

# **Aristotle in the 12<sup>th</sup>-Century Commentaries on Proclus’ *Elements of Theology***

**Lela Alexidze**

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# Aristotle in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century commentaries on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*

Lela Alexidze

## I. Introduction

This paper aims to analyze Aristotle's role in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine and Georgian commentaries on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. These are the Greek text by Nicholas of Methone (*Anaptyxis*, i.e. exposition or refutation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*) and Ioane Petritsi's Georgian commentary on Proclus' same book. These two commentaries represent two different attitudes toward Aristotle and Neoplatonic philosophy. One is Nicholas of Methone's mainly (though not entirely) positive evaluation of Aristotle's theories, his radically negative attitude toward Proclus' philosophy, and his point of view on the incompatibility between Aristotle's and Proclus' theories. The other is only partial acceptance by Petritsi of Aristotle's ideas, his entirely positive attitude toward Proclus' philosophy, and, together with Proclus, to the whole Platonic tradition. The latter was, in Petritsi's opinion, in some instances, opposed to Aristotelian philosophy.

Let us briefly formulate in advance the main characteristics of the attitude of the two above-mentioned thinkers toward Aristotelian and Platonic tradition.

Nicholas of Methone was an opponent of Proclus' philosophy, and the targets of his attack were those intellectuals among his contemporaries who admired Proclus' theories.<sup>1</sup> In the *Anaptyxis* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Nicholas fiercely criticized almost all propositions of Proclus' treatise, sometimes using the methods of

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<sup>1</sup> For Nicholas' text see Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation* (1984), ed. A. D. Angelou (henceforth referred to as Nicholas, *Ref.*+page, line+chapter). On the possible target of Nicholas' *Anaptyxis* see Trizio (2014) 203; Robinson (2017) 107. I would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewer, whose comments helped much to improve this paper. I am also very grateful to Mariam Abashidze and Giorgi Markozashvili for their help.

Aristotelean logic.<sup>2</sup> Nicholas' attitude toward Aristotle was more favorable than toward Platonists and particularly toward Proclus, though Aristotle too, in Nicholas' opinion, was a Hellenic, i.e. non-Christian philosopher, and therefore, he could not be perfect. Nevertheless, to Nicholas, Aristotle's theories were certainly more valuable than those of Proclus. As Nicholas aimed to criticize Proclus while Aristotle was already an authority in the field of philosophy among his contemporary thinkers, it seems that his goals were more feasible by unveiling the differences between Aristotle's and Platonic philosophies than by showing the similarities between them.

Georgian philosopher Ioane Petritsi was educated in Byzantium and was either Psellos' direct student or his much younger follower.<sup>3</sup> As the exact time of Petritsi's life is unknown, we cannot be sure whether he lived before Nicholas of Methone, was his contemporary, or lived after him.<sup>4</sup> However, we are in possession of the texts of both philosophers. Petritsi, like Nicholas, wrote a commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, but his text is radically different from that of Nicholas: Petritsi openly admires Proclus' philosophy and the whole Platonic tradition generally. Although Petritsi accepted Aristotle's logic along with some of his ontological and cosmological theses, he did not hold him in as high regard as he did Plato or Proclus, especially in theology (i.e. metaphysics). However, Aristotle's logic was, in Petritsi's opinion, a necessary basis for all kinds of ontological and theological studies, including the theory of the supreme One. Consequently, in certain cases, Petritsi demonstrated the differences between Platonic and Aristotelian theories, on the one hand, while in other instances, he emphasized harmony between their respective doctrines. However, the supremacy of Platonic tradition generally and of Proclus' philosophy in particular was an axiom for Petritsi.

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<sup>2</sup> Robinson (2014) 89-94. English translation of Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* by J. M. Robinson in Robinson (2014), Appendix A, 162-459 (henceforth quoted as Robinson, *Dissert.*).

<sup>3</sup> On Petritsi's life see Gigineishvili (2007) 12-19; Alexidze and Bergemann, Introduction in *Ioane Petritsi* (2009) 1-7 (henceforth quoted as Petritsi, *German*). For Petritsi's commentary see S. Kauchtschischvili's edition: Ioane Petritsi (1937) (henceforth referred to as Petritsi, *Comm.*+page+chapter (or prologue, or epilogue).

<sup>4</sup> Alexidze (2014) 239-242. On the differences between Psellos, Nicholas of Methone and Petritsi regarding Proclus' philosophy see Mtchedlidze (2017) 137-152.

Thus, in what follows, we shall discuss two different attitudes toward Aristotle and (neo)platonian philosophy: first, partially positive evaluation of Aristotle's theories by Nicholas of Methone, and his belief in the incompatibility of Aristotle's and Proclus' theories; and second, only partial acceptance by Petritsi of Aristotle's theories, which in some cases were, he claimed, opposed to the Platonic tradition which he never criticized.

## II. Aristotle in Nicholas of Methone's *Anaptyxis*

Nicholas, bishop of Methone, wrote an exposition (Ἀνάπτυξις) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. This 'exposition' is often translated as 'Refutation',<sup>5</sup> because Nicholas' attitude toward Proclus' philosophy (or, more than that, toward his followers in Nicholas' contemporary milieu) is extremely negative. In his exposition, Nicholas tries to refute and criticize Proclus' *Elements* chapter by chapter.<sup>6</sup> Nicholas is more favorable toward Aristotle than Proclus, and, as we already mentioned, in some cases he uses the methods of Aristotelian logic to refute Proclus' theses. We shall discuss only those cases in Nicholas' text where Aristotle is explicitly mentioned.

### II. 1. Aristotle is not better than other Hellenic 'wise men'

In his prologue, Nicholas contrasts the truth of Christian wisdom with the fallacy of Hellenic doctrines. Nicholas critically mentions Aristotle along with Plato, Pythagoras, and wise men experienced in false teaching:

Nicholas, *Ref.* 3,17-23, prooem.

He [i.e. Proclus] not only celebrates mysteries with Aristotle and Plato and Pythagoras, and others wise in the teaching of the falsely-called wisdom, but, having become a most intimate witness and initiate and attendant even of the demons themselves, whom he worshipped as gods, he lit a fire and he kindled his zeal as hotly as possible against piety, and in this he baked, as bricks,

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<sup>5</sup> See the title of Angelou's edition, in Nicholas, *Ref.*

<sup>6</sup> We possess Nicholas' commentaries on the first 198 propositions of Proclus' *Elements*, preceded by Nicholas' prologue.

cogitations kneaded together and mixed from every Hellenic teaching.<sup>7</sup> (tr. Robinson)

Thus, as we see, Nicholas' evaluation of Aristotle's philosophy is not positive. He considers it in the context of the Greek pagan philosophy and does not oppose it in this case to Proclus' philosophy. All Hellenic theories seem to be opposed, in Nicholas' opinion, to Christian wisdom.

## II. 2. Proclus contradicts Aristotle

In chapter 14, unlike the fragment from his prologue we discussed above, Nicholas juxtaposes Proclus against Aristotle and refers to Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias*. Nicholas quotes the first part of Proclus' prop. 14: "All being is either unmoved or moved".<sup>8</sup> Nicholas comments on this fragment as follows:

Nicholas, *Ref.* 19,23-29, ch. 14

In the present proposition he [i.e. Proclus] not only contradicts Aristotle and the other wise men, by saying 'all being', and assigning the 'all' to the universal being, even though these [wise men?] do not mean this (for 'all', says Aristotle in *On Interpretation*, does not signify the universal),<sup>9</sup> but also fights himself, propounding what is entirely opposite to the things which he wishes to demonstrate; for he wishes to show that, of being, some is unmoved, and some moved.<sup>10</sup> (tr. Robinson)

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 3,17-23, prooem.: Οὗτος γὰρ οὐκ Ἀριστοτέλει μόνον καὶ Πλάτωνι, Πυθαγόρα τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις συνοργιάσας σοφοῖς ἐν τοῖς τῆς ψευδωνύμου σοφίας δόγμασιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ δαιμόνων αὐτῶν, οὓς ὡς θεοῦς ἔσεβεν, αὐτόπτης καὶ μύστης καὶ θεραπευτῆς γνησιώτατος γεγονώς, πῦρ μὲν ἀνήψεν καὶ ὡς εἶχε σφοδρῶς ἐξέκαυσε τὸν κατὰ τῆς εὐσεβείας ζῆλον, ἐν τούτῳ δὲ πλίνθους ὥπτισε τοὺς συμφύρτοις καὶ παμμυγεῖς ἐκ πάσης παιδείας ἐλληνικῆς λογισμοῦς. Translation of Nicholas' text here and further by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 166.

<sup>8</sup> Πᾶν τὸ ὄν ἢ ἀκίνητόν ἐστιν ἢ κινούμενον. Proclus, *ET* (1963), ed. Dodds, 16,9, §14 (henceforth quoted as Procl. *ET*, +page, line+§).

<sup>9</sup> See Arist. *De interpr.* 17b12 ("for though [the subject] 'man' is universal, it is not universally used in the statement, for the word 'every' signifies not a universal but something universally taken."). See also Arist. *De interpr.* 20a9. Reference in Robinson, *Dissert.* 197, and Nicholas, *Ref.* 19.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 19,23-29, ch. 14: Ἐν τῷ παρόντι προβλήματι οὐχ Ἀριστοτέλει μόνον καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις σοφοῖς ἀντιφθέγγεται, πᾶν τὸ ὄν λέγων καὶ τὸ πᾶν τῷ καθόλου ὄντι προσνέμων ἐκείνων τοῦτο μὴ βουλομένων (τὸ γὰρ πᾶς, φησὶν ἐν τῷ *Περὶ ἐρμηνείας* Ἀριστοτέλης, οὐ τὸ καθόλου σημαίνει), ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐαυτῷ μάχεται τούναντιον ἅπαν οὐ δεῖξαι βούλεται προβαλλόμενος· βούλεται γὰρ δεῖξαι τοῦ

In this case, Nicholas falsely interprets Proclus' phrase 'all being', which, in Proclus' text, embraces those beings which are moved as well as those which are not, while Nicholas claims that 'all being' must imply just one kind of characteristic, i.e. to be either moved or unmoved. In Nicholas' opinion, Proclus contradicts Aristotle as well as himself.

### II. 3. Aristotle's theory of the primary substances vs. Platonic universals

In chapter 60, Nicholas discusses Proclus' thesis from prop. 60: "Everything that is cause of more things is superior to what has a power toward fewer."<sup>11</sup> Nicholas is on the side of Aristotle and against the Platonic theory of the supremacy of forms. His argumentation is as follows:

Nicholas, *Ref.* 62,32–63,5, ch. 60

And the things that he [i.e. Proclus] calls 'wholes', that is, the more simple and more universal things, do not, strictly speaking, exist, for they do not subsist in themselves but are contemplated in the more particular things, and especially in the individuals. Wherefore also Aristotle says that the particulars are primary substances and [substances] proper, but the genera and the species are called secondary [substances], and more the species than the genera [are substances].<sup>12</sup> (tr. Robinson, slightly modified)

Thus, Nicholas seems to be against the realist position that assigns more reality to the genera and species than to individuals. Hence, he openly expresses his sympathy with Aristotle, who called particulars 'primary substances', and genera and species – 'secondary ones'. Nicholas discusses this issue in the context of God's supreme causality:

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ὄντος τὸ μὲν ἀκίνητον εἶναι, τὸ δὲ κινούμενον. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 197.

<sup>11</sup> Procl. *ET*, 58,3-4, §60. Nicholas, *Ref.* 62,25-26, ch. 60: Πᾶν τὸ πλείονων αἴτιον κρείττον ἐστὶ τοῦ πρὸς ἐλάττονα τὴν δύναμιν λαχόντος. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 272.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 62,32–63,5, ch. 60: Ἄ δὲ φησιν οὗτος ὅλα τουτέστι τὰ ἀπλούστερα καὶ καθολικώτερα, ταῦτα οὐδὲ κυρίως εἰσὶν, ὅτι μηδὲ καθ' ἕκαστα ὑφεστήκασιν, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς μερικωτέροις καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς καθ' ἕκαστα θεωρεῖται. Διὸ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης πρώτας οὐσίας καὶ κυρίως εἶναι φησι τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, δευτέρας δὲ λέγεσθαι τὰ γένη καὶ τὰ εἶδη καὶ μᾶλλον τὰ εἶδη ἢ τὰ γένη. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 273. See also Arist. *Categ.* 2a14; 2b7.

unlike Proclus, Nicholas does not accept the theory of a plurality of causes (even if they are, according to Proclus, hierarchically subordinated to the supreme One), since he claims that God is a single cause of everything.

#### II. 4. Nicholas against an infinity of things

Nicholas opposes Proclus' theory of infinity and perpetuity of certain beings to Aristotle's thesis that the heaven has to be finite. In chapter 94, Nicholas discusses Proclus' thesis according to which "All perpetuity is a certain infinity."<sup>13</sup> Against Proclus, Nicholas asserts that only God is infinite and perpetual in every respect:

Nicholas, *Ref.* 93, 5-8; 12-13, ch. 94

And if something among beings is perpetual, it is so not in itself, nor because of itself, but because of the goodness of God [...]; for every magnitude is embraced in the heaven; and Aristotle has proven the heaven to be finite.<sup>14</sup> (tr. Robinson)

The problem of infinity is discussed by Nicholas with reference to Aristotle also in chapter 96. He comments on Proclus' thesis that "the power of every finite body, if it is infinite, is incorporeal."<sup>15</sup> As Nicholas claims, "finite' is added, as if there even exists some infinite body; and indeed it has been shown by Aristotle that no body is infinite."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, in Nicholas' opinion, any theory of infinity or even perpetuity of any beings or their potencies except God himself is false. Nicholas' argumentation is directed against Proclus with the help of Aristotelian theses.

<sup>13</sup> Procl. *ET*, 84,17, §94: Πᾶσα μὲν αἰδιότης ἀπειρία τίς ἐστίν. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 324.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 93, 5-8; 12-13, ch. 94: "Εἰ τι δὲ τῶν ὄντων ἐστὶν αἰδιον, οὐ καθ' αὐτὸ οὐδὲ δι' ἑαυτὸ ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγαθότητα τοιοῦτον ἐστίν [...] ἐμπεριέχονται γὰρ πάντα τὰ μεγέθη τῷ οὐρανῷ· πεπερασμένον δ' εἶναι τὸν οὐρανὸν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀπέδειξε. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 325. Arist. *De caelo*, 271b1; 276a16; 278b19-21.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 94, 20-21, ch. 96: Παντὸς πεπερασμένου σώματος ἢ δύναμις, ἄπειρος οὐσα, ἀσώματος ἐστίν. Procl. *ET*, 86,1-2, §96. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 327.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 94, 22-24, ch. 96: Πρόσκειται τὸ πεπερασμένον, ὡς τάχα καὶ ἀπείρου τινὸς σώματος ὄντος· καὶ μὴν δέδεικται τῷ Ἀριστοτέλει μηδὲν σῶμα ἄπειρον εἶναι. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 327. Arist. *Phys.* 3. 5. 204b1; 206a7.

## II. 5. Proclus' theory of souls is "mere chatter"

In chapter 184, Nicholas criticizes Proclus' theory of the kinds of souls. According to Proclus, "every soul is either divine, or changes from intellect into unintellect, or is intermediate between these."<sup>17</sup>

Nicholas criticizes this theory of the soul from various angles. One is that there is no place for the souls of animals or plants. After refuting Proclus' proposition on the kinds of souls, Nicholas assumes: "and the three kinds in gradation that this wise man [i.e. Proclus] introduces, of the intellects and of the souls, are bare concepts and, as Aristotle would agree, 'mere chatter'."<sup>18</sup> (That means, they are mere sound, without any meaning).

Thus, in this last case too, Nicholas refers to Aristotle for refuting Proclus' theory.

## III. Aristotle in Ioane Petritsi's commentary on Proclus' *Elements*

Petritsi translated Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and wrote a commentary on each proposition along with a prologue and an epilogue. In his prologue and commentaries, Petritsi distinguishes two mainstreams in philosophy: Platonic and Aristotelian. The opposition of Plato's and Aristotle's theories as well as of their successors to each other plays a crucial role in Petritsi's work. Petritsi himself preferred Plato and Platonists to Aristotle and his successors. Thus, in Petritsi's work, Plato's superiority over Aristotle's theories is clearly declared. Nevertheless, the Neoplatonic tendency - an attempt at harmonization of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies (though with priority given to Plato, especially in the domain of metaphysics/theology), and the high esteem of Aristotle's work (mainly in the domain of logic and physics, which play an introductory role in Platonic metaphysics) is one of the main characteristics of Petritsi's commentary. To Petritsi, the head of Platonic philosophy was Proclus, because he was, as Petritsi says, the philosopher who elaborated the theory of the supreme transcendent One

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<sup>17</sup> Procl. *ET*, 160,21-22, §184. Nicholas, *Ref.* 159,26-28, ch. 184: Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἢ θεία ἐστίν, ἢ μεταβάλλουσα ἀπὸ νοῦ εἰς ἀνοϊαν, ἢ μεταξύ τούτων. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 434.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas, *Ref.* 160,18-21, ch. 184: Τὰ δὲ παρὰ τοῦ σοφοῦ τούτου παρεισαγόμενα τρία κατὰ βαθμοὺς γένη τῶν τε νόων καὶ τῶν ψυχῶν ψιλὰ μόνον εἰσὶν ἐννοήματα καί, ὡς ἂν Ἀριστοτέλης συμφήσειε, τερετίσματα. Transl. by Robinson in Robinson, *Dissert.* 435. Arist. *Anal. Post.* 1, 22, 83a33.



which was expressed in a veiled form in Plato's dialogues.<sup>19</sup> In Petritsi's opinion, Proclus and Plato belonged to the same group of 'Platonic theologians,' to whom he also assigned the philosophers and poets before and after Plato, such as Orpheus, Aglaophamos, Pythagoras, the Eleatics, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Asclepius.<sup>20</sup> Although Petritsi had high regard for certain aspects of Aristotle's philosophy, especially his logic,<sup>21</sup> and often based his own interpretations on Aristotelian concepts such as the relationship between form and matter,<sup>22</sup> potency and activity,<sup>23</sup> in his eyes, the overall status of Aristotle was lower than that of Plato.<sup>24</sup> With respect to topics of the greatest importance to him, such as the difference between corporeal and incorporeal substances,<sup>25</sup> the ontological independence of the incorporeal from the corporeal,<sup>26</sup> the self-constitution of the human soul in its non-corporeal state,<sup>27</sup> the importance of the demiurgic/efficient/creative, and also paradigmatic causes,<sup>28</sup> the relationship between eternity and time,<sup>29</sup> and the importance of not discussing theological subjects in a way relevant to the material world,<sup>30</sup> Petritsi tried to prove that Plato's and his successors' philosophy was more true than that of Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias together with other Peripatetics, and the Stoics.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Petritsi did not refer to Aristotle as a 'theologian' or 'divine' in the same manner he spoke of Plato and Proclus.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 4-5, prologue.

<sup>20</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 100, ch. 41; 107-108, ch. 50. Alexidze (2014) 230.

<sup>21</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 3-4, prologue; 10-11.

<sup>22</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 72-73, ch. 27. Alexidze (2017) 127.

<sup>23</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 6-9, prologue; 17-18, ch. 1; 77, ch. 28; 109-110, ch. 50; 114, ch. 52; 137, ch. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 5, prologue; 54, ch. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 51, ch. 17; 99-100, ch. 41.

<sup>26</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 99-100, ch. 41; 194, ch. 186; 195, ch. 187.

<sup>27</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 129-130, ch. 64.

<sup>28</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 38, ch. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 107-108, ch. 50; 116, ch. 53; 117-118, ch. 54.

<sup>30</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 5, prologue; 54, ch. 18; 75, ch. 28. See also 111, ch. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 5, prologue; 75, ch. 28; 100, ch. 41; 107, ch. 50;

<sup>32</sup> For example, 'the divine Plato': Petritsi, *Comm.* 4, prologue; 115, ch. 52. See also Petritsi, *German*, 64, and Alexidze (2014) 230.

### III. 1. Petritsi prefers Plato and Platonists to Aristotle and Aristotelians

Petritsi preferred Plato to Aristotle mainly for the following reasons:

- (a) In Petritsi's opinion, Platonists distinguished the incorporeal and corporeal forms, while the followers of Aristotle 'mixed' them with each other. Petritsi was on the side of the Platonists:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 98-100, ch. 41

None of the incorporeal forms is characterized by the dimension of place or where-to-be, because it is present everywhere equally, and is not in a place, while the form which is embodied, can be imagined and viewed in the bodies. On this issue arose a disagreement among the opinions of the Aristotelians and the ancient theologians, because Plato, Aglaophemos, Orpheus, and all Eleatics, like the sage Eleatic Xenos and all other Pythagoreans, like Parmenides and Zeno do not mix incorporeal forms with corporeal ones, even if [the latter] were the parts of the celestial [substances].<sup>33</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

- (b) According to Petritsi, the soul is an incorporeal (though it could be embodied) and self-constituted substance. As Petritsi claims, for Platonists, the human soul is immortal; it is not an *entelecheia*<sup>34</sup> of a body, as the followers of Aristotle thought. Petritsi seems to be quite reluctant to use the word *entelecheia* in relation to the human soul, because he does not want to define the soul as the form of the body; in his opinion (and against the

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<sup>33</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 98-100, ch. 41: “არა რომელსა უსხეულოთა გუართა შესახავს განსაზიდი ადგილისად, ანუ სადაობად, რამეთუ ყოველგან სწორად წარმოდგომი არს, და არა ადგილსა შორის, ხოლო სხეულთა-შორისი გუარი ადგილსა-შორისად იოცნების და იხილევებისცა. რამეთუ ამას ზედა განსქდა წვალებად არისტოტელის-გამოთად და ძუელთა ღმრთისმეტყუელთად, რამეთუ პლატონ და ალაოფიმოს და ორფევს და ყოველნი ელეათ-გამონი, ვითარ ბრძენი ელეატი ქსენი და სხუანი ყოველნი პითალოროდს-გამონი, ვითარ პარმენიდი და ზინონ არა აღრევენ უსხეულოთა გუართა სხეულთა შორის, დადათუ იყვნენ ციერთა ნაწილისანი.” (All translations from Petritsi are mine). On the possible sources of this fragment see Alexidze (1997) 150-154. See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 106-107, ch. 48; 194, ch. 186; 195, ch. 187, and 222, epilogue.

<sup>34</sup> Ἐντελέχεια. Petritsi sometimes uses a Greek word in Georgian transliteration.

Aristotelian theory), the soul is not inseparable from the body but is a self-constituted substance:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 130, ch. 64

Here arises an immense opposition between the followers of Asclepius and Aphrodisias, because [the latter] says that the human soul is a kind of irradiation from the unmoved sphere and is not a hypostasis, i.e. self-constituted, but is a kind of illumination from the universal soul. But the columns of wisdom – all great Platonists and truly theologians – immediately invalidate [the opinions] of these [men] and of those who are like them, refuting them and claiming that the human soul is self-constituted; they assert that it is the first intellectual substance of the mortals and the *agalma* [i.e. an image] of the intellect.<sup>35</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

In chapter 186 of his commentary, Petritsi claims again that the soul “is not inseparable from the body unlike the *entelecheia* of the Stagirite.”<sup>36</sup> Further, in chapter 187, discussing cosmic souls and bodies, Petritsi says that “unlike Aristotle’s *entelecheiai*, the souls do not need any substrates, and they totally transcend such perishable and changeable affections.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 130, ch. 64: “ხოლო აქა დიდთა უდიდესნი წინაუკუმობანი შემოვლენ ყოველთა ასკლეპიანთა და აფროდისიელისნი, რამეთუ კაცობრივსაცა სულსა ნაბრწყინად იტყვს უცთომელისა სფეროდსგან და არა გუამოვნებად, ვითარ თვთმდგომ, არამედ ვითარ ნაელვად საყოველთაოდას სულისადთ. ვინაჲ ამათ და ესევითართა ყოველთა სუეტნი სიბრძნისანი ყოველნი პლატონურნი დიდნი და ჭეშმარიტებით ღმრთისმეტყუელნი არდი უჩინო ჰყოფენ, და უკუ არღუევენ, და სულსა კაცობრივსა თვთგუამოვნებად აღმოაჩენენ და პირველ მეკუდოთადას არსებად გონიერად და ალაღმად გონებისად გამოაჩენენ.” See also Alexidze (2008) 83-86; 240-242; 338-340; 353-354.

<sup>36</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 194, ch. 186: “და კუალად [სული] არცა სხეულთაგან განუშორებელი არს, ვითარ სტაგირელისა ენტელექიაჲ”.

<sup>37</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 195, ch. 187: “და კუალად არცა ვითარ არისტოტელის ენტელექიანი წინამდებარეთად მოქენე არიან [სულნი], არამედ სრულიად ზესთა ძეს ესე ვითართა ხრწნა-ქცევითთა ვნებათა”. See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 106-107, ch. 48.

- (b) For Platonists, the supreme principle of the cosmos was the demiurge/creator, while Aristotle and his successors excluded the demiurgic/creative/efficient cause from the domain of beings:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 38-39, ch. 11

You see, how immediately he refutes the opinion of those [scholars] who sent into *exoria* [i.e. exile]<sup>38</sup> the demiurgic [creative] cause from the [domain] of beings, like the Stagirite and the philosopher of Aphrodisias, and their schoolmates.<sup>39</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

- (c) Aristotle did not share Plato's definition of time as the moving image of Eternity:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 107-108, ch. 50

Aristotle says that *chronos* is the measure of the movement, and the first movement [occurs] in the first bodies which the Greek language called 'heaven' - '*ouranos*' [...]. In this *ouranos* as in the first body [occurs] the first movement, and the measure of the movement is *chronos*. This definition of *chronos* belongs to Aristotle and the Peripatetics. As for the great Plato and all theologians, like the great Egyptian Plotinus, *kathegemon* [i.e. teacher]<sup>40</sup> of Porphyry, and the great Phoenician Iamblichus, the Phoenician intellect, discussing *chronos*, they claim that it is the image of the eternal being. Because in the eternal being everything is unmoved, and it possesses its substance in the sameness and identity, and its activity is inseparable from the substance, while in *chronos* everything is in movement and flow. Thus, there, in eternity, being exists in the unmoved stability, while here, in *chronos*, the eternity is divided into what is first, what is following and what has already passed, or into what is present and what is future. Therefore, there is eternity, and here

<sup>38</sup> Again, Petritsi uses the Greek word ἐξορία in Georgian transliteration.

<sup>39</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 38, ch. 11: “გესმა თუ რაოდენთა მყის უჩინო ჰყოფს თნებათა პირველ მათსა რომელთა შემოქმედებითი მიზეზი მყოფთაგან ექსორია ყვეს, ვითარ სტაგირელმან და აფროდისიადთ-გამო ფილოსოფოსმან და მისთა თანმესხოლეთა.” See Procl. *In Tim.* I, 295-296; 319-320 Diehl. On this issue see Alexidze (1997) 159-161; Alexidze (2008) 88-90; Alexidze 2021 (1) 161-162.

<sup>40</sup> καθηγμων. Again, Petritsi uses a Greek word in the Georgian transliteration.

is the *chronic* [i.e. existing in time] flow; there is the undivided substantial sameness, while in *chronos* it is divided and changeable.<sup>41</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

- (d) For Petritsi, Platonic philosophy was the supreme authority in the domain of metaphysics (theology), while Aristotle, his followers, and the Stoics were more specialized in physics and logic, tending to analyze theological issues by means of concepts applicable only to the realm of physics. This kind of reasoning, as Petritsi asserted, was not correct:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 54, ch. 18

The being has its definition in itself, because it is the self-constituted substance which does not need something other for its own existence, [i.e. it does not need something] random, called ‘accidents’ by the Peripatetics who took into consideration only the natural bodies. On the other hand, the great Plato calls ‘substance’ even those accidents which are in the true cosmos and the true being, because order is the [true] being there, while here it is an accident; and the three dimensions, colors and forms are

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<sup>41</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 107-108, ch. 50: “რამეთუ იტყვს არისტოტელი: ხრონომ არსო საზომი მიდრეკისაჲ, ვითარმედ საზომი პირველისა მიდრეკისაჲო. ხოლო პირველი მიდრეკაჲ პირველსა შორის სხეულთასა, რომელსა ცად, ორანოდ, უწოდა გუარმან ელლენთა ენისამან [...]. ამას ორანოსა შორის პირველი მიდრეკაჲ, ვითარცა პირველსა სხეულთასა, ხოლო საზომ მიდრეკისა ხრონომ. ხოლო ესე საზღვარი ხრონომსათჳს არისტოტელისი და პერიპატომს-გამოთაჲ არს. ხოლო დიდი პლატონ და ყოველნი ღმრთისმეტყუელნი, ვითარ მეგჳტელი დიდი პლოტინოს, კათიგემონი პორფირისი, და დიდი იამვლიხოს ფინიკ, გონებაჲ ფინიკელი, დასდებენ ხრონომსათჳს და იტყვან ხატად სამარადმყოფსად. რამეთუ ვითარცა სამარადმყოფსა შორის ყოველი მიუდრეკელად, და ვითარ იგივეობასა ზედა და მასვეობასა მოუგია არსებაჲცა თჳსი და მოქმედებაჲ განუკუეთელად არსებისგან, ეგრეთვე ხრონომს შორისსა ყოველსა მიდრეკისა და დენისა მიერ. რამეთუ მუნ შორის სამარადისოობასა მყოფობაჲ უძრავად გამანებულ არს, ხოლო აქა ხრონოსა შორის მარადისოობაჲ პირველად და შემდგომად და გარდასრულად, და აწად და მომავალად განყოფილ არს: რამეთუ მუნ საუკუნომ, ხოლო აქა დინებაჲ ხრონებრი; მუნ განუკუეთელი იგივეობაჲ არსებითი, ხოლო ხრონოსა შორის განჭრითი და ცვალებითი.” On this fragment and its ancient sources see Alexidze (1997) 166; Alexidze (2008) 128-133; 348-349.

beings and incorporeals there, while here they are accidental and random. And there [Plato] classifies them into five kinds which are substance, sameness, otherness, rest, and change. Thus, [Plato] places them, as the kinds and beings, in the intelligible and intellectual cosmos.<sup>42</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

Petritsi, *Comm.* 75, ch. 28

If the ignorance sweeps someone away [...], and he claims that the cause and the effect are equal, then he first manages to confuse the universal order, and thereafter equates the last and subsequent ones with the first ones and the fathers. Thus, such a person overturns the structure of the beings, and ascribing an incomparable honor to the subsequent [beings], he dishonors them. Therefore, those who dishonor the causes and the [first] principles, [dishonor] even more also the effects, like the Stoics and Peripatetics who claimed that the principles and causes of knowledge and understanding are in a corporeal and individual substance.<sup>43</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

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<sup>42</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 54, ch. 18: “რამეთუ არსსა თვისი საზღვარი თან მოაქუს, რამეთუ არსებად არს თვთმდგომი არ მოქენე სხვისა მამყოფელად თვისდა, ვითარ ზედმოსრულთა, რომელთა შემთხუევითად უწოდეს პერიპატომს-გამოთა, ვითარ მხედველთა ბუნებითისა ოდენ სხეულისათა. ხოლო დიდი პლატონ თვთ მათ შემთხუევითა არსებად უწოდეს ნამდვლ ნამკსა და ნამდვლ არსსა შორის, რამეთუ მუნ მორთულებად არს არს, ხოლო აქა შემთხუევა; და მუნ სამნი ესე განსაზიდნი, და ფერნი და ნაკუეთნი, არს არიან და უსხეულო. ხოლო აქა ზედშემოსრულ და შემთხუევა. და მუნ ხუთ ტომად აღავლენს, ვითარ არსებად, თვთობად, სხუაობად, დგომად, მიდრეკად. ვინაა ამათ, ვითარცა ტომთა და არსთა, დასხამს გონებითსა და გონიერსა შორის აღმკულსა.”

<sup>43</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 75, ch. 28: “ხოლო თუ უმეცრებამან ვის გაზიდნეს [...], და თქუნეს მიზეზი და მიზეზოანი სწორად, პირველად წესი ყოვლისაად შემლად იმეცადინოს, და მერმე უკუანადსკნელნი და შემდგომნი ყვნეს სწორ და პირველცა მიზეზთა და მამათა, და აქციოს ნაქუსი არსთაად, და საუკუნესა შორის წესნი მყოფთანი აღარღვნეს და პატივითა არ შესადართა უპატივო ყვნეს შემდგომნი. რამეთუ რომელთა მიზეზთა და დასაწყთა უპატივო უქმ თვთ მათ მიზეზის გამოთა რაფხომ, ვითარ სტოელთა და პერიპატომს-გამოთა, რომელნი იტყოდეს ცნობისა და უწყებისა დასაბამთა და მიზეზთა ამის სხეულისა და განნაწილებულისა არსებისგან.” See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 5, prologue; 222, epilogue. See Alexidze (2021) (3), 147-162.

### III. 2. Aristotelian theses in Petritsi's commentary and the explicit mention of Aristotle and his works

Petritsi accepted some Aristotelian theses. He could have known them directly from Aristotle, via his commentators or Neoplatonists, who deliberately attempted to make Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines consistent with each other and also accepted some achievements of Aristotle. The following aspects of Aristotle's philosophy played an important role in Petritsi's commentary:

- (a) The laws of logic were of chief importance for Petritsi as an introduction and as an 'instrument' (*organon*) for inquires in the domain of metaphysics and physics. According to Petritsi, the laws of logic and syllogisms were instruments and a starting point which led Proclus toward his theory of the supreme transcendent One. In Petritsi's opinion, Proclus' *Elements of Theology* aims to prove by means of logic and also arithmetic the existence of the supreme One, which is an absolute *one* and does not contain any parts, unlike other kinds of unities.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Petritsi discusses the structure of the syllogism in the first chapter of his commentary in order to show that Proclus proves his first thesis "every manifold in some way participates unity"<sup>45</sup> in accordance to the laws of the syllogism.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Petritsi refers to Aristotle who, as he says, claimed that definitions are principles of conclusions, and as Petritsi thinks, where the necessity (i.e. logical law) of conclusions is vanished, it is impossible to elaborate either natural or even more metaphysical theories.<sup>47</sup>
- (b) Petritsi shared Aristotle's theory of the relationship between substance, potency, and activity.<sup>48</sup> He claimed that we can know about the substance from what comes thereafter, i.e. from its activity and potency, because what is first by nature is later in the process of cognition. By nature, substance is first, which is why we learn about it from what follows; and just as we understand the character of potencies and activities, in the same

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<sup>44</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 3-5, prologue.

<sup>45</sup> Procl. *ET.* 3,1, §1 (translation from Proclus' *ET* by Dodds).

<sup>46</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 10-11, ch. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 76, ch. 28.

<sup>48</sup> Corresponds to Greek οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια.

way, we are informed about their substance, because each potency and activity belongs to a certain substance. Thus, the activity of the soul is complex, and accordingly, its substance must also be a complex entity, while the activity of the intellect is simple, and its substance is also simple. Further, referring to Aristotle, Petritsi discusses the kinds of knowledge in children or uneducated people on the one hand and ‘philosophers’ on the other. The soul (i.e. its capacity of intellection) of the first ones is in the state of potency, while the soul and the intellect of the ‘philosophizing’ people are active.<sup>49</sup> In chapter 77 of the commentary, discussing the activity and the potency of the eternal and the corporeal beings, Petritsi claims that the universal eternal beings are eternally active, i.e. their activity is inseparable from their substance. As for the corporeal beings, even if they are immortal, as in the case of the celestial bodies, they exist only potentially and are activated by means of permanent active intellectual power while matter is a pure potency. Petritsi further refers to Aristotle and says that the issue of potency and activity is discussed in his *Physics*.<sup>50</sup> In chapter 78, Petritsi, following Proclus (*Elements of Theology*, prop. 78), discusses two kinds of potencies: perfect and imperfect. The former embraces the activity in itself and is a perfect potency, while the latter is only a potency, i.e. an ability, which does not contain an activity but gets it additionally, as in the case of the soul and the heaven, as they become perfect by means of the activity of the permanently active intellect.<sup>51</sup> As for the kinds of intellect, their substances, potencies, and activities are eternal and unchangeable.<sup>52</sup> However, analyzing the relationships between substance, potency and activity, Petritsi probably did not follow Aristotle's theory exclusively but also its Neoplatonic versions.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 8-9, prologue; 220, epilogue. The same idea is formulated in an old note to the Georgian translation of Nemesios of Emesa's *Peri physeos anthropou* (1914) 4. The translation was made by Petritsi before he translated Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. Evidently, he was the author of this note too. See also Arist. *De An.* 2, 5, 417ab. See also Petritsi, *German*, 73.

<sup>50</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 137, ch. 77. Arist. *Phys.* 1, 8, 191b27-31; 11, 3, 255ab.

<sup>51</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 138, ch. 78. Arist. *de An.* 3, 5, 430a10-25.

<sup>52</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 186, ch. 169.

<sup>53</sup> Petritsi, *German*, 69. See also Alexidze (2021) (4), 84-86.



- (c) According to Petritsi, the intellect and the object of its intellectual activity are the same (unlike the soul, which has to embrace an object of its thought step by step, first getting information about it from ‘outside’). The act of intellection is inseparable from the intellect’s substance, just as the rays are inseparable from the sun disc.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the intellect, the act of intellection, and the object of intellection are the same. Moreover, the intellect performs two things at once: this is the act of thinking, and thinking that what it thinks. This is an eternal activity. The intellect embraces the object of thinking and also the intellection of its own activity aimed at the object of its thought (i.e. it is aware of its own act of thinking). Therefore, the intellect knows not only *what* it knows but also *that* it knows.<sup>55</sup> Petritsi’s understanding of the intellect as the subject which thinks itself could be influenced by Aristotle and also by Neoplatonic theories.<sup>56</sup> Especially intellect’s awareness of the act, the object, and the subject of cognition (which all are the same) is clearly expressed by Proclus in the *Elements of Theology*, prop. 168 on which Petritsi commented.<sup>57</sup>
- (d) Petritsi interpreted matter as a lack of form.<sup>58</sup> We call it, as Petritsi says, ‘non-being’ by reason of the privation of forms.<sup>59</sup> Matter, according to Petritsi, has no *morphē* (i.e. form),<sup>60</sup> and is characterized by its *sterēsis* (i.e. privation, lack).<sup>61</sup> Matter is ‘below’ the forms, while the supreme One on which matter

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<sup>54</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 7-8, prologue. On the discursive (*dianoetic, metabatic*) mode of soul’s cognition in Petritsi in detail see Alexidze (2016), 174-194.

<sup>55</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 186, ch. 168.

<sup>56</sup> See Bonazzi (2022), 118.

<sup>57</sup> Procl. *ET.* 146, 16-23, §168. On Petritsi’s theory of intellect see also Alexidze (2021) (2), 10-38.

<sup>58</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 30, ch. 6. See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 76, ch. 28; 83, ch. 32; 126, ch. 59; 137, ch. 77. On Petritsi’s theory of matter in detail see Alexidze (2017), 123-134.

<sup>59</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 42-43, ch. 11.

<sup>60</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 69, ch. 25. Here too Petritsi uses Greek word μορφή in Georgian transliteration.

<sup>61</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 124-125, ch. 57. Again, Petritsi uses Greek word στέρησις in Georgian transliteration. On matter as privation (in opposition to Aristotle) see Plotinus, *Enn.* II, 4, 16, 3-4; 12-13.

depends transcends the forms.<sup>62</sup> We find an interesting combination of Platonic and Aristotelian influences concerning matter in chapter 27 of Petritsi's commentary:

Petritsi, *comm.* 72-73, ch. 27

Socrates says [about matter] that it is similar to a female, which is constantly in change [i.e. it strives constantly to otherness]. As it gets from the forms their *aporroia* [i.e. emanation, outflow],<sup>63</sup> it strives to run away and reject [this emanation] in order to catch and get another one. In such a way it is constantly inclined to changes insofar as it is not stable in its relations to its lovers.<sup>64</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

I think that in this case Petritsi combines the fragment from Plato's *Timaeus*, where the principle, which in Neoplatonic (and Petritsi's) philosophy corresponds to matter, is called receptacle, nurse and mother,<sup>65</sup> with Aristotle's definition of matter, which desires form, as the female desires the male.<sup>66</sup> In sum, Petritsi's thesis that matter is formless could have been influenced not only directly by Aristotle but even more by Neoplatonic (mostly Proclus') understanding of *hyle*.

(e) Petritsi shares the Aristotelian point of view on the eternity of the world. As he claims, the movement of the heaven is endless, because the object of its desire and love is also endless.<sup>67</sup> The heaven is immortal and infinite, though its immortality only includes the perpetuity of its movement.<sup>68</sup> In this case too, we

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<sup>62</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 58-59, ch. 20. From this passage it is clear that Petritsi's supreme One does not correspond to Aristotle's Prime Mover which is Form of Forms.

<sup>63</sup> ἀπόρροια. Again, Petritsi uses a Greek word in Georgian transliteration.

<sup>64</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 72-73, ch. 27: "რომლისათვისცა იტყვს სოკრატი, ვითარმედ 'ნიადაგ მესხუაესა მდედრს ჰგავსო ნივთი'. რამეთუ, ვითარ რად ეპყრას რადვე გუართა აპორრუად, ჰმეცადინოს სივლტოლად და განგდებად მას, და ზედ მოქმნად და შემოხდად სხუასა, და ესრეთ სხვთი სხუად ცვალებად დაუცხრომელად უმდგომოობისათვის თვისისა მიყუართადმი თვსთა."

<sup>65</sup> Plato, *Ti.* 49a, 50bd, 51a, 52de.

<sup>66</sup> Arist. *Phys.* I, 9, 192a3-7; 13-25. This fragment is quoted also by Plotinus, *Enn.* II, 4, 16, 13-16. See Perl (2022), 33. See also O'Brien (1996) 179-181; Alexidze (2017), 127; Petritsi, *German*, 251.

<sup>67</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 45, ch. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 110, ch. 50.

cannot be sure whether Petritsi's position was influenced by Aristotle or rather by Neoplatonic (Proclean) interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* and generally,<sup>69</sup> Proclus' theory of the eternity of the world.

- (f) Petritsi seems to agree with Aristotle's theory of the eternity of the forms, combining it with Proclus' thesis that "for if it is one, it does not become one, because the being does not become [as it already is]".<sup>70</sup> Petritsi quotes this phrase and comments upon it as follows:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 25, ch. 3

You see that the being which already exists according to [its] form does not become.<sup>71</sup> Aristotle demonstrated this in his *Physics* as he said that the being which exists according to the form does not become. Because if it is, how can it become existent?<sup>72</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

Petritsi expresses the same idea, again with reference to Aristotle, in chapter 62 of his commentary: "We have learned that the being which exists according to [its] form does not become, as Aristotle has proved."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Procl. *In Tim.* I, 276-282.

<sup>70</sup> Procl. *ET*, 4, 6-7, §3 (English translation by Dodds, 5, slightly modified according to Petritsi's version of translation): εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἡδὴ ἔστιν ἓν, οὐ γίνεταί ἕν· τὸ γὰρ ὄν οὐ γίνεταί ὃ ἡδὴ ἔστιν. Petritsi, 25, ch. 3: "ზოლო არს თუ იგიო ერთ, არა იქმნეს ერთ. რამეთუ მყოფი არა იქმნების". Petritsi, *Comm.* 25, ch. 3. See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 119, ch. 54.

<sup>71</sup> I inserted "you see, that the being" and "does not become" following the Georgian manuscripts. This fragment is absent in Kauchtschischvili's edition. See also Petritsi, *German*, 96.

<sup>72</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 25, ch. 3: "გესმა, თუ მყოფი არა იქმნების, რომელი გუარითა წარმოდგომილ იყოს. ესე არისტოტელი 'ზუნებითა' შორის აღმოაჩინა, იტყვის ვითარმედ უკუეთუ არს, ვითარღა იქმნეს არსი." See Arist. *Phys.* 1. 7. 190a9-24, 191b26 in combination with *Metaph.* 7. 9. 1034b8. See also Petritsi, *Comm.* 104, ch. 45. On this issue see Alexidze (2008) 72-73; 335-336, and Petritsi, *German*, 210.

<sup>73</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 114-115, ch. 52: "ესე გვსწავიეს, რომელ მყოფი არა იქმნების რომელი წარმოდგომილა გუარითა, ვითარ არისტოტელი აღმოაჩინა".

- (g) Petritsi seems to be happy with Aristotle's definition of the intellect as the "form of forms" (ὁ νοῦς εἰδῶς εἰδῶν)<sup>74</sup> though Petritsi applies it to Proclus' first Limit.<sup>75</sup>
- (h) Petritsi endorses Aristotle's thesis according to which true knowledge requires the knowledge of the causes. In chapter 11 of his commentary, Petritsi explicitly makes reference to Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>76</sup>
- (i) Petritsi seems to agree with the Aristotelian understanding of the difference between the human soul and the intellect. As he claims, unlike the intellect, the soul acquires the ability of cognition from the outside. Petritsi refers to Aristotle using the Greek word 'thurathen'<sup>77</sup> in Georgian transliteration.<sup>78</sup>
- (j) Interestingly, Petritsi refers to Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias* (he mentions the title of the book in Greek, in Georgian transliteration) in his prologue to the commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in order to explain the meaning of the title of Proclus' book: *Stoicheiosis*. As Petritsi claims, this word signifies the most simple item, i.e. an element, because when one teaches something, one starts with the simplest things and progresses towards the ones that are composed of them just as words are composed from the letters, sentences from the words, and a speech from the sentences.<sup>79</sup>
- (k) At the end of chapter 54 of his commentary Petritsi claims that the death of the partial and individual beings does not mean that their forms (kinds) are also perishable. Thus, a man dies, or a horse or a deer or a fish, but not their nature, i.e. not humanity, horseness and so on. The same is the case of the four elements: only their part changes while the whole remains. Here Petritsi refers to Aristotle and claims that he teaches us about it in his

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<sup>74</sup> Arist. *De an.* 3.5. 432a2.

<sup>75</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 37, ch. 10. See also Petritsi, *German*, 115.

<sup>76</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 41-42, ch. 11. Arist. *Anal. Post.* 1. 2. 71b10, 78b4-13; 90a15. See also Petritsi, *German*, 122.

<sup>77</sup> θύραθεν. See Arist. *GA* 736b28; *De an.* 3. 5, 430a10-25. See also Alexander Aphrodisias, *De anima*, 111, 22-36, ed. Bruns.

<sup>78</sup> თჳრათენად. Petritsi, *Comm.* 58, ch. 20. See also Petritsi, *German*, 144.

<sup>79</sup> Petritsi, 5, prologue.

“book ‘*About coming-to-be and passing away*’ which he calls ‘*Peri geneleos and phthoras*’”.<sup>80</sup>

- (l) In chapter 17, Petritsi asserts that the soul is incorporeal and it does not consist of corporeal parts. Petritsi refers to Iamblichus, who, as Petritsi says, claimed that the parts of the incorporeals are also incorporeal.<sup>81</sup> Petritsi repeats this idea:

Petritsi, *Comm.* 51, ch.17

An incorporeal thing nowhere consists of corporeal parts, while a corporeal thing is made up from the incorporeals like a body consists of an *epiphaneia*<sup>82</sup> and other dimensions. And again, as Aristotle proved, a body without any qualities becomes qualified by means of four [kinds of] qualities,<sup>83</sup> just as a number by means of its parts, and the order by means of its parts.<sup>84</sup> (tr. Alexidze)

Thus, Petritsi tries to find a correspondence between the (neo)platonist point of view on the soul as an incorporeal being with Aristotle’s understanding of the composition of bodies.

- (m) In chapter 18, Petritsi refers to Aristotle discussing the meaning of the word ‘being’ (მყოფი is the Georgian equivalent of Greek τὸ ὄν). As Petritsi says, according to Aristotle, ‘being’ is a common name for the substantially existent (არსი) and for an

<sup>80</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 119, ch. 54.

<sup>81</sup> For Iamblichus see Simpl. in *Cat.* 5a23, CAG VIII, 137 Kalbfleisch; Larsen (1972), 23, 267, fr. 44. Simplicius tried to find a correspondence between Iamblichus’ and Aristotle’s theories on this issue, like Petritsi, who seems to do the same in this case. See Petritsi, *German*, 134.

<sup>82</sup> ἐπιφάνεια, i.e. surface. Again, Petritsi uses the Greek word in Georgian transliteration.

<sup>83</sup> In Kauchtschishvili’s opinion, discussing four kinds of qualities (ποιότητες) in Aristotle, Petritsi had in mind Arist. *Cat.* 8. (Kauchtschishvili in Ioane Petritsi (1940), XXXIII, though I think the two contexts are quite different.

<sup>84</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 51, ch. 17: “რამეთუ არა სადა შედგეს უსხეულოდ სხეულთაგან. ხოლო სხეული შედგეს უსხეულოთა მიერ, ვითარ სხეული ეპიფანიადას მიერ და სხუათა განსაზიდათ. და კუალად, ვითარცა აღმოაჩინა არისტოტელი, ვითარმედ ურომელოდ სხეული გარომელდების ოთხთა რომელობათაგან, ვითარცა რიცხვ თვსთა ნაწილთა მიერ და მორთულეზა თვსთა ნაწილთა მიერ.” See Arist. *Cat.* 6. 4b20-31.

accidental one (შემთხვევითი),<sup>85</sup> though “‘being’ is more than the substantially existent, because it contains more”.<sup>86</sup> In chapter 19, Petritsi discusses the hierarchy of beings. He refers to Aristotle and claims that all beings, in spite of their differences, are as existent, equal because they are provided with their existence (აობად) equally by the first existent principle (ად), though they are different as beings and belong to the various levels of the hierarchy.<sup>87</sup> In chapter 52, Petritsi refers to Plato (having in mind, probably, also Aristotle’s *Categories*) and claims that the corporeal entities are permanently in the condition of genesis (i.e. coming-to-be and vanishing), “that’s why they should not be called ‘beings’, as the divine Plato says.<sup>88</sup> But if one still calls them ‘beings’, this must be only on the basis of name identity [i.e. homonymous/equivocally], and not substantially [i.e. synonymous/univocally], as in the case of a living being and [its] image.”<sup>89</sup>

- (n) Petritsi agrees with Aristotle that there must be one ‘ruler of everything’ (meaning one cause). In the epilogue of his commentary, Petritsi puts forward the notion of evil that has no substance, and mentions Aristotle in a positive context. He says that in *Metaphysics* – “in the [book], which comes after *Physics*, that means in his *Theology*, [Aristotle] says that ‘there is one ruler of everything’.”<sup>90</sup> Here Petritsi probably means Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* XII 9, 1076a4, where a phrase from Homer’s *Ilias* II 204 is quoted.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See Arist. *Metaph.* 6. 7. 1017a.

<sup>86</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 54, ch. 18: “უფროდ ვიდრემე არსსა მყოფი, რამეთუ უმეტესთა არს შემცველ.”

<sup>87</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 56, ch. 19. See also Arist. *Metaph.* 11. 2. 1060b4-5.

<sup>88</sup> Plat. *Ti.* 27d5-28a4.

<sup>89</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 115, ch. 52: “არა ჯერ არს, რადამცა მყოფ ეწოდანო, იტყვის ღმრთივი პლატონ. ხოლო თუ ვინ უწოდდესო, ოდენ სეხნაობით უწოდონ და ნუ არსებით, ვითარ ცხოველსა და ხატსა.” See Arist. *Categ.* 1.1a.

<sup>90</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 214, epilogue.

<sup>91</sup> See Alexidze (2021) (3), 155. Interestingly, Georgios Gemistos Plethon, like Petritsi, says that Aristotle quotes Homer, according to whom “the rule of many is not a good thing – let there be one ruler.” (Homer, *Ilias*, II, 204). However, unlike Petritsi, Plethon thinks that Aristotle’s “words are impressive in theory, but in

- (o) An interesting example of Petritsi's ambivalent attitude toward Aristotle is expressed in the so-called epilogue of his commentary. Here Petritsi claims that if both Greeks and Georgians had not impeded him in fulfilling his intellectual ambitions and had helped him, his work would have been in harmony with the divine providence, and he would have been able "to produce [in Georgian] philosophical theories in Aristotelian manner, and create theology free from matter."<sup>92</sup> In this fragment, I think, Petritsi, on the one hand, highly appreciates Aristotle's philosophy, and, on the other, criticizes him because he thinks that Aristotle mixed the subject of physics, i.e. material world with theology.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, Petritsi often compared Plato with Aristotle and their successors with each other as well. There are certain theses which Petritsi shared with Aristotle, though he never gave preference to Aristotle over Plato; on the contrary, he frequently wrote about the superiority of Plato and his successors' philosophy in comparison with Aristotle and his successors. The theory of the supreme One, the difference between corporeal and incorporeal forms, the incorporeal character of the soul's substance – these are some major Platonic theses, besides many others, also shared by Petritsi. Petritsi's interpretation of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies and their relationship is based on Neoplatonic tradition – the intention of 'harmonization' of their philosophies as far as it was possible, though under Plato's leadership. Among Platonists, Proclus' philosophy had a major impact on Petritsi, and he explicitly acknowledged his authority. Petritsi claimed that in Aristotle's philosophy the demiurgic/creative/efficient cause was neglected. He was certain that Platonic tradition had its roots in ancient times and was much older than Plato himself. Directly or indirectly, Petritsi testified that he was a follower of Platonic tradition, more so than the Aristotelian one, though he certainly used a lot of Aristotelian theses.

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practice it is he himself who introduces the disorderly state of beings by refusing to allow the unity of being." (Pletho, *de diff.* 896, in PG, ed. Migne. Transl. by Woodhouse (1986), 195). Alexidze (2021) (3), 155, 158-159.

<sup>92</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 222, epilogue: "ხედვამცა ფილოსოფოსთა განცდისად მეარისტოტელურა და ღმრთისმეტყუელებად ნივთისაგან მიუხებელი წარმომეყენა." On this fragment see also Alexidze (2008), 79-82, 338; Alexidze (2017) 130.

<sup>93</sup> Petritsi, *Comm.* 75, ch. 28; 54, ch. 18.

#### IV. Conclusion

We discussed some cases of interpretation of Aristotle's theories by two 12<sup>th</sup>-century Christian interpreters of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*: the Greek 'Refutation' by Nicholas of Methone (*Anaptyxis*), and the Georgian commentary by Ioane Petritsi, who was also educated in Byzantium and had a broad knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy. In both texts, Aristotle's philosophy was not a central subject, but had a kind of a supportive role in the exposition of the main issues related to Proclus' theories. Nicholas' attitude toward Aristotle was more favorable than his attitude toward Proclus, though not even Aristotle, as a non-Christian philosopher, could be perfect for Nicholas. I think it was more profitable for Nicholas' radically critical approach to Proclus' philosophy to unveil the differences between Aristotle's and Platonic philosophies than to show the similarities and the possibility of harmony between them. As for Petritsi, Aristotle was not as great for him as Plato or Proclus were, especially in theology (i.e. metaphysics), though Aristotle's logic, as well as some of his ontological and cosmological theses, were acceptable for him. Petritsi appreciated Aristotle's logic as a necessary basis for ontological and theological studies, including Proclus' theory of the supreme One. In certain cases, Petritsi demonstrated the differences between Platonic and Aristotelian theories, on the one hand, while in other cases, he tried to show harmony between them. Briefly, the attitude of these two medieval thinkers can be summarized as follows: Nicholas of Methone made a radically negative evaluation of Proclus' philosophy, and expressed in some instances a positive attitude toward Aristotle, while Petritsi made an explicitly positive evaluation of Proclus' philosophy and the whole Platonic tradition, and only partially accepted Aristotle's theories.



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