



A New Edition of the *Elenchos* of Pseudo-Hippolytus : David Litwa's *Refutation of All Heresies*

Paul-Hubert Poirier

Volume 74, numéro 3, 2018

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1061892ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1061892ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculté de philosophie, Université Laval

Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses, Université Laval

ISSN

0023-9054 (imprimé)

1703-8804 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cette note

Poirier, P.-H. (2018). A New Edition of the *Elenchos* of Pseudo-Hippolytus : David Litwa's *Refutation of All Heresies*. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 74(3), 447–453. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1061892ar>

◆ note critique

A NEW EDITION OF THE *ELENCHOS* OF PSEUDO-HIPPOLYTUS : DAVID LITWA'S *REFUTATION OF ALL HERESIES**

Paul-Hubert Poirier

Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses
Université Laval, Québec

The work entitled *Refutation of All Heresies* (in Greek : Ὁ κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος) is definitely one of the most important Christian works that was transmitted to us by antiquity. It is also one of the most intriguing and mysterious. For more than a century and a half, several generations of scholars have scrutinized every aspect of the text although no definitive consensus has ever been reached. Despite notable achievements, current scholarship continues to bear witness to the vagaries of the research. There are, however, some good reasons to be less pessimistic and the publication I am reviewing here is one of them. Before getting to David Litwa's book, I first would like to offer a number of preliminary remarks.

The *Refutation of all Heresies* (I will come back to the title) had a hidden life before it was (re)discovered by nineteenth-century scholars, antiquarians and controversialists. As early as 1701, a publication by Jacob Gronov entitled *Origenis Philosophoumenon*^{sic} *fragmentum* (Leiden), followed by three others in the first half of the eighteenth century,¹ had made known a work with the title Ὡριγένους κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος, "Refutations of all Heresies by Origen." In some of the five man-

* Paper presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado, on November 21st, 2018, in the Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Section.

1. For a list of these editions, see M. MARCOVICH, *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Berlin, New York, W. de Gruyter (coll. "Patristische Texte und Studien," 25), 1986, p. XIV.

uscripts in existence then,² there was reference to an additional title, Ὠριγένους φιλοσοφουμένων. Accordingly, the work would go on to be circulated under the title, Φιλοσοφούμενα. At that time, it consisted of an overview of Greek philosophy beginning with Thales (I, 1) and ending with the Sceptics (I, 23), the Brahmins (I, 24), and the Druids (I, 25) for a total of some twenty “philosophers” or “schools.”³ These so-called *Philosophoumena* have since been one of the major ancient doxographies of Greek philosophy along with Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.⁴

The public life of the *Refutation of All Heresies* began in 1842, due the initiative of a “precursor” in the person of Constant(inos) Minoïde Mynas.⁵ In the 1830s, Mynas, a Greek refugee from what was then Ottoman Greece, was teaching Greek literature in Paris and doing research on the Greek manuscripts of the Bibliothèque royale. In 1840, he was officially dispatched by the French government to the Levant in order to visit Greek convents in the Turkish Empire and Greece, especially those on Mount Athos, in order to copy or buy Greek manuscripts. His mission was quite successful and, on February 25th, 1842, he announced to his sponsors that he acquired nine manuscripts ; one of the texts, in particular, he described as a “Refutation in ten discourses, by Origen, of the heresies of the ancients and those of his time ; the first three (discourses) and part of the fourth are missing.” In addition, Mynas informed that “the name of the author is not mentioned but, according to what he says towards the end of the tenth (discourse), where he expresses his profession of faith, the work seems to be from him,”⁶ that is, from Origen. Once he arrived in Paris, Mynas entrusted the manuscript to the Bibliothèque royale where it received the call number Supplément grec 464. The acquisition of the manuscript was announced in January 1844, in Mynas’ final report : “A bombycinus [that is, paper] manuscript, 14th century, containing a refutation of all heresies. This work, [this time] from an anonymous author, is divided in ten books, but the first three are missing with the end [Supp. grec 464].”⁷

Some ten years after Mynas’ acquisition, the manuscript gained greater attention thanks to a French scholar, the Hellenist Emmanuel Miller who, at that time, was active in the Bibliothèque royale. Miller actually published the *editio princeps* of the manuscript under the title *Origenis Philosophoumena sive omnium haeresium refuta-*

2. See P. WENDLAND, *Hippolytus Werke. Dritter Band. Refutatio omnium haeresium*, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung (coll. “Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte,” 26), 1916, p. XI ; and M. MARCOVICH, *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium*, p. 1-3.

3. For a handy edition, see H. DIELS, *Doxographi Graeci*, Berlin, G. Reimer, 1879, p. 551-576.

4. On the contribution of the *Philosophoumena* to the history of ancient philosophy, see J. MANSFELD, *Here-siography in Context. Hippolytus’ Elenchos as a Source for Greek Philosophy*, Leiden, Brill (coll. “Philosophia Antiqua,” 56), 1992.

5. On Mynas, see P. NAUTIN, *Hippolyte et Josipe. Contribution à l’histoire de la littérature chrétienne du troisième siècle*, Paris, Cerf (coll. “Études et textes pour l’histoire du dogme de la Trinité,” 1), 1947, p. 20-21.

6. Letter to Prosper Faugère cited by H. OMONT, “Minoïde Mynas et ses missions en Orient (1840-1855),” *Mémoires de l’Institut national de France*, 40 (1916), p. 370.

7. Cited by *ibid.*, p. 395.

tio,⁸ despite the fact that Pierre-Daniel Huet had established, as early as 1668, that the attribution to Origen could not be possible.⁹ Miller, who gives a rather precise description of this manuscript, “a Mynoïde Myna barbariae tenebris erepta,”¹⁰ easily recognized that it contained the truncated remaining part of the so-called *Philosophoumena*, the *Refutation of All Heresies*, the first book of which had been known for some time. The Paris manuscript actually gave access to the major part of the work, from book four (except the beginning) to the conclusion at the end of book ten. In less than ten years, two other editions followed Miller’s edition, those of Duncker and Schneidewin in 1859 and Cruice in 1860.¹¹ In 1916, the text was published posthumously and for years — as is still the case for many of us — it was the standard edition of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, Paul Wendland’s *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, as the third instalment of the *Hippolytus Werke* published by the Prussian Academy of Sciences in the GCS series.¹²

The publication of Wendland’s edition under the umbrella of the “Works of Hippolytus” series, reflects the consensus that had emerged regarding the authorship of the *Refutation of All Heresies*. Just after the publication of Miller’s edition, Justus Ludwig Jacobi had proposed to attribute the *Refutation of All Heresies* to the Roman presbyter Hippolytus of Porto,¹³ known to be the author of a “catalogue (*Syntagma*) against the heresies”¹⁴ and of numerous other works.¹⁵ Both the figure of Hippolytus and his real identity have been the subject of controversy for a long time. As Victor Saxer has written, “the question of Hippolytus is as debated today as the character was not easy to go on with during his lifetime.”¹⁶ Enrico Norelli has recently reexamined the Hippolytus question and has come to a reasonable conclusion.¹⁷ Norelli, following Manlio Simonetti, proposes to divide the Hippolytean corpus in two parts.

8. E. MILLER, *Ὡριγένους φιλοσοφούμενα ἢ κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος*. *Origenis Philosophumena sive omnium haeresium refutatio*, Oxford, University Press, 1851.

9. In his *Origeniana* reprinted in *Patrologia Graeca* 17, col. 1282-1283; reference given by E. NORELLI, “Hippolyte et le corpus hippolytéen,” in B. POUDERON, ed., *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne des origines à 451*, T. III, *De Clément d’Alexandrie à Eusèbe de Césarée*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres (coll. “L’Âne d’or,” 65), 2017, p. 421.

10. MILLER, *Ὡριγένους φιλοσοφούμενα ἢ κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος*, p. VI.

11. L. DUNCKER, F.W. SCHNEIDEWIN, *S. Hippolyti episcopi et martyris Refutationis omnium haeresium librorum decem quae supersunt*, Göttingen, Dieterich, 1859; P.F.M. CRUICE, *Philosophumena sive haeresium omnium confutatio, opus Origeni adscriptum*, Paris, Imprimerie impériale, 1860.

12. WENDLAND, *Hippolytus Werke*.

13. See J.L. JACOBI, “Ὡριγένους Φιλοσοφούμενα ἢ Κατὰ πασῶν αἱρέσεων ἔλεγχος. Origenis Philosophumena sive Omnium haeresium refutatio. E codice Parisino nunc primum edidit Emmanuel Miller. Oxonii, 1851. XII et 348. 8,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben*, 2 (1851), 25, p. 203-204; 26, p. 205-206; 27, p. 216-220; 28, p. 221-223; 29, p. 233-236.

14. Summarized by Photios’ *Myriobiblion*, cod. 121, ed. R. HENRY, *Photius. Bibliothèque*, t. II, “Codices” 84-185, Paris, Les Belles Lettres (« Collection des Universités de France - Série grecque », 142), 1960, p. 95-96.

15. The most recent and up-to-date overview of the “Hippolytean” corpus is NORELLI, “Hippolyte et le corpus hippolytéen.”

16. V. SAXER, “Hippolyte (Saint),” in R. AUBERT, ed., *Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques. Tome vingt-quatrième*, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1993, col. 627.

17. NORELLI, “Hippolyte et le corpus hippolytéen.”

The first would contain the “group of the (anonymous) author of the *Elenchos*,” comprising the *Refutation* itself, the *Summary* (*Sunagôgê*) of the times and years since the creation of the world (the so-called *Chronicle of Hippolytus*) and the treatise *On the universe*.¹⁸ The second would include the “Group of Hippolytus,” an oriental author, with *The Antichrist*, the exegetical works and *Against the Heresy of Noetus*.¹⁹

These discussions, initially prompted by Pierre Nautin’s brief monograph published in 1947, were practically ignored by the last editor of the *Refutation* prior to David Litwa, the well known philologist Miroslav Marcovich. Marcovich’s edition was published in 1986 in the series “Patristische Texte und Studien”. Marcovich was a great scholar who distinguished himself by numerous critical editions of Greek texts, among others, in addition to the *Refutation*, those of Heraclitus, the Christian apologists and Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. If one wanted to describe philology à la Marcovich, he could evoke the editor’s predilection for emendations *ex ingenio* and his *libido coniecendi*. Like Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and other great names of the nineteenth century, Marcovich claimed to know better than the ancient authors themselves (and their manuscripts) as to what ought to be the “right text.” His editions of Diogenes Laertius and “Hippolytus” are perfect illustrations of this method and they were criticized for this very reason.²⁰ Marcovich was particularly fond of works attested by a single manuscript or a poor textual tradition, which is the case of Justin Martyr and of the *Refutation*. In the case of the *Refutation*, David Litwa, in the introduction of the book under review, mentions Marcovich’s “invasive, unnecessary, and conjectural emendations to our only surviving manuscript of books 4-10” (p. XXIX). More precisely, Litwa adds, “the majority of [Marcovich’s] emendations are cosmetic (the addition of particles, articles, the standardization of spelling, and so on)” (p. XXX). While recognizing that “many [of those emendations] were necessary to restore sense to the text” and that “some other emendations, though strictly speaking unnecessary, remain plausible and should be considered valid attempts to restore the text,” Litwa nevertheless considers that “a great many of Marcovich’s emendations are too clever by half” (*ibid.*). Among other idiosyncrasies of Marcovich’s edition, Litwa signals as “especially confusing [...] his tendency to insert φησίν, or change φασίν to φάσι (and *vice versa*), in the reports” (p. XXXI). Marcovich’s edition is still indispensable, at least for its *apparatus fontium et comparandorum*, a gold-mine of raw materials, and its Indices.

Now let us return here to the book under review, David Litwa’s edition and translation of the *Refutation of All Heresies*. First, I would like to congratulate David Litwa for having undertaken and carried out such a difficult project. For this remarkable achievement, he is entitled to the recognition of the entire scholarly community. Litwa’s objective was “to produce a working translation” and “a new edition of the

18. Known via Photios’ *Myriobiblion*, cod. 48.

19. NORELLI, “Hippolyte et le corpus hippolytéen,” p. 437-477.

20. See D. HAGEDORN, review of M. MARCOVICH, *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium* (Berlin, New York, W. de Gruyter [coll. “Patristische Texte und Studien,” 25], 1986), in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 32 (1989), p. 210-214, for Marcovich’s *Refutatio*; and T. DORANDI, “Diogenes Laertius Vitae Philosophorum,” *Phronesis*, 45 (2000), p. 331-340, for his Diogenes Laertius.

text more faithful to the manuscript tradition” (p. IX). The introduction of the book (p. XXVII-LIII) addresses the main themes tackled by the history of research : the manuscript tradition, the title, the edition of Marcovich, the question of authorship (the author being identified by Litwa as “our author” instead of Hippolytus or Pseudo-Hippolytus), the man (“the last major theologian in Rome to write in Greek”), the thesis and organization of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, genealogy, comparison and chronology, “the author’s primary heresiological procedure”, the author’s predecessors, the audience, the hypothesis of a “Gnostic” Sondergut (Litwa considers that “no consensus on the identity of this supposed Sondergut redactor has emerged, and no solid proof that our author received the Sondergut as a redacted collection has been adduced”), and a note on the translation (“Since this translation is primarily meant for scholars, I have endeavored to adhere closely to the Greek”). The introduction is followed by the Greek text and the annotated translation, a rich bibliography, an index of ancient sources and a subject index.

Surprisingly enough, no part of the introduction is devoted to the *ratio editionis* or the governing principles of the edition of the Greek text of the *Refutation of All Heresies*. The reader learns incidentally that “What is required is a new text, one that retains Marcovich’s helpful and plausible emendations while discarding those that are speculative, decorative, and unnecessary. I have attempted,” continues Litwa, “to provide such an edition here. In text-critical decisions, there is a general and simple rule followed throughout : where the text of the Paris manuscript makes adequate grammatical and logical sense, it stands. Where it does not make sense, the least disruptive and most plausible emendations are sought” (p. XXXI). If I am not mistaken, there are about 200 cases where Litwa explicitly adopts Marcovich’s emendations or propositions.

These principles are implemented by a set of sigla in the Greek text : angled brackets < > indicate words added to reestablish the text ; square brackets [] indicate words that are suspect and therefore not represented in the translation ; words in parentheses () indicate words faded in the manuscript(s) or develop scribal abbreviations ; an ellipsis ... indicates a lacuna in the text ; an ellipsis in angled brackets <...> indicates a suspected lacuna. Since the Greek text has no critical apparatus, the reader is inclined to conclude that where these sigla appear, and unless a footnote to the translation indicates that the textual changes come from Marcovich, these emendations are to be attributed to the editor. But whether this is always the case remains unclear. For the few random passages that I have looked at more closely, for example 6, 11 (p. 366 Litwa), where just one emendation is credited to Marcovich, all the others — except two *loci* where the reading of the Paris manuscript is kept — are either Marcovich’s or Miller’s. The same goes for 6, 25, 4-26, 2 (p. 400 Litwa), where emendations by Marcovich, Cruice or Roeper are tacitly reproduced.²¹ This means that Litwa’s edition cannot be used for critical purposes without having his edition and those of Wendland and Marcovich close at hand, which is a significant restriction.

21. Just one of Marcovich’s emendations is signaled as such (p. 401, n. 99).

In a general way, and despite these remarks, David Litwa provides a text that is built on sound principles, which is not an easy task. If the general principle of keeping to the Paris manuscript when it makes adequate grammatical sense is self-evident, it is not so evident when it comes to “logical sense.” The difficulty is in determining what is deemed to be “logical” not (only) for us but (also) for the author of the *Refutation* or the Byzantine scribe(s). A good example of this difficulty is *Refutation* 4, 4, 7 where the Paris manuscript and Wendland’s edition (p. 37, 10-11) give πρὶν τηρητικῶς παραφυλάξασθαι τὴν τοῦ γεννηθέντος ὥραν κατ’ οὐρανὸν βλέπομένην, “before can be observed carefully the hour of him who has been born as it is seen in the sky.”²² Both Marcovich and Litwa heavily emend the text in order to concur with Sextus Empiricus²³ : “before the objects seen in the sky are carefully correlated with the moment of the child’s birth” (Litwa’s translation). The emendation is justified because “[P’s] reading indicates that the astrologer observes the hour of the native’s birth in the sky. But the *hour* cannot be seen in the sky, only the stars.”²⁴ But to what extent are we allowed to modify the text of a manuscript on the basis of what *we* think is logical ? Evidently, the risk is that we end up with a “logical” text that has little to do with the “original” or with the text as actually transmitted. In that case, there is a precisely justifying parallel of the *Refutation*’s actual reading in Augustine, who makes fun of the astrologers who observe “the tiny portion of the sky where the indication of the hour is situated, which is called horoscope (*caeli particulam, ubi ponitur horae notatio, quem horoscopum vocant*)” (*De civitate Dei* V, II, 193), just what the author of the *Refutation* says.

Considering the fact that the introduction of the book does not provide a formal presentation of the manuscript, that there is no explicit *ratio edendi* and no critical apparatus,²⁵ the reader wonders what could be the basis of Litwa’s edition. Is it a direct inspection of the manuscripts and especially the Paris *unicum*, or an update of Marcovich’s edition ? One has the impression that the textual and critical basis of the edition are Marcovich’s apparatuses.²⁶ I concede that it would be a desperate task trying to produce an edition of the *Refutation* on the sole basis of such a defective

22. Transl. (slightly modified) F. LEGGE, *Philosophumena or the Refutation of All Heresies Formerly Attributed to Origene, but now to Hippolytus, Bishop and Martyr, who Flourished About 220 A.D.*, Vol. I, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge ; New York, The Macmillan Company (coll. “Translations of Christian Literature - Series I - Greek Texts”), 1921, p. 73. Aldo MAGRIS gives the following translation : “prima che venga messa a punto, tramite osservazione, l’ora del neonato vista in cielo” (*‘Ippolito’. Confutazione di tutte le eresie, con un saggio introduttivo di Emanuele Castelli*, Brescia, Morcelliana [coll. “Letteratura cristiana antica - Nuova serie,” 25], 2016, p. 95).

23. *Against the Professors* V, 70 (R.G. BURY, *Sextus Empiricus in Four Volumes. IV. Against the Professors*, London, William Heinemann Ltd ; Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press [coll. “Loeb Classical Library,” 382], 1949, p. 334-335).

24. M.D. LITWA, *Refutation of All Heresies*, Atlanta, Ga., SBL Press (coll. “Writings from the Greco-Roman World,” 40), 2016, p. xxx, n. 14.

25. Cf. M. HERRERO DE JAUREGUI, review of M.D. LITWA, *Refutation of All Heresies*, in *Gnosis*, 3 (2018), p. 119 : “Leaving aside excessive dependence of Marcovich’s decisions, the main problem with this edition is that it lacks a critical apparatus in which variants are systematically deployed and one of them is chosen for the text.”

26. “In fact, it is Marcovich (rather than P) the textual reference of this edition” (*ibid.*).

witness as the Paris manuscript, and that a philologist is justified to build on the results of his predecessors. Nevertheless, I would have appreciated some clarification on the elaboration of the edition.

To conclude these remarks, I want to express my great satisfaction with the translation and the annotation. In the footnotes alone — which number over 2000 — David Litwa provides a running commentary on the *Refutation of All Heresies*. The bibliography is exhaustive and nothing significant in three centuries of scholarship was left aside. Since its publication in 2016, David Litwa's *Refutation of All Heresies* has been a real “companion-book” for my own work on Gnosticism and the history of early Christian literature. He deserves our profound gratitude for such an accomplishment.