism are, in T.'s opinion: "Aristophanes plagiarizing opinions of Euripides" (p. 847), and "The plagiarism of Aristotle from Parmenides went as unnoticed as that from Anaxagoras" (p. 1362, fn. 883).

Speaking of plagiarism and seeing plagiarism in such situations, it is worth underling that, as it is expected in such a gargantuan enterprise, one cannot pertinently cover everything. This can cause some confusion. For example, the Muslim Arab theologian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Aš'arī (c. 874-936) is confused with the companion of Muḥammad, Abū Mūsā al-Ašarī (died c. 662/672).⁴ Other, more striking similarities are to be found.⁵

The book ends with two Appendices: *I. The wondrous Greek travels to the East*, and *II. Origen and the homoousion. A critical edition of two unpublished texts*. The second Appendix is one of the book's most important con-

⁴ This was very well pointed out by Michael Chase (according to the text of a talk delivered 2017 at Northwest Ancient Philosophy Workshop, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada, *Anaxagoras and al-Nazzām*, uploaded on academia.edu): "Astonishingly, Tzamalikos 2016 confuses the eminent theologian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Aš'arī (c. 874-936) with his ancestor, the companion of Muḥammad Abū Mūsā al-Ašarī (ob. 662-672), thus throwing off the history of Islamic philosophy by two centuries. Tzamalikos' description of Abū Mūsā al-Ašarī (2016, p. 365. n. 165) is, moreover, taken directly from the relevant Wikipedia article". At the time of writing this review, the beginning of Wikipedia article still matches the footnote 165 from page 365 of T.'s book.

⁵ See, for example, Ramelli's notes on the specific notion of "adorned Wisdom", "Christ-Logos-Wisdom creator as containing in itself [...] the *logoi* or Forms of all creatures" to which both Origen and Bardaisan of Edessa shared a similar view. Although, "this unique parallel was first pointed out by myself [Ramelli] in my [...] 2009 monograph on Bardaisan, [...] and at a workshop at the Oxford Patristics Conference, to which I invited T." (Ramelli, Review, 111). These references are missing from T.'s book. Thus Ramelli rightly points out that "T. thinks very much like me in many respects [...]. Therefore, it might appear a bit surprising that T. omits to refer to my extensive arguments to the same effect" (*Ibidem*, 112).

tributions. It contains a *Commentary on Genesis* (Codex Holy Sepulchre, 3), and a *Commentary on Matthew* (Codex Sabaiticus, 232). Origen's influence is commensurable beyond the Origenian heresiologies, as some of his ideas set the tone for the council of Nicaea. These two critical editions of unpublished Origenian writings should prove that this is the case (if they do indeed belong to Origen). T. insists that the text "speaks for itself". Therefore, following T.'s line of thought, Christian theology through Origen, in its most essential problematics, bears an Anaxagorean imprint.

The book provides a sixty-page bibliography (p. 1605-1665) containing *Primary sources* and *Modern works*, with the latter being reserved only five pages (p. 1661-1665). One of these five pages records T.'s works. Most of the books mentioned in the bibliographical list are not directly related with exegesis on Anaxagoras or Origen, such as Camus' *Le mythe de Sisyphe* or Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger receives some attention, as according to T., Heidegger introduced and used theological thoughts in his philosophy. For example, the famous Heideggerian etymology of *alétheia* was taken directly from Damascius (p. 1308).

The bibliography intensifies the general impression conveyed by the book, namely that the author is a solitary researcher who seldom references modern scholarship and its controversies. Perhaps the author thought that the remarkable display of primary sources could compensate the omission of (important titles of) up-to-date scholarship. It is difficult to assess the contribution that T. makes on the sources he quotes, comments and associates because the references to ongoing discussions on these sources are deliberately omitted. Even if one reads primary texts and claims to interpret them firsthand, one's view upon these sources bears, at least to some extent, the mark of already made scholarship. For example, the fact that the author uses ideas of Ilaria Ramelli, but fails to reference her, even in the bibliography, imperils the whole exegesis.

The four indexes are organized in a somewhat puzzling manner: Names (p. 1666-759), Terms (p. 1760-1775), Greek Terms (pp. 1776-1790) and Modern Names (p. 1791-1793). One might think that the index of Names is different from the index of Modern Names, listing thus only the ancient names of the philosophers. The Index of Names has a permissive understanding; besides the indexing of the names of ancient authors, it also indexes names of historical periods or geographical places, such as the 'Middle Ages' or 'Middle East' (p. 1722). One would consider the index of Terms different and complementary to the index of Greek Terms, but there are terms listed in both indexes, with identical page. Index of Modern Names also lists superfluous items, such as cities (e.g., Paris).

Some minor typos are to be found: the bibliographical list of Modern works is not consistent, with abbreviation of the given name, but also with unabbreviated ones and repeated entries of the same title or missing spaces. The content (of both volumes) lists the Index of Terms at page 1753, while it is actually at page 1760. And from here, the rest of indexes are imperfectly referred: Index of Greek Terms is listed in the content on page 1763, while it should be on 1776; index of Modern Names is listed on page 1774, but it is actually on page 1791.

Even if it has gone very much unnoticed, this book deserves attention. It is the testament of a scholar who struggles for more than three decades (as T. confesses in more than one instance) with Origen's thinking and heritage. This volume is rich in bold, speculative ideas. It proposes a novel perspective on the influences on Christian philosophy, beyond the established philosophers and schools of antiquity, such as Plato and Neoplatonism. It is an important contribution to the exploration of the hypothesis of how (Presocratic) philosophy made its way into Christian philosophy and religion. One of the biggest achievements of the book is the close reading of Origen. If one thought that Origen, the theologian-philosopher,⁶ distanced himself from pagan philosophy, this study proposes that we rethink such opinions, if indeed Origen is to be conceived as Anaxagoras' pupil. If the author is correct, and Origen was not a Platonist, but an Anaxagorean, a large part of the history of theology should be rewritten from a renewed perspective.

⁶ An important feature of T.'s exegesis is that he does not endorse the distinction between theology and philosophy, and I agree that we should consider it more carefully when discussing ancient authors, especially those equivocal figures such as Origen.