GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA ON ANAXAGORAS

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Abstract: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) focuses on Anaxagoras (ca. 500–428 BC) because he considers him as a precursor of the later Neoplatonic concept all things exist in all things in their own mode, which became the core of Pico’s metaphysics. Anaxagoras’s philosophy permits Pico to establish his doctrine that all things share a portion of God within them, in their own way. Pico rejects the fixed position of man in the ontological hierarchy. Man has the chance to become everything. Pico asserts that man contains all things in himself as their center, just like God contains all things as their origin. As a consequence, Anaxagoras’s principle is supportive to Pico’s metaphysics. Furthermore, Anaxagoras’s metaphysical principle is supportive of Pico’s method of allegorical interpretation, which is indispensable for his syncretism and his attempt to reveal hidden truths in every text or level of reality.

Keywords: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Anaxagoras, Plotinus, Proclus, Neoplatonism, Intellect, Demiurge, homoiomereia, metaphysics, cum in ipsa ita sunt omnia, ut in ipsa omnia sint ipsa.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) is well known for his attempt to enrich his sources by resorting to philosophical traditions that were not well known to fifteenth-century humanists so as to broaden his scope. 1 In the first half of the fifteenth century, Diogenes Laertius’s Vitae Philosophorum was translated in Latin by Ambrogio Traversari. 2 Earlier partial Latin translations of the work were probably produced during the Middle Ages by Henricus Aristippus in the twelfth century. At least one medieval version of Diogenes Laertius’s Vitae Philosophorum was available to Walter Burley (1275–1344/5), the Prehumanists in Verona, and Petrarch’s friend Dionigi da Borgo S. Sepolcro (d. 1342), as several sources attested. 3 Diogenes Laer-
tius’s work became an additional source on Presocratic philosophy in the fifteenth century and contributed to the revival of the interest in the field. In addition, Renaissance scholars derived indirect information about the Presocratics from the works of Aristotle and other ancient Greek philosophers, especially the Neoplatonists, who commented on the Presocratic philosophy. Pico della Mirandola writes that, without any kind of obligation, he decided to study all the teachers and schools of philosophy. This Eclecticism is the bedrock of his philosophy. In addition to ancient Greek philosophy, his research also includes the Presocratic philosophy. Pico was contentious and he seemed to enjoy philosophical disputes, despite the different readings of his works. As a result, in his effort to engage in heated philosophical debates and promote human understanding, he is not afraid to challenge the established ideas and criticize even key theological doctrines. This article seeks to explore the ways in which Giovanni Pico della Mirandola treated the philosophy of Anaxagoras (ca. 500–428 BC), the philosopher who transmitted the Ionian tradition to Athens, so as to formulate his own philosophy. Pico focuses on Anaxagoras because he considers him as a precursor of the later Neoplatonic concept *omnia sunt in omnibus modo suo* (all things exist in all things in their own mode), which became the core of Pico’s metaphysics. I will also attempt to identify Pico’s sources and correct common misinterpretations of Pico’s text in prior scholarship.

In his *Conclusiones*, Pico comments on Anaxagoras:

3>21. Per predictas conclusiones intelligi potest, que sit omiomeria Anaxagorae, quam opifex intellectus distinguat. (Through the preceding conclusions one can understand what Anaxagoras’s *homeoemeria* is, which the demiurge of the intellect distinguishes.)

3>22. Nemo miretur quod Anaxagoras intellectum appellauerit immixtum, cum sit maxime mixtus, quia maxima mixtio coincidit cum maxima simplicitate in natura intellectuali. (Let no one marvel that Anaxagoras called the intellect unmixed, although it is greatly mixed, since the greatest mixture coincides with the greatest simplicity in the intellectual nature.)


7 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West* (n. 5 above) 405.

8 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusiones” (n. 6 above) 3>22.

9 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West* (n. 5 above) 405.
Pico focuses on homoiomereia (ὁμοιομέρεια), the original homogenous state of things according to Anaxagoras, who holds the view that objects are temporary mixtures of ingredients, while the original state is that of universal mixture. Anaxagoras shares with Parmenides the principle that what-is is without start or stop. The Intellect (Νοῦς), a distinct cosmic entity, sets the mixture into rotary motion: everything is mixture and separation of ingredients. Pico correlates the philosophy of Anaxagoras with the conclusion that cum in ipsa ita sunt omnia, ut in ipsa omnia sint ipsa (when in itself all things exist in such a way that in itself all things are itself). The later Neoplatonic concept Πάντα ἐν πᾶσι, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἑκάστῳ (all things in all things, but in each according to its proper nature), as Proclus expresses it in his Institutio Theologica—and not in Theologia Platonica as S. A. Farmer inaccurately suggests in his edition of Pico’s Conclusiones—seems very interesting to Pico and becomes the core of his philosophy: omnia sunt in omnibus modo suo. The Neoplatonic concepts, especially that the whole is in the part and that all things are in all, are of crucial importance for Pico’s philosophy. According to Pico, there are four worlds: the ultra mundane, which corresponds to the intelligible realm of the Platonists or the angelic realm of the theologians; the celestial; the sublunar; and the human. Since everything

10 H. Diels, W. Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (Berlin 1952) 59 B1 25–27; ibid. DK 59 A45 (Aristoteles, Physica, 203a19–24); ibid. DK 59 A45a (Simplicius, In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria, 9.460.4–26); ibid. DK 59 A41 (Simplicius, In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria, 9.272.12); ibid. DK 59 A46 (Aristoteles, De generatione et corruptione, 314a18); ibid. DK 59 A46a (Aetius I, 3, 5).


12 DK (n. 10 above) 59 B17.

13 DK (n. 10 above) 28 B8, 27–28.


18 Farmer, Syncretism in the West (n. 5 above) 320.


is in every world, anything that occurs in one world has references to the others.\textsuperscript{21} The same Neoplatonic concept could also be traced back to Syrianus,\textsuperscript{22} who ascribed it to the Pythagoreans, as well as Iamblichus,\textsuperscript{23} who ascribed it to Numenius.\textsuperscript{24} It is worth noticing that Anaxagoras’s principle that everything is in everything, according to Plotinus,\textsuperscript{25} should be applied solely at the level of Intellect and not at the level of matter, a rather peculiar, although interesting for Pico’s argumentation, interpretation.\textsuperscript{26} Pico, at first sight, as modern scholarship suggests, seems to follow Proclus and ignore or disregard Plotinus’ argumentation on the subject.\textsuperscript{27}

Notwithstanding the fact that Pico in \textit{Heptaplus}, his biblical commentary, has certain doubts, he argues that Anaxagoras, as expounded by the Pythagoreans and the Platonists, holds that whatever is in any of the three worlds is at the same time contained in each:

\begin{quote}
Quam Anaxagorae credo fuisse opinionem, si recte eum sensisse putamus, expicitam deinde a Pythagoricis et Platonicis.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

(Picò we have understood him rightly, I believe that this was the opinion of Anaxagoras, as expounded by the Pythagoreans and the Platonists.)\textsuperscript{29}

Pico’s interprets Anaxagoras’ argument in such a loose manner in order to corroborate his own views. Pico, as his phrasing suggests, was not persuaded that the ancient, medieval commentators and he personally understood and interpreted properly the philosophy of Anaxagoras. Garin suggests that Pico draws on Simplicius, who is his main source for Anaxagoras.\textsuperscript{30} Although Garin argues that Pico relies on a certain passage, in which Simplicius exposes Anaxagoras’s fundamental doctrines,\textsuperscript{31} there is also another, at least, passage from which Pico would have drawn.\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, Pico owned and had access to Aristotle’s \textit{Physics}, various copies of Simplicius’s \textit{In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria}, and the eleventh-century Byzantine polymath Michael Psellus’s \textit{In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentarium}.\textsuperscript{33} Pico’s reference to Pythagoreans and Platonists, in the plural, indicates that, besides Syrianus

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{21} G. Pico della Mirandola, “Heptaplus,” \textit{De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari a cura di Eugenio Garin (Edizione nazionale dei classici del pensiero italiano)}, ed. E. Garin (Firenze 1942) 185–188.
\item\textsuperscript{24} Proclus, \textit{The Elements of Theology} (n. 17 above) 254.
\item\textsuperscript{26} G. Stamatelos, \textit{Plotinus and the Presocratics, A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus’ Enneads} (New York 2007) 149.
\item\textsuperscript{27} Farmer, \textit{Syncretism in the West} (n. 5 above) 86–87.
\item\textsuperscript{28} Pico della Mirandola, “Heptaplus” (n. 21 above) 188.
\item\textsuperscript{29} Pico della Mirandola, \textit{On the Dignity of Man} (n. 4 above) 77.
\item\textsuperscript{30} Pico della Mirandola, “Heptaplus” (n. 21 above) 188.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Simplicius, \textit{In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria} (n. 15 above) 9.27.
\item\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. 9.460–462.
\end{itemize}
and Iamblichus, Pico probably had read Psellus’s text. Pico, as well as other fifteenth-century humanists, thought of Psellus as the collector and purveyor of ancient mystic wisdom, including the Chaldean Oracles, the Orphic Hymns, and Pythagorean wisdom. Pico in certain cases draws from Psellus’s works on magic and the Chaldeans. Besides the aforementioned works, Pico owned and studied several medieval commentaries on Physics, but these works certainly do not belong to the Platonic and Pythagorean tradition.

But Pico at the same time distanced himself from Anaxagoras. Pico argues, according to Farmer’s translation, that there is a Demiurge of the Intellect, who distinguishes homoiomereia. In addition Pico contends that the Intellect is greatly mixed, because the greatest mixture coincides with the greatest simplicity in the intellectual nature. On the contrary Anaxagoras is adamant: the Intellect is separate, unaffected, and unmixed. It does not contain a portion of everything, because otherwise it could not set things to move. If it mixes with one, it will mix with all. According to Anaxagoras everything which separates itself contains all things, besides the Intellect. It is worth noting that Pico seems to follow Averroes and the Averroists on the Intellect, maintaining the unicity of the Intellect, despite the fact that he seems to endorse in a rather perplexed manner the personal immortality of the soul.

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36 Pico della Mirandola, “De Hominis Dignitate” (n. 4 above) 128, 152; Borghesi et al., “Overview” (n. 1 above) 91, 133; Farmer, Syncretism in the West (n. 5 above) 486–487.
37 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusiones” (n. 6 above) 3–21, 3–22.
Aristotle, who follows in a certain point Anaxagoras’s theory on the Intellect, although he shares Plato’s criticisms, notes that Anaxagoras failed to explain how Intellect comes to think. The immateriality of the Intellect is inconsistent with the materiality of its objects. Aquinas agrees with Anaxagoras that the Intellect should command all because it is perfectly unmixed. Also Averroes subscribes to Anaxagoras’s argument in his Commentary on the De Anima. Pico probably follows Cusanus and the great majority of the medieval scholastics who tried to combine divine simplicity and creatural multiplicity, safeguarding God’s indirect knowledge of essences. In addition Pico argues that any contradiction in the intellectual nature is compatible, a possible aura of the philosophy of Heraclitus.

Farmer suggests that Pico’s vocabulary indicates that he is relying on a Neoplatonic commentary on Aristotle’s Physics that Farmer could not identify. I argue that Pico draws from Simplicius’s In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria. The similarity of the two passages is obvious:

Per predictas conclusiones intelligi potest, que sit omiomeria Anaxagorae, quam opifex intellectus distinguat. (Through the preceding conclusions one can understand what Anaxagoras’s homeoemeria is, which the demiurge of the intellect distinguishes.)

καὶ ὁ νοῦς δὲ παρὰ Ἀναξαγόρᾳ διακοσμῶν καὶ κινῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰς ὁμοιομερείας διακρίνειν αὐτὰς λέγεται. (And in Anaxagoras, Mind, which arranges and moves the homeoemeriae from the beginning, is said “to separate” them.)

43 T. Aquinas, “De uniate intellectus contra Avveroistas,” Aquinas against the Averroists, On There Being Only One Intellect, trans & ed. R. McNerney (West Lafayette 1993) II. 20. 369–380, II. 92. 139–143; T. Aquinas, Sentencia Libri De anima, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita, t. 45/1 Commissio Leonina (Roma, Paris 1984) lib. 1. 1 3 n. 10, lib. 1. 3 n. 11, lib. 1. 5 n. 5, lib. 1. 5 n. 14, lib. 3. l. 7 n. 7lib. 3 l. 7 n. 7, lib. 3 l. 7 n. 8, lib. 3 l. 7 n. 9, lib. 3 l. 9 n. 1; T. Aquinas, De substantiis separatis, Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita, t. 40 D (Rome 1968) c. 1.
46 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusiones” (n. 6 above) 3>13.
48 Farmer, Syncretism in the West (n. 5 above) 405.
49 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusiones” (n. 6 above) 3>21.
50 Farmer, Syncretism in the West (n. 5 above) 405.
Pico could also have drawn from John Philoponus’s *In Aristotelis physicorum libris commentaria*, although Philoponus’s wording is slightly different:

Πανταχοῦ τὸν Ἀναξαγόραν ἐπαινεῖ ὅτι νοῦν ἐπέστησε διακοσμήσις τοῦ παντός, πάσας εἶναι λέγον τὰς ὁμοιομερείτις μεμιγμένας καὶ κινεῖσθαι ταύτας ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸν διακρινομένας. (He praises Anaxagoras that he set Mind to arrange everything, claiming that all the homoiomereis, which are mixed, are put into motion while they are differentiated by the mind.)

But there is an important difference: Simplicius and Philoponus holds that the Intellect distinguishes the homoioiomerêias (ἁμοιοιομέρηια), in the plural, while Pico supports that the opifex intellectus distinguishes the omioimeria, in the singular. Homoioiomeria, in the singular, is mentioned in DK 59 A45a. In this passage is obvious that homoioiomeria does not refer to the original mixture or to something similar to the meaning that Pico gives to the word.

Aristotle, the ancient expert on Presocratics, cites the plurals homoioiomerê (ἁμοιοιομέρη) and homoioiomerêiai (ἁμοιοιομέρειαι). Aristotle uses the word homoioiomerê consistently. But subsequent authors and commentators, including several Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists, are not so careful in their writings leading to misinterpretations and chancy readings. Simplicius, who was familiar enough with Anaxagoras’s philosophy, embraces the Aristotelian interpretation of homoioiomerê (ἁμοιοιομέρη), while he equates homoioiomerêiai (ἁμοιοιομέρειαι) with seeds (σπέρματα). Anaxagoras refers to seeds, which are present in the original mixture and contain, as the original mixture, at the same time the opposites and the natural essences. Previous scholarship has demonstrated that Anaxagoras himself never used the concept homoioiomerêia. After Aristotle, homoioiomerê, homoioiomerêiai, and other plurals were common in texts which refer to Anaxagoras. On the contrary, the singular homoioiomerêia was not so common. We can trace the singular homoioiomerêia mainly in Lucretius, Simplicius, Themistius, and John Philoponus, but the term does not reflect Anaxagoras.

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ras’s teaching in an accurate fashion. It is very probable that Pico opted for the use of the concept homoiomereia following Lucretius, who uses the word as a stereotyped general expression in order to describe and refute Anaxagoras’s philosophy. Pico’s interpretation of homoiomereia looks also similar to that of John Philoponus, who describes a single homoiomereia which contains all the beings in a way very similar to that of Pico.

Furthermore, Anaxagoras never refers to a possible creator of the Intellect. As noted earlier, Pico’s reference to the Demiurge and his phrasing suggests that he was drawing from Simplicius’s commentary on Aristotle’s Physics. But given that Pico pursued a systematic study of Neoplatonism, he should have been familiar with the idea that the Intellect (Noûς), the image of the One, is an emanation of the One. According to Plotinus, the One remains in his undifferentiated unity and is not the Demiurge. Plotinus asserted that the Intellect is identical to the Platonic Demiurge (Δημιουργός), as described in Timaeus. Intellect contains the world of the Demiurge and is not the result of emanation or creation from the Demiurge. Moreover, Plotinus criticized Anaxagoras that the latter’s Intellect (Noûς) could not be temporally prior to matter; instead it is concurrent. Even in the later Neoplatonists the scheme of emanation guarantees that the One is not a Demiurge. The cosmos is a product of the work of the lower hypostases, namely Intellect and Soul (Ψυχή). In the Conclusiones, according to Porphyry, Pico admits that the Demiurge of the world is the suprmundane soul:

22.2. Opifex mundi est supermundana anima. (The demiurge of the world is the suprmundane soul.)


61 Joannes Philoponus, In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria (n. 53 above) 16.24.25, 16.100.32, 16.105.18–26; E. Garin, History of Italian Philosophy (n. 1 above) 1.298.

62 Plotinus, Enneades (n. 25 above) V. 1, 7, V. 1. 4. 6–8.

63 Plotinus, Enneades (n. 25 above) II. 3. 13, 15, IV. 4. 9, 9, V. 2. 1, V. 6. 4, VI. 9. 6; Nyvlt, Aristotle (n. 41 above) 16.

64 Plotinus, Enneades (n. 25 above) II. 4. 7, III. 9. 1, V. 9. 5.


66 Plotinus, Enneades (n. 25 above) II. 4. 7. 2–13.

67 Plotinus, Enneades (n. 25 above) III. 8. 4, V. 9. 5, IV. 4. 11; Proclus, Institutio Theologica (n. 17 above) 28, 38, 57. 18–26.

68 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusiones” (n. 6 above) 22.2.

69 Farmer, Syncretism in the West (n. 5 above) 307.
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Pico draws from Proclus’s *In Timaeum*, where Proclus summarizes the basic arguments of Porphyry on the creation myth of the Platonic dialogue. In the *Conclusions* according to Iamblichus, Pico adds that the seventh of the intellectual hierarchy is the Demiurge of the sensible world. Apparently Pico traces in Proclus evidence that Iamblichus prefigured the henads. As a result, Pico’s argument, according to Farmer’s translation, that the Demiurge of the Intellect distinguishes the *omoiomeria*, misinterprets Anaxagoras as well the Neoplatonists.

I believe that the problem arises not from Pico’s text but from Farmer’s translation (opifex intellectus = Demiurge of the Intellect), which is incorrect and misleading. In my reading, in Pico’s phrase opifex intellectus the noun intellectus is not a genitive but a nominative form, since the noun intellectus belongs to the fourth declension. As a result, the correct translation is Demiurge-Intellect, as in apposition, which seems to be accurate according to the Neoplatonic philosophy. Plotinus associates the Demiurge with Intellect and not with the One, despite Porphyry’s slightly different view. Iamblichus follows the general pattern of Plotinus’s argumentation and places Demiurge in the realm of the Intellect. Syrianus follows respectively on the same path. Finally, Proclus supports that the Demiurge exists in the Intellect. Moreover, if my reading is correct, Pico’s argument no longer opposes the philosophy of Anaxagoras who claims that theIntellect sets the original mixture in motion and is not its Demiurge. We have to bear in mind that Anaxagoras does not call the Intellect Demiurge nor does he conflate Intellect with God or divine principle, despite Iamblichus’s quotation. We must also have in mind that in the *Commento* Pico blames Ficino for the latter’s attempt to compromise emanationism and creationism. Moreover, Pico’s endeavor to present Moses philosophizing on the emanation of all things from God remains on the level of verbal expression and is not a well documented and articulated view. It is merely a rhetorical exaggeration, which aims to strengthen Pico’s syncretism in the *Heptaplus*. Thus, any attempt to justify Farmer’s translation, with the argument that Pico tried, in the specific passage, to compromise emanation and creation, is doomed to fail. It is also worth noticing that according to Pico, as I mentioned earlier, being and One are coextensive, identical principles and must exist

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71 Pico della Mirandola, “Conclusions” (n. 6 above) 23.2.  
72 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West* (n. 5 above) 311.  
74 Proclus, *In Timaeum* (n. 70 above) 307.4–5.  
78 G. Pico della Mirandola, “Commento alla canzone d’ amore,” *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari a cura di Eugenio Garin (Edizione nazionale dei classici del pensiero italiano)*, ed. E. Garin (Firenze 1942) 466; Allen, “The Birth Day” (n. 20 above) 94; Farmer, *Syncretism in the West* (n. 5 above) 21; Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy* (n. 1 above) v. 1, 305.  
79 Pico della Mirandola, “Heptaplus” (n. 21 above) 176.  
80 P. R. Blum, *Philosophy of Religion in the Renaissance* (Farnham 2010) 133.
in some mode in every level of reality; One is not prior to being. Pico reaches this conclusion through his explanatory method, which suggests that the words we use so that we describe the levels of reality can be linked to the same words we use in order to describe other levels. If this is the case, then the correct meaning of the phrase *opifex intellectus* is once again Demiurge—Intellect and not Demiurge of the Intellect. Pico simply denominates. Otherwise, we have to admit that Pico has no thorough knowledge of Presocratic and Neoplatonic philosophy or that his philosophy is not so concrete.

Although this a possible explanation, according to Pico’s wording and the general meaning of the aforementioned passages of the *Conclusiones*, Pico sets forth another view in his *Commento*, a work which is written almost the same period with the *Conclusiones*. Pico holds that God creates Intellect, a perfect and unique creation. Despite the ambiguous wording of the passage, the last word is indicative:

*dico che Iddio ab aeterno produsse una creatura di natura incorporea ed intelletuale, tanto perfetta quanto è possibile e’ sia una cosa creat.***

(God from eternity produced a creature of incorporeal and intellectual nature, as perfect as is possible for a created being.)

In addition, Pico supports that Intellect, according to the Platonists, is the sole direct creation of God:

*immediatamente non proviene altra creatura che questa prima mente.*

(immediately no other creature proceeds but this first mind.)

But the problem still persists. Pico uses three times words that refer to creation, while in the specific and subsequent chapters he prefers *produsse, producere*, and other forms of the verb *producro*. Pico’s terminology does not seem to be consistent enough. A possible explanation would be that in the specific chapter Pico’s priority is the rejection of Ficino’s argument that God creates directly also the human souls. Furthermore, Pico mentions as his sources Plotinus, the famous Platonists, Aristotle, and all the Arabs, notably Avicenna. The harmonization of the opinions of the aforementioned philosophers on the Intellect is rather superficial and not the outcome of solid argumentation. In the mid-1480s Pico’s philosophy was not coherent. In addition, Pico’s argumentation is ambivalent. He seems to lie simultaneously in Christian and Neoplatonic ground. Pico admits that, according to the Neoplatonists, the Intellect is

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82 Farmer, *Syncretism in the West* (n. 5 above) 28–29.

83 Pico della Mirandola, “Commento” (n. 78 above) 465.

84 Ibid. 466.


an emanation from the One and not a creation per se. According to Michael Allen, Pico adds that God created the Ideas in the Intellect. But Pico’s text does not offer any evidence to support Allen’s argument. Pico once again prefers types of the verb *produco* instead of *creo*. The two verbs indicate different philosophical perspectives, as it is obvious. Although Pico seems to be confused, the use of words that refer to creation would be interpreted as rather loose interpretation of the Neoplatonic theory on the Intellect, since the general wording of the phrases suggests that *creatura* implies the emergence of One’s thought and thinking. The same confusion could be found and in other passages of Pico’s *Commento*. But Pico insists. Later in the *Commento* he argues that Intellect (*mente angelica*) consists of potency and act. Potency, the unlimited is equated with matter and act, the limit, is form. The Aristotelian flavor of his philosophy is obvious despite the fact that Pico mentions a passage from the Platonic *Philebus*. Intellect, like created things, is consisted of different principles. But potency is imperfection. Furthermore, as Allen suggests, Pico’s view lacks consistency. Pico’s contradictions have further implications. In another passage he describes the Intellect (*anima intellettuale e angelica*) in a different way: unformed substance, the original prime matter, took form by God and became Intellect. This is not an act of pure creation, according either Christians or the Neoplatonists. In favor of my translation of Pico’s phrase *opifex intellectus* as Demiurge—Intellect is Pico’s unambiguous affirmation that the Intellect creates the universe: *dalla quale poi era prodotto el resto del mondo* (from which is produced the rest of the world). Similar arguments are reproduced and in other passages of the *Commento*.

Anaxagoras’s quotation is crucial for Pico. Pico found in Anaxagoras the oldest ancient source which supported his key thesis that all things exist in all things in their own mode, although he has the impression that Moses shared the same view. Anaxagoras’s philosophy permits Pico to establish his doctrine that all things share a portion of God within them, in their own way. As a result, humans are capable of achieving true knowledge and felicity. Philosophy is simply the ladder to God. Despite the fact that Pico upholds the general pattern of medieval metaphysics, he rejects the fixed position of man in the ontological hierarchy. His anthropocentrism is prevalent. Man has the chance to become everything. Pico asserts that man contains all things in himself as their center, just like God contains all things as their origin:

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87 Pico della Mirandola, “Commento” (n. 78 above) 467–468.
88 Allen, “The Birth Day” (n. 20 above) 95.
89 Pico della Mirandola, “Commento” (n. 78 above) 511.
90 Ibid. 472.
92 Allen, “The Birth Day” (n. 20 above) 97.
93 Pico della Mirandola, “Commento” (n. 78 above) 480–481.
94 Ibid. 511.
95 Ibid. 472–473.
quod Deus in se omnia continet uti omnium principium, homo autem in se omnia continet uti omnium medium. (God contains all things in himself as their origin, and man contains all things in himself as their center.)

As a consequence, Anaxagoras’s principle is supportive to Pico’s metaphysics. Furthermore, Anaxagoras’s metaphysical principle is supportive to Pico’s method of allegorical interpretation, which is indispensable for his syncretism and his attempt to reveal hidden truths in every text or level of reality.

But the crucial question is if and to what extent Anaxagoras’s philosophy influenced Pico’s thought. Anaxagoras assumes that all things are found together in the original mixture and everything is in everything at all times. But this mixture was unlimited (ἄπειρον), undifferentiated and exists eternally. As a result, creatio ex nihilo, which Pico defends, in a typical Platonic vocabulary and fashion, especially in his Heptaplus, is not compatible with Anaxagoras’s model. In addition, it is not clear whether Pico was aware of the fact that Anaxagoras’s Intellect is the only thing in which the principle everything in everything does not apply, since the Intellect is not mixed, let aside that Anaxagoras’s Intellect is corporeal. Pico refutes instead Anaxagoras’s argument and insists that the Intellect is greatly mixed, since maxima mixtio coincidit cum maxima simplicitate in natura intellectuali (since the greatest mixture coincides with the greatest simplicity in the intellectual nature). Pico expresses a similar view in the Commento, where he argues that only God is without discord, while the Intellect, as a mixture of potency and act, is composed of discord and concord. Anaxagoras’s wording suggests that there are some things in which Intellect is present, while in others Intellect is not present. It is possible that Pico, despite his reliance on Proclus’s thought, follows Plotinus’s and not Proclus’s interpretation of Anaxagoras’s philosophy concerning the principle everything in everything. Plotinus’s interpretation, although attempted in passing, is convenient for Pico’s view that the greatest mixture coincides with the greatest simplicity in the intellectual nature. Farmer holds that Pico comes to that paradoxical conclusion so as to reconcile Averroism and Christianity on the thorny issue of personal immortality. Once again Farmer’s argument is doubtful, since Pico calls Averroes an infidel, whose
views are interesting solely for academic disputation.\footnote{112} Despite Pico’s intentions, Plotinus’s interpretation is supportive for Pico’s argumentation. Furthermore, Pico was forced to concede, although he did not do it, that, as Plato suggested,\footnote{113} while Anaxagoras’s explanation is not simply materialistic,\footnote{114} is a solid physical explanation since there is no answer on the question why the intellect arranges things in the best possible way.


\footnote{113} Plato, \textit{Phaedo} (n. 40 above) 95a–100a.