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ARISTOTELIAN DEFINITION OF SOUL IN RUSTAVELI'S POEM (12ᵀᴴ CENTURY)

Aristotle's treatise on the soul *De anima* (Περι πσυχεσ) consummates the age-old drive of Classical Greek philosophy towards determining the essence of the soul. In the view of Anaximenes (Milesian school), the soul had material existence, consisting of air. According to Heraclitus of Ephesus (6th-5th cent. B.C.), the soul constituted a mixture of water and fire, while Democritus (5th-4th cent. B.C.) believed that it was composed of atoms. The stoicists also considered the soul to be material. Pythagoras (6th cent. B.C.) held the soul to be a harmony, while Socrates (5th cent. B.C.), opposing this view, contended that the soul could not be a harmony, for the latter was complex, and the soul simple. For his part, Socrates shared the view of ancient thinkers to the effect that the soul has an existence independent of the body. He believes the soul existed before the birth of the body and continued to exist after its death, migrating to another world. For their part, the Pythagoreans developed the same view, holding that souls could wander from body to body. In the wake of Socrates, Plato (5th-4th cent. B.C.) too accepted the thesis of the immaterial nature and immortality of the soul. Considering the soul in relationship with the body, he arrives at the conclusion that the soul introduces life into the body (*Phaidon* LIV). On the other hand, Plato argues that «the soul is different in kind from the body. The soul is invisible and immaterial, while the body, of course, is both visible and material. Moreover, the soul is separable from the body and immortal»[1].

Aristotle's view on the soul took shape in the setting of the views just cited and under their direct criticism. It was a development of the views of

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[1]   G.E.R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: the Growth and Structure of His Thought*. Cambridge, 1968, p. 184.

Socrates and Plato, but at the same time quite a new and principled conception on the essence of the soul.

Aristotle concurs with his predecessor philosophers regarding the soul not being identical with the body. However, unlike them, he argues that the soul does not exist independently of the body. In his opinion, the soul is the essence (*ousia*) of the body, its reification or consummation – *entelecheia*. The soul is the form or shape of a natural body with potential life (*to tu somatos eidos*), (*De anima*, II, 1). To gain an insight into this statement, Aristotle's conception of form (*eidos*) acquires essential importance. *Eidos* – interpreted by Plato as *idea* existing in an immaterial world – is, in Aristotle's view, the being of an object – its primordial or basic essence. The common between the form conceived of by Aristotle and form in ordinary understanding, i.e. its outline or shape, is that both impart wholeness to matter. The most characteristic and essential feature of the soul is precisely the fact that it (the soul) turns the natural body with potential life into an organic whole or single object. According to Aristotle soul is that which imparts reality to a plant or an animal. That is why in Aristotle's opinion, the form of an object and its image are the same. This is the only thing about which there is said to be a definite certainty. Hence the form of an object is the same as the concept or conception of the object. Therefore, in Aristotle's definition the soul is a certain concept and form rather than matter and substrate. According to him soul or the form of body is reification and conception. Hence, soul is the essence of the animate body (*De anima*, II, 2).

Aristotle's thesis – soul is the form of body – became popular in medieval Scholasticism. This definition of soul is repeated by the greatest representatives of Arabic Aristotelianism: Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (10th-11th cent.) in the East, and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (12th cent.) in the West. In Byzantium it was referred to by John Italus, a scholastic of the 11th century Constantinople Academy. In Latin-language Scholasticism of Western Europe Aristotle's cited definition became popular from the early 13th century. Initially it occurs with Alfred Anglicus. This proposition was shared and developed by Sieger of Brabant, European representative of Averroism (in his treatises *Quaestiones in tertium De anima, De intellectu: Tractatus de anima intellectiva)*. Aristotle's definition of the soul was interpreted in a specific way by Thomas Aquinas. He argued his position in a polemic with the Averroists, viz. Sieger of Brabant (the treatise: *De unitate intellectus contra averroistas*). Important for our present topic is

the fact that in Aristotle's view, shared by Thomas Aquinas, the soul is a form of the body (*Summa contra gentiles, II; Summa Theologie, Ia*). The position of Thomas Aquinas on the soul, thought of as the form of the body, is shared by Dante Alighieri. At the turn of the 13th-14th centuries the soul was considered to be the form of the body by Duns Scotus and Maister Ekhart.

Aristotle's definition of the soul was known to and repeated by Rustaveli, a Georgian poet and thinker of the 12th-13th centuries. His poem *The Man in the Panther's Skin* is by its subject an Oriental-Persian Type love romance, echoing somewhat with its knightly etiquette the Western courtly romance. From the viewpoint of its ideological-world view – lofty national Georgian ideals (pure, elevated love, devotion to a friend, ets.) – it fits organically into religious-Christian thought, enriched from the intellectual position with Classical Greek philosophy. The poet's theological-philosophical problems and terminology clearly correspond to late medieval developed Scholasticism, while its clearly-defined humanistic position, fine aesthetic experience and high psycholgism point to Renaissance ideals.

In conformity with the Persian epic tradition, the poem begins with a discourse on the creation of the world. Following in the wake of the biblical *Genesis*, Rustaveli speaks of God's act of creation: God created the firmament by that mighty power, made His creatures to breathe with a spirit from on high; to us men He has given the world, infinite in variety we possess it; from Him is every monarch in His likeness.

In the second quatrain Rustaveli appeals to God and commits his own soul to Him: Defend me, give me strength to trample upon Satan, give me the love of a lover longing unto death, lighten the burden of sin I must bear with me beyond the grave!

This commitment begins with the words: O one God, thou created the face of every body! Different interpretations of this line have taken shape in Rustaveli Studies: God gave form to matter (M. Gogiberidze), God introduced His essence into every object (Sh. Nutsubidze), God created the first models of all animal species (I. Lolashvili), God created the first man as the model of living body (Z. Gamsakhurdia), God created the ideas of all objects (B. Bregvadze). These interpretations are unacceptable on several grounds: in them reference is repeatedly made to the creation of the world by God: at the same time, according to some of them the view differs from the biblical creationism set forth in the first line. Further, such

interpretations of the first line of the quatrain are not continued logically in the remaining lines of the same quatrain. It is not clear why the poet moves from the statement set forth in the first line to the supplication of committing his own soul to God. Finally, these interpretations do not take full account of precise philosophical meanings of the notions «face» and «body» in Rustaveli's above-cited statement.

Face (*image, sakhe* in Georgian) in old Georgian philosophical works, translated from Greek (the works of Dionysius the Areopagite translated by Ephrem Mtsire, and Proclus's *Elements of Theology,* translated by Ioane Petritsi) corresponds to the Greek notions *eidos* and *morphe* and means *form* – only in the meaning it was used in Classical Greek philosophical heritage: in that of the essence of a thing, its conceptualization or idea. Body (Georgian *tani*) in the Georgian language generally, and in Rustaveli's poem in particular, means the body of man or animal, *soma* being its corresponding Greek term.

Thus, Rustaveli begins to commit his own soul to God in the following words: O one God, thou created the form of every body. As pointed out above, the form (or image) of a body, with a potential of life, means soul. This formula has the meaning of soul in Classical Greek philosophy too, in late medieval Arabic, Greek and Latin Scholasticism, early patristic writings (*On the Nature of Man* by Nemesius of Emesa), and in Old Georgian translated philosophical literature too (Ioane Petritsi). After stating this thesis, it is natural and logical for the poet to commit his own soul to God: God, thou created all souls and thou protect my soul.

In the second line of the poem as in the first, Rustaveli adheres to Christian creationism: every soul is created by God. In this thesis of Rustaveli, only the definition of soul stems from Aristotle's philosophy: the reference to soul as the form of body. Thus, Rustaveli does not confuse, nor does he reconcile Christian creationism with Aristotle's ontological conception of the eternity of the world. He (Rustaveli) conveys the formula of religious creationism through a philosophical thesis stemming from Aristotle's metaphysics. This thesis deals with the essence of the soul – conceiving the soul as a form of body possessing the potential of life. Such theological interpretations correspond to the essence of 13th century European Scholasticism. In particular, as indicated above, it was this definition that was adopted in 13th century Scholasticism, being harmonized with religious theosophy from different positions.

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