

PERENDY, László

## JUDGING PHILOSOPHERS

### Theophilus of Antioch on Hellenic inconsistency

Significant passages of the *Ad Autolyicum*, the only surviving work of Theophilus, deal with various questions of philosophical interest. Several philosophers are mentioned by name: Pythagoras, Empedocles, Protagoras, Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, Epicurus, Chrysippus, and Clitomachus. There are other authors, as well, who are named in connection with philosophical problems: Critias and Euhemerus. We can find also passages where certain philosophical views are introduced without giving the names of the philosophers themselves.

First I will be quoting the passages where Theophilus names individual philosophers or refers to various schools of philosophy. I will proceed in a chronological order, starting from the pre-Socratics. As we shall see, Theophilus offers us as a kind of short history of Greek philosophy. After the – sometimes lengthy – quotations originating from various schools and individual philosophers, I will briefly summarize the most important characteristics of the various schools and philosophers, mostly on the basis of a recent handbook. Then I will analyse my quotations from the *Ad Autolyicum*, keeping in view the opinions of some modern authors. In the second part of my contribution I will treat the problems which – in Theophilus' mind – particularly illustrate the inconsistent behaviour of the Hellenes. For the sake of convenience, some quotations are repeated, because they can be linked to more than one philosopher or topic.

### A Concise History of Hellenic Philosophy

#### About philosophers in general

Ὡστε असुμφωνός ἐστιν ἡ γνώμη κατὰ τοὺς φιλοσόφους καὶ συγγραφεῖς.

Τούτων δὲ ταῦτα ἀποφηναιμένων εὐρίσκεται ὁ ποιητῆς Ὅμηρος ἑτέρα ὑποθέσει εἰσάγων γένεσιν οὐ μόνον κόσμου ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν.<sup>1</sup>

"The opinions of philosophers are inconsistent with those of other writers. For while the former authors made these statements, we find that the poet Homer relies on a different assumption when he introduces the origin not only of the world but also of the gods." (*Ad Autolycum* II 5)<sup>2</sup>

Already Robert M. Grant made the observation that Theophilus – like Tatian, who also comes from Syria – claims that Greek philosophers contradict one another, and also the poets. Grant thinks that both of them used only doxographical sources and not the original versions when they were enumerating the mistakes and inconsistencies of the Hellenes. These sources of the opinions (δόξαι) of philosophers were used in Greco-Roman schools of rhetoric.<sup>3</sup>

### Pre-Platonic philosophers

Τί γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς εἰρήκασιν;

Ἦ τί ὠφέλησαν Εὐριπίδην καὶ Σοφοκλέα καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τραγωδιογράφους αἱ τραγωδίαί, [...] ἢ Πυθαγόραν τὰ ἄδυστα καὶ Ἡρακλέους στῆλαι, [...] ἢ Ἐμπεδοκλέα τὸ διδάσκειν ἀθεότητα, ἢ Σωκράτην τὸ ὀμνεῖν τὸν κύνα καὶ τὸν χῆνα καὶ τὴν πλάτανον καὶ τὸν κεραυνωθέντα Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ἃ ἐπεκαλεῖτο; Πρὸς τί δὲ καὶ ἐκὼν ἀπέθνησκεν, τίνα καὶ ὅποιον μιστὸν μετὰ θάνατον ἀπολαβεῖν ἐλπίζων;

"What truth did they speak? Or what did their tragedies avail for Euripides and Sophocles and the other tragic poets [...]? Or the shrines and the pillars of Heracles for Pythagoras? [...] or the teaching of atheism for Empedocles? or the oath by dog and goose and plane-tree for Socrates, not to mention his oath by the lightning-struck Asclepius and

1 The Greek text is taken from MIROSLAV MARCOVICH (ed.), *Theophili Antiocheni: Ad Autolycum* (Patristische Texte und Studien, 44), Berlin–New York, 1995.

2 The English translation is from ROBERT M. GRANT, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum*, Oxford, 1970. I have kept his references to doxographies inserted in the text of his translation. The abbreviation "Diels, *Dox*" refers to HERMANNUS DIELS, *Doxographi Graeci*, Berlin, 1879.

3 R. M. GRANT, *Early Christianity and pre-Socratic Philosophy*, in Id., *After the New Testament*, Philadelphia, 1967, 85–112, 91.

his invocation of the demons? For what purpose was he willing to die? What kind of reward did he hope to receive after death?" (III 2)

Θεοὺς γὰρ φήσαντες εἶναι πάλιν εἰς οὐδὲν αὐτοὺς ἡγήσαντο. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ἀτόμων αὐτοὺς ἔρασαν συνεστάναι ἢ δ' αὖ χωρεῖν εἰς ἀτόμους, καὶ μηδὲν πλεῖον ἀνθρώπων δύνασθαι τοὺς θεοὺς φασιν. Πλάτων δέ, θεοὺς εἰπὼν εἶναι, ὑλικοὺς αὐτοὺς βούλεται συνιστᾶν. Πυθαγόρας δέ, τοσαῦτα μοχθήσας περὶ θεῶν καὶ τὴν αἰὼν κάττω πορείαν ποιησάμενος, ἔσχατον ὀρίζει φύσιν (αἰδίσιν) καὶ ἀντοματισμὸν εἶναί φησιν τῶν πάντων θεοῦς (τ') ἀνθρώπων μηδὲν φροντίζειν.

"After saying that gods exist, once more they reduced them to nothing. For some said that they were composed of atoms, or on the other hand that they return to atoms [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 8]; and they say that the power of the gods is no greater than that of men. Plato, who said that gods exist, wanted them to consist of matter. And Pythagoras, who went through such great labours over the gods and made his way up and down, finally defines their nature and says that everything was produced spontaneously [ibid., 589,9–10: Epicurus]; the gods do not take thought for men [ibid., 572,6: Epicurus]." (III 7)

Τί δ' οὐχὶ καὶ Κριτίας καὶ Πρωταγόρας ὁ Ἀβδηρίτης λέγων· "Εἴτε ἄρ' εἰσὶν θεοί, οὐ δύναμαι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγειν, οὔτε ὁποιοῖ εἰσὶν δηλῶσαι· | πολλὰ γὰρ ἔστιν τὰ κωλύοντά με";

"And what of Critias, and Protagoras the Abderite who said: 'Whether or not there are gods, I cannot say anything about them or explain their nature; for there are many things that hinder me' [cf. Sext. *Emp. Adv. Mat.* ix. 56]?" (III 7)<sup>4</sup>

Πλάτων δέ, ὁ τοσαῦτα εἰπὼν περὶ μοναρχίας θεοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου, φάσκων ἀθάνατον εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐκ αὐτὸς ὕστερον εὐρίσκεται ἐναντία ἐαυτῷ λέγων, τὰς μὲν ψυχὰς μετέρχεσθαι εἰς ἑτέρους ἀνθρώπους, ἐνίων δὲ καὶ εἰς ἄλογα ζῷα χωρεῖν (θέλων); Πῶς οὐ δεινὸν καὶ ἀθέμιτον δόγμα αὐτοῦ τοῖς γε νοῦν ἔχουσιν φανήσεται, ἵνα ὁ ποτε ἀνθρωπος πάλιν ἔσται λύκος ἢ κύων ἢ ὄνος ἢ ἄλλο τι ἄλογον κτήνος; Τοῦτω ἀκόλουθα

4 Sext. *Emp. Adv. Mat.* is the abbreviation for SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, *Adversus mathematicos*.

καὶ Πυθαγόρας εὐρίσκεται φλυαρῶν, πρὸς τῷ καὶ πρόνοιαν ἐκκόπτειν.

"And did not Plato, who said so many things about the sole rule of God and about the human soul, saying that the soul is immortal, later contradict himself and say that souls pass into other men and, in some cases, into irrational animals? How is it possible that his teaching will not seem evil and unlawful for those who possess reason, when he holds that one formerly a human being will become a wolf or dog or ass or some other irrational animal? Pythagoras also spoke nonsense which agrees with Plato, in addition to rejecting providence [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 7: Epicurus]." (III 7)

Τίνι οὖν αὐτῶν πιστεύσωμεν, Φιλήμονι τῷ κωμικῷ, λέγοντι·  
Οἱ γὰρ θεὸν σέβοντες ἐλπίδας καλὰς  
ἔχουσιν εἰς σωτηρίαν,

ἢ οἷς προειρηκάμεν Εὐημέρῳ καὶ Ἐπικούρῳ καὶ Πυθαγόρᾳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀρνούμενοις εἶναι θεοσέβειαν καὶ πρόνοιαν ἀναιροῦσιν;

"Which of them, then, shall we believe [cf. II. 8]? Philemon the comic poet, who says [fr. 181 Kock]:

Those who worship God have good hopes  
Of safety,

or the previously mentioned Euhemerus and Epicurus and Pythagoras and the rest who deny the existence of religion and destroy providence?" (III 7)<sup>5</sup>

Οὐδὲ (μὴν) ἀγένητος ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶν καὶ αὐτοματισμὸς τῶν πάντων, καθὼς Πυθαγόρας καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ πεφλυαρήκασιν, ἀλλὰ μὲν οὖν γενητὸς καὶ προνοία διοικεῖται ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὰ πάντα θεοῦ (\*) κ(α)λ(ῶς) ὁ πᾶς χρόνος καὶ τὰ ἔτη δαίκνυται τοῖς βουλομένοις πείθεσθαι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.

"The world is not uncreated nor is there spontaneous production of everything, as Pythagoras and the others have babbled [iii. 7]; instead, the world is created and is providentially governed by the God who made everything [iii. 9]." (III 26)

5 Kock is the abbreviation for T. KOCK, *Comicarum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Leipzig, 1884.

As we can see, the references to pre-Platonic philosophers are surprisingly numerous. The first philosopher criticized by Theophilus is Pythagoras (Πυθαγόρας) of Samos, who was born c. 570 BC. He emigrated to Croton, which is in southern Italy. I quote Simon Blackburn to sum up his teaching. It is not without interest to compare what are the essential parts of the philosophy of Pythagoras for Theophilus and the author of a modern handbook. In Italy "he founded a religious society (...). Membership of the society entailed self-discipline, silence, and the observance of various taboos, especially against eating flesh and beans. Pythagoras taught the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the cycle of reincarnation, and was supposed able to remember former existences. The soul, which has its own divinity and may have existed as an animal or plant, can, however, gain release by a religious dedication to study, after which it may rejoin the universal world-soul. (...) This tremendous success inspired the view that the whole of the cosmos should be explicable in terms of *harmonia* or number. The view represents a magnificent break from the Milesian attempt to ground physics on a conception of a prime matter, or undifferentiated basis shared by all things, and to concentrate instead on form, meaning that physical natures receive an intelligible grounding in different geometric structures. (...) Cosmologically Pythagoras explained the origin of the universe in mathematical terms, as the imposition of limit on the limitless by a kind of injection of a unit. (...) He died between 500 and 490 BC."<sup>6</sup>

As we have just seen, Theophilus thinks that Pythagoras went to the shrines and pillars of Heracles in vain. His travels and other efforts to acquire more knowledge were useless.

Empedocles (Ἐμπεδοκλῆς) of Acragas (Agrigentum in Sicily) was born c. 493. He "attained a remarkable personal and religious importance, being a poet, orator, scientist, statesman, miracle worker, and in his own eyes a god. (...) In his principal philosophical poem, *On Nature*, he replaces the Parmenidean One with a universe whose changes were the recombination of four basic and permanent elements, air, earth, fire, and water, mixing and separating under the influence of two forces, attraction (Love) and repulsion (Strife). The universe moves through cycles according to whichever one of these is predominant. He

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6 S. BLACKBURN, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford–New York, 1996, 311–312.

also proclaims the Pythagorean doctrine of the pre-existence and immortality of the soul and the contingency of its bodily existence: souls are condemned to the cycle of birth and rebirth by a fall from heavenly grace. (...) Empedocles also held a doctrine of the evolution of the species. The exact way in which he reconciled the natural and the theological elements of his philosophy is controversial, but the doctrine of the four elements was taken over by Aristotle and thence by the medievales.”<sup>7</sup> He died c. 433. Theophilus mentions him as an atheist.

Protagoras (Πρωταγόρας) of Abdera was born c. 490. He was “the most successful of the Sophists, whose independent importance is attested by Plato, Aristotle, and Sextus Empiricus. He taught virtue (*aretē*) in Athens (...) He is famous for the assertion that ‘man is the measure of all things’: a relativistic slogan whose precise meaning is debatable [...]. It seems clear that while Protagoras believed that each person’s sense perceptions are true (for their owner), he also believed that moral and political doctrines, to which his relativism might seem especially well-adapted, are capable of improvement and can be taught. It is quite possible that Protagoras established in Athens the dialectical method, later made famous through Plato’s Socratic dialogues.”<sup>8</sup> He died c. 420 BC.

Socrates (Σωκράτης) was born c. 470. He „represented the turning-point in Greek philosophy, at which the self-critical reflection on the nature of our concepts and our reasoning emerged as a major concern, alongside cosmological speculation and enquiry. (...) He remains the model of a great teacher, but it is uncertain whether he had anything in the nature of a formal school. (...) All the Greek schools of philosophy conceived of themselves as owing much to Socrates, except for the Epicureans who disliked him intensely, calling him ‘the Athenian buffoon’.”<sup>9</sup> In 399 BC he was brought to trial and condemned to death by the Athenians. He was charged of introducing strange gods and corrupting the youth.

Leucippus of Miletus (fl. 450–420 BC) was an atomist. His name is not mentioned by Theophilus. “Little is known of the life of Leucippus, who is yet treated by Aristotle as the founder of Greek atomism. Two

7 BLACKBURN, 118–119.

8 BLACKBURN, 307–308.

9 BLACKBURN, 355–356.

works are attributed to him: *On Mind* and *Great World-System*, but nearly nothing is known of what they contained. It is impossible to distinguish his doctrines from those of Democritus, whose more extensive writings form the basis of what is known of the system he shared with Leucippus."<sup>10</sup>

Democritus of Abdera (c. 460–c. 370 BC) was also an atomist. He is not mentioned by name, either. "He was known as very widely travelled, and was called the laughing philosopher. (...) The atomism proposed by Democritus and Leucippus was a response to the Eleatic arguments against motion. The Eleatics argued that what is real is both single and motionless, since motion is impossible without empty space (...) and plurality is impossible without empty space to separate the different unities. By allowing empty space, the atomists could avoid the Eleatic conclusion, but the individual atoms retain the characteristics that Parmenides attributed to the whole of unchanging reality. They are indivisible, homogeneous, solid, and unchanging, but they may differ from each other in shape and size. They are infinite in number, exist in empty space (the void), and are in eternal motion. When enough atoms exist in a region of space they form a vortex, with a mass of heavier atoms at the centre attracting others; the speed of the motion ignites such masses and causes the celestial bodies. The arrangements and conglomerations of atoms produce the world we experience; this world is, however, only one of the infinite number of worlds that different arrangements of atoms produce. The soul is made of particularly fine atoms, but is a composite and hence as perishable as the body. Perception is the result of *eidola* or thin films of atoms being shed from the surfaces of objects and interacting with the atoms of the soul.

The magnificent vision of the universe that Democritus conjures up, with its mechanism and its total absence of purpose and design, was too much for Plato and Aristotle, and only wholeheartedly embraced by Epicurus..."<sup>11</sup>

Atomists are criticized, because at least according to Theophilus they said that even gods are composed of atoms, and cease to exist when atoms are separated from each other. So atomists are inconsis-

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10 BLACKBURN, 216.

11 BLACKBURN, 98.

tent, because they say that immortal gods have an end in their existence.

So in Theophilus' mind the efforts made by the philosophers are either useless or unacceptable. Here again are some examples: the journey made by Pythagoras to the end of the world was futile; his great labours over the gods, his definition of their nature did not result in anything; his statements that everything was produced spontaneously or that gods do not take thought for men cannot be proved; his opinion that souls pass into other men and, in some cases, into irrational animals is nonsense; his rejection of providence is in contradiction with other Hellenic authors, just like his denial of the existence of religion; it cannot be accepted, either, that the world is uncreated and everything is produced spontaneously. Theophilus rejects Empedocles for his atheism and denial of providence, and Protagoras the Abderite, who admitted his ignorance about the nature of gods, for his agnosticism.

In Robert M. Grant's opinion Theophilus knows less about Pythagoras than Tatian does. He also thinks that Theophilus confuses Pythagoras with Epicurus, because he accuses him of "denying the concern of the gods for men"<sup>12</sup>.

#### Plato

Πλάτων δὲ καὶ οἱ τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτοῦ θεὸν μὲν ὁμολογοῦσιν ἀγένητον καὶ πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων εἶναι· εἶτα ὑποτίθενται παρὰ θεὸν ἀγένητον καὶ ὕλην ἀγένητον καὶ ταύτην φασὶν συνηκμακέναι τῷ θεῷ. Εἰ δὲ θεὸς ἀγένητος καὶ ὕλη ἀγένητος, οὐκ ἔτι ὁ θεὸς ποιητὴς τῶν ὅλων ἐστὶν κατὰ τοὺς Πλατωνικοὺς, οὐδὲ μὴν μοναρχία θεοῦ δείκνυται, ὅσον τὸ κατ' αὐτοῦς. Ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὡσπερ ὁ θεός, ἀγένητος ὢν, καὶ ἀναλλοιώτος ἐστὶν, οὕτως, εἰ καὶ ἡ ὕλη ἀγένητος ἦν, καὶ ἀναλλοιώτος καὶ ἰσόθεος ἦν· τὸ γὰρ γενητὸν τρεπτὸν καὶ ἀλλοιωτόν, τὸ δὲ ἀγένητον ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀναλλοιώτον.

"Plato and his followers acknowledge that God is uncreated, the Father and Maker of the universe; next they assume that uncreated

12 R. M. GRANT, *Early Christianity...*, 100.



matter is also God, and say that matter was coeval with God [cf. Diels, *Dox.* 567, 13; 588, 1718.] But if God is uncreated and matter is uncreated, then according to the Platonists God is not the Maker of the universe, and as far as they are concerned the unique sovereignty of God is not demonstrated. Furthermore, as God is immutable because he is uncreated, if matter is uncreated it must also be immutable, and equal to God; for what is created is changeable and mutable, while the uncreated is unchangeable and immutable." (II 4)

Τί δὲ ὠφέλησεν Πλάτωνα ἢ κατ' αὐτὸν παιδεία, ἢ τοὺς λοιποὺς φιλοσόφους τὰ ἰδύγματα αὐτῶν (ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἀριθμὸν αὐτῶν καταλέγω, πολλῶν ὄντων); Ταῦτα δὲ φασιν εἰς τὸ ἐπιδειξαι τὴν ἀνωφελῆ καὶ ἄθεον διάνοιαν αὐτῶν.

"And what did Plato's form of education avail him? What did their doctrines avail the other philosophers – not to list the whole number, since there are so many? We say these things to demonstrate their useless and godless notions." (III 2)

Θεοὺς γὰρ φήσαντες εἶναι πάλιν εἰς οὐδὲν αὐτοὺς ἡγήσαντο. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ἀτόμων αὐτοὺς ἔφασαν συνεστάναι ἢ δ' αὖ χωρεῖν εἰς ἀτόμους, καὶ μηδὲν πλεῖον ἀνθρώπων δύνασθαι τοὺς θεοὺς φασιν. Πλάτων δέ, θεοὺς εἰπὼν εἶναι, ὑλικοὺς αὐτοὺς βούλεται συνιστᾶν.

"After saying that gods exist, once more they reduced them to nothing. For some said that they were composed of atoms, or on the other hand that they return to atoms [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 8]; and they say that the power of the gods is no greater than that of men. Plato, who said that gods exist, wanted them to consist of matter." (III 7)

Πλάτων δὲ, ὁ τοσαῦτα εἰπὼν περὶ μοναρχίας θεοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς ἀνθρώπου, φάσκων ἀθάνατον εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐκ αὐτὸς ὑπερον εὐρίσκεται ἐναντία ἑαυτῷ λέγων, τὰς μὲν ψυχὰς μετέρχεσθαι εἰς ἑτέρους ἀνθρώπους, ἐνίων δὲ καὶ εἰς ἄλογα ζῷα χωρεῖν (θέλων); Πῶς οὐ δεινὸν καὶ ἀθέμιτον δόγμα αὐτοῦ τοῖς γε νοῦν ἔχουσιν φανήσεται, ἵνα ὁ ποτε ἄνθρωπος πάλιν ἔσται λύκος ἢ κύων ἢ ὄνος ἢ ἄλλο τι ἄλογον κτήνος; Τοῦτω ἀκόλουθα καὶ Πυθαγόρας εὐρίσκεται φλυαρῶν, πρὸς τῷ καὶ πρόνοιαν ἐκκόπτειν.

"And did not Plato, who said so many things about the sole rule of God and about the human soul, saying that the soul is immortal, later

contradict himself and say that souls pass into other men and, in some cases, into irrational animals? How is it possible that his teaching will not seem evil and unlawful for those who possess reason, when he holds that one formerly a human being will become a wolf or dog or ass or some other irrational animal? Pythagoras also spoke nonsense which agrees with Plato, in addition to rejecting providence [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 7: Epicurus].” (III 7)

Πλάτων δὲ, ὁ δοκῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτερος γεγενῆσθαι, εἰς πόσῃν φλυαρίαν ἐχώρησεν. Ἐν γὰρ ταῖς Πολιτείαις αὐτοῦ ἐπιγραφομέναις ῥητῶς κεῖται λέγοντος: “(Πῶς), εἴ γε (ἔ)μεν(εν) τάδε οὕτως (τὸν) πάντα χρόνον ὡς νῦν διακοσμεῖται, καινὸν ἂν εὐρίσκετό ποτε (καί) ὅτιοῦν; Τοῦτο ὅτι μὲν μυριάκις μυρία ἔτη διελάνθανεν ἄρα τοὺς τότε· χίλια δ’ ἄφ’ οὗ γέγονεν ἢ δις τοσαῦτα ἔτη, τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ Δαιδάλου καταφανῆ γέγονεν, τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ Ὀρφείως, τὰ δὲ ἀπὸ Παλαμῆδους.” Καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν γεγενῆσθαι, τὰ μὲν μυριάκις μυρία ἔτη ἀπὸ κατακλυσμοῦ ἕως Δαιδάλου δηλοῖ. Καὶ πολλὰ φήσας περὶ πόλεων (καί) κατοικισμῶν καὶ οἰκίσεων καὶ ἔθνων, ὁμολογεῖ εἰκασμῶ ταῦτα εἰρηκέναι· λέγει γάρ· “Εἰ γοῦν, ὦ ξένε, τις ἡμῖν ὑπόσχηται θεὸς ὡς, ἂν ἐπιχειρήσωμεν (τὸ δεύτερον) τῇ τῆς νομοθεσίας σκέψει, τῶν νῦν εἰρημένων (λόγων) οὐδ’ ἐλάττους ἀκουσόμεθα, μακρὰν ἂν ἔλθοιμι ἔγωγε.” Δῆλον ὅτι εἰκασμῶ (ταῦτα) ἔφη· εἰ δὲ εἰκασμῶ, οὐκ ἄρα ἀληθῆ | ἐστὶν τὰ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ εἰρημένα.

Δεῖ οὖν μᾶλλον μαθητὴν γενέσθαι τῆς νομοθεσίας τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς καὶ αὐτὸς ὡμολόγηκεν ἄλλως μὴ δύνασθαι τὸ ἀκριβὲς μαθεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ὁ θεὸς διδάξῃ διὰ τοῦ νόμου.

“And Plato, who is thought to have been the wisest of the Greeks – to what nonsense did he not attain! For in his book entitled *Republic* it says explicitly [*Leg.* iii. 677 c–d]: ‘If these things had remained for all time just as they are now arranged, how would anything new ever be found? On the one hand, they must have escaped the knowledge of those who lived then for a myriad myriad years; on the other, one or two thousand years ago, some things have been discovered from the time of Daedalus, some from that of Orpheus, and some from that of Palamedes.’ When he says that these things took place, he indicates that his ‘myriad myriad years’ are from the deluge [cf. *Leg.* iii. 677 a] to the time of Daedalus. And when he makes many statements about the various cities in the world and the habitations and nations, he admits

that these statements are made by conjecture. For he says [*Leg.* iii. 683 b–c]: ‘If, then, stranger, some god should promise us that if we could undertake for a second time our examination of the laws, we should hear discourses not inferior or shorter than the discourses so far spoken, I should go a great way.’ Obviously he spoke by conjecture; and if by conjecture, then his statements are not true.

One must, instead, become a student of the legislation of God, as Plato himself admitted when he said that accurate learning cannot be obtained unless God teaches it through the law [*Meno* 99 e].” (III 16–17)

Πλάτων γάρ, ὡς προειρήκαμεν, δηλώσας κατακλυσμὸν γεγενῆσθαι, ἔφη μὴ πάσης τῆς γῆς, ἀλλὰ τῶν πεδίων μόνον γεγενῆσθαι, καὶ τοὺς διαφυγόντας ἐπὶ τοῖς ὑψηλοτάτοις ὄρεσιν αὐτοὺς (μόνους) διασεσῶσθαι.

“Plato, as we have already said [III. 16], showed that there was a deluge, but he says that it took place not over the entire earth but only over the plains, and that those who fled to the highest mountains were saved [*Leg.* iii. 677 a–b].” (III 18)

Plato (Πλάτων) was born c. 429 “in Athens of an aristocratic family. (...) After the death of Socrates in 399, he travelled extensively. (...) On return from Sicily he began formal teaching at what became the Academy. Details of Plato’s life are surprisingly sparse. (...) The dating of his works has to be established on internal evidence, and is subject to scholarly dispute.

Plato’s fame rests on his Dialogues which are all preserved. They are usually divided into three periods, early, middle, and late. (...) The early dialogues establish the figure of Socrates, portrayed as endlessly questioning, ruthlessly shattering the false claims to knowledge of his contemporaries. [...] In the middle dialogues, concern switches to the philosophical underpinnings of this notion of a form, possibly in response to pressure on Plato to justify the dialectical method as more than a sceptical game. The middle dialogues are not in dialogue form, and do not exhibit the Socratic method. (...)

It is the middle dialogues that defend the doctrines commonly thought of as Platonism, and the positive doctrines are certainly uncompromising. A pivotal concept is that of the forms. These are independent, real, divine, invisible, and changeless; they share features of the things of which they are the form, but also cause them (so they are

not simply common properties, or universals). Unique amongst them is the form of the Good, the quasi-divine goal of mystical apprehension that could be achieved, if at all, only at the end of the philosophical pilgrimage. Apprehension of the forms is knowledge (*noēsis*) whereas belief about the changing everyday world is at best opinion (*doxa*). Knowledge is recollection of the acquaintance we had with the forms before our immortal souls became imprisoned in our bodies. (...)

The *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* are late middle or early late dialogues, and the former contains sufficiently devastating criticism of the doctrine of forms to throw Plato's later views into doubt. (...) In the late works, especially the last and longest dialogue, the *Laws*, Plato returns to the character of the ideal republic in a more sober manner, with civic piety and religion taking much of the burden of education away from philosophy. The *Timaeus* is especially interesting as a scientific treatise, whose cosmology echoed on in the Neoplatonism of the Christian era."<sup>13</sup> He died in 348/47 BC.

Theophilus observes the following contradictions in the teaching of Plato (and his followers): they acknowledge that God is uncreated, he is the Father and Maker of the universe, but they are also alleged to assume that uncreated matter is also God, and say that matter was coeval with God; Plato said so many things about the sole rule of God and about the human soul, saying that the soul is immortal, but later he contradicted himself and said that souls pass into other men and, in some cases, into irrational animals.

Plato was obviously also ill-informed according to Theophilus, because he wanted the gods consist of matter. He was mistaken also about the deluge, because he said that it took place not over the entire earth but only over the plains. Theophilus criticizes him also because he obviously spoke by conjecture, which means that his statements are not necessarily true. Consequently, his form of education (ἡ κατ'αὐτὸν παιδεία) did not avail him anything. One must, instead, become a student of the legislation of God, as Plato himself admitted when he said that accurate learning cannot be obtained unless God teaches it through the law. One can also ask: if Plato was the wisest of the Greeks, what about the abilities of the others?

13 BLACKBURN, 288–289.

Unfortunately and surprisingly, the influence of Platonism on Theophilus has drawn little attention in modern scholarship so far.<sup>14</sup>

### Diogenes of Sinope

Τί γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς εἰρήκασιν;

Ἦ τί ὠφέλησαν Εὐριπίδην καὶ Σοφοκλέα καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τραγωδιογράφους

αἱ τραγωδίαι, [...] ἢ Διογένην ἢ κυνικὴ φιλοσοφία,

"What truth did they speak? Or what did their tragedies avail for Euripides and Sophocles and the other tragic poets? [...] or the Cynic philosophy for Diogenes?" (III 2)

Antisthenes, the teacher of Diogenes is not named by Theophilus. Antisthenes was born c. 445. "A devoted follower of Socrates, but also considered (e.g. by Diogenes Laertius) to be an important influence on the first famous Cynic, Diogenes of Sinope. He shared much of Socrates' ethical teaching, but with a rather hearty penchant for those states of self-sufficiency that are the result of effort and exertion. He is cited by Aristotle as having held a theory of language according to which there is no such thing as contradiction or definition."<sup>15</sup>

Diogenes (Διογένης) of Sinope was born c. 404. "The founder of the Cynics, Diogenes lived in Athens and perhaps Corinth. He may have

14 J. H. WASZINK in his article on the influence of Platonism mentions him only in connection with the so-called theory of loan: *Einfluss des Platonismus im frühern Christentum*, in C. ZINTZEN (ed.), *Der Mittelplatonismus*, Darmstadt, 1981, 413–448 [= *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965) 129–162], 431. He is not mentioned by J. C. M. VAN WINDEN, either, in the paper titled *Das Christentum und die Philosophie. Der Beginn des Dialogs zwischen dem Glauben und dem Verstand*, in C. ZINTZEN (ed.), *Der Mittelplatonismus...*, 397–412. E. P. MEIJERING did not find a work of any significance about the topic, so he does not treat him in his *Zehn Jahre Forschung zum Thema Platonismus und Kirchenväter* in ID., *God Being History. Studies in Patristic Philosophy*, Amsterdam–Oxford–New York, 1975, 303–320. He does write about the research on Justin, Tatian, and Athenagoras. Theophilus is not mentioned by MEIJERING in the following work, either: *Wie platonisierten Christen? Zur Grenzziehung zwischen Platonismus, kirchlichen Credo und patristischer Theologie* in ID. *God Being History...*, 15–28.

15 BLACKBURN, 20.

been taught by Antisthenes, but it was his life and influence that gave the Cynics their importance. He taught that the right way of life was to have the simplest possible needs and to satisfy them in the most direct way. (...) [His] ethic is not just one of self-sufficiency, but more one of self-mastery born of a healthy contempt for one's own pleasures and pains, and especially born of impatience with the conventions and hierarchies of a presumably corrupt society."<sup>16</sup> He died in 323 BC.

Diogenes is mentioned among the other Greek authors whose doctrines did not avail anything for them. His philosophy is not explained by Theophilus.

### The teaching of the Stoa

Καθάπερ γὰρ ψυχὴ ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ βλέπεται, ἀόρατος οὕσα ἀνθρώποις, διὰ δὲ τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ σώματος νοεῖται [ἢ ψυχῇ], οὕτως ἔχει ἅν καὶ <τὸ> τὸν θεὸν μὴ δύνασθαι ὀραθῆναι ὑπὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, διὰ δὲ τῆς προνοίας καὶ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ βλέπεσθαι καὶ νοεῖσθαι. Ὅν τρόπον γὰρ καὶ πλοῖον θεασάμενός τις ἐν θαλάσῃ κατηρτισμένον καὶ τρέχον καὶ κατερχόμενον εἰς λιμένα δηλον ὅτι ἠγήσεται εἶναι ἐν αὐτῷ κυβερνήτην τὸν κυβερνῶντα αὐτό, οὕτως δεῖ νοεῖν εἶναι τὸν θεὸν κυβερνήτην τῶν ὅλων, εἰ καὶ οὐ θεωρεῖται ὀφθαλμοῖς σαρκίνους διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν ἀχώρητον εἶναι.

Εἰ γὰρ τῷ ἡλίῳ, ἐλαχίστῳ ὄντο στοιχείῳ, οὐ δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἀτενίσει διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν θερμὴν καὶ δύναμιν, πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ δόξῃ, ἀνεκφράστῳ οὕσῃ, ἄνθρωπος θνητὸς οὐ δύναται ἀντωπῆσαι; Ὅν τρόπον γὰρ ῥοάα, ἔχουσα φλοῖον τὸν περιέχοντα αὐτήν, ἔνδον ἔχει μονὰς καὶ θήκας πολλὰς, διαχωριζομένας διὰ ὑμένων, καὶ πολλοὺς κόκκους [ἔχει], τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικοῦντας, οὕτως ἢ πᾶσα κτίσις περιέχεται ὑπὸ πνεύματος θεοῦ, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ περιέχον σὺν τῇ κτίσει περιέχεται ὑπὸ χειρὸς θεοῦ· ὡσπερ οὖν ὁ κόκκος τῆς ῥοᾶς ἔνδον κατοικῶν οὐ δύναται ὄραν τῇ ἔξω τοῦ λέπου, αὐτὸς ὢν ἔνδον, οὕτως οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐμπεριεχόμενος μετὰ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως ὑπὸ χειρὸς θεοῦ οὐ δύναται θεωρεῖν τὸν θεόν.

Εἶτα βασιλεὺς μὲν ἐπίγειος πισταύεται εἶναι, καίπερ μὴ πᾶσιν βλεπόμενος, διὰ δὲ νόμων διατάξεων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσιῶν

καὶ δυνάμεων καὶ εἰκόνων νοεῖται· τὸν δὲ θεὸν οὐ βούλει σὺ νοεῖσθαι διὰ ἔργων καὶ δυνάμεων;

“Just as the soul in a man is not seen, since it is invisible to men, but is apprehended through the movement of the body, so it may be that God cannot be seen by human eyes but is seen and apprehended through his providence and his works. As when one observes a ship at sea, fitted out and cruising and returning to port, one will obviously infer that in her there is a pilot who steers her, so one must suppose that the pilot of the universe is God, even if he is not visible to merely human eyes because he is unconfined. If a man cannot stare at the sun, though it is a very small star, because of its overwhelming heat and power, how much more is it the case that a mortal man cannot view the glory of God which is inexpressible! As a pomegranate, with a rind surrounding it, has inside many cells and cases, separated by membranes, and has many seeds dwelling in it, so the whole creation is surrounded by the spirit of God and the surrounding spirit, along with the creation, is enclosed by the hand of God. As the pomegranate seed, dwelling inside, cannot see what is outside the rind since it is itself inside, so man, who with the whole creation is enclosed by the hand of God, cannot see God.

A king on earth is believed to exist even if he is not seen by all; he is apprehended by means of his laws and commands and authorities and powers and images. Are you unwilling to apprehend God through this works and powers?” (I 5)

Ἐνιοὶ μὲν τῆς Στοᾶς ἀρνοῦνται | καὶ τὸ ἐξ ὅλου θεὸν (ἄφθαρτον) εἶναι, ἢ, εἰ καὶ ἔστιν, μηδενός φασιν φροντίζειν τὸν θεὸν πλὴν ἑαυτοῦ· καὶ ταῦτα μὲν παντελῶς Ἐπικούρου καὶ Χρυσίππου ἢ ἄνοια ἀπεφήνατο. Ἄλλοι δὲ φασιν αὐτοματισμὸν τῶν πάντων εἶναι, καὶ τὸν κόσμον ἀγένητον καὶ φύσιν (ἀ)ἴδιαν· καὶ τὸ σύνολον πρόνοιαν μὴ εἶναι θεοῦ ἐτόλμησαν ἐξαιρεῖν, ἀλλὰ θεὸν εἶναι μόνον φασὶν τὴν ἐκάστου συνείδησιν. Ἄλλοι δ' αὖ τὸ δι' ὅλου κεχωρηκὸς πνεῦμα θεὸν δογματίζουσιν.

“Some of the Stoics absolutely deny the existence of God or assert that if God exists he takes thought for no one but himself. Such views certainly exhibit the folly of Epicurus and Chrysippus alike. Others say that everything happens spontaneously, that the universe is uncreated and that nature is eternal; in general they venture to declare that there is no divine providence but that God is only the individual's con-

science [cf. [Menander], *Monostichoi* 81 and 107 Jaekel]. Others, on the contrary, hold that the spirit extended through everything is God [SVF ii. 1033].” (II 4)<sup>17</sup>

The first representatives of Stoicism, Zeno and Cleanthes are not named by Theophilus, only their follower, Chrysippus is. Zeno of Citium (Ζήνων ὁ Κιτιεύς) (c. 334/262) “was a Phoenician born on Cyprus, originally a pupil of Crates the Cynic. He turned to Socratic philosophy, and gradually evolved the unified metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that make up the Stoical system.”<sup>18</sup> None of his works has survived. However, his teachings have been passed on, including his main concept that “tranquillity can best be reached through indifference to pleasure and pain”. Cynic teaching was, at least in part, continued in his Stoic philosophy. Zeno preached that “man conquers the world by conquering himself”. He lectured his students on the value of *apatheia*, which he explained to be “the absence of passion”.

Cleanthes (c. 331–232 BC) was the “second head of the Stoic school. Coming between Zeno of Citium, the founder, and Chrysippus, the ‘second founder’ of the Stoic school, Cleanthes has usually been accorded a relatively minor position. However, his *Hymn to Zeus* contains an elaboration of Stoic physics, explaining the flux in terms of a principle of ‘tension’ (*tonos*) in the underlying substance of the world. He represents the pantheism of Stoicism, and the conception of ideal life as one lived in accordance with nature.”<sup>19</sup>

Chrysippus (Χρυσίππος) of Soli c. 280–207 BC was “the third leading Stoic after Cleanthes, and possibly the most productive philosopher of all time, having written 704 books, none of which survive (...). Chrysippus was originally a pupil of Arcesilaus, and was converted to Stoicism by Cleanthes. He enjoyed a considerable reputation as a logician (...) He also held a cognitive theory of the emotions, which he thought consisted in judgements of the value of things.”<sup>20</sup> He is honoured as the second founder of Stoicism.

17 Jaekel is the abbreviation for S. JAEKEL, *Menandri sententiae*, Leipzig, 1964. SVF stands for H. VON ARNIM, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1903–5.

18 BLACKBURN, 404.

19 BLACKBURN, 66.

20 BLACKBURN, 63.



In Theophilus' mind there is no unanimity among the Stoic philosophers, either. Some of them (e.g. Chrysippus) deny the existence of God or assert that if God exists he takes thought for no one but himself. Others say that everything happens spontaneously, that the universe is uncreated and that nature is eternal. They also deny the existence of divine providence. Some of them say that God is only the individual's conscience, in contradiction with others, who hold that the spirit extended through everything is God.

But Theophilus applies several metaphors cherished also by the Stoics. These pictures of the pilot, the sun, and the king are traditional Stoic ones. As Kathleen E. McVey points out, they have been observed in *Ad Autolyicum* already by Gustave Bardy and Johannes Geffcken.<sup>21</sup> The notion that God contains the universe is also Stoic. Chrysippus – unlike Cleanthes – taught that the cosmic ἡγεμονικόν was in the αὐθής, which means that it is surrounded by it.<sup>22</sup> McVey thinks that – if we want to emphasize his eclecticism – Theophilus seems to be closer to Stoicism than to Platonism.

Theophilus seems to be mistaken when he charges the Stoics of atheism, says Grant. "His error can be explained by recalling that in a similar doxography used by Epiphanius such views are assigned to the Middle Stoic Panaetius. Presumably he is following a source critical of both Epicureans and Stoics – in other words, someone like Carneades."<sup>23</sup>

David Sutherland Wallace-Hadrill points out that the Eastern Church shows very little Stoic influence. There are virtually only two exceptions: Theophilus of Antioch and Nemesius. Referring to Robert M. Grant<sup>24</sup>, he regards as Stoic elements the use of divine attributes, and

21 K. MCVEY, *The use of Stoic Cosmogony in Theophilus of Antioch's Hexaemeron*, in M. S. BURROW–P. ROEM (eds.), *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective. Studies in honor of Karlfried Froehlich on his sixtieth birthday*, Grand Rapids/Mich., 1991, 37.

22 *Ibid.* The term „enclosing“ is examined in detail in the following article: W. R. SCHOEDEL, *Enclosing, not Enclosed. The early Christian doctrine of God*, in SCHOEDEL, W. R.–WILKEN, R. L. (eds.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition. In honorem R. M. Grant* (Théologie historique, 54), Paris, 1973, 75–86.

23 R. M. GRANT, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Philadelphia, 1988, 152.

24 R. M. GRANT, *Theophilus of Antioch to Autolyicus*, in *Harvard Theological Review* 40 (1947) 230.

also the insight that the presence of God can be observed in his creatures. He also points out that the terms λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός also come from Stoicism.<sup>25</sup> He thinks that in Theophilus' mind the λόγος is impersonal: it is just an attribute to the Father, like his wisdom, strength, and power. Wallace-Hadrill says it is doubtful if Theophilus knew about the Stoic origin of these statements.<sup>26</sup>

### Epicurus

Ἐνιοὶ μὲν τῆς Στοᾶς ἀρνοῦνται | καὶ τὸ ἐξ ὅλου θεὸν (ἄφθαρτον) εἶναι, ἢ, εἰ καὶ ἔστιν, μηδενός φασιν φροντίζειν τὸν θεὸν πλὴν ἑαυτοῦ· καὶ ταῦτα μὲν παντελῶς Ἐπικούρου καὶ Χρυσίππου ἢ ἄνοια ἀσπερήνατο.

"Some of the Stoics absolutely deny the existence of God or assert that if God exists he takes thought for no one but himself. Such views certainly exhibit the folly of Epicurus and Chrysippus alike." (II 4)

Τί γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς εἰρήκασιν;

Ἦ τί ὠφέλησαν Εὐριπίδην καὶ Σοφοκλέα καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τραγωδιογράφους αἱ τραγωδίαι, [...] ἢ Ἐπίκουρον τὸ δογματίζειν μὴ εἶναι πρόνοιαν [...];

"What truth did they speak? Or what did their tragedies avail for Euripides and Sophocles and the other tragic poets [...] or the dogmatic denial of providence for Epicurus?" (III 2)

Τίνι οὖν αὐτῶν πιστεύσωμεν, Φιλόμονι τῷ κωμικῷ, λέγοντι·

Οἱ γὰρ θεὸν σέβοντες ἐλπίδας καλὰς

ἔχουσιν εἰς σωτηρίαν,

ἢ οἷς προειρήκαμεν Εὐημέρω καὶ Ἐπικούρω καὶ Πυθαγόρᾳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἀρνούμενοις εἶναι θεοσέβειαν καὶ πρόνοιαν ἀσπαιροῦσιν;

"Which of them, then, shall we believe [cf. II. 8]? Philemon the comic poet, who says [fr. 181 Kock]:

25 See also M. MÜHL, *Der λόγος ἐνδιάθετος und προφορικός von der älteren Stoa bis zur Synode von Sirmium 351*, in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 7, Bonn, 1962, 7–56.

26 D. S. WALLACE-HADRILL, *Christian Antioch*, Cambridge, 1982, 103.

Those who worship God have good hopes  
Of safety,

or the previously mentioned Euhemerus and Epicurus and Pythagoras and the rest who deny the existence of religion and destroy providence?" (III 7)

Epicurus (Ἐπίκουρος) (341–270 BC) "was born on the island of Samos, but moved to Athens in 307/6 BC, where he established a secluded community called the 'Garden'. His doctrines are known mainly through the account in Diogenes Laertius, and through Lucretius' poem *De Rerum Natura*, which is believed to be faithful representation of his thought. Epicurus followed the atomistic metaphysics of Leucippus and Democritus, in particular allowing for empty space, an infinite number of worlds their changing combinations produce. Epicurus also had a doctrine of the survival of the fittest in order to account for the evolution of species without appeal to the final causes of Aristotle. However, room is made for gods, although they have no concern at all for this cosmos, and in particular play no role either as first causes or as providing ends for existence. (...) Another interesting doctrine is that of the *prolepsis* or way in which experience becomes general, by allowing us to anticipate the kind of object to which terms refer (...)

The aim of all philosophy is, however, to enable us to live well, which is not to live in the hedonistic trough the word Epicureanism now suggests, after centuries of propaganda against the system. Rather, practical wisdom, attained through philosophy, is needed to attain the pleasant life, which consists in a preponderance of *katastematic* pleasure, capable of indefinite prolongation, over merely *kinematic* or volatile sensory pleasures. (...) As with other Greek ethical philosophies, *ataraxia*, is the summit of the *katastematic* pleasures, and requires understanding the limits of life and removal of the fear of death, cultivation of friendships, and the removal of unnecessary desires and false gratifications."<sup>27</sup>

Theophilus condemns Epicurus as well, because he, like some of the Stoics, denies the existence of God. Epicurus asserts that if God exists he takes thought for no one but himself. So, in one way or another, he

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27 BLACKBURN, 122.

denies the existence of divine providence. In this he contradicts the tragic poets. As a consequence, he also denies the existence of religion. His assertions are contradictory to the truth, says Theophilus. Theophilus is not the only author from the end of the second century who strongly criticizes the Epicureans for denying providence. The famous physician, Galen in his work *On the Usefulness of Parts* (written between 169 and 176) also strongly condemns the Atomists, including the Epicureans.<sup>28</sup>

### Later Academy

Ἦ οὐκ οἶδας ὅτι ἀπάντων πραγμάτων ἡ πίστις προηγείται; Τίς γὰρ δύναται θερίσαι γεωργός, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον πιστεύσῃ τὸ σπέρμα τῇ γῆ; Ἦ τίς (πλέων) δύναται διαπερᾶσαι τὴν θάλασσαν, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον ἑαυτὸν πιστεύσῃ τῷ πλοίῳ καὶ τῷ κυβερνήτῃ; Τίς δὲ κάμων δύναται θεραπευθῆναι, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον ἑαυτὸν πιστεύσῃ τῷ ἰατρῷ; Ποίαν δὲ τέχνην ἢ ἐπιστήμην δύναται τις μαθεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον ἐπιδῶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ πιστεύσῃ τῷ διδασκάλῳ;

“Do you not know that faith leads the way in all actions? What farmer can harvest unless he first entrusts the seed to the earth? Who can cross the sea unless he first entrusts himself to the ship and the pilot? What sick man can be cured unless he first entrusts himself to the physician? What art or science can anyone learn unless he first delivers and entrusts himself to the teacher?” (I 8)

Ἄποσα δὲ Κλιτόμαχος ὁ Ἀκαδημαϊκὸς περὶ ἀθεότητος εἰσηγήσατο (ἐῶ).

“Furthermore, Clitomachus the Academic philosopher introduced many arguments for atheism.” (III 7)

Carneades (Καρνεάδης) was born in Cyrene c. 214. “The most prominent member of the later Academy after Arcesilaus. Carneades was a distinguished sceptic (...) His philosophical originality lay in admitting a concept of the plausible (*to pithanon*), perhaps better thought of

28 Cf. T. TIELEMAN, *Galen and Genesis*, in G. H. VAN KOOTEN (ed.), *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the context of Judaism, ancient philosophy, Christianity, and modern physics*, Leiden–Boston, 2005, 125–145, 129.

as what is acceptable or that which is better to act upon. He needed to fend off the charge that scepticism leads to total paralysis, by defining the kind of reasoning that, in spite of scepticism, remains a suitable basis for action. (...) Carneades voiced a robust rejection of natural theology...<sup>29</sup> He died in 129 BC.

Although Theophilus does not name Carneades, he seems to be using similar arguments as he does. Robert M. Grant reminds us that according to Carneades people follow probability in voyaging, sowing a crop, marrying and begetting children. Xenophon points out that people usually follow those who are the best: a doctor, a pilot or a farmer. Origen is using the same analogies for faith: sailing, etc.<sup>30</sup> Gábor Kendeffy points out that Theophilus' argumentation resembles that of Cicero, who in his *Lucullus* defends himself against the charge of *apraxia*. Cicero proves the applicability of probabilism in everyday life, giving the same examples of navigation and medicine. Kendeffy notes that Cicero also refers to Clitomachus.<sup>31</sup> Theophilus may have relied on Carneades also when "he tries to show that Greek ideas about revelation, the gods, and the nature of the world are inconsistent."<sup>32</sup>

Sextus Empiricus and Diogenes Laertius report the so-called "tenth mode" of Sceptical argumentation, which was used to criticize ethics. "Sextus recommends opposing each category to itself as well as to the others. Just so, in Theophilus' third book he plays materials in such categories against one another."<sup>33</sup> First it could be pointed out how absurd the idea of cannibalism (suggested by the Stoics under certain conditions) in itself was. The atheism of the Stoics was also criticized, although they shared this view with their arch-enemies, the followers of Epicurus.

Clitomachus (Κλειτόμαχος) is the latest philosopher whom Theophilus mentions by name. He was born in Carthage in 187 BC. He was a disciple of Carneades. He became the head of the New Academy in 126 BC. He died in Athens in 109 BC.

29 BLACKBURN, 55–56.

30 R. M. GRANT, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Philadelphia, 1988, 151.

31 KENDEFFY G., *Az egyházatyák és a szkepticizmus*, Budapest, 1999, 44–45. See also his introduction to the anthology containing the texts of Cicero and Sextus Empiricus: *Antik szkepticizmus. Cicero- és Sextus Empiricus-szövegek*, Budapest, 1998, 7–69.

32 R. M. GRANT, *Greek Apologists*, 151.

33 *Ibidem*, 152.

Theophilus accuses him of introducing many arguments for atheism. Actually, Epicurus and the Stoics also advocate atheism, the most dangerous charge brought up against the Christians. The implicit question in Theophilus' work is obvious: why are the Epicureans and Stoics not persecuted, as the Christians are? He mentions also that the Stoics advocate cannibalism, and some Platonists recommend promiscuity. Actually, Greek philosophers not only tolerate, but they also encourage these hideous crimes. Christians are accused of atheism, cannibalism, and licentiousness. Why do the authorities apply double standards: persecuting the Christians and glorifying the Hellenes for the same kind of behaviour?

As we have seen, Theophilus gives a rather comprehensive overview about the doctrines of Greek philosophers until Clitomachus, who died almost 300 years before he wrote his *Ad Autolyicum*. However, one important name is missing: Aristotle. Why is not he mentioned by name? Why is not he criticised? Or is he included among the followers of Plato by Theophilus? If not, does this silence mean that his philosophy is approved of by Theophilus? He was definitely more influential than Clitomachus, and several of his views were obviously contradictory to some Christian doctrines.

However, Aristotle can be present behind the scenes in the *Ad Autolyicum*. The aim of the *Ad Autolyicum* strongly reminds us of the aim of the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle. This work is not extant. Our main source about it is the *Protrepticus* of Iamblicus from the late third century AD, but Cicero's lost work, *Hortensius* also had similar characteristics. Both of them were exhortations to the philosophic life.<sup>34</sup> The *Hortensius* was read by Augustine. It exerted a deep influence on him, helping him in the process of his conversion.

The other remarkable feature of this concise history of Hellene philosophy is that Theophilus is silent about the three centuries preceding his own times. As we have seen, the last philosopher he mentions is Clitomachus, who died in 109 BC. Did he not take the contemporary representatives of the Academy or the Stoa seriously? Or was he rather using a manual which could have been compiled hundreds of years be-

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34 Cf. F. YOUNG, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, in M. EDWARDS et alii (eds.) *Apologists in the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, Oxford, 1999, 90.

fore the end of the second century AD? Who was this supposed manual written by? Given the fact that the last philosopher he mentions died well before the appearance of Christianity, it could have been written by a Jewish scholar, and not necessarily by a Christian writer.

## Persistent Errors Committed by the Hellenes, and the Futility of their Efforts

Their most common mistakes concerning God

Καὶ τί μοι τὸ λοιπὸν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν τοιούτων ὀνομασιῶν καὶ γενεαλογιῶν καταλέγειν; Ὡστε κατὰ πάντα τρόπον ἐμπαίζονται οἱ συγγραφεῖς πάντες καὶ ποιηταὶ καὶ φιλόσοφοι λεγόμενοι, ἔτι μὴν καὶ οἱ προσέχοντες | αὐτοῖς. Μύθους γὰρ μᾶλλον καὶ μωρίας συνέταξαν περὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς θεῶν· οὐ γὰρ ἀπέδειξαν αὐτοὺς θεοῦς, ἀλλὰ ἀνθρώπους, οὓς μὲν μεθύσους, ἐτέρους πόρνους καὶ φονεῖς...

Ἐτεροὶ δ' αὖ εἶπον πρόνοιαν εἶναι, καὶ (ἄλλοι) τὰ τούτων δόγματα ἀνέλυσαν. [...]

Πλὴν καὶ πλεθὺν (θεῶν) εἰσήγαγον ἢ καὶ μοναρχίαν εἶπον, καὶ πρόνοιαν εἶναι τοῖς λέγουσιν ἀπρονοησίαν τάναντία εἰρήκασιν.

"Why should I continue to list the multitude of such names and genealogies? All the historians and poets and so-called philosophers are deceived in every respect, and so are those who pay attention to them. For they have composed myths and foolishness concerning their god by showing them to be not god but men, some of them drunkards, others fornicators and murderers. (...)

Others, again, said that providence exists, while still others demolished their doctrines. [...]

Nevertheless, they introduced a multitude of gods or else spoke of the divine monarchy; to those who said that providence exists they expressed the contrary belief in the non-existence of providence." (II 8)

καθὼς ἐν τοῖς ἐπάνω | ἐδηλώσαμεν, ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν ιστοριῶν ὧν συνέγραψαν ἀπεδείξαμεν. Αἱ δὲ εἰκόνες αὐτῶν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν ἕως τοῦ δεῦρο ἐκτυποῦνται, εἶδωλα, ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων. Καὶ τούτοις μὲν λατρεύει τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ματαίων ἀνθρώπων, τὸν δὲ ποιητὴν καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων καὶ τροφέα πάσης πνοῆς ἀθε-

τοῦσιν, πειθόμενοι δόγμασιν ματαίοις διὰ πλάνης πατροπαραδό-  
του (καὶ) γνώμης ἀσυνέτου.

"We have shown from the very histories they composed that in their own writings the names of the so-called gods are names of men, as we have made clear above [I. 9; II. 2-7]. And their images, which are fashioned every day up to the present time, are *idols, the works of men's hands* [Ps. 113: 12; I 1]. The multitude of foolish men worships these, but they reject the Maker and Fashioner of the universe, the Nourisher of all breath, in obedience to vain doctrines because of the hereditary error of their unintelligent opinion." (II 34)

Θεοὺς γὰρ φήσαντες εἶναι πάλιν εἰς οὐδὲν αὐτοὺς ἡγήσαντο. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ἀτόμων αὐτοὺς ἔφασαν συνεστάναι ἢ δ' αὖ χωρεῖν εἰς ἀτόμους, καὶ μηδὲν πλεῖον ἀνθρώπων δύνασθαι τοὺς θεοὺς φασιν. Πλάτων δέ, θεοὺς εἰπὼν εἶναι, ὑλικοὺς αὐτοὺς βούλεται συνιστᾶν. Πυθαγόρας δέ, τοσαῦτα μοχθήσας περὶ θεῶν καὶ τὴν ὄνω κάτω πορείαν ποιησάμενος, ἔσχατον ὀρίζει φύσιν (ἀίδιαν) καὶ αὐτοματισμὸν εἶναί φησιν τῶν πάντων θεοῦς (τ') ἀνθρώπων μηδὲ φροντίζειν.

"After saying that gods exist, once more they reduced them to nothing. For some said that they were composed of atoms, or on the other hand that they return to atoms [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 8]; and they say that the power of the gods is no greater than that of men. Plato, who said that gods exist, wanted them to consist of matter. And Pythagoras, who went through such great labours over the gods and made his way up and down, finally defines their nature and says that everything was produced spontaneously [ibid., 589,910: Epicurus]; the gods do not take thought for men [ibid., 572,6: Epicurus]." (III 7)

Robert M. Grant – relying on the observations by Harry Austryn Wolfson – reminds us that already Philo had three different views about the origin of the true statements in Greek philosophy. He thought that sometimes they derived their views from the Old Testament; sometimes they used "their native reason". He admitted that on few occasions philosophers might have received the truth as divine inspiration.<sup>35</sup>



Grant points out that – in his doctrine of God – Theophilus “made use of categories both Platonic and Stoic... He lists ‘negative attributes’ of God in Platonic fashion while he treats the logos, or Son of God, in a Stoic manner, differentiating the *logos endiathetos* within God from the *logos prophorikos* expressed by him. (...) Theophilus insists on the transcendence of God and points out that all of God’s ‘appellations’ refer to his characteristics, attributes, or activities, not to his nature in itself. (...) All these terms are symbolic because they refer to the ineffable transcendent God who, unlike Marcion’s God, is just as well as good.

Similar teaching is to be found in Albinus and the *Corpus Hermeticum* (2. 14). But like Justin, Theophilus is not an orthodox Platonist philosopher. His list of names and attributes ends on a biblical note. ‘If I call him ‘fire’ I speak of his wrath.’ The interlocutor asks, ‘Will you tell me that God is angry?’ Against the overwhelming majority of philosophers, not to mention the Marcionites, Theophilus replies, ‘Certainly: he is angry with those who commit evil deeds but good and merciful toward those who love and fear him. For he is the instructor of the pious and father of the just, but judge and punisher of the impious.’ Here he is on firm Stoic ground, at least: Plutarch notes that in the Stoic view ‘God punishes evil and does much to punish wicked men.’<sup>36</sup>

### Their mistakes about the origin of the universe

Ἄλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῆς κοσμογονίας ἀσύμφωνα ἀλλήλοις καὶ φαῦλα ἐξεῖπον. Πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι τινὲς ἀγένητον τὸν κόσμον ἀπεφήναντο, καθὼς καὶ ἔμπροσθεν ἐδηλώσαμεν, καὶ οἱ μὲν ἀγένητον αὐτὸν καὶ (ἀ)ἴδιαν φύσιν φάσκοντες οὐκ ἀκόλουθα εἶπον τοῖς γενητὸν αὐτὸν δογματίσασιν. Εἰκασμῶ γὰρ ταῦτα καὶ ἀνθρωπίνῃ ἐννοίᾳ ἐφθέγγαντο, καὶ οὐ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν.

“Moreover, they made inconsistent and evil statements about the origin of the world. In the first place, some of them declared that the world was uncreated, as we have already explained [II. 4]; and those who said that it was uncreated and that nature is eternal disagreed

36 R. M. GRANT, *Gods and the One God. Christian theology in the Graeco-Roman World*, London, 1986, 87–88.

with those who held that it came into existence. They made these statements by conjecture and by human thought, not in accordance with the truth." (II 8)

Τῆς μὲν οὖν ἑξαήμερου οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων δυνατὸς κατ' ἀξίαν τὴν ἐξήγησιν καὶ τὴν οἰκονομίαν πᾶσαν ἐξειπεῖν, οὐδὲ εἰ μυρία στόματα ἔχοι καὶ μυρίας γλώσσας. Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ εἰ μυρίοις ἔτεσιν βιώσει τις ἐπιδημῶν ἐν τῷδε τῷ βίῳ, οὐδὲ οὕτως ἔσται ἰκανὸς πρὸς ταῦτα ἀξίως τι εἰπεῖν, διὰ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος καὶ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς σοφίας τοῦ θεοῦ, τῆς οὐσης ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ προγεγραμμένη ἑξαήμερῳ.

Πολλοὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν συγγραφέων (τὴν γραφὴν) ἐμιμήσαντο καὶ ἠθέλησαν περὶ τούτων διήγησιν ποιήσασθαι, (ἀλλ' ἠδυνάτησαν) καίτοι λαβόντες ἐντεῦθεν τὰς ἀφορμάς (ἦτοι περὶ κόσμου κρίσεως ἢ περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρώπου), καὶ οὐδὲ τὸ τυχόν ἔναυσμα ἄξιόν τι τῆς ἀληθείας ἐξεῖπον.

"No man can adequately set forth the whole exegesis and plan of the Hexaëmeros (six days' work), even if he were to have ten thousand mouths and ten thousand tongues. Not even if he were to live ten thousand years, continuing in this life, would he be competent to say anything adequately in regard to these matters, because of the *surpassing greatness* [Eph. 1:19] and *riches of the Wisdom of God* [Rom. 11:33] to be found in his Hexaëmeros quoted above.

To be sure, many writers have imitated it and have desired to compose a narrative about these matters, but, although they derived their starting-point from it in dealing with the creation of the world or the nature of man, what they said did not contain even a slight spark worthy of the truth. What has been said by philosophers, historians, and poets is thought to be trustworthy because of its embellished style, but what they say is proved foolish and pointless by the abundance of their nonsense and the absence of even the slightest measure of the truth in their writings." (II 12)

Τετάρτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγένοντο οἱ φωστῆρες. Ἐπειδὴ ὁ θεὸς προγνώστης ὧν ἠπιστατο τὰς φλυαρίας τῶν ματαίων φιλοσόφων, ὅτι ἡμελλον λέγειν ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων εἶναι τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς φυόμενα, πρὸς τὸ ἀθετεῖν τὸν θεόν· ἴν' οὖν τὸ ἀληθὲς δειχθῆ, προγενέστερα γέγονεν τὰ φυτὰ καὶ τὰ σπέρματα τῶν στοιχείων· τὰ γὰρ μεταγενέστερα οὐ δύναται ποιεῖν τὰ αὐτῶν προγενέστερα.

"On the fourth day the luminaries came into existence. Since God has foreknowledge, he understood the nonsense of the foolish philosophers who were going to say that the things produced on earth come from the stars, so that they might set God aside [I Thess. 4:8]. In order therefore that the truth might be demonstrated, plants and seeds came into existence before the stars. For what comes into existence later cannot cause what is prior to it." (II 15)

Theophilus may have been relying on a doxographical source, similar to that used by Hippolytus in his *Refutation*. Grant thinks that "Theophilus has substituted 'nature' for 'God' – perhaps following an anti-Epicurean source. For other information he seems to rely on the *Monostichoi* ('one-liners') ascribed to Menander. The idea that each person's conscience is God appears in the *Monostichoi*."<sup>37</sup>

Already Aristides reproaches the so-called philosophers about their mistake concerning the elements of this world.<sup>38</sup>

Writing about the creation theories of the second century apologists, N. J. Torchia compares their various ways of approach to the Greek ideas about the creation of the world. He points out that Theophilus "dispenses with references to matter altogether (except on critical grounds). His distance from Justin here is readily apparent: rather than attempting to reconcile Christian and Greek outlooks, he makes a conscious effort to separate himself from any features of the Platonic paradigm of creation. In keeping with his reliance upon 2 Maccabees (7.28), he focuses upon the all-encompassing power of God in His role as supreme Creator. The singularity of this power lies in the fact that God can make 'whatever he wishes out of the non-existent...'

Theophilus' language bears an unmistakable Hellenic imprint, utilizing the Eleatic antithesis between being and non-being. For him, God is not a Framer or even a begetter of matter, but a giver of being in its widest sense. However, while he relies upon Greek forms of thought, he does so only in the service of a uniquely Christian philosophizing. It is rooted in Scriptural teachings that raised challenging new questions for Greek philosophy. But, by the same token, Greek philosophy provided Christian thinkers with the arguments and concepts to interpret those teachings in a more precise, technical manner.

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37 R. M. GRANT, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, Philadelphia, 1988, 152.

38 ARISTIDES, *Apologia* 3.3.

Paradoxically, such dialectical tools enabled them to articulate an understanding of creation that would have been quite alien to the Greek intellectual tradition."<sup>39</sup>

They contradict each other in the case of the most important problems; their efforts to know real truth are obviously futile

*(Already quoted partially)*

Θεοὺς γὰρ φήσαντες εἶναι πάλιν εἰς οὐδὲν αὐτοὺς ἡγήσαντο. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐξ ἀτόμων αὐτοὺς ἔφασαν συνεστάναι ἢ δ' αὖ χωρεῖν εἰς ἀτόμους, καὶ μηδὲν πλεῖον ἀνθρώπων δύνασθαι τοὺς θεοὺς φασιν. Πλάτων δέ, θεοὺς εἰπὼν εἶναι, ὑλικοὺς αὐτοὺς βούλεται συνιστᾶν. Πυθαγόρας δέ, τσοᾶντα μοχθήσας περὶ θεῶν καὶ τὴν ἄνω κάτω πορείαν ποιησάμενος, ἔσχατον ὀρίζει φύσιν (ἀϊδίαν) καὶ αὐτοματισμὸν εἶναί φησιν τῶν πάντων θεοῦς (τ') ἀνθρώπων μηδὲ φροντίζειν. Ὅποσα δὲ Κλιτόμαχος ὁ Ἀκαδημαϊκὸς περὶ ἀθεότητος εἰσηγήσατο (ἐῶ).

Τί δ' οὐχὶ καὶ Κριτίας καὶ Πρωταγόρας ὁ Ἀβδηρίτης λέγων· „Εἴτε ἄρ' εἰσὶν θεοί, οὐ δύναμαι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγειν, οὔτε ὁποῖοί εἰσιν δηλώσαι· | πολλὰ γὰρ ἐστὶν τὰ κωλύοντά με“; Τὰ δὲ περὶ Εὐημέρου τοῦ ἀθεωτάτου περισσὸν ἡμῖν καὶ λέγειν· πολλὰ γὰρ περὶ θεῶν τολμήσας φθέγγασθαι ἔσχατον καὶ τὸ ἐξόλου μὴ εἶναι θεοῦς, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα αὐτοματισμῷ διοικεῖσθαι βούλεται. [...]

Ὅποσα τε καὶ ἄλλοι καὶ σχεδόν γε οἱ πλείους εἶπον περὶ θεοῦ καὶ προνοίας, ὄραν ἔστιν πῶς ἀνακόλουθα ἀλλήλοις ἔφασαν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἐξόλου θεὸν καὶ πρόνοιαν εἶναι ἀνεῖλον, οἱ δ' αὖ συνέστησαν θεὸν καὶ πάντα προνοία διοικεῖσθαι ὠμολόγησαν. [...]

Χρῆ οὖν (τὸν συνετὸν) προσέχειν καὶ νοεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα, κριτικῶς ἐξετάζοντα τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσόφων (καὶ) ποιητῶν καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν εἰρημμένα.

39 N. J. TORCHIA, *Theories of Creation in the Second Century Apologists and their Middle Platonic Background*, in E. A. LIVINGSTONE (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXVI*, Leuven, 1993, 192–199, 199.

"After saying that gods exist, once more they reduced them to nothing. For some said that they were composed of atoms, or on the other hand that they return to atoms [Diels, *Dox.* 589, 8]; and they say that the power of the gods is no greater than that of men. Plato, who said that gods exist, wanted them to consist of matter. And Pythagoras, who went through such great labours over the gods and made his way up and down, finally defines their nature and says that everything was produced spontaneously [ibid., 589,9-10: Epicurus]; the gods do not take thought for men [ibid., 572,6: Epicurus]. Furthermore, Clitomachus the Academic philosopher introduced many arguments for atheism. And what of Critias, and Protagoras the Abderite who said: 'Whether or not there are gods, I cannot say anything about them or explain their nature; for there are many things that hinder me' [cf. Sext. *Emp. Adv. Mat.* ix. 56]? It would be pointless for us to speak of the theories of the most godless Euhemerus. For after venturing to make many statements about the gods he finally denied their existence entirely [ibid., ix. 53: Diagoras], and held that everything is governed by spontaneity. [...]

And whatever the others, though practically a majority, said about God and providence, it is easy to see how they contradicted one another; for some absolutely rejected the existence of God and providence, while others gave proof of God and admitted that everything is governed by providence. [...]

One must therefore pay attention and understand what is said, critically examining the remarks of philosophers and of poets as well." (III 7)

The harsh judgements passed by Theophilus may seem strange for us. He obviously speaks about several schools of philosophy. Why should they share the same doctrines if they belong to various schools? But – as Arthur Darby Nock observes<sup>40</sup> – in popular philosophy these differences were not so much accentuated (e.g. Seneca likes quoting Epicurus). For a man in the street these divergent opinions formed a part of the same – supposedly uniform – *Weltanschauung*, which accentuated its unity and superiority against Christianity.

40 A. D. Nock, *Christianisme et hellénisme*, Paris, 1973, 125.

(Most parts of the following passage have already been quoted before)

Τί γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς αἰρήκασιν;

Ἦ τί ὠφέλησαν Εὐριπίδην καὶ Σοφοκλέα καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τραγωδιογράφους αἱ τραγωδίαι, [...] ἢ Πυθαγόραν τὰ ἄδυστα καὶ Ἑρακλέους στῆλαι, ἢ Διογένην ἢ κυνικὴ φιλοσοφία, ἢ Ἐπίκουρον τὸ δογματίζειν μὴ εἶναι πρόνοιον, ἢ Ἐμπεδοκλέα τὸ διδάσκειν ἀθεότητα, ἢ Σωκράτην τὸ ὀμνύειν τὸν κύνα καὶ τὸν χῆνα καὶ τὴν πλάτανον καὶ τον κεραυνωθέντα Ἀσκληπιὸν καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ἃ ἐπεκαλεῖτο; Πρὸς τί δὲ καὶ ἐκὼν ἀπέθνησκειν, τίνα καὶ ὅποιον μιστὸν μετὰ θάνατον ἀπολαβεῖν ἐλπίζων; Τί δὲ ὠφέλησεν Πλάτωνα ἢ κατ' αὐτὸν παιδεία, ἢ τοὺς λοιποὺς φιλοσόφους τὰ | δόγματα αὐτῶν (ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἀριθμὸν αὐτῶν καταλέγω, πολλῶν ὄντων); Ταῦτα δὲ φάμεν εἰς τὸ ἐπιδειῖξαι τὴν ἀνωφελῆ καὶ ἄθεον διάνοιαν αὐτῶν.

“What truth did they speak? Or what did their tragedies avail for Euripides and Sophocles and the other tragic poets [...]? Or the shrines and the pillars of Heracles for Pythagoras? or the Cynic philosophy for Diogenes? or the dogmatic denial of providence for Epicurus? or the teaching of atheism for Empedocles? or the oath by dog and goose and plane-tree for Socrates, not to mention his oath by the lightning-struck Asclepius and his invocation of the demons? For what purpose was he willing to die? What kind of reward did he hope to receive after death? And what did Plato’s form of education avail him? What did their doctrines avail the other philosophers – not to list the whole number, since there are so many? We say these things to demonstrate their useless and godless notions.” (III 2)

The final conclusion that can be drawn from Theophilus’ argumentation is that Hellene philosophy, the most important pillar of pagan religion, is contradicting itself in the most important issues. The authorities accuse the Christians of atheism. But these accusations become ridiculous as soon as it becomes obvious that pagan philosophers themselves have viewpoints diametrically opposed to each other. The apparently rational bases of pagan *paideia* start trembling when there is no agreement in the most important issues of their doctrine of the divine sphere. Theophilus makes it obvious that the various *doxai*, i.e. opinions of the Hellene philosophers concerning the genesis and the structure of the cosmos are not coherent at all. There are several basic

issues on which they are unable to come to an understanding. Is the cosmos without beginning or did it come into being at a certain point of time? If it is not eternal, what was it formed of? In what order did the various constituents of the cosmos come into being? What are the basic constituents of the cosmos: prime matter or atoms? Is there any connection between the divine sphere and the material world? Theophilus states that the so-called philosophers cannot agree among themselves if gods take care of the cosmos and the humans or not. Does divine providence exist or not?

What can be the cause of the obvious phenomenon that – like the poets – the Greek philosophers proclaim opinions which are contradictory to each other? Why are the efforts of philosophical schools fruitless and useless, precisely in relation to the most important issues? Why does the Hellene παιδεία – poetry and philosophy alike end in failure? According to Theophilus the cause of this apparent failure is that Hellene writers lived much later than the prophets, who were inspired by the real source of truth, i.e. the Holy Spirit. That is why they could rely only on secondary and – consequently unreliable sources. One of the most important messages of the *Ad Autolyicum* is that the Hellene poets and philosophers appeared and wrote their useless works much later than the prophets. It was a universally accepted axiom in antiquity that “what is older is better” (πρεσβύτερον κρείττον).<sup>41</sup> Like Josephus Flavius, Theophilus also wanted to prove with the help of the science of chronology that prophets lived much sooner after the creation of the world than the poets and philosophers. Consequently, their knowledge is much more reliable than that of the philosophers. Furthermore, prophets were not inspired by bad demons, but the Holy Spirit, who – according to the testimony of an ancient, prophetic book, the *Genesis* – was present at the creation of the world.<sup>42</sup>

41 See P. PILHOFER, *Presbyteron Kreitton. Der Altersbeweis der jüdischen und christlichen Apologeten und seine Vorgeschichte* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe 39), Tübingen, 1990.

42 Concerning the connection of Greek philosophy and ancient biblical truth see also the following works: E. R. DODDS, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, New York 1965; A. J. DROGE, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian interpretations of the history of culture*, Tübingen, 1989; G. G. STROUMSA, *Philosophy of the Barbarians. On early Christian ethnological representations*, in H. CANCEK et alii (eds.), *Geschichte – Tradition – Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel*

After demonstrating the total failure of the Greek παιδεία, Theophilus proposes that his pagan audience should try to find more reliable information about the genesis of the cosmos in the *Bible*. The prophets received information directly from the divine spirit, who was present at the creation of the world, and can bear evidence of the exact order of events. The prophetic books are more reliable also because they were written well before the works of philosophers. In addition to their antiquity, they can be trusted also because the information contained in them is not contradictory. Unlike the Hellenic poets and philosophers, the prophets pronounced their views in unison with one another. This obviously cannot be otherwise, as they all were inspired by the same spirit present at the creation of the world. The information contained in the prophetic books is not partial or fragmentary, but it is complete. So if Autolyclus desires to acquire the entirety of wisdom, he must look for information about the origin of the word in the *Law of Moses*, especially in the *Book of Genesis*.

We can observe that there are three areas of culture present in the argumentation of the *Ad Autolyicum*: Hellenic, Jewish, and Christian. Nicole Zeegers carefully examines them in a well-documented contribution.<sup>43</sup> Summarizing the characteristics of the presence of profane, i.e. Hellenic culture in the *Ad Autolyicum*, she refers to previous works of hers.<sup>44</sup> She compares Theophilus' methods of using the works of pagan philosophers, and his attitude to Hellenic culture with those of the other apologists. The differences are obvious at first sight. Unlike Tatian, Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria, he almost always gives an exact quotation, which is often quite verbose. He often quotes not only individual authors, but also collections of quotations. These *florilegia* had been compiled by unknown authors. Their topics can be

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zum 70. Geburtstag, Band II. *Griechische und Römische Religion*, Tübingen, 1996, 339–368; J. H. WASZINK, *Some Observations on the Appreciation of "The Philosophy of the Barbarians" in Early Christian Literature*, in *Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann*, Utrecht–Anvers, 1963, 41–55.

43 N. ZEEGERS, *Les trois cultures de Théophile d'Antioche*, in B. POUDERON–J. DORÉ (eds.), *Les apologistes chrétiens et la culture grecque* (Théologie Historique 105), Paris 1998, 135–176.

44 N. ZEEGERS–VANDER VORST, *Les citations poétiques chez Théophile d'Antioche*, in *Studia Patristica* 10 (= TU 107), Berlin, 1970, 168–174; *Les citations des poètes grecs chez les apologistes chrétiens du III<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Louvain, 1972.



e.g. providence, divine justice, the fate of the soul after death. The quotations from these collections could have been inserted into the text of the *Ad Autolyicum* sometimes only in a strained way.

The other characteristic feature of his way of quoting is his accuracy, or one could even say, his excessive pedantry. This phenomenon in itself would not make us suspicious about his lack of Hellenic erudition. But if we compare his extant work with those of the other apologists, it becomes quite obvious that he was not imbued with the profane culture of his days. One has the impression that in a way Hellenic culture was alien to him. He virtually never quotes anything by heart. He always has to make use of a written record of a philosophical or poetic work.

His judgement about profane culture is very similar to that of Tatian: obviously negative. He does not try to find any value which is common Hellenism and biblical culture. If he happens to find a piece of truth in the works of the Hellenes, he accuses them of plagiarism.<sup>45</sup>

His knowledge of Hellenic culture seems to be rather superficial and biased. However, we must not forget that – except for a few fragments – we are not in the possession of his other and numerous works, so we can pass judgement about his philosophical erudition only on the basis of his extant work. But the *Ad Autolyicum* is obviously a rich source of information about the main concerns of Christian apologetics and catechesis in Antioch from the end of the second century.

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45 N. ZEEGERS, *Les trois cultures de Théophile d'Antioche...*, 135–138.