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The Problem of Evil and the Theory of Contraries from Alexandria and Athens to Armenia in Late Antiquity*

To my grandmothers, Elisa and Antonia

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to trace the reception of the problem of evil in Armenian philosophical literature in Late Antiquity. As preliminary material, it offers a detailed discussion of the philosophical tenets of the debate as developed by the Neoplatonists, and especially by the Greek Alexandrian commentators, with a particular focus on David the Invincible. It provides the edition and theoretical analysis of an Armenian pseudepigraphic text, the so-called “Every Evil Is Punishable”, which is attributed to David the Invincible in the Armenian tradition, and has been generally considered as the Armenian translation of (pseudo-)Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Manicheos*. The paper also draws a comparison between the Armenian text and (pseudo-)Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Manicheos*, on the one hand, and between the Armenian text and two other Greek texts, namely Didymus the Blind’s *Contra Manicheos* and John of Caesarea’s *Syllogisms*, on the other.

KEYWORDS: Armenian Philosophical Literature, Late Antiquity, Armenian Translations, Early Byzantine Literature

The problem of evil was one of the main issues in the philosophical and theological debates of Antiquity and Late Antiquity. Both the Neoplatonists and the Church Fathers discussed the ontological status of evil as something opposed to God, and generally to the divinity. The former focused on it in response to two theories: that of the relation between matter and evil as found in Plotinus’ *Enneads*, and that of the relation between possession and privation as found in Aristotle’s *Categories*. For the latter, by contrast, it was one of the epistemic paradigms in the hard and eristic process of reshaping and adapting the pagan philosophical theories to the Christian faith. Starting from the first half of the 5th century, the disputes about the problem of evil also reverberated in Armenia. It was at that point that first Mesrop Mashots and his disciples, and then the mostly anonymous members of the Hellenizing (Grecizing) School, initiated the translation of a variety of texts, including the Graeco-Hellenistic literature¹. Although this is well known, we do not have a detailed study of how theoretical questions concerning evil—its ontological status and the logical backgrounds of the problem—transmigrated into medieval Armenian literature. The aim of this paper is an attempt to partly fill this gap.

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¹ For recent contributions on this topic, M. MORANI, *Ancient Armenian Translation from Greek Texts: Questions of Method*, in: *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions. An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. F. Gazzano – L. Pagani – G. Traina. Berlin – Boston 2016, 3–21; V. CALZOLARI, *The Transmission and Reception of the Greek Cultural Heritage in Late Antique Armenia: The Armenian Translations of the Greek Neoplatonic Works*, in: *Greek Texts 47–70*; G. MURADYAN, *The Hellenizing School*, in: *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, ed. V. Calzolari with the Collaboration of M. E. Stone. Leiden – Boston 2014, 321–348.

The paper is divided into three sections. In section 1, I will examine the theoretical tenets of the debate in the Greek tradition, particularly as formulated by the Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonic commentators. I will attempt to outline the main ontological and logical problems relating to contraries—among which the couple good-evil is unavoidably included—that are discussed in the commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*. Particularly, my focus will be on David the Invincible (or the Armenian, according to the Greek sources). It was thanks to him that the Graeco-Hellenistic heritage and the Neoplatonic Alexandrian philosophical tradition rapidly spread into Armenia. This initiated in turn a “local” commentary tradition that was to be productive intermittently until the 18th century. In the same section, I will offer a general overview of the position of the Church Father Gregory of Nyssa, and I will scrutinize especially the Cappadocian’s ontological approach to the problem of evil. This is necessary, because the Greek pseudepigraphical text known under the title *Contra Manicheos* (hereafter, *CMg*), which is at the core of my study, was attributed to him by the Greek manuscript tradition. This pseudepigraphical text is of great interest, for it shows how multilayered the transition of the Greek inheritance to Christianity was, in particular as regards fundamental logical tools, such as demonstrative method and syllogistic arguments. These tools would have been of paramount significance in theological and Christological disputes. Of the Greek *CMg* (or rather, its underlying model, as I will show) there exists an extensive re-adaptation in Armenian, which is attributed to David the Invincible and bears a different title: Ամենապի շար սասնջելի [“Every Evil Is Punishable”] (hereafter, *ACH*). In section 2, I will draw attention to the Armenian Church Father Eznik of Koghb, who was the first Armenian author to deal with the problem of evil in his original masterpiece, *Against the Sects* (or *De Deo*, as it was brilliantly defined by Louis Mariès). A detailed discussion of Eznik of Koghb’s answers to the problem of evil will also help us better to understand the background of David the Invincible’s discussion of evil, which is mainly found in the *Definitions and Division of Philosophy* (the Armenian adaptation of David’s *Prolegomena philosophiae*)². Then, I will offer a systematic examination of David’s ontological views on evil in his Armenian commentaries, in order to assess what conceptual similarities prompted the Armenian tradition to attribute *ACH* to David himself. In section 3, I will offer the diplomatic edition of the Armenian *ACH*, as well as its English translation, in juxtaposition with the Greek *CMg*. I will end with a detailed examination of the theoretical tenets of both texts, by comparing their lexical and conceptual differences and similarities against two other Greek texts, the *Contra Manicheos* by Didymus the Blind and the *Omne malum punienudum est* or *Syllogisms* probably composed by John of Caesarea.

INTERTWINED PHILOSOPHICAL HUBS: ATHENS AND ALEXANDRIA

The problem of evil had been considered an important question throughout Antiquity, especially in relation to the ontological status of matter and to the concept of (divine) providence, which can, for instance, be seen in some representatives of Middle-Platonism, such as Numenius. Yet, from Plotinus and the early Christianized “Platonism” onwards it became a crucial issue. The philosophers examined it from ontological and logical perspectives, whereas the Alexandrian and Cappadocian Fathers included it in their theological and ontological arguments in response to the proselytism of the dualistic sect of the Manicheans.

² I prefer to define the Armenian version of the *Prolegomena* by David the Invincible as an “adaptation” rather than a “translation” for several reasons that I attempted to substantiate by means of linguistic and textual proofs in: B. CONTIN, *David l’Arménien et l’École d’Alexandrie. Recherches sur la formation du vocabulaire épistémologique des œuvres grecques et arméniennes* (OCA 301). Rome 2017. Cf. V. CALZOLARI, *La version arménienne des Prolegomena philosophiae de David et son rapport avec le texte grec*, in: *L’œuvre de David l’Invincible et la transmission de la pensée grecque dans la tradition arménienne et syriaque*, ed. V. Calzolari – J. Barnes (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Armeniaca. Davidis Opera* 1). Leiden – Boston 2009, 39–65.

The ontological argument: Plotinus and Proclus

The father of “Neoplatonism”, Plotinus, focuses on the problem of evil in the first book of his *Enneads*, chapter 8. Here, he identifies evil with primordial matter and describes its ontological status through the apophatic discourse, in order to show that evil is necessarily deprivation of being in the ontocosmological process of emanation proceeding from the One. When interpreting *Theaetetus* 176A, where we are told that evil is endemic in this sphere of existence, Plotinus agrees with Plato that evil is something necessary. Yet he reframes Plato’s position in the light of his theory of emanation so as to avoid a possible dualistic conclusion³. Evil thus becomes the last outcome in the outgoing process of emanation and is necessarily opposed to good⁴. Evil and vice come into existence because the irrational part of the soul is necessarily charmed by material attractions. Since matter is produced by a lower manifestation of the higher soul (characterized as “sensation”), it is imperfect by necessity, being the imperfect effect of an imperfect cause⁵.

Plotinus’ negative conception of evil was challenged by one of the main representatives of the Neoplatonic school, Proclus. Both Plotinus and Proclus seek to tackle the ontological status of evil, starting from *Theaetetus* 176A. Yet, the discrepancy between the two authors is evident, being mainly due to their different concept of matter. Proclus, in fact, does not accept Plotinus’ view that matter should be regarded as being opposed to the plenty of being and as formless. When rejecting this opinion, Proclus argues that the nature of evil does not depend on matter, because matter is the necessary substratum of every created being. Thus, matter should be good by necessity, since it has been created by the divine. By contrast, evil has no matter and is characterized as parasitic existence (*parhypostasis*) which comes into existence through a certain deficiency of the beings that are good by essence⁶. Nonetheless, the presence of evil challenges the role of divine providence, for evil is an obstacle to the good being of providence and to its activity in the realm of nature. In order to avoid this aporia, Proclus argues that evil depends solely on the soul. Since the soul is a self-moving substance and subjected to change, it can also be exposed to partial evil. Yet, evil is finally encompassed by the divine providence which leads the creature to its own original ontological status of “being good”. Evil is not absolute evil, but is mixed with good according to different degrees and appearances. What seems to be evil is indeed evil for the particulars but not for the universals (*De Malorum Subsistentia* 59):

³ Cf. J. M. RIST, Plotinus on Matter and Evil. *Phronesis* 6, 2 (1961) 154–166, part. 158–160.

⁴ Plotinus, *Enneads* I 8.7.16–23: “It is also possible to grasp the necessity of evil in this way. For since there is not only the Good, there must be, in the going out beyond it, if one wishes to say in this way, in the descent and departure, the end beyond which nothing more emerges, and this is evil. There must be something after the first and so also the last, but this is matter, having nothing of the first” (after D. O’MEARA, Plotinus: Introduction to the *Enneads*. Oxford 1993, 83).

⁵ J. OPSOMER, Proclus vs Plotinus on Matter (*De mal. subs.* 30–7). *Phronesis* 46, 2 (2001) 154–188. On the distinction put forward by Proclus between *steresis* and *hexis*, in particular with respect to Aristotle, J. N. MARTIN, Existence, Negation, and Abstraction in the Neoplatonic Hierarchy. *History and Philosophy of Logic* 16, 2 (1995) 169–196, part. 191–192.

⁶ Proclus, *De malorum subsistentia* 53.1–14: *Si itaque hec recte dicimus, neque agere malum neque posse dicendum, sed et agere ipsi et posse a contrario. Et enim bonum debile et inefficax propter mixturam mali fit, et malum virtutis et operationis transortitur propter boni presentiam: in uno enim ambo. Et sicut in corporibus materia fit contrarium contrario, et le secundum naturam fortificat le preter naturam [...], quod autem preter naturam debilitat quod secundum naturam, latitante naturam ad facere et ordine in quo le bene nature soluto: sic utique et in animalibus malum vincens bonum utitur illius potentia ad suum, scilicet ea quae rationis et inventionibus ad concupiscentias; et tradunt invicem ex sui ipsorum natura, hoc quidem de potentia, hoc autem de debilitate, quoniam et secundum se malum ne neque agere natum est neque posse* (Procli *Opuscula*, ed. H. BOESE. Berlin 1960, 250–252; Proclus. *Trois études sur la Providence*, ed. D. ISAAC [*Les Belles Lettres*]. Paris 1982). For a Greek retroversion, see Proklos, *Tria Opuscula*, Textkritisch kommentierte Retroversion der Übersetzung Wilhelms von Moerbeke, ed. B. STROBEL (*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina* 6). Berlin – Boston 2014, 908–910.

Talia quidem igitur omnia bonum habent multipliciter. Et enim ad aliorum vindictam facta sunt, et secundum dignitatem actio, et non idem agentem male in quodcumque agere aut ad indigens pati. Hec igitur et patienti omnino bona et facienti, secundum quod assequitur totis (sic !).

“Thus, all these evils have good in multiple manners. In fact, it is for the punishment of others that they are produced, and the act is accomplished with respect to what is worthy, and acting bad with someone who needs to be punished is not the same as acting bad in whatever circumstance. And these evils are undoubtedly good from the perspective both of the one who suffers them [*patiens*] and of the one who commits them [*faciens*], since the latter conforms himself to the whole.”⁷

In Proclus’ cosmological argument, evil has no further existence: gods, in fact, also create evil, but they do and know it as good for they have a comprehensive and undivided knowledge of what appears to be disunited and divided (De mal. sub. 61). The Plotinian identification between matter and evil is reformulated by Proclus. Since evil is deprived of any ontological status, it cannot combine with matter, because of its lack of existence and form⁸.

The logical argument: Ammonius of Hermias, Simplicius, Olympiodorus, Philoponus and David

For the Neoplatonist commentators who succeeded Proclus, both in Alexandria and in Athens, the discussion about evil emerges in the commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*, and particularly in the *lemmata* devoted to the opposites (*ta antikeimena*)⁹. Ammonius of Hermias (434/45–517/26), who received his education from Proclus in Athens and later became a teacher of philosophy in Alexandria, describes three contrary modes of being, which have been passed down through the exegetical tradition: 1. a certain evil is wholly contrary to what is good, 2. a certain good is not wholly contrary to what is evil (because it is not convertible), 3. either a certain good or a certain evil is contrary to what is evil (*in Categories* 101.17–19). He argues, however, that the contraries cannot co-exist in the same substance (*hyparxis*) according to the same part and at the same time, such as health and illness. Moreover, not all the contraries can be seen in the same genus, such as the contrary genera of justice and injustice which belong to different genera. The former, in fact, belongs to the genus of virtue and the latter to the genus of vice. Yet, Ammonius argues that these contrary genera share a given common genus, for virtue is (a state of) possession, and similarly also vice is (a state of) possession¹⁰. Therefore, he declares that according to Aristotle contraries can be contraries by possession

⁷ Proclus 105–106 (ISAAC). Translated by me.

⁸ L. CARDULLO, Il male come “privazione”. Simplicio e Filopono in difesa della materia. *Peitho/Examina Antiqua* 1, 8 (2017) 391–408.

⁹ Here the Alexandrian commentators focus their exegetical efforts on: Aristotle, Cat. 13a37–b1, 13b36–14a1–6 (ed. R. BODÉUS. Aristotle. *Catégories*. Paris 2001, 60, 62): “Ὅσα δὲ ὡς κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις ἀντίκειται, φανερόν ὅτι κατ’ οὐδένα τῶν εἰρημένων τρόπων ἀντίκειται [...] Ἐναντίον δὲ ἐστὶν ἀγαθῶ μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης κακόν (τοῦτο δὲ δῆλον τῆ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐπαγωγῆ, οἷον ὑγεία νόσος καὶ δικαιοσύνη ἀδικία καὶ ἀνδρεία δειλία, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων), κακῶ δὲ ὅτε μὲν ἀγαθὸν ἐναντίον, ὅτε δὲ κακόν· τῆ γὰρ ἐνδεία κακῶ ὄντι ἢ ὑπερβολῆ ἐναντίον κακὸν ὄν· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ μεσότης ἐναντία ἐκατέρῳ οὕσα ἀγαθόν. Ἐπ’ ὀλίγων δ’ ἂν τὸ τοιοῦτον ἴδοι τις, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν πλείστων ἀεὶ τῷ κακῷ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐναντίον ἐστίν. “It is plain that things opposed as affirmation and negation are not opposed in any of the above ways [...]. What is contrary to a good thing is necessarily bad; this is clear by induction from cases—health and sickness, justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, and so on with the rest. But what is contrary to a bad thing is sometimes good but sometimes bad. For excess is contrary to deficiency, which is bad, and is itself bad; yet moderation as well is contrary to both, and it is good. However, though this sort of thing may be seen in a few cases, in most cases what is contrary to a bad thing is always a good.” Translation by J. L. ACKRILL, *Categories*, in: Aristotle. *Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volume I. The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. J. Barnes (*Bollingen Series* 71, 2). Chichester, West Sussex ©1995, 21.

¹⁰ Ammonius, in Cat. 102.15–21 (ed. A. BUSSE, Ammonius in Aristotelis *Categorias* Commentarius [*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 4]. Berlin 1895): “Ἄνω εἰρηκῶς ὅτι τὰ ἐναντία ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γένει δεῖ εἶναι, νῦν δείκνυσιν ὅτι οὐ πάντα ἐν τῷ

and privation, without however developing the argument about evil as his successors do¹¹. He merely states that evil and good are genera of some other things, in accordance with Aristotle's statement in *Categories* 14a19–25: Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἢ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γένει εἶναι ἢ ἐν τοῖς ἐναντίοις γένεσιν, ἢ αὐτὰ γένη εἶναι [...] ἀγαθὸν δὲ καὶ κακὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν γένει, ἀλλ' αὐτὰ τυγχάνει γένη τινῶν ὄντα (63, 19–25 BODÉUS)¹². It should be noted that even today the meaning of this statement is a matter of debate, because it can be interpreted in two different ways: either that evil and good are not in any ordinary genus but fall under a category, or that they are not in any category but subsumed under all the categories¹³. Given this situation, it is not surprising that the ancient Greek commentators, too, were induced to offer different interpretations and solutions.

Olympiodorus (495/505–565), a disciple of Ammonius, outlines four contrary modes of being, which have been handed down from the Ancients, adding one mode to the three put forward by his teacher: 1. goods are only contrary to evils, but evils are contrary both to goods and to evils (he refers then to the example of the deficiency which is contradictory not only to symmetry, which is something good, but also to excess, which is something bad); 2. contraries cannot co-exist in the same subject at the same time; 3. contraries can exist in the same subject by genus or species: by species, such as illness and health, in the animal body, and by genus, such as white and black, in the body *simpliciter*; 4. contraries are subsumed either under the same genus or under contrary genera, or they are the most general genera like good and evil. Further, Olympiodorus attempts to explain the meaning of *Categories* 14a 19–25, arguing that Aristotle does not intend to affirm two more genera beyond the ten categories. Hence, Olympiodorus states that neither good nor evil have their own matter, but that they act as genera through the whole scheme of the categorial being as, for instance, generation and corruption act in the substance, the former as good and the latter as bad, and so on¹⁴. Even though Olympiodorus develops his discourse on good and bad further than Ammonius, he does not take his argument as far as Simplicius and Philoponus.

Simplicius (490–560) describes only three contrary modes of being among the four inherited from the philosophical tradition: 1. contraries can be under the same genus as, for instance, white and black which are under color; 2. or they can be under contrary genera as, for instance, justice and injustice; 3. or they can be themselves genera as good and evil which are not in any ordinary genus, but are indeed genera in themselves. After quoting the opinions defended by various philosophers (Nicostratus, Archytas, Aristotle, Theophrastus and Iamblichus), he explains that it is worth investigating whether good and evil, and justice and injustice, and health and illness, should be defined as contraries, or rather as modes of having and not-having¹⁵.

αὐτῷ γένει εἰσίν. δικαιοσύνη γὰρ καὶ ἀδικία ἐναντία γένη οὐκ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γένει θεωροῦνται. ἢ γὰρ δικαιοσύνη ἐν γένει τῆ ἀρετῆς, ἢ δὲ ἀδικία ἐν γένει τῆ κακίας. φημὲν ὅτι καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἐναντία γένη κοινόν τι γένος ἔχει. καὶ γὰρ ἢ ἀρετὴ ἔστιν καὶ ἢ κακία ὁμοίως ἔστις. Cf. Arist. Cat. 11.14a19–25 (63 BODÉUS).

¹¹ I use here the term “meontological” (or “meontology”) to define non-being not as absolutely non-existent (existential sense) but as something that simply is not (predicative sense). For an insightful discussion of the value of the meontological argument in the MXG (*On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias*) and in the Peripatetic school (according to the author, however, the MXG was penned by Aristotle himself), M. WESOLY, La «Dimostrazione propria» di Gorgia. *Peitho/Examina Antiqua* 1, 4 (2013) 159–188.

¹² “All contraries must either be in the same genus or in contrary genera, or be themselves genera. [...], while good and bad are not in a genus but are themselves actually genera of certain things.” Translation by ACKRILL, *Categories* (n. 9), 22.

¹³ Cf. L. M. DE RIJK, Aristotle. *Semantics and Ontology. Volume One: General Introduction. The Works on Logic*. Leiden – Boston – Cologne 2002, 451–453; BODÉUS, Aristotle 148–150 (Notes complémentaires).

¹⁴ Olympiodorus, in Cat. 141.31–40, 142.1–40, 143.1–4 (ed. A. BUSSE, *Olympiodori Prolegomena et in Categoriae Commentarium [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 12, 1]. Berlin 1902).

¹⁵ Simplicius, in Cat. 414.22–34, 415.1–35, 416.1–20 (ed. K. KALBFLEISCH, *Simplicii in Aristotelis Categoriae Commentarium [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 8]. Berlin 1907). According to Jan Opsomer, the source for the main arguments of Simplicius against Plotinus, and the identification of evil with *parhypostasis* (“parasitical existence”) should be traced back to Iamblichus and not to Proclus: OPSOMER, *Proclus vs Plotinus* 184–188.

“In fact, if he [Aristotle] wishes that the contraries are equivalent, and both of them are similarly leading <principles> and by nature, but these ones, I mean evil, injustice and illness and other similar things, are rather failures, deviations and alterations from what is according to nature, and they are parasitical existences, how could both of them be leading <principles>, equivalent and similar by nature? If, in fact, what is against nature generally exists at all, it exists in those things and not in others. And that they are failures is evident first of all from the fact that they are the achievement of nothing, and then also those who choose to commit injustice are baited by the faint image of good which is present in it (i.e. injustice), and fall into <committing it> by failure, whereas they are looking for a sufficient, satisfactory and primary thing. Who, when dealing with illness, does not nourish doubts that it is a disposition against nature? Thus, all the physicians till today continue to define it in this manner. Therefore, if these manifestations are opposed to each other as what is by nature opposed to what is against nature, it should not be an antithesis of contraries (because these ones are both by nature and forms as, for instance, white and black, hot and cold), but it should be rather <an antithesis> of possession and privation: a feature of the latter is the ‘being deprived’ and the ‘having been deprived’. [...] And generally, both the contraries are actions of nature, whereas illness is a failure of the nature and a privation, since it is not only absence of what is natural, but also failure. In fact, in Physics, a privation was absence of the form which does not manifest its being-against-nature anywhere, but rather the otherness. [...] And since wherever the being-against-nature is present, it should be said that here there is privation rather than contrariety.”¹⁶

Simplicius does not regard evil as something contrary to good. His argument is based on the fact that if the contraries are forms, primary guiding principles and equivalent (as also Aristotle had already affirmed), evil, injustice and illness do not possess an in-formed existence and are not symmetrical to the plenitude of their opposites. The latter are rather instances of what is against nature and failure from what is the plenitude of a given form, as, for instance, the faltering walk with respect to the correct walk. And evil or illness cannot be contrary to what is good and healthy insofar as white and black are as contrary forms of a common genus. Simplicius’ opinion on the me-ontological status of evil is defended not only against Plotinus’ conception of the couple “matter-evil”, but also against the dualism of the Manicheans. Simplicius argues against their arguments in favor of two contrary ontological principles in his *Commentary on the Enchiridion of Epictetus*. From a philosophical perspective, discussions against gnostic and Manichean dualism became particularly heated from the fourth century onwards, particularly in the Latin world (St. Augustine), but do not seem to have taken place in the Hellenistic world as of the first half/middle of the sixth century with Simplicius.

John Philoponus (490–570) deals with the problem of contraries in a manner that is rather closer to Proclus and Simplicius than to Ammonius and Olympiodorus. At the beginning of the discussion

¹⁶ Simplicius, inCat. 416.29–33, 417.1–10, 417.27–32, 418.1–2 (KALBFLEISCH): εἰ γὰρ τὰ ἐναντία ἰσοσθενῆ βούλεται <εἶναι > καὶ ὁμοίως προηγούμενα καὶ κατὰ φύσιν ἄμφω, ταῦτα δέ, τὸ κακὸν φημι καὶ ἀδικία καὶ νόσος καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἀποτυχία μᾶλλον εἰσὶν καὶ παραλλάξεις καὶ παρατροπαι ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ παρυσποστάσεις, πῶς ἂν εἴη προηγούμενα ἄμφω ἢ ἰσοσθενῆ ἢ κατὰ φύσιν ὁμοίως; εἰ γὰρ ἔστιν ὅλως τὸ παρὰ φύσιν, ἐν τούτοις ἔστιν καὶ οὐκ ἄλλω, καὶ ὅτι ἀποτυχία, δηλοῖ τὸ πρῶτον μὲν μηδενὸς εἶναι τέλος αὐτά, ἔπειτα καὶ οἱ αἰρούμενοι ἀδικίαν τῇ παραχρῶσει τοῦ ἐν αὐτῇ ἀγαθοῦ δελεάζονται καὶ κατὰ ἀποτυχίαν αὐτῇ περιπίπτουσιν, τὸ αὐταρκες καὶ τὸ ἰκανὸν καὶ τὸ πρωτεῖον ζητοῦντες. τίς δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς νόσου διαμφιβάλλει. ὅτι οὐ παρὰ φύσιν ἔστιν διάθεσις; καὶ οὕτως αὐτὴν μέχρι νῦν οἱ ἰατροὶ πάντες ὀρίζομενοι διατελοῦσιν. εἰ οὖν ὡς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ταῦτα καὶ τὸ παρὰ φύσιν ἀντίκεινται, οὐκ ἂν εἴη ὡς ἐναντίων ἀντίθεσις (ἐκεῖνα γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν καὶ εἶδη ἄμφω, ὡς λευκὸν καὶ μέλαν καὶ θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρὸν), ἀλλ’ ὡς ἕξεως μᾶλλον καὶ στερήσεως, τῆς μὲν ἐν τῷ στερίσκεσθαι, τῆς δὲ ἐν τῷ ἔστερησθαι. ὅλως δὲ τὰ ἐναντία ἄμφω φύσεως ἔργα, νόσος δὲ φύσεως ἀποτυχία καὶ στερήσις, οὐχ ὡς ἀπουσία μόνον ἦν τοῦ εἶδους οὐδαμοῦ τὸ παρὰ φύσιν ἐμφαίνουσα, ἀλλ’ ἑτερότητα μᾶλλον· ἢ γοῦν τοῦ βοῦς ὕλη ἐστέρεται τέως τοῦ τῶν μελισσῶν εἶδους καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἄρτου τοῦ τῆς σαρκός, οὐδαμοῦ τοῦ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνότος ἐνταῦθα ὡσπερ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀντικειμένης στερήσεως. ὥστε ὅπου τὸ παρὰ φύσιν, ἐκεῖ στερήσιν μᾶλλον ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐναντίον ῥητέον: Translation by me.

about the contraries, Philoponus mentions four contrary modes of being, but then refers only to three of them as follows: 1. either contraries are subsumed under one and the same genus; 2. or contraries are subsumed under contrary genera like injustice and justice; 3. or they are genera by themselves like good and evil. When referring to the former in order to explain *Categories* 14a 23–25, Philoponus argues that we could regard good and evil as “trans” genera crossing through the whole system of categorial being, and not as two further categories in addition to Aristotle’s ten *predicamenta*. Yet, he rejects this conclusion in a way that is very close to Proclus and Simplicius:

“In fact, Aristotle, too, affirmed herein that what is good and what is evil are genera not as genera by themselves, but as genera which are observed in each category. There is, therefore, something good and something bad in substance as well as in quantity and in quality, and in all the other categories. In fact, in substance what is good is the perfection by itself, and what has brought to perfection the account of nature neither being a monster nor exceeding or failing in relation to <its own> account of nature, in quantity what is good is due proportion of quantity for each one of the realities. In quality, what is good is the proportion of every color, and similarly for all the others. Yet, for those who are precise, good and evil do not appear to be contrary, but opposed by privation and by possession. In fact, it is necessary that each one of the contraries has a nature endowed with form and properly defined, such as, for instance, white and black. What is bad, however, does not have a defined substance. In fact, it is a sort of disproportion, and how might disproportion have a defined form? Whence badness does not fall under definition, but as privation appears through the absence of possession because it has no defined nature, badness, too, stands by the absence of virtue either by hypernegation or by privative negation. If the latter (i.e. the virtue), in fact, is observed in proportion, the alteration from due proportion produces evil either by excess or by defect. One must know that even if he <Aristotle> says that contraries are subsumed under contrary genera, <he intends to say that> they are not in such a manner according to their most general genus, but by proximity and subordination. It is necessary that all the contraries are subsumed under the same genus: if, in fact, injustice and justice are subsumed under badness and virtue, they are in such a manner because they belong to one common genus, that is, I mean, possession and disposition. These ones are in turn subsumed under quality which is a genus more general than all contraries. And contraries are reasonably subsumed under one genus.”¹⁷

There is a striking difference between the two disciples of Ammonius when they discuss the problem of contraries, focusing on good and evil. Philoponus rejects Olympiodorus’ opinion that evil

¹⁷ Philoponus, in Cat. 190.20–32, 191.1–15 (ed. A. BUSSE, *Philoponi (olim Ammonii) In Aristotelis Categorias Commentarium [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 13, 1]*. Berlin 1898): οὕτως δὴ καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν ταῦθα γένη εἶπεν εἶναι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακὸν οὐχ ὡς αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς κατηγορίας θεωρούμενα· ἐστὶ γάρ τι καὶ ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν καὶ ἐν ποσῶ καὶ ἐν ποιῶ καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις κατηγορίας· ἐν οὐσίᾳ μὲν γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἢ καθ’ αὐτὴν τελειότης, τὸ ἀπηρτισμένον ἔχειν τὸν λόγον τῆς φύσεως καὶ μὴ τέρας εἶναι ἢ τῶ | πλεονάζειν κατὰ τὸν λόγον ἢ ἐλλείπειν, ἐν ποσῶ δὲ ἢ σύμμετρος ἐκάστῳ πράγματι ποσότης καὶ ἐν ποιῶ τὸ σύμμετρον ἐκάστῳ χρώματι, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως· ἀκριβολογούμενοι δὲ οὐδὲ ἐναντία τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακὸν φανήσεται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ στέρησιν καὶ ἐξὶν ἀντικεῖσθαι· δεῖ γὰρ τῶν ἐναντίων ἐκάτερον εἰδοπεποιθῆσθαι καὶ ὀρισμένην ἔχειν φύσιν, ὡς περὶ τὸ λευκὸν καὶ τὸ μέλαν· τὸ δὲ κακὸν οὐκ ἔχει ὀρισμένην ὑπόστασιν· ἀμετρία γὰρ τίς ἐστίν, ἢ δὲ ἀμετρία πῶς ἂν εἶδος σχοίη ὀρισμένον; ὅθεν οὐδὲ ὀρισμῶ ὑποπίπτει ἢ κακία, ἀλλ’ ὡς περὶ ἢ στέρησις τῆ ἀπουσίας τῆς ἕξεως παραγίνεται αὐτὴ οὐκ ἔχουσα ὀρισμένην τινὰ φύσιν, οὕτω καὶ ἡ κακία τῆ ἀπουσίας τῆς ἀρετῆς παραγίνεται ἢ καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἢ κατ’ ἐλλείπιν· ἐκείνης γὰρ ἐν συμμετρίας θεωρουμένης ἢ τοῦ μετρίου παρατροπὴ κακίαν ἐποίησε κατὰ τε τὸ πλεονάζον καὶ τὸ ἐλλείπον. ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι εἰ καὶ ὑπὸ τὰ ἐναντία τελεῖν γένη ἔφη τὰ ἐναντία, οὐ κατὰ τὸ γενικώτατον αὐτῶν γένος εἴρηκεν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ προσεχές καὶ ὑπάλληλον· ἀνάγκη γὰρ πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ τελεῖν γένος· εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἡ ἀδικία καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ὑπὸ τὴν κακίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν τελοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ ὑφ’ ἐν τὴν κοινὸν τελοῦσι γένος, τὴν ἐξὶν λέγω καὶ τὴν διάθεσιν, αὐτὰ δὲ ὑπὸ τὴν ποιότητα, ἥτις ἐστὶ γένος γενικώτατον πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων. καὶ εἰκότως ὑφ’ ἐν τὰ ἐναντία τελοῦσι γένος· ἐσπούδασε γὰρ ἄνωθεν τε καὶ κάτωθεν ἢ φύσιν τὸν πρὸς ἄλληλα αὐτῶν εἰδυῖα πόλεμον ἄνωθεν τε καὶ κάτωθεν αὐτὰ συνδήσαι, ἄνωθεν μὲν τῶ κοινῶ γένει κάτωθεν δὲ τῶ κοινῶ ὑποκειμένῳ· Translation by me.

and good are the most general genera seen in all the ten categories as trans-categorical *predicamenta*. Philoponus argues, in fact, that all the contraries cannot be genera by themselves, but are necessarily subsumed under a more general genus. Therefore, they can be subsumed under one of the most general *predicamenta* as, for instance, injustice and justice are subsumed under the common genus of possession (ἔξις) and disposition (διάθεσις). The latter in turn are subsumed under quality which is even more general than they are. It is up to the nature to join above and below what is in conflict: above, by joining the contraries to a common genus, and below by joining them to a common subject (inCat. 191, 19–27)¹⁸. It is evident that for Philoponus, good and evil as well as justice and injustice or health and illness, are not genera by themselves. Rather, the positive terms of these contraries are manifestations of the state of having and then of quality, whereas the negative terms of them come into existence as negative and privative forms in respect of their *habitus*. The term *diathesis* (“disposition”) used to describe injustice and evil is borrowed from Aristotle (Cat. 8b 27–9a 13), who defines it as a sort of quality beside possession (*hexis*). *Hexis* differs from *diathesis*, because the former is not easily changed but it can nevertheless convert into disposition, whereas disposition is easily changeable and does not necessarily convert into possession. Philoponus uses the Aristotelian term when defining the nature of evil in the context of his theory of virtue and vice. By assuming that virtue and vice are subsumed under one common and more general genus, Philoponus (but David, too) seems to contradict what he had already affirmed about the me-ontic status of evil. Yet, Philoponus attempts here to make sense of Aristotle’s statement. For him, in fact, Aristotle does not affirm the existence of contrary genera, because contraries are all subsumed under the most general genus of quality, whereas evil cannot be subsumed under any contrary genus, as it lacks its own form and matter.

Concerning the term *diathesis* as a lexical marker for evil and vice, it is interesting to mention that, in *Homily 2 on the Hexameron*, Basil of Caesarea uses the same definition when describing evil as the outcome of the individual voluntary activity:

“Therefore, if evil is not created as generated by God, from where does it receive its nature? None of those who are alive, in fact, will deny that there are evils. What shall we say? That evil is not a living and animate substance, but a disposition of the soul contrary to virtue, which appears in the negligent because of the falling away from the good”¹⁹.

Basil had already defined evil as inclination (*diathesis*) towards badness because of the falling away from good and virtue, which are indeed the most convenient and natural *habitus* (*hexis*) for the soul. Even though the arguments of both authors are different—Basil’s argument is ontological and ethical, whereas Philoponus’ is logical—they agree when they define evil as the outcome of the conversion into a ‘maladroit’ disposition of the soul’s *habitus*, which is not necessary, and nevertheless possible.

David the Invincible (second half 6th/mid-7th cent.), a second-generation student in Ammonius’ circle, deals with the question of evil near the end of his *Commentary on Categories* in a manner that

¹⁸ Philoponus, inCat. 190.8–32, 191.1–5 (BUSSE). Philoponus, too, argues against Manichean ontological and cosmological dualism in his *On the Creation of the World (De Opificio Mundi)* 301.15–303.24 (ed. G. REICHARDT, *Iohannis Philoponi De opificio mundi libri VIII [Scriptores sacri et profane 1]*. Leipzig 1897), stating that evil is not substantial, but is produced when nature acts out of goodwill: cf. CARDULLO, *Il male come “privazione”* 402, footnote 25.

¹⁹ Basilus Caesarensis, *Homilia II in Hexameron* 4.25 (PG 29, 37): Εἰ τοίνυν, φησί, μήτε ἀγέννητον, παρὰ Θεοῦ γεγονός, πόθεν ἔχει τὴν φύσιν; Τὸ γὰρ εἶναι τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἀνταρεῖ τῶν μετεχόντων τοῦ βίου. Τί οὖν φαμεν; Ὅτι τὸ κακὸν ἐστὶν οὐχὶ οὐσία ζῶσα καὶ ἔμψυχος, ἀλλὰ διάθεσις ἐν ψυχῇ ἐναντίως ἔχουσα πρὸς ἀρετὴν, διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ καλοῦ ἀπόπτωσιν τοῖς ῥαθύμοις ἐγγινομένη. Translation by me.

As already explained, Aristotle uses the term *diathesis* (pl. *diatheseis*) to define the qualities which are easily changeable and alterable, whereas the qualities which are not subjected to changing and altering are defined as *hexeis*. Nonetheless, Aristotle does not seem to count evil either among the dispositions or among the states of having, as Basil of Caesarea and Philoponus more clearly do: Aristotle, Cat. 8b 26–9a 13 (39–41 BODÉUS).

is very close to Philoponus²⁰. At the beginning of the discussion, he outlines three contrary modes of being according to the philosophical tradition: 1. good is contrary to evil alone, and evil is contrary either to good or to another evil, as, for instance, in the case of virtue, because in every virtue there is hypernegation (*hyperbole*) and privative negation (*elleipsis*); 2. contraries can sometimes co-exist by genus like white and black in the animal, and by species like healthy and ill among men; 3. contraries are subsumed either under one genus as, for instance, white and black [are subsumed] under color, or under opposed genera as, for instance, justice and injustice [are subsumed] under virtue and badness, or they are not subsumed under a genus like, for instance, good and evil, because they are genera by themselves. In accordance with Philoponus, David argues that evil and good should not be regarded as contraries by those who are meticulous. They are rather ‘opposite’ according to the mode of privation and possession (καὶ οὕτως μὲν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐναντία γένη εἶναι φησι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν. ἀκριβολογουμένοις δὲ οὐδὲ ἐναντία φανήσεται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ στέρησιν καὶ ἕξιν ἀντικεῖσθαι)²¹. In fact, each one of the contraries needs to have been endowed with form and to have a defined nature like, for instance, white and black, whereas evil does not have a defined substance (*hypostasis*). The latter is a disproportion, and a disproportion cannot have a defined form. Moreover, evil does not fall under definition (*horismos*), and it is to be characterized as either hypernegation or privative negation of virtue²². Between David’s inCat. 250.18–35 to 251.1–4 and Philoponus’ inCat. 190.20–32 to 191.1–15 there is not only a striking conceptual similarity, but even a strong similarity in wording. This could be the result of manuscript interpolations, but could also be further evidence in order to substantiate that David depends on the Philoponian branch of the Alexandrian school rather than on Olympiodorus’ branch. Even though this intellectual interdependence has already been hinted at by some scholars, it is still stubbornly ignored by the dominant scholarship, which maintains the tradi-

²⁰ In my opinion, there is no need to go back once again to the *vexata quaestio* concerning the authorship of the *Commentary on Categories* (ed. A. BUSSE, *Eliae in Porphyrii Isagogen et [olim Davidis] Aristotelis Categoriae Commentaria [Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 18, 1]. Berlin 1900, 105–281). On the basis of textual parallels between the Armenian versions of David’s logical commentaries and their Greek corresponding commentaries (except for *In analytica priora* that is extant only in Armenian), several pieces of evidence in favor of David’s paternity have been suggested by scholars in Armenian studies, such as Sen Arevshatyan, Jean-Pierre Mahé, Valentina Calzolari, and Erna Shirinyan. David’s paternity has also been accepted by prominent scholars, such as Richard Bodéüs, Richard Sorabji, and Ilsetraut Hadot. Very recently, Christoph Helmig, too, is keener on attributing the Commentary to David rather than to Elias: C. HELMIG, *Die jeweiligen Eigenheiten der Neuplatoniker David und Elias und die umstrittene Autorschaft des Kommentars zur Kategorienschrift*, in: *Die Kunst der philosophischen Exegese bei den spätantiken Platon- und Aristoteles-Kommentatoren*, hrsg. von B. Strobel. Berlin – Boston 2018, 277–313, part. 307. For a brief overview of the *status quaestionis* and new evidences in favor of David’s authorship: CONTIN, *David l’Arménien* 75–78; V. CALZOLARI, *Aux origines de la formation du corpus philosophique en Arménie: quelques remarques sur les versions arméniennes des commentaires grecs de David*, in: *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. C. D’Ancona Costa (*Philosophia Antiqua* 107). Leiden – Boston 2007, 259–291.

Unfortunately, the section devoted to contraries has not come down to us in the Armenian version of David’s *Commentary*, at least at the current state of the art, E. M. SHIRINIAN, *The Armenian Version of David the Invincible’s Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories*, in: CALZORI–BARNES, *L’œuvre de David l’Invincible* (n. 2), 89–102.

²¹ Dav (EI), inCat. 250.17–20 (BUSSE).

²² Dav (EI), inCat. 250.17–27 (BUSSE): καὶ οὕτως μὲν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐναντία γένη εἶναι φησι τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ κακόν. ἀκριβολογουμένοις δὲ οὐδὲ ἐναντία φανήσεται, ἀλλὰ κατὰ στέρησιν καὶ ἕξιν ἀντικεῖσθαι· δεῖ γὰρ τῶν ἐναντίων ἐκάτερον εἰδοπεποιηθῆναι καὶ ὀρισμένην ἔχειν φύσιν, ὥσπερ τὸ λευκὸν καὶ τὸ μέλαν· τὸ δὲ κακὸν οὐκ ἔχει ὀρισμένην ὑπόστασιν· ἀμετρία γὰρ τίς ἐστίν, ἢ δὲ ἀμετρία πῶς εἶδος ἂν σχοίη ὀρισμένον; ὅθεν οὐδὲ ὀρισμῶ ὑποπίπτει ἡ κακία, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἢ στέρησις τῆ ἀπουσίᾳ τῆς ἕξεως παραγίνεται αὐτὴ οὐκ ἔχουσα ὀρισμένην τινὰ φύσιν, οὕτω καὶ ἡ κακία τῆ ἀπουσίᾳ τῆς ἀρετῆς παραγίνεται ἢ καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἢ κατ’ ἔλλειψιν.

“And Aristotle states that good and evil are contrary genera in this way. To those who are meticulous, however, they should not seem to be contrary, but opposed by privation and possession. In fact, it is necessary that each one of the contraries has a nature endowed with form and properly defined, such as, for instance, white and black. What is bad has not a defined substance. In fact, it is a sort of disproportion, and how might disproportion have a defined form? Whence badness does not fall under definition, but since privation appears through the absence of possession because it has no defined nature, badness, too, appears through the absence of virtue by either hypernegation or privative negation. If the latter [i.e. the virtue], in fact, is observed in proportion, the alteration from due proportion produces evil by both excess and defect.” Translation by me.

tional chronology Olympiodorus the Younger—Elias—David²³. When recalling the contrary modes of being inherited from the ancient tradition, David seems to interweave some modes of Olympiodorus and some others of Philoponus and Simplicius (Table 1). Yet, when summing up his viewpoint about contraries, and particularly about good and evil, David clearly depends on Philoponus and Simplicius. In fact, he not only rejects the opinion that good and evil are genera by themselves, but clarifies also what is the mode of opposition of good and evil, by stressing the status of deprivation and disproportion of the latter. Compared with Philoponus, David is more coherent when discussing the category of quality. In this context, he refers to symmetry or proportion (*symmetria*) as what is good in quality, and asymmetry or disproportion (*asymmetria*) as what is evil in quality. And then again, he defines evil as a sort of asymmetry (*ametria*) in opposition to symmetry (*symmetria*) for each defined nature (inCat. 250.22–24). By contrast, Philoponus provides the example of the symmetry of colors, in order to show how the good can be seen under the category of quality (inCat 190.27).

The Armenian version of David's *Commentary on Categories* stops abruptly at the end of the discussion on quantity (Cat. 6a12). Since the discussion of opposites and contraries has not come down to us, we cannot establish what the Armenian terms for the Greek *ametria* and *steresis* are in the context of the same commentary. Yet, there is an interesting passage in the Armenian version of David's *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge* where the author uses the term 'disproportion' (*ameteria*, in Greek) for hectic fever. When speaking about the relation between accidents and subject, David refutes the opinion of those who affirm that the accident destroys the subject and itself on purpose:

“For some say: if no being desires its perdition (for we say about non-rational [creatures] that they kill themselves by jumping from cliffs and falling into the water, and they do this, not desiring their perdition, but because they flee from somebody or kill themselves by accident out of anger), why do accidents desire to destroy themselves? And that they destroy themselves, is clear from the following: for if accidents are in the subject and destroy the subject, it is agreed that they destroy themselves too. And we shall say why they destroy the subject. Hectic fever destroys its subject, for it is impossible for it to go without the destruction of its subject. Now, because it destroys its subject, it also destroys itself with it.

Against them, we say that no accident longs for its destruction and neither does it long for destroying its subject (for it destroys it by accident, and not on purpose). And hence it is clear that hectic fever is a disproportion, and that a sound mixture is a due proportion and that they are contrary to each other. And a disproportion seeks to destroy the due proportion and, destroying it, it destroys by accident the subject as well, destroying the subject, it destroys itself as well.”²⁴

In this passage, David characterizes hectic fever as a mode of illness and defines it not as accident (either separable or inseparable) but as disproportion and something opposite to due proportion, which is the healthy mixture of the elements that belong to a substance by nature. The term used by David to define hectic fever is *anch'ap'ut'iwn* (corresponding to the Greek *ametria*, and opposed to

²³ Among the scholars who elaborated an alternative chronology for the activity of the last representatives of the Alexandrian Neoplatonic School, G. FURLANI, *Il Libro delle Definizioni e Divisioni* di Michele l'Interprete. Rome 1926, 147–149; W. WOLSKA-CONUS, Stéphanos d'Aléxandrie et Stéphanos d'Athènes. Essai d'identification et de biographie. *REB* 47 (1989) 5–89; M. ROUECHÉ, *The Definitions of Philosophy* and a new fragment of Stephanus the Philosopher. *JÖB* 40 (1990) 71–98. Cf. also CONTIN, David l'Arménien 46–51.

A salient example of the static nature of taken-for-granted assumptions in the field, C. WILDBERG, David, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018), ed. E. N. Zalta. URL: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entires/david/>> (Last access: 12th June 2019).

²⁴ Dav, inIs. 29.8 (ed. G. MURADYAN, *David the Invincible. Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge* [*Philosophia Antiqua* 137. *Commentaria in Aristotelem Armeniaca. Davidis Opera*. Volume 3]. Leiden – Boston 2015, 268–269; For the Greek: Dav, inIs 206.17–32 [BUSSE]).

ch'ap'akts'ut'iwnk'/summetria). Even if the discussion of contraries has not come down to us, we can suppose that the Armenian translator of David's *Commentary on Categories* would have used the same term *anch'ap'ut'iwn* to define evil, in accordance with Philoponus and Simplicius as well as in keeping with David's thought. In fact, it is worth reflecting on the striking similarity between the definition of hectic fever in the Greek version of David's *inIs* and the definition of evil in the Greek version of David's *Commentary*. In both cases, *ametria* is the common term used to denote a state of disproportion and privative negation. Even more interesting is the fact that the Armenian version of David's *inIs* denotes the two opposite modes of disproportion and symmetry (or proportion) as ընդդէմ միմեանց. I would suggest translating ընդդէմ միմեանց into "opposite to each other" rather than into "contrary to each other" as the editor of the Armenian *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge* does. The terms "opposite" and "contrary" could sometimes be used interchangeably by the commentators, but not in the context of the logical discussion about the contrary modes of being. As already mentioned, in the commentaries on *Categories*, Simplicius, Philoponus and David define evil as something opposed (*antikeitai/ta antikeimena*) to good by privation rather than as something contrary (*enantios*) to it. Contraries, in fact, have intermediate stages and middle terms, whereas opposites are categorically contradictory. In this case, proportion and disproportion imply an antithesis of possession and privation and not an antithesis of contrariety. In fact, when growing and reaching the last stage of its own generation, contrary becomes an absolute contrary, whereas privation (and disproportion) when growing and reaching the last stage of their development lead to destruction and death²⁵.

AMMONIUS	OLYMPIODORUS	SIMPLICIUS	PHILOPONUS	DAVID (ELIAS)
1. A certain evil is wholly contrary to what is good	1. goods are contrary only to evils (and evils are contrary to both goods and evils)	1. contraries are under the same genus	1. contraries are subsumed under one and the same genus	1. good is contrary to evil alone, and evil is contrary to both good and any other evil
2. A certain good is not wholly contrary to what is evil	2. contraries do not co-exist in the same subject at the same time	2. contraries are under contrary genera	2. contraries are subsumed under contrary genera	2. contraries can co-exist <in the same subject> by genus and by species
3. Either a certain good or a certain evil is contrary to what is evil	3. contraries can exist in the same subject either by genus or by species	3. contraries are genera by themselves (e.g. good and evil) ²⁶	3. contraries are genera by themselves (e.g. good and evil)	3. contraries are subsumed under either one genus or opposed genera, or they are not subsumed under one genus, but are themselves genera (e.g. good and evil)
	4. contraries are subsumed under either the same genus or contrary genera, or they are the most general genera (e.g. good and evil)			

Table 1: Contrary modes of being according to the 'Neoplatonic' commentators on Aristotle's *Categories*

²⁵ Cf. Simplicius, inCat. 417.23–27 (KALBFLEISCH)

²⁶ The same classification of three contrary modes of being is attested in, Hunayn ibn Ishāq, inCat. 11.13–18 (ed. J. T. ZENKER, *Aristotelis Categoriae graece cum versione arabica Isaaci Honeini Filii et variis lectionibus textus graeci e versione arabica ductis*. Leipzig 1846, 80).

The influence of Proclus (412–485), who had possibly had access to the Library of Alexandria and may also have consulted the writings of the Church Fathers, is particularly stunning in the cases of Philoponus and David. Both of them, in fact, detached themselves from Ammonius and sketched their own view about the ontological status of evil within a logical framework, borrowing more from Proclus than from the head of their school. Simplicius and Philoponus introduced the idea of privation (*steresis*) and asymmetry into the *Categories*, because they sought to elaborate logical arguments in order to refute the ontic and theological dualism of their adversaries. Their me-ontological position on the nature of evil is, in fact, expressed in other works, notably the *De Opificio Mundi* by Philoponus and the *Commentary on the Enchiridion of Epictetus* by Simplicius, where both philosophers disprove Manichean dualism. In the case of David, there is no work formally devoted to the refutation of either onto-cosmological or theological dualism. Yet, an interesting literary piece has come down to us—the Armenian version of pseudo-Gregory’s syllogisms against Manicheans—which the Armenian manuscript tradition generally ascribes to David the Invincible and inserts just after David’s *Book of the Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*²⁷.

The Cappadocian perspective on Evil

The question of evil and its activity in God’s creation is already broached in the Old and New Testaments as far as it represents a crucial event in the order of creation. In the Bible, the emergence of evil is connected to the free will of the creatures. The latter, in fact, choose, by a voluntary act of separation, to break their primordial ontological condition, that of having been created good by the Creator²⁸. The reason for the existence of evil lies in the voluntary activity of the creatures which, by acting according to evil and vice, turn away from their Creator and the whole creation, which is substantially good and positive. The problem was also dealt with by the Church Fathers who responded to the ontological and cosmological dualism of the Manicheans and other heterodox sects (Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, Methodius of Olympus, Titus of Bosra), and undertook it to harmonize the (neo)Platonic theories with the Christian faith (Gregory of Nyssa, pseudo-Dionysius). Polemic emerges as one of the first reasons that prompted the Church Fathers to get involved in the ontological analysis of good and evil. This was especially the case for the Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian theologians, probably because of the prevailing proselytism and consequent diffusion of the gnostic and dualistic trends within the Church. By contrast, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa are less concerned, even if the former occasionally disparages the opinions of the Marcionites, the Valentinians and the Manicheans as, for instance, in the *Homily II on the Hexameron* where the Church Father condemns the heretics for their false and literal interpretation of Genesis 1.2 (“and darkness was upon the face of the deep” [KJV]) and their false opinion on the origin of evil²⁹. By contrast,

²⁷ For instance, M 1746 (XIII c.), M 1747 (a. 1243), W 353 (a. 1325), W 263 (a. 1705–1714), and the five manuscripts (of which the eldest dates to AD 1310) held in the Library of the Mechitarist Fathers of Venice and used for the *editio princeps* of David’s works: see, Կորիւն Վարդապետի, Մամբրէ Վերծանցի եւ Դաւիթ Անյաղթի ստուեմագրութիւնք [The works of Koriwn Vardapet, Mambrē the Commentator and David the Invincible]. Venice 1833, 9 (*Praefatio*). Abbreviations = M (Matenadaran, Yerevan); W (Mekhitarist Library, Vienna).

²⁸ For a discussion of the problem in the Bible and in Greek Patristic literature, E. S. MAINOLDI, Il non-essere volontario: la concezione del male nella tradizione teologica e ascetica bizantina. *Chōra. Revue d’Études anciennes et médiévales* 6 (2008) 181–210.

²⁹ Basilus (*PG* 29, 4.24–25): Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ παρὰ Θεοῦ τὸ κακὸν τὴν γένεσιν ἔχειν εὐσεβές ἐστι λέγειν, διὰ τὸ μηδὲν τῶν ἐναντίων παρὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου γίνεσθαι. Οὐτε γὰρ ἡ ζωὴ θάνατον γεννᾷ, οὔτε τὸ σκότος φωτὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχή, οὔτε ἡ νόσος ὑγείας δημιουργός, ἀλλ’ ἐν μὲν ταῖς μεταβολαῖς τῶν διαθέσεων ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων πρὸς τὰ ἐναντία αἱ μεταστάσεις· ἐν δὲ ταῖς γενέσεσιν οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τῶν ὁμογενῶν ἕκαστον τῶν γινομένων προέρχεται. Εἰ τοίνυν, φησὶ, μήτε ἀγέννητον, παρὰ Θεοῦ γεγονὸς, πόθεν ἔχει τὴν φύσιν; Τὸ γὰρ εἶναι τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ τῶν μετεχόντων τοῦ βίου. Τί οὖν φαμεν; Ὅτι τὸ κακὸν ἐστὶν οὐχὶ οὐσία ζῶσα καὶ ἔμψυχος, ἀλλὰ διάθεσις ἐν ψυχῇ ἐναντίως ἔχουσα πρὸς ἀρετὴν, διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ καλοῦ

Gregory of Nyssa is more interested in investigating the problem from an ontological perspective. In his *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, he considers evil as privation (*steresis*) of being and not depending on God. In the fifth *Homily*, in particular, Gregory of Nyssa offers his interpretation of the text of *Ecclesiastes* 2, 12–13 where the Biblical author creates an analogy between wisdom and light on the one hand, and folly and darkness, on the other:

“When I saw these things, he says, and weighed, as in a balance, what is, against what is not, I found that the difference between wisdom and folly was the same as one would find if light were measured against the dark. I think it is appropriate that he uses the analogy of light in the discernment of the good. Since darkness is in its own nature unreal (for if there were nothing to obstruct the sun’s rays, there would be no darkness), whereas light is of itself, perceived in its own essence, he shows by this analogy that evil does not exist by itself, but arises from deprivation of good, whereas good is always as it is, stable and steadfast, and does not arise from the deprivation of anything which is prior to it. What is perceived as essentially opposed to good, is not; for what in itself is not, does not exist at all; for evil is the deprivation of being, and not something existing.”³⁰

Though Gregory of Nyssa was greatly indebted to Platonism, he formulates his own hermeneutics about the existence of evil and vice. Thus, evil as well as its temporal and concrete corollary which are sin and passions, are a consequence of the rational soul’s enslavement to evil. The rational soul, in fact, is charmed by evil, and being subjected to time, it can also act badly and commit mistakes. The Biblical idea that evil produced a fundamental shift between the creature and the Creator by means of the original sin is not questioned by Gregory of Nyssa. Yet, he offers ontological arguments in favor of his main idea that evil has no substance and is opposed to good because of its non-being. And because of its not being good, evil is also outside of the plenitude of being³¹.

FROM CAPPADOCIA AND ALEXANDRIA TO ARMENIA

Eznik of Koghb’s “Against the Sects”

The first Armenian author to reflect on the ontological status of evil is Eznik of Koghb in his treatise *Against the Sects*, which dates to the middle of the 5th century, just a few decades after the creation of the native script. Eznik deals with the topic from a theological perspective and develops his arguments with the purpose of refuting the false opinions both of the pagan philosophers and of the false sects inspired by gnostic and docetic opinions (Valentinians, Zoroastrians, Marcionites)³². At the very beginning, Eznik spells out his main ontological ideas: evil does not come from the good

ἀπόπτωσιν τοῖς ῥαθύμοις ἐγγινομένη.

“Neither is it proper to affirm that evil is generated by God, for nothing among contraries is generated by what is contrary. In fact, neither life generates death nor darkness gives beginning to light nor illness produces health, but whenever the dispositions change, it means that there are changes from contraries towards contraries. In the generation, every reality that comes into existence is not produced by what is contrary, but by the realities that share the same genus. Therefore, if evil is not created as something generated by God, from where does it receive its nature? None of those who are alive, in fact, will deny that evil exists. What shall we say? That evil is not a living and animate substance, but a disposition of the soul contrary to virtue, which appears in the negligent because he falls away from good.” Translation by me.

³⁰ Gregorius Nyssenus, InEccl. V 356.1 (Translated by S. G. HALL – R. MORIARTY, in: Gregory of Nyssa. *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, ed. S. G. Hall. Berlin – New York 1993, 31–144).

³¹ Gregorius Nyssenus, InEccl. VII 406.17. Cf. S. TARANTO, L’esegesi morale di Gregorio Nisseno nelle “Omellerie sull’Ecclesiaste” (VI–VIII). *Annali di studi religiosi* 5 (2004) 441–462.

³² For the identification of the heretics refuted by Eznik on the basis of Methodius of Olympus’ *De Autexousio*, with the 2nd–3rd centuries sect of the Valentinians, A. ORENGO, Eznik of Koghb as a translator of Methodius of Olympus, in: *Greek Texts and Armenian Traditions. An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. F. Gazzano – L. Pagani – G. Traina. Berlin 2016, 31–45.

Creator, and evil things are not evil by nature, for the Creator creates only good things³³. At the end of the first chapter, God is defined as the source of goodness, and amongst all his creatures only those who are intelligible and rational are receptive of goodness according to their respective virtues and degrees. Yet, they are not receptive of beauty as well, but they are rather endowed with it, because the whole of God's creation has already been provided with beauty from the very beginning of creation. Here Eznik emphasizes the basic difference between beauty and goodness, for the former depends on God's benevolent providence, whereas the latter depends on the soul's voluntary activity. All the intelligible and rational creatures are endowed with it. Doing good or doing bad, therefore, are up to the posterior activity of the will of rational beings³⁴. It is worth remarking on the Armenian term used by Eznik to denote the voluntary faculty, *antsnishkhanut'awn* (անձնիշխանություն, a calque of the Greek *to autexusion*). To the best of my knowledge, Eznik is the first Armenian author to introduce the term into the native theological vocabulary³⁵. By contrast, David the Invincible does not adopt Eznik's term *antsnishkhanut'awn* to define the voluntary activity that he calls instead *yōzharut'awn* (յօշարություն/*promptitudo animi*), including it amongst the rational soul's practical faculties³⁶.

According to Eznik, therefore, if created beings are receptive of goodness, but not originally endowed with it, they can choose either good or evil or both of them! This idea clearly depends on biblical exegesis, particularly of the New Testament, but is transformed by Eznik into a creative and fresh paradigm³⁷. The same term *antsnishkhanut'awn* is usually used by Nonnus of Nisibis (early 9th cent.) in the only extant Armenian version of his original Arabic *Commentary to Saint John's Gospel*, where it implies the idea that creatures deliberately chose to detach themselves from God the Fa-

³³ Eznik of Koghb, *Against the Sects* (Venice, 3^o ed., 1926), I 1, 8–9: Ձի ոչ որ է առաջին քան գնա, եւ ոչ որ է յետոյ նման նմա, եւ ոչ ընկեր հաւասար նորին, եւ ոչ էութիւն հակառակ նմա, եւ ոչ գոյութիւն ընդդիմակաց, եւ ոչ բնութիւն հիւթաբեր ի պէտս նորա, եւ ոչ նիւթ ինչ յորմէ առնիցէ գոր առնելոց իցէ. Այլ ինքն է պատճառ ամենայնի, որ ի լինելն եւ գոյանալ եկին ի չգոյէ եւ ի գոյէ:

“Because no one is prior to Him, and no one after Him is similar to Him, and He has no equal companion, no existence is contrary to Him, and no substance is opposite to Him. And He does not need anything endowed with matter nor any matter from which He should create what was to be created. But, He is the only reason for all things which came into existence and received substance among non-existents and existents.” Translation by me.

For the textual references to the *Against the Sects*, I use the edition of the Mechitarist Fathers of Venice: Եզնկայ Կողբացոյ Բագրեանդայ Եպիսկոպոսի Եղծ Աղանդոց. Venice 3 1926.

³⁴ Eznik of Koghb, *De Deo*, I 1, 11: [...] Որ զամենայն գոր արար՝ զեղեցիկս արար, այս ինքն զբանաորս եւ զանբանաորս, զմտաորս եւ զանմտաորս, զխօսունս եւ զանխօսունս, զասունս եւ զանասունս: Եւ բանաորաց եւ մտաորաց յիրաբանչիւր առաքինութեանց կարգեաց ստանալ զբարութիւն, եւ ոչ զգեղեկցութիւն. Ձի գեղեկցութեանն առիչ ինքն է, եւ բարութեանն՝ զանձնիշխանութիւնն արար պատճառ:

“He made beautiful everything He did, namely rationals and irrationals, and those which are endowed and those which are not endowed with intellect, as well as those which are endowed and those which are not endowed with word. And among the rational and intelligible virtues, He arranged that <everything He created> receive goodness, but not beauty; because He himself is the giver of beauty. And He made the free will the cause of goodness.” Translation by me.

³⁵ *Antsnishkhanut'awn* occurs in other but later translations and original works of the Armenian literature as, for instance, in the collection of *Homilies* called *Yachakhapatum* Յաճախապատում [Sermons] VI 14 (ed. Y. K'ĒŌSĒIAN, Գրիգոր Լուսաորդի Յաճախապատումի ճառերը, in: Մասնագիրք Հայոց [Library of Armenian Literature]. Antelias 2003, I 20). This collection of homilies was ascribed to St. Gregory the Illuminator, but was probably composed between 485 and 510 for the sake of coenobitic instruction within the Armenian monasteries at the turn from the 5th and 6th centuries, B. L. ZEKIYAN, Back to the Sources of Armenian Spirituality. *Hachakhapatum* as a Doctrinal and Practical Vademecum for Introduction to Christian Life and Monastic Spirituality, in: In Search of the Precious Pearl (Proceedings of the 5th Encounter of Monks from East and West 31st May–7th June 2001), ed. E. G. Farrugia. Rome 2005, 139–153.

³⁶ For instance: David, Def. 85.13–15 (ed. S. S. AREVSHATYAN, Դավիթ Անյաղթ. Երկասիրութիւնք փիլիսոփայականք. Սահմանք եւ տրամատութիւնք իմաստասիրութեան [David the Invincible. Philosophical Works. Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy]. Yerevan 1980, 85). In the Greek *Prolegomena* by David, there is no mention of a term corresponding to the Armenian *yōzharut'awn* in the parallel passages in which David speaks about the functions of the rational soul's practical capacity: cf. CONTIN, David l'Arménien 178–182.

³⁷ For some considerations on the tradition held in the New Testament, MAINOLDI, Il non-essere volontario 191–192.

ther³⁸. The idea of detachment and separation as the consequence of badness emerges also in David's *Prolegomena and Definitions of Philosophy* (cf. below).

In order to introduce his main thesis that evil is basically produced by the unevenness (or anomaly) of any mixed and composite element, Eznik assumes the paradigm of the four elements. Thus, Eznik argues that all beings, if not mixed with their own associates, become evil and dangerous, even if originally created good and useful:

“Thus, what do they [i.e. the pagan Greeks, the Magians and the Sectarrians] confess to be good among the created beings, and what evil? In fact, many times what they believe to be good is harmful, if taken alone without being mixed with its own companion, as it is generally shown from all the elements. The sun which is good, becomes in turn burning and drying if not mixed with air. The moon, too, which has a moist nature, becomes in turn harmful and corrupting if not mixed with hotness. And the earth becomes dried and cracked without water, but waters only deluge and corrupt the earth. Thus, if divided, the four natures by which the world is constituted and exists, corrupt each other, but if mixed with their own companion, they are useful and beneficial. [...] There is necessarily a certain hidden power that by mixing together the corrupting things transformed it into what is useful to each other.”³⁹

Eznik then states that those who are healthy must confess that what is changeable is not essential, but is caused by something or someone else, or again, shaped by what is non-existent (զի որ շարժին եւ փոփոխի՝ չէ էական. այլ կամ լեալ յումերէ եւ յիմերէ, եւ կամ հաստատեալ ի չգոյէ). By contrast, the One who is and moves the whole reality is unique, indivisible, unchangeable and unmovable. The One who causes things to exist has no opposite in himself and to himself (արդ եթէ մի էութիւն է՝ որ զամենայն յամենայնի ազդեցուցանէ, եւ չիք ինչ նմա հակառակ [...])⁴⁰. To assess the priority of God's creative activity with respect to matter and space, Eznik puts forward interesting cosmological arguments that deserve serious consideration. The context is Eznik's response to those who suppose that either evil is co-eternal with God or evil's existence depends on matter by means of which God created the universe.

“Thus, how will they consider God? Either as existing in the whole matter (*hyle*) at some point or as existing in a certain part of the same (matter)? If they say that all of God is in the whole matter—it does not matter how immense they say God is—the matter would be more immense than He. And if He existed only in a certain part of it, in this case too, the matter would be more immense than He, because a little part of the matter became able to receive all of God. But, if He is not in the matter and not in a certain part of it, it is evident that there is a space between both of them which is more immense than they. Thus, it comes forth that the principles without beginning are not only two, but three: God, matter and the space, which should be yet more immense than the two.”⁴¹

³⁸ Nonnus of Nisibis, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, ed. R. W. Thomson. Atlanta 2014, 139–140.

³⁹ Eznik of Koghb I 2 (Venice 1926, 14).

⁴⁰ Eznik of Koghb I 3 (Venice 1926, 15).

⁴¹ Eznik of Koghb I 5 (Venice 1926, 26): Արդ զիմարդ համարիցին զԱստուած. Իբրեւ ի տեղուց ինչ յամենայն ի հիւղն լինել, եթէ ի միում ինչ ի մասին նորա: Եթէ զամենայն զԱստուած յամենայն ի հիւղն լինել ասիցեն, որչափ մեծ եւ ասիցեն զԱստուած, գտանի հիւղն մեծ քան զնա: Քանզի յորում իցէ որ, յայն յորում էն, քան զայն որ ի նմա էն մեծ գտանի, զի բաական եղև տանել բոլոր զնա: Եւ եթէ ի մասն ինչ միայն ի նմանէ, եւ այնպէս բիրապատիկ իսկ մեծ քան զնա հիւղն գտանի, զի սակաւ ինչ մասն նորա բաական եղև ընդունել զամենայն զնա: Եւ եթէ ոչ ի նմա, եւ ոչ ի մասին ինչ նորա, յայտ է՝ թէ այլ ինչ էր անջրպետ ընդ մէջ երկոցուն մեծ քան զերկոսին, եւ ոչ միայն երկու անսկզբնակիցք գտանին, այլ երեք. Աստուած, եւ հիւղն, եւ անջրպետն, եւ մանաւանդ մեծ եւ անջրպետն քան զերկոսին: Translation by me.

Then, Eznik rejects the idea that God transformed matter from its primordial and unshaped state into evenness and form, for it would imply that God worked confusedly and by necessity as matter does. Here, Eznik depends on the post-Nicene Church Fathers' interpretation of Plato's legacy, affirming the contingency rather than the necessity of the existence of the world⁴². The distinction between the eternal generation of the Son of God and the creation of the world from a certain temporal beginning-point is already unequivocal in Eznik's Christology.

For Eznik evils are not endowed with substance or personhood, but rather depend on voluntary activity, for they are products of the personhood (Չարիքս որ լինին ուստի իցեն: Հարցոյք եւ մեք. Չարիք որք լինին՝ անձինք ինչ իցեն, թէ արգասիք անձանց)⁴³.

“Because they (i.e. men) are unable to make something entirely out of nothing, the stones which they fashion into buildings no longer are called stones, but cities or temples. For it is not that the nature makes towns or temples, but rather the art which is in the nature. And the art does not happen as if from something adjacent which might exist in the natures. And the art does not come to be from some among the adjacent things that exist in the natures, from which he (i.e. the artist) takes his artistic knowledge, but rather from accidents which come about from the natures. Because it is not the case that some self-existent is able to manifest art from the self-existents, but from the accidents which occur: just as from the art of ironmongering, the ironmonger, and from carpentry, a carpenter. Because man is a being prior to art, but art is not before man. Art would not exist if man did not exist first. [...] And how can that matter which they call fruitless and formless be midwife to such fruits unless evils have come into being by accident and not from matter? For killing is not a substance (անձն/*hypostasis*), nor is adultery a substance, nor again other things from those evils come one after another. [...] Likewise, evils too receive the denomination from the accidents. [...] But it is necessary to know that someone who does something is not the same as what he does, just as the potter, when he makes a vase, does not himself become a vase, but is a constructor of vases, whence he receives a name from the art. Likewise one who accomplishes evil receives the name ‘evil’ from doing evil, whether he is an adulterer or a murderer. Therefore, men are duly said to be the doers of evil, for they are the cause of doing and not doing by themselves. And we must not designate evils as substances, but as products of the substance, and evil.”⁴⁴

⁴² Cf. M. CHASE, Discussion on the Eternity of the World in Antiquity and Contemporary Cosmology. *ΣΧΟΛΗ* 7, 1 (2013) 20–68, part. 41–45. For Eznik's Christology and Incarnation, R. D. YOUNG, Notes on Eznik of Kolb's Discussion of the Incarnation. *The St. Nersess Theological Review* 1, 2 (1996) 169–180.

⁴³ Eznik of Koghb I 7 (Venice 1926, 31).

⁴⁴ Eznik of Koghb I 6–7 (Venice 1926, 30–33): Նոքա քանզի ամենեւին յոչընչէ չկարեն ինչ առնել, քարինքն՝ գոր ի շինածսն յորինեն՝ ոչ եւս քարինք կոչին, այլ կամ քաղաք կամ տաճարք. Ձի ոչ եթէ բնութեան գործ է քաղաքս կամ տաճարս, այլ արուեստին է՝ որ ի բնութեանն: Եւ արուեստն ոչ եթէ յրնթերակացէ ինչ իմեթէ՝ որ ի բնութիւնսն իցէ՝ առնու զարուեստագիտութիւնն, այլ ի դիպացն որ դիպին ի բնութեանցն: Քանզի ոչ եթէ անձնատր ինչ յանձնատրաց զարուեստն կարէ ցուցանել, այլ ի դիպացն որք դիպինն. Որպէս ի դարբնութենէ դարբինն, եւ ի հիւսնութենէ հիւսն: Ձի մարդ եւ յառաջագոյն քան զարուեստն է. Եւ հիւզն, գոր ասեն անարգասատր եւ անկերպարան, զիմարդ անարգասատրն եւ անկերպարանն յայս կարէր արդիւնս ծնուցանել, եթէ ոչ ի դիպացն լինիցին չարիքն, եւ ոչ ի նմանն: Ձի սպանութիւնն չէ անձն ինչ, եւ ոչ դիւնութիւնն անձն ինչ է, եւ ոչ դարձեալ այլքն մի ըստ միոջէ ի չարեացն. այլ որպէս ի դպրութենէն դպիր կոչի, եւ ի ճարտարութենէն ճարտար, եւ ի բժշկութենէն բժիշկ, եւ այն ոչ եթէ անձինք ինչ են, այլ յիրաց անտի առնուն զանուանս, նոյնպէս եւ չարիքն ի դիպացն առնուն զանուանումս: Բայց զայն պարստ է գիտել, թէ գոր գործէ ինչ որ՝ ոչ ինքն նոյն է. որպէս բրուտն յորժամ անօթս գործիցէ՝ ոչ ինքն անօթ լինի, այլ գործիչ է անօթոցն, ուստի եւ զանուանումն արուեստին առնու, նոյնպէս եւ չարագործն ի չարն գործելոյ առնու զանուն չարութեանն՝ եթէ շուն իցէ եւ եթէ սպանող: Ապա ուրեմն յիրաւի ասին մարդիկ արարիչք չարեաց, զի ինքեանք են պատճառք առնելոյ եւ չառնելոյ: Եւ զչարիսն ոչ պարտիմք անձինս անուանել, այլ արգասիս անձանց եւ չար: Translation from Eznik of Koghb, *On God*, ed. M. J. BLANCHARD – R. D. YOUNG. Leuven 1998, 46–47, slightly modified by me.

Even if he does not make it explicit, Eznik draws upon two clear-cut ontological distinctions that cannot be explained but as a veiled Aristotelian influence, despite the author's criticism of the Greek philosophical doctrines. There is a distinction between substances (in this case, individuals) and accidents, and between the substances as efficient causes and the products of their activity. Only man is responsible for the coming into existence of evils. Following the Cappadocians' footsteps, Eznik rejects any interdependence between matter and evil. He states, in fact, that if matter were subsumed under disorder, weakness and deformity, we should suppose that God would also cause evils to exist, but this is not tenable at all⁴⁵. Evil is, therefore, not uncreated and self-existent, but comes into existence because of the arrogance of the Liar and his jealousy of the honors with which man is endowed. The coming into existence of sufferings is caused by the sins, which are in turn caused by the Liar and Adversary. Yet, their existence also reveals the glory and benevolence of God, because if a person rejects his guilty condition, makes repentance and converts, God rescues him from the sufferings in order that the healed can praise the Healer. Yet, there are also sufferings which depend on a given unevenness of the mixed elements as, for instance, when one of the four elements that the human body is made up of is in excess or deficient because of wrong habits:

“And there are sufferings which are produced neither for sins nor for some glory of God, but for the unevenness of the due mixture. In fact, the human body is made up of four elements: humidity, dryness, coldness and hotness. If one of them diminishes or grows, it causes pains in the body. It happens in this way when one eats or drinks too much, practices a strict fasting or nourishes himself with unproper food, works in extremely hot conditions or tortures himself in extremely cool conditions, <or keeps himself> in such other contrary states by which anomalies should come up in the body.”⁴⁶

Then, sufferings, and namely injustices and vices, come into existence because of transgression, that is the disrespect of the boundaries, which causes evils, such as wars and fornication⁴⁷. Even if Eznik does not use either a Christian or a non-Christian Neoplatonic vocabulary to define evil as disproportion (*ametria/anch'ap'ut'iw*) and privation (*steresis*), there is a striking conceptual similarity between Eznik's idea of anomaly (*anhart'ut'iw*) and unevenness (*ch'kshrel*) of due mixture as the source of illness and David's idea of disproportion of due mixture as the source of hectic fever (cf. above).

David the Invincible

David's discussion of evil is an interesting starting point for examining his opinion about the problem and for assessing how original his contribution was with respect to his own Alexandrian colleagues. It also allows us to substantiate the thesis of the linguistic and theoretical influence of Eznik on David himself⁴⁸. In the *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*—the Armenian re-writing of the *Prolegomena to Philosophy* by David which was probably translated into Armenian by the author himself or by one of his disciples—David deals with evil when discussing two of the six definitions of philosophy:

⁴⁵ Eznik of Koghb I 7 (Venice 1926, 33).

⁴⁶ Eznik of Koghb I 20 (Venice 1926, 89–91): Եւ եւն ցարք՝ որ ոչ վասն մեղաց են, եւ ոչ յԱստուծոյ ինչ ի փառս, այլ ի չկշռելոյ խառնութեան: Քանզի մարդոյ մարմին ի չորց տարերց խառնեալ է, ի խոնաւութենէ, ի ցամաքութենէ, ի ցրտութենէ եւ ի ջերմութենէ. Եւ թէ մի ինչ պակասիցէ կամ յովիցէ, ցաս գործէ ի մարմնի, եւ այն կամ ի շատ ուտելոյ եւ յըմպելոյ լինի, կամ ի սաստիկ պահոց, կամ յանխտիր կերակրոց, կամ յոյժ ի տօթի աշխատելոյ, կամ կարի ի ցրտոյ լկելոյ, կամ յայլոց ինչ այնպիսեաց հակառակորդաց՝ որովք անհարթութիւնք ի մարմինս գործիցին: Translation by me.

⁴⁷ Cf. David, Def. 45.13–18 (AREVSHATYAN).

⁴⁸ For a general and preliminary overview of the influence of Eznik on David: B. CONTIN, Alle origini del pensiero filosofico armeno. Eznik di Koghb e Dawith l'Invincibile. *Annali di Ca' Foscari* XLIV 3 (2005) 69–79.

“Philosophy is the meditation on death” and “Philosophy is the imitation of God to the best of man’s possibilities” borrowed from *Phaedo* 64A and *Theaetetus* 176A-B. David’s hermeneutics when dealing with this topic is generally indebted to Ammonius and Olympiodorus, but shows also some original features, which set it apart from his predecessors and from Elias himself who is generally considered to be a contemporary of David and closest to him⁴⁹. The first definition is discussed in the eighth lesson, where David replies to those who claim that Plato’s statement on the need to practice death is embarrassing, for if the philosopher loves knowledge and truth, he cannot intentionally take his own life. *Phaedo* 64A is explained in positive terms as a response to those who, according to the Neoplatonic Alexandrians, misinterpreted Plato’s idea such as, for instance, the Stoics. David develops his arguments depending on Plotinus and Porphyry, Ammonius and Olympiodorus⁵⁰. Above all, David is convinced that by philosophizing every man can attain happiness and well-being, for only philosophy provides the epistemic and ethical tools that can lead human beings to happiness by means of *theoresis* and practice:

“But, with regard to theology, we affirm that, even though the divine is inconceivable by itself, we arrive at the judgement and the conclusion that the Creator exists by looking at the creation, the creatures and the ordered movement of the world.”⁵¹

The discussion about the similarity to God is again based on the Alexandrian interpretation of Plato’s *Phaedo* 64a and *Theaetetus* 176a–b. Plato’s statements prompted the Alexandrian Neoplatonists, and particularly its Christian exponents, to tackle the idea that the philosopher should think ceaselessly about dying and being dead. This implied also the idea of suicide, as was mainly theorized by the Stoics. I will not deal with this topic in the present paper, for Michael Papazian has already undertaken a meticulous analysis of the question of suicide in the Alexandrian commentators, and even challenged the main thesis of Christian Wildberg according to which the Christian dominance was not yet relevant in the Neoplatonic school of Alexandria in the second half of the sixth century⁵².

After having discussed the question of suicide, David offers his interpretation of the fourth definition of philosophy: “Philosophy is the meditation on death.”

“It must be known that being alive is possession and causes being, whereas death is privation and causes non-being. Each of these <forms> is said to be in a twofold manner, for there is a twofold manner of being alive: a natural one and a voluntary one. Then, being alive is said to be natural when the soul and the body are conjugated, for we say that the soul gives the sensation and the movement to the body. [...] Whereas, being alive is voluntary; when the worst one defeats the best one, that is when the soul is defeated by the bodily passions, and life is called luxurious, that is not moderate. The natural death is the separation of the soul from the body since we are all subjected

⁴⁹ This theory has been challenged by M. Roueché (1990) and B. Contin (2018): footnote 23. Nonetheless, Mossman Roueché seems to have a different opinion in later contributions: M. ROUECHÉ, Stephanus the Philosopher and Ps. Elias: a case of mistaken identity. *BMGS* 36, 2 (2012) 120–138, part. 129, and M. ROUECHÉ, A Philosophical Portrait of Stephanus the Philosopher, in: *Aristotle Re-Interpreted: New Findings on Seven Hundred Years of Ancient Commentators*, ed. R. Sorabji. London 2016, 541–563, part. 550–551.

⁵⁰ M. G. MOUZALA, Olympiodorus and Damascius on the Philosopher’s Practice of Dying in Plato’s *Phaedo*. *Peitho/Examina Antiqua* 1, 5 (2014) 177–198; S. P. GERTZ, Death and Immortality in Late Neoplatonism: Studies on the Ancient Commentators on Plato’s *Phaedo*. Leiden – Boston 2011.

⁵¹ David, Def. 35.17–20 (AREVSHATYAN): Իսկ յաղագս աստուածաբանականին ասենք թէպէտ եւ աստուծայինն անգիտելի է ըստ ինքեան, այլ սակայն, տեսանալով զստեղծուածս եւ զարարածս նորա եւ զբարեկարգապէս շարժումն աշխարհի, ի մտածութիւն եւ ի կարծիս զամբ ստեղծչին: Translation by me.

This passage of the *Definitions* is very close to Eznik’s words as expressed in the first chapter of his *Against the Sects* where all the living and created beings reveal the benevolent existence of God: Eznik of Koghb I 3 (Venice 1926, 17).

⁵² M. PAPAIZIAN, Late Neoplatonic Discourse on Suicide and the Question of Christian Philosophy Professors at Alexandria. *JHS* 135 (2015) 95–109.

to death, whereas the voluntary death is the life carried out by virtue, that is the being saved of the living being when he performs the meditation of death in order to realize the mortification of the passions. By considering it, four consequences come out: being, non-being, being good, and being evil. Therefore, being is the natural life, non-being the natural death, being good the voluntary death and being evil the life conducted according to the appetite.”⁵³

Thus, being evil is caused by a voluntary act of the living being when it decides to live according to what is bad, disregarding what is good. The idea of voluntarism in relation to the problem of evil is not fully developed by David, but there are some hints that permit us to reconstruct his opinion. In fact, some lines before, when arguing against those who disapprove of what is allegedly considered to be Plato’s idea on death (a necessary means to free the soul from the prison of the earthly body), David unfolds four arguments that neither Elias nor Olympiodorus nor Ammonius know. According to the third argument, David affirms that evils, vices and badness are caused by the inaptitude of the living beings, just as the sun seems to be more or less bright according to the recipient of the sunlight, whose eyesight can be either good in someone or weak⁵⁴. Vice and badness are therefore the consequences of a given degree of weakness and imperfection in the human soul, which actually seems to be detached from the divine nature to which it is originally and naturally similar, because of the similarity between the attributes of God and man (goodness, knowledge and potency). David does not spell out that evil has no existence of its own, but it is quite clear that he agrees with this theory, when defining evil as the outcome of an individual disposition of the soul:

“Thus, the happiest person is the one who lives according to virtue, and does not become sad about the corporeal trials or the external <temptations>, that are the material goods. And the one who does not become sad about either the corporeal adversities or the external <temptations>, never takes his own life. Similarly, the philosopher who behaves by virtue, becomes sad neither about the corporeal adversities nor about the external <temptations>, whereas those who suffer for the corporeal and external adversities, lend their ears to listen to Hippocrates who says ‘Because of external temptations, they generate a personal sadness to/by themselves’.”⁵⁵

It is worth pointing out that here the Armenian uses the significant term *p’ordzut’iwn* to describe both the inner and the exterior adversities. The meaning of *p’ordzut’iwn* is much closer to *peirasmos* than to *symphora*. In Greek, the former is more frequently used in the New Testament, meaning

⁵³ David, Def. 62.22–32, 63. 1–6 (AREVSHATYAN): Պարտ է գիտել եթէ կենդանութիւն է ունակութիւն եւ պատճառք գոյոյ, իսկ մահ՝ պակասութիւն եւ պատճառք ոչ գոյոյ, եւ իւրաքանչիւր որ ի սոցանէ երկակի ասի գոյ. քանզի եւ է իսկ երկակի կենդանութիւն. Է՛ որ բնական, եւ է՛ որ յօժարական: Արդ, բնական ասի շարամերձութիւն հոգւոյ եւ մարմնոյ, ըստ որում զգայութիւն ասի տալ հոգի մարմնոյ եւ շարժումն. [...] Իսկ յօժարական կենդանութիւն է յորժամ յոռեզոյնն յաղթէ յաւազունին, այսինքն յորժամ հոգին յաղթի ի մարմնականաց հեշտախտութեանց. ընդ որս եւ անառակ կեանք կոչեցան, այսինքն ոչ ողջախոհ: Իսկ բնական մահ է անջատումն հոգւոյ ի մարմնոյ, ըստ որում ամենեքեան վախճանիմք: Իսկ յօժարական մահ է ըստ առաքինութեան կենցաղավարութիւն, այսինքն ապրիլ կենդանւոյն, յորժամ խոկումն լինի մահու վասն մեռելութիւն գործելոյ ախտից: Translation by me.

⁵⁴ David, Def. 61. 7–23 (AREVSHATYAN): Իսկ յերրորդ ձեռնակութենէ յայսմանէ թէ խստուածային բնութիւնն ոչ երբէք որոշէ զինքն յերկրորդէն, այսինքն ի մարդոյ, բայց եթէ յանպատկանաւորութենէ մարդոյն. քանզի յայնժամ թոյի որոշել զինքն ի նմանէ: Եւ արդ որայսի ինչ է, գոր ասեմքս. որպէս արեգակնային լոյս առ հասարակ զամենեսեան լուսաւորէ. բայց թէ յանպատկանաւորութենէ տեսարանացն թոյի զոմանս առաւել լուսաւորել եւ զոմանս նուազ: Քանիզ եւն ոմանք որ առողջ ունին զտեսարանն, եւ եւն որ տկար, եւ յայսմանէ թոյի զոմանս առաւել լուսաւորել եւ զոմանս նուազ: Translation by me.

⁵⁵ David, Def. 61.34–35, 62.1–8 (AREVSHATYAN): Իսկ բարեբջանիկն է այն, որ ըստ առաքինութեան կեայ, ոչ տրտմի, ոչ ի վերայ մարմնականաց փորձութեանց եւ ոչ ի վերայ արտաքնոցն, այսինքն ընչից. իսկ որ ոչ տրտմի ի վերայ մարմնականացն փորձութեանց եւ ոչ ի վերայ արտաքնոցն, այսպիսին եւ ոչ արտահանէ զինքն. նոյնպէս եւ իմաստասէրն ըստ առաքինութեան կենցաղավարելով ոչ տրտմի, ոչ վասն մարմնականացն փորձութեանց եւ ի վերայ արտաքնոցն, յսեմ զասացեալսն առ ի Հիպոկրատայ, վասն օտար փորձութեանց իւրական ստանան զտրտմութիւնն: Translation by me.

either “trial” or “temptation” with a moral connotation, whereas the latter means more generally a negative “event” or “misfortune”, and is attested in the corresponding Greek passage⁵⁶. Further, the Armenian *p’ordzut’iwn* was used by the Ancient translators of the Bible to render the Greek *peirasmos* as we read, for instance, at the end of the *Pater* in the Gospel of St. Matthew: *Et ne inducas nos in temptationem, sed libera nos a malo* (Mt 6:13)—Եւ մի տանիիր զմեզ ի փորձութիւն, այլ փրկես ի չարէն:

This offers a further proof of the “veiled” Christianity of the author. It is not unusual for David to use the same word with different meanings, as, for instance, in the passage attributed to Plotinus (“Thus, tell me, o Plotinus: if someone suffered in his life all the adversities that happened to Priam and saw the conquest of Troy by trickery and, after his death, was thrown unburied, should he be happiest or not?”), in which the word *p’ordzut’iwn* corresponds to *symphora* (“misfortune”) rather than to *peirasmos*, whereas the word *ch’ar* is used by metonymy and means “trickery” rather than “evil/bad”. Yet, in the previous passage on the internal and external trials/temptations, the Armenian version is more faithful to David’s philosophical view that considers the inner and exterior trials as the most productive means to strengthen the soul and to avoid either excess or privation. In fact, if the excess of a desire produces vice, the unfulfillment of desires even leads to privation and sadness⁵⁷. Passion as opposed to virtue is a lack of proportion⁵⁸, and evils and sufferings are meant for the sake of the virtuous soul.

“Thus, as much as the good captain of a ship is tested not when the sea is calm but when the waves swell, the great soul is also challenged by trials. In respect of this, the Peripatetics too, wishing to show the self-control over their own souls, were used to pronounce this prayer ‘Zeus, inundate us with trials!’”⁵⁹

The Armenian again shows more consistency in rendering the Greek version and confirms the reading of both “trial” and “temptation” for the word *p’ordzut’iwn* rather than “misfortune” when the author speaks about evil on ontological and teleological grounds.

The pairs of contraries—being alive/being dead, on the one hand, and natural/voluntary, on the other—used by David in order to explain what ultimately is the connection between death and being good, can be summarized in a diagram, where the combination of the four terms implies a pair of contrary propositions, a pair of subcontrary propositions, two pairs of contradictory propositions, and two pairs of subaltern propositions⁶⁰:

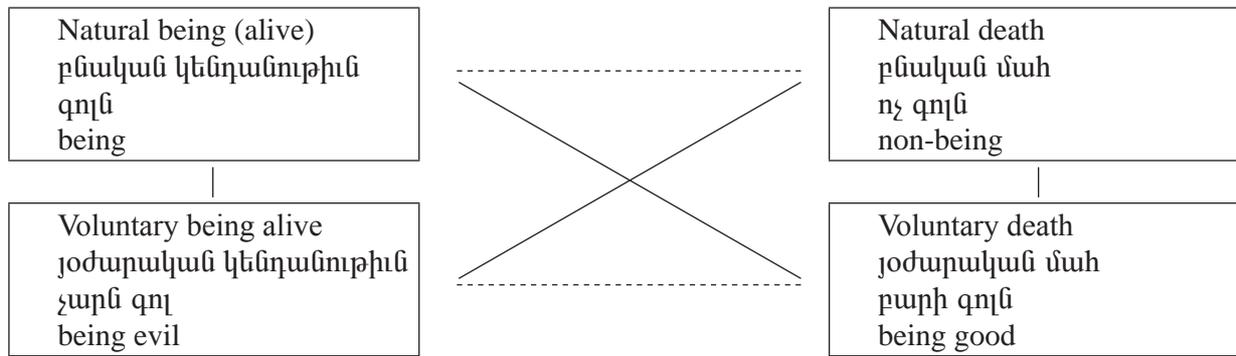
⁵⁶ David, Prol. 30.25–30 (BUSSE): [...] δῆλον ὅτι καὶ ὁ φιλόσοφος ὡς κατ’ ἀρετὴν ζῶν ἑαυτὸν οὐκ ἀναιρεῖς <οὐκ ἀνιώμενος> οὔτε ἐπὶ ταῖς σωματικαῖς συμφοραῖς οὔτε ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκτός, ἐπεὶ οἱ ἀνιώμενοι ἐπὶ ταῖς σωματικαῖς συμφοραῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκτός ἀκούσονται τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ Ἱπποκράτους λεγομένου ἐπ’ ἄλλοτριαῖς γὰρ συμφοραῖς ἰδίας καρποῦνται λύπας.

⁵⁷ For instance: David, Def. 47.35, 48.1; Def. 69.9–10 (AREVSHATYAN).

⁵⁸ The same concept is attested in the *History of the Armenians* by Movsēs Khorenats’i. For a synoptic analysis of the terms “proportion” and “disproportion” in David and Movsēs, P. PONTANI – B. CONTIN, Osservazioni preliminari sul rapporto tra armeno “ban” e greco “logos” e sue implicazioni nell’elaborazione del pensiero etico e politico armeno, in: *Il Logos di Dio e il Logos dell’uomo. Concezioni antropologiche nel mondo antico e riflessi contemporanei*, ed. A. M. Mazzanti. Milan 2014, 29–43.

⁵⁹ David, Def. 66.2–6 (AREVSHATYAN): Քսահի որպէս լաւ նաւապետ ոչ ի հանդարտութեան ծովուն, այլ ի յուցման ալեացն փորձի, նոյնպէս եւ վեհազոյն հոգի ի փորձութեան նահատակի: Ուստի եւ ձեռնալաւնքն, կամելով զժողովարարիւն հոգոյ ցուցանել՝ աղօթելն ստելով, Ջեւս, սեղալ ի մեզ փորձութիւն: David, Prol. 34.8–12 (BUSSE): [...] ὡς περὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄριστος κυβερνήτης οὐκ ἐν γαλήνῃ ἀλλ’ ἐν ζάλῃ δοκιμάζεται, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ ἀρίστη ψυχὴ ἐν ταῖς περιστάσεσι δοκιμάζεται. ὅθεν οἱ Περιπατητικοὶ καὶ βουλόμενοι τὸ καρτερικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνδείξασθαι ἔλεγον “ὦ Ζεῦ, ὄρεξον ἡμῖν περιστάσεις” (“Thus, as much as the noblest skipper is tested not in the still sea but in the storm, the noblest soul is similarly tested in critical circumstances. Therefore, the Aristotelians, too, wishing to show the soul’s temperance, were used to say: ‘Oh Zeus, send us hardships’”). Both translations by me.

⁶⁰ Cf. Elias, Prol. 13.18–23 (BUSSE): for Elias, the natural life combines with the voluntary life, and with the voluntary death,



1. Natural being alive = life → being	2. Natural death = death → non-being
3. Voluntary being alive = vice → being evil	4. Voluntary death = virtue → being good

It emerges clearly that the ontological conditions of being evil and being good depend on the voluntary act of the soul. Even though David does not touch upon the question of evil’s existence (because his treatise is not meant to be a theodicy, but a general introduction to philosophical questions), there is a very significant passage—absent in Elias, Olympiodorus and Ammonius—in the tenth praxis where David discusses the concept of similarity and its application to the relation between God’s essence and human essence:

“For good is existent in God and His Essence is good, in order that He is also incapable of receiving evil through an excess of good as, for instance, the sun which does not participate of the darkness through an excess of light. On the contrary, since man has good(ness) by possession, he is also receptive of evil as, for instance, when affirming that the air is receptive of light by possession, for it shines at the sunrise, but it is also said to be receptive of the darkness, for it darkens at the sunset.”⁶¹

In the seventh lesson of the Armenian *Commentary on Prior Analytics*, David refers to God as the highest Good when explaining the difference between demonstrative and dialectical propositions:

“Thus, they differ in both use and matter, because everything that is true, even if it is paradoxical, may be the subject of the demonstrative. For instance, the sun is much bigger than the earth, and the earth, than the moon, though the sun seems to be the size of a foot; for this is true, though paradoxical, whereas everything that is reputable, though false, may be the subject of the dialectical. It is reputable (because many people think so) but false to say that God can do everything. It is false, because God cannot do something bad due to the infinite good existing in him according to nature and above nature.”⁶²

whereas the voluntary life combines with the natural death. On the other side, the natural life does not combine with the natural death, and the voluntary life does not combine with the voluntary death.

⁶¹ David, Def. 68.14–23 (AREVSHATYAN): Վասն զի բարին էակացեալ է առ աստուծոյ, եւ էութիւն աստուծոյ է բարին, ուստի եւ անկարութիւն է ընդունակ լինել չարին վասն առաւելութեան բարոյն. որպէս արեգակն անընդունակ ասի լինել խաւարի վասն առաւելութեան լուսոյն: Իսկ մարդ ունակութեամբ ունի զբարին, ուստի եւ ընդունակ է չարութեան. որպէս եւ յօդդ ըստ ունակութեան ասի ունել զլոյս, վասն զի ի ծագել արեգականն լուսատրի, ուստի եւ ընդունակ ասի գոլ խաւարի. քանզի ի մտանել արեգականն խաւարի: The corresponding Greek passage is: David, Prol, 36.8–14 (BUSSE): Translation by me.

⁶² David, inAPr. 76.4–13: Արդ այսպէս պիտոյիւք զանազանին, այլ եւ նիւթով, զի բացացուցականունն ենթակայանայ, ամենայն որ ինչ ճշմարիտ է, թէ եւ անկարծելի է. Որգոն, թէ՛ արեգակն կարի յոյժ մեծ է քան զերկիր, եւ երկիր՝ քան զլուսինն, թէպէտ եւ ոտնաչափ երեւի արեգակն: Քանզի այս թէպէտ եւ անկարծելի է, այլ սակայն ճշմարիտ գոյ: Իսկ տրամաբանականունն ամենայն որ ինչ կարծելի է՝ ենթակայանայ, թէպէտ եւ սուտ գոյ: Իսկ ներկարծելի է եւ սուտ

The subject of the demonstrative propositions is what is true, whereas what is reputable is the subject of the dialectical propositions since in their case the assumption can also be false and is not necessarily true. In the twelfth lesson of his *Definitions*, David had already stated that the hypothetical science uses demonstrative premises by means of fundamental postulates in order to prove its theses, whereas non-hypothetical science uses common notions which do not need demonstration (but should be subjected to enquiry in order to establish their validity)⁶³.

Both David and Eznik, even if from different perspectives, transmitted some of the main ontological and cosmological questions discussed within Christian Platonism as well as non-Christian and Christian Neoplatonism to the early Armenian literature. Both of them sought to introduce original conceptual and linguistic tools that were to be useful and productive in the later medieval literature. In Eznik the theological argument based on voluntary activity, already present in the Bible, in the Church Fathers, and also in some “pagan” later authors such as Simplicius, is the main way of showing the non-existence of evil. David, too, considers evil as caused by the voluntary activity of the soul, but his arguments are based on ontological, logical and anthropological considerations.

A NEGLECTED PSEUDEPIGRAPHICAL TEXT ON EVIL BY WAY OF SYLLOGISM

The works attributed to David the Invincible have received due attention from modern scholarship in relatively recent times⁶⁴. Yet, the main focus has been on the philosophical works pertaining to Aristotelian logic—and even limited to the *Prolegomena*, the *Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge*, the *Commentary on Aristotle’s Categories* and the *Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics*—excluding the variety of the other pseudepigraphical works that have been incorporated in the so-called *Corpus Davidicum* by the Armenian tradition⁶⁵. One of these works deserves particular attention for its content and stylistic features. In fact, the short composition known as *ACH* (“Every Evil Is Punishable”) offers a discussion of the ontological status of evil in relation to good, and, what is even more interesting, presents it by means of logical syllogisms.

The attribution to David the Invincible seems to be quite late, since the first Armenian text in which it is found is a *Commentary on ACH* by the catholicos Nersēs the Gracious (catholicos from 1166 to 1173)⁶⁶. Yet, we cannot exclude the possibility that the work had been attributed to David

ասելն, եթէ՛ Աստուած զամենայն ինչ կարէ ներգործել, վասն զի բազմաց ամենեցուն այսպէս թոյի: Բայց ստտ է, վասն զի ի չարիս անկարութիւն ունի նոյնպէս եւ Աստուած՝ սակս անչափ բարոյն, որ բնութեամբ եւ ի վեր քան զբնութիւն զոյ զոյացեալ ի նմա: (ed. A. TOPCHYAN, David the Invincible. Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics [*Philosophia Antiqua* 122, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Armeniaca. Davidis Opera*]. Leiden – Boston 2010).

⁶³ David, Def. 77.10–18 (AREVSHATYAN): Առ որս պարտ է ասել թէ երկակի է մակացութիւն. մին ներստորադրական եւ միւսն աններստորադրական: Եւ ներստորադրական է որ առնու սկիզբունս որք պէտս ունին ապացուցութեան եւ որոց զպատճառսն անգիտանայ. [...] Իսկ աններստորադրական մակացութիւն է, որ առնու սկզբունս զհասարակաց մտածութիւնս, որք ոչ ունին պէտս ապացուցութեան:

Cf. also Aristotle, Top 100b18–25 (ed. G. COLLI, Aristotele. Organon. Milan 2003, 407).

⁶⁴ V. CALZOLARI, Aux origines de la formation du corpus philosophique en Arménie : quelques remarques sur les versions arméniennes des commentaires grecs de David, in: The Libraries of the Neoplatonists, ed. C. D’Ancona Costa. Leiden 2007, 259–278; CALZOLARI–BARNES, L’œuvre de David l’Invincible (n. 2).

⁶⁵ V. CALZOLARI, David et la tradition arménienne, in: CALZOLARI–BARNES, L’œuvre de David l’Invincible 15–36. A critical edition of many philosophical and theological pseudepigrapha known under the name of David, has recently been published: Յատկութեամբ. Գալիթի Անյաղթիւն վերագրող եւ նրա անուանն առնչող գրութեաներ [Supplement. The Writings Attributed to David the Invincible and Related to His Name], ed. G. MURADYAN, in: Մասննազիթք Հայոց [Library of the Armenians] 20. Yerevan 2014, 614–782.

⁶⁶ For a preliminary interesting study on the reception of *ACH* in several early manuscripts: A. MELKONYAN, Գալիթի Անհաղթի կերպարը հայերէն որոշ ձեռագրերի հիշատակարաններում [The figure of David the Invincible in the colophons of some Armenian manuscripts], in: Proceedings of the International Conference on Armenian Studies for the Centennial Anniversary of the Birth of the Academician Levon Khachikyan Yerevan 2018. Yerevan 2019, 392–403. The main thesis of the paper, with which I agree, is that the *ACH* was attached to the *Definitions* because of the strong conceptual similarities and continuities

before Nersēs' time, even if the small number of Armenian codices (particularly containing philosophical texts) prior to the 11th–12th centuries is an obvious obstacle in this field of research. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that a wide variety of early and late manuscripts place the *ACH* after the *Definitions*, even if the research on this topic is insufficient as yet⁶⁷. In any case, the translation of the Greek original into Armenian is necessarily prior to Nersēs himself who commented it, in all likelihood, before his appointment to the catholicosate⁶⁸. Even if from a codicological and historical viewpoint the early mid-12th century is a sure *terminus post quem non* for the chronology of the *ACH*: its linguistic features show several Grecisms which coexist with more genuinely Armenian options which display the translator's linguistic competence.

According to the catholicos Nersēs, David wrote his main work, the *Definitions*, in order to refute those who denied the existence of philosophy, and the *ACH* to disprove the false opinions of those who affirmed that evil was uncreated and acting in God as well as in man's heart. For the catholicos Nersēs the Gracious, the interdependence of both works attributed to David is unambiguous because of the conceptual similarities between the *Definitions* and the *ACH*: they both deal with the problem of the ontological status of evil and its implications for ethics. At the end of the *Definitions*, in fact, we find some lines that, in the manuscript tradition of David's work, generally precede (or rather, introduce) the first lines of the *ACH*:

“Thus, things being in this manner, [we affirm that] God gave the philosophy in order to ornament the human soul. He adorns theoretical potencies with theory, and animal potencies with practice in order that we do not acquire the false knowledge that comes from opinions and do not behave in a bad way.”⁶⁹

Another significant reference is a passage from the first section of David's Armenian *Commentary on Aristotle's Prior Analytics*, a treatise concerned with syllogism and demonstration:

“And the demonstrative syllogism is useful in all of philosophy, both theoretical and practical, in order that we should regard as true what is truly shown in theoretical philosophy, and in order that we should not acquire false knowledge and should do nothing bad.”⁷⁰

between the two texts. Arminè Melkonyan (Researcher at the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) had the courtesy to share with me the very latest outcomes of her current research on the reception of the *ACH* in the Armenian manuscript tradition. According to the manuscript evidence, the *ACH* comes immediately after the *Definitions* in 53 among the 57 mss. that Melkonyan has scrutinized, whereas the *Commentary on the ACH* by Nersēs Shnorhali comes after the *ACH* in four manuscripts.

⁶⁷ The manuscripts which contain both works and which I could check personally or through the catalogues, are: W263 (a. 1705–1714), V94 (16th c.), V875 (16th c.), V805 (a. 1314), V2168 (15th c.), V1254 (14th c.), M1747 (a. 1243), M1746 (13th c.); J522 (a. 1734); J434 (17th c.); J989 (18th c.). W= Library of the Mechitarist Fathers of Vienna; V= Library of the Mechitarist Fathers of St. Lazarus in Venice; M= Institute of the Ancient Manuscripts of Yerevan; J= Library of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, St. James. The outcomes of the research carried out by Arminè Melkonyan will undoubtedly contribute to advance our knowledge on this topic.

⁶⁸ B. CONTIN, *L'editio princeps* delle “Definizioni e divisioni della filosofia” di Davide l'Invincibile e il breve trattato “Ogni male fa soffrire” (Costantinopoli 1731), in: Al-Ġazālī (1058–1111), la prima stampa armena, Yehudah ha-levi (1075–1141), la ricezione di Isacco di Ninive, secondo Dies Academicus, 7–9 Novembre 2011 (*Orientalia Ambrosiana* 2), ed. C. Baffioni – R. B. Finazzi – A. Passoni Dell'Acqua – E. Vergani; Sezione di Armenistica: La prima stampa Armena, ed. C. R. B. Finazzi. Milan 2013, 139–159.

⁶⁹ David, Def. 104.18–22 (AREVSHATYAN): Արդ այսոցիկ այսպէս էլոց, շնորհեաց աստուած զիմաստասիրութիւն վասն զարդարելոյ զմարդկային հոգի: Արդ զգիտնական զօրութիւնսն զարդարէ եւ ի ձեռն տեսականին, իսկ զկենդանականն ի ձեռն գործականին, որպէս զի մի գտուտ գիտութիւն ի կարծեաց ընկալցոք եւ մի չար ինչ գործեսցոք:

⁷⁰ David, inAPr. I 6 (TOPCHYAN 36–38): Իսկ ապացոցական հասարթումն պախտանացոյ գոյ յամենայն իմաստասիրութեան՝ ի տեսականն եւ ի գործականն. որպէս զի զցուցեալսն ի տեսականումն ճշմարտապէս՝ ճշմարիտ կարծեսցոք, որպէս զի մի գտուտ գիտութիւն ընկալցոք եւ մի չար ինչ գործեսցոք:

Both passages show that the conceptual and textual relation between David's works and the *ACH* was so evident and strong for the Armenians that, at some point in their tradition, they were induced to attribute the *ACH* to one of the main authorities of their own intellectual history, David the Invincible. Nonetheless, in the absence of other data, it is very hard to establish which sources the catholicos Nersēs used, as well as on which grounds the catholicos himself declares David to be the author of the *ACH*⁷¹. Overall, according to modern Armenian scholarship, the text is recognized as a translation into Armenian made by David the Invincible from a Greek original that is attributed to Gregory of Nyssa or to a certain Nemesius⁷².

Under the name of Gregory of Nyssa, the Greek tradition has handed down a text entitled *Si quid sit* or *Contra Manicheos* (hereafter, *CMg*), which has been edited by Jacques Paul Migne among the works of the Church Father (*PG* 46, t. III, 541–542). Although not questioning the attribution to Gregory of Nyssa, the editor points to the similarity between the *CMg* and the *Contra Manicheos* by Didymus the Blind (Alexandria, 313–398; hereafter, *CMdid*). In addition, there is another text with the incipit *Omne malum puniendum est* (Πᾶν κακὸν κολαστέον; hereafter, *OM*), which has the same textual structure as the *CMg*. The *OM* can be read in the fourth volume of Angelo Mai's *Nova Patrum Bibliotheca* (Rome 1847), which contains several apologetical works by Gregory of Nyssa, Eusebius, Didymus of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Nicetas of Byzantium and Peter of Sicily. The *OM* is in the third part of the volume after a quite long text on the *Controversies of the Manichean Photinus with Paul, a Christian of Persia*, which also includes a *Disputatio cum Manichaeo (Dialexis)*. The latter was attributed to John of Damascus by the editor on the basis of the title in the manuscript *Vaticanus* gr. 1838 (13th c.) that reads *Joannis Orthodoxi disputatio cum Manichaeo* (Διάλεξις Ἰωάννου ὀρθοδόξου πρὸς Μανιχαῖον). The *OM* (or “Syllogisms of the Saint Fathers”) was edited as an appendix to the *Dialexis*. Both the latter and the former were re-edited by M. Richard and M. Aubineau in the first volume of the *Corpus Christianorum (Series Graeca)* in an appendix to the homilies of John of Caesarea, on the basis of three unedited manuscripts more ancient than the one used by Angelo Mai. The manuscripts used by the editors were *Sinaiticus* gr. 383 (10th cent.; *Diktyon* 58758), *Parisiensis* gr. 1111 (11th cent.; *Diktyon* 50707), *Athous Vatopedi* 236 (11th cent.; *Diktyon* 18380). In all these codices the text is attributed to a certain John the Orthodox who, according to the editors, should be John of Caesarea, known also as John the Grammarian (early 6th cent.)⁷³.

The *OM* is made up of thirteen propositions which roughly correspond to what we read in the *CMg*. The hypothesis of Marcel Richard and Michel Aubineau is that John of Caesarea, after having authored three works against the Manicheans, composed a collection of syllogisms on the basis of the *CMdid*, excerpting and elaborating the latter. In the Greek tradition, we thus have two texts, the *CMg* and the *OM*, attributed respectively to Gregory of Nyssa and John of Caesarea, both depending on the second chapter of the *CMdid* (*PG* 39, 1088C–1089A–B). It is possible that the Armenian *ACH* depends either on one of the three texts or on all of them, partly or entirely. In order to assess which one among the three Greek texts is the *Vorlage* for the Armenian *ACH*, I will examine all three Greek texts. In the process, I will also assess how the Greek texts relate to each other.

⁷¹ Even though numerous Armenian texts are preserved only in later manuscripts, this should not be assumed as an *a priori* argument for diminishing their value and their authenticity, see T. GREENWOOD, “New Light from the East”: Chronography and Ecclesiastical History through a Late-Seventh Century Armenian Source. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, 2 (2008) 107–254, part. 201.

⁷² Կորիւն Վարդապետի Մամբրէի Վերծանողի եւ Դաւթի Անյաղթի Մատենագրութիւնք [Library by Koriwn Vardapet, Mambrē the Interpreter and David the Invincible]. Venice 1833, 215; G. ZARBHANEAN, Մատենագրարան Հայկական Թարգմանութեանց Նախնեաց (Դար Գ – ԺԳ) [Library of the Armenian Translations by the Ancestors (4th–13th cc.)]. Venice 1889, 373–374.

⁷³ A. GRILLMEIER, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Band 2, 2. Die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jahrhundert. Freiburg – Basel – Vienna 1989, 54–74.

Although the Armenian renders the source text(s) almost *verbatim*, there are some lexical differences that imply a process of re-elaboration and adaptation of the inherited material. Moreover, the textual and lexicographical analysis of the Armenian version represents by itself an interesting case-study not only for the translation technique which reveals some Hellenizing features, but also for the ontological lexicon related to some relevant terms, especially in the Late Antique Christological debates, as “essence”, “substance”, “accident”, “property”, “voluntary”, and “natural”. Here, I will provide several comparisons: first of all, between the Armenian *ACH* and its alleged Greek *Vorlage*, the *CMg*, and secondly, between the *ACH*, on the one hand, and *CMdid* and *OM*, on the other. For the *ACH*, I will provide a diplomatic edition on the basis of two manuscripts, namely W263 (a. 1705–1714; Vienna, Mechitarist Library) and V875 (16th century; Venice, Mechitarist Library); the *editio princeps* (Constantinople 1731, designated as “Const 1731”), and the 1833 edition published by the Mechitarist Fathers of Venice (designated as “Ven 1833”)⁷⁴. For the Greek texts, I will rely on the available editions. Even though the *ACH* is not generally structured as a list of syllogisms as it clearly is in the case of *OM*, I propose a division of the Armenian text on the basis of *CMg* for the sake of clarity and convenience.

⁷⁴ Կորին Վարդապետի Մամբրեի Վերծանողի և Դավիթ Անյաղթի Մատենադրութիւնք [Library by Koriwn Vardapet, Mambrē the Commentator, and David the Invincible]. Venice 1833, 215–16. The text edited by the Mechitarist Fathers was collected on the basis of 5 manuscripts held in the Library at that time, among which the most ancient dates to 1310 and is written in *bolorgir*. Instead, the other ones are undated and written in both *bolorgir* and *nōtragir*. The codex V875 I included in the present edition of the *ACH* was possibly acquired by the Mechitarist Library of Venice after 1833, because it is not mentioned in the printed edition.

Amenayn ch'ar tanjeli (Const 1731, p. 204–5, W263 fol. 318r–318v, V875 fol. 185r–185v)

1. Ամենայն չար տանջելի. ոչ որ տանջել[ա]լ⁷⁵ անապական է:
2. Ոչ որ ապականացու անեղ, է չար ապականացու: Չար ուրեմն ոչ է անեղ:
3. Ոչ որ ըստ բնութեան չար եւ վասն զի չար առարկութիւն է, ոչ որ առարկութիւն գոյացութիւն է. ապա ուրեմն չար⁷⁶ ոչ է գոյացութիւն⁷⁷:
4. Ամենայն ընդդիմակքն միմեանց ապականիչք. հակառակք ուրեմն ոչ են անապականք:
5. Ոչ ինչ անեղ փոփոխելի եւ փոփոխելի⁷⁸ բարին պարտել[ա]լ ի չարէն. բարի ուրեմն ոչ է անեղ:
6. Անեղն⁷⁹ ոչ է ցանկացող ապականութեան ուրուք եւ ոչ ապականիչ: Իսկ չարն փափագող է ապականութեան. չար ուրեմն ոչ է անեղ:
7. Իսկ աստուածային գիրք տանջանաց մատենն ոչ միայն զայլ չարսն, այլ եւ զնոյն ինքն զբանասարկուն: Ասեն եւ ամենայն տանջանաց մատենեալն այլայլելի է. ոչ որ այլայլելի անեղ. ապա ուրեմն ոչ ինչ ի չարեացն է անեղ:
8. Որք բոլորովին ընդդիմակք⁸⁰ են՝ ոչ ինչ ունին հաւասար: Որպէսզի ամենայն հարկատրութեամբ որ միումն է գոյացեալ միսումն եւս ոչ գոյանայ: Եւ է գոյացեալ բարութեան⁸¹ գոլ անեղն. չար ուրեմն ոչ ինչ յայցսանէ գոյանայ, բայց միայն չարութիւն:

Si quid sit malum, puniendum est (PG 46, III.541–2)

1. Է՛ի տի ան κακόν, κολαστέον· οὐδέν δὲ κολαζόμενον ἄφθαρτον. Οὐδὲν ἄρα κακόν ἄφθαρτον.
2. Οὐδὲν φθαρτὸν ἀγέννητον· ἔστι δὲ τὸ κακὸν φθαρτόν. Τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.
3. Οὐδὲν κατ'οὐσίαν κακόν· τῷ τὸ κακὸν ποιὸν εἶναι. Οὐδὲν δὲ ποιὸν οὐσία. Τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ οὐσία.
4. Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἀλλήλων φθαρτά· τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα ὄντα οὐ φθαρτά. Τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία οὐκ ἄφθαρτα.
5. Οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον τρεπτόν· τρέπεται δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ. Τὸ ἄρα ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.
6. Τὸ ἀγέννητον οὐκ ἔστιν ὀρεκτικὸν φθορᾶς τινος, οὐδὲ γε φθαρτικόν· τὸ δὲ γε κακὸν ὀρεκτικὸν φθορᾶς. Τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.
7. Αἱ θεῖαι Γραφαὶ ταῖς κολάσεσι παραδίδοσθαι οὐ τοὺς ἄλλους μόνους κακοὺς, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν διάβολου λέγουσι· πᾶν δὲ τὸ κολάσει παραδιδόμενον τρεπτόν· οὐδὲν δὲ τρεπτὸν ἀγέννητον. Οὐδὲν ἄρα τῶν κακῶν ἀγέννητον.
8. Τῶν δι' ὅλου ἐναντιουμένων, οὐδὲν κοινόν. Ὡστε πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχει, μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν.

⁷⁵ <տանջեալ> տանջելի W263

⁷⁶ <չար> չարն Ven 1833

⁷⁷ <ապա [...] գոյացութիւն> om. W263

⁷⁸ <եւ փոփոխելի> om. Const 1731

⁷⁹ <անեղն> անեղքն W263

⁸⁰ <ընդդիմակք> ընդդիմակքն V875, Ven 1833

⁸¹ <բարութեան> բարութեանն V875

1. Every evil is punishable. Nothing subjected to suffering/punishment is uncorrupted.

2. Nothing corruptible is uncreated, and as evil is corruptible, then evil is not uncreated.

3. Nothing is evil by nature, and because evil is an accident and no accident is substance, and consequently evil, too, is no substance.

4. All the contraries are destructive of each other. Then, contraries are not incorruptible.

5. No uncreated being is mutable, and the good which is defeated by evil is liable to be changed. Good, then, is not uncreated.

6. What is uncreated does not desire the corruption of anything and does not produce corruption, whereas evil desires corruption. Evil, then, is not uncreated.

7. Then, the Divine Writings condemn to the sufferings not only what is evil, but also the liar himself. (They say that) everything which is subjected to suffering is also alterable [and] nothing which is alterable is uncreated. Consequently, nothing coming from what is evil is uncreated.

8. Realities which are wholly opposite, have no equality, because what exists by necessity in one, does not exist in the other. And what is uncreated exists in goodness. Hence, evil does exist from either of the two, but only evilness <exists from evil>.

1. If something is evil, it must be chastened. But nothing that is chastened is incorruptible. Therefore, no evil is incorruptible.

2. Nothing corruptible is unbegotten, and evil is corruptible. Evil, then, is not unbegotten.

3. Nothing is evil by essence, because evil is a quality and no quality is essence. Therefore, evil is not essence.

4. All the contraries can corrupt/be corrupted by one another, and the uncreated beings are not corruptible. Therefore, contraries are not incorruptible.

5. No uncreated thing is liable to be changed, but the good which is prevailed over by evil, is subjected to changing. Good, then, is not uncreated.

6. What is uncreated does not desire any corruption, and is not what corrupts, but evil desires corruption. Consequently, evil is not uncreated.

7. The Divine Writings do not consign to chastisement only evils, but also say it for the slanderer himself. Anything which is given over to chastisement is mutable, but nothing mutable is uncreated. Therefore, nothing among evils is uncreated.

8. Among things which are wholly contrary, nothing is common, for it is absolutely necessary that good exists and evil does not.

9. Ամենայն որ իրաւացի փափաքէ⁸² ումեք⁸³, առ այն⁸⁴ յարմարե[ա]լ ունի զփափաքումն⁸⁵ եթէ զիրար[ա]նութեամբ բաղձայցէ: Ապա եւ յապականացուացն է չարութիւն: Եւ եթէ յապականացուացն է չարութիւն, ապականի եւ ինքն: Եւ ապականե[ա]լն ոչ է անեղ:

10. Եւ եթէ անեղ իցէ չարութիւն՝ ըստ⁸⁶ բնութեան նմա գոյանայ չարն⁸⁷ գոյ. ոչ որ ըստ⁸⁸ բնութեան գործելով մեղանչէ. <չար ուրեմն մեղանչէ.>⁸⁹ եւ որ ոչն մեղանչէ՝ ոչ է ընդ բանբասանօք է եւ ընդ բանպասանօք է սատանայ. <սատանայ>⁹⁰ ապա <ուրեմն> եւ ոչ է անեղ⁹¹: <ո՛վ որ անեղ ստորոգ է, ճշմարտապէս եւ ինքն է չար>⁹²

9. Πᾶς ὁ εὐλόγως ὀρεγόμενός τινος ἐπιτετευγμένη ἔχει τὴν ὄρεξιν, ἣ εὐλόγως ὀρέγεται· τῶν φθαρτῶν ἄρα ἐστὶν ἡ κακία· τῶν φθαρτῶν οὐσα ἀφανισθήσεται. Ἀφανιζομένη δὲ, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγέννητος.

10. Ἀγέννητον τὸ κακὸν, κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει τὸ κακὸν εἶναι. Οὐδεὶς δὲ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἀμαρτάνει· τὸ ἄρα ἀγέννητον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει. Τὸ μὴ ἀμαρτάνον οὐχ ὑπαίτιον· ὑπαίτιος δὲ ὁ Σατανᾶς. Οὐκ ἄρα ἀγέννητον.

First syllogism (corresponding to the first syllogism in *CMg*, *CMdid* and *OM*).

Here, the terms are arranged in such a way that they form a categorical syllogism in the mood AaB—BaC—(therefore) AaC. In the Armenian *ACH*, however, the syllogism is lacking and formulated with different terms. In the Greek *CMg*, the major premise is in the form “All A is B” with the introduction of the hypothetical particle (“If something is evil, it must be chastened”) and is formulated from universal propositions, whereas the minor premise is in the form “No B is C” and the conclusion in the form “No A is C”. The minor premise and the conclusion are indeed formulated from universal propositions: *Εἴ τι ἄν κακόν, κολαστέον· οὐδὲν δὲ κολαζόμενον ἄφθαρτον. Οὐδὲν ἄρα κακὸν ἄφθαρτον.* By contrast, in *CMdid* and *OM* the major premises are formulated from universal propositions in the form “All A is B”: (<Ἄλλως τε> in *CMdid*) *πᾶν κακὸν κολαστέον· οὐδὲν κολαστέον ἄφθαρτον· οὐδὲν ἄρα κακὸν ἄφθαρτον*, (<τῷ μὴ ἀφθάρτως ὑπάρχειν φθαρτόν> in *CMdid*).

The *ACH* depends on *CMdid* and *OM*, for the major premise is in the form “All A is B” without any use of the hypothetical particle *εἴ ἄν* as attested in *CMg*. However, the syllogism is not complete, for the conclusion is absent. If complete and valid, it should have been:

- 1) Every evil is punishable (Ամենայն չար տանջելի <է>)
- 2) Nothing which is to be punished is incorruptible/Everything which is to be punished is corruptible ոչ որ տանջելալ անապական է/ <ամենայն տանջելալ ապականացու է>
- 3) No evil is incorruptible/Every evil is corruptible <ոչ որ չար անապական է>/<ամենայն չար ապականացու է>

⁸² <փափաքէ> փափաքէ Ven 1833|փափաքի Const 1731

⁸³ Բնիք NBHL s.v. *diwrabanut' iwn*

⁸⁴ <առ այն> om. W263, Ven 1833

⁸⁵ <յարմարեալ ունի զփափաքումն> W263

⁸⁶ <ըստ> ընդ W263

⁸⁷ <չար> Const 1731, V875

⁸⁸ <ըստ> ընդ W263

⁸⁹ <չար ուրեմն մեղանչէ> W263, V875

⁹⁰ <սատանայ> om. Const 1731, Ven 1833

⁹¹ <ոչ է անեղ> ոչ է անմեղ Const 1731

⁹² <ո՛վ որ անեղ ստորոգ է, ճշմարտապէս եւ ինքն է չար> om. Const 1731, Ven 1833

9. Everything which duly desires something, adapts its own desire to the [desired] thing, if it desires reasonably. But evilness comes from corruptible things and if it derives from corruptible things, it is corrupted. And what is corrupted is not uncreated.

10. So, if evil was uncreated, evil should subsist in it by nature. Nothing that acts according to nature, commits sins. <Therefore, evil commits sins> What does not commit sins, is not subjected to reprehension, but Satan is subjected to reprehension. Therefore, Satan, too, is not uncreated

9. Everyone who has a reasonable desire of something, achieves his desire well, if he has a reasonable desire. Among the corruptible things there is evil. What is among the corruptible things is subjected to destruction. What is subjected to destruction, then, is not uncreated.

10. [If] evil is uncreated, then it exists by itself in nature, but nothing that acts according to nature, commits sins. In fact, what is uncreated does not commit sin. What does not commit sin, is not guilty. But Satan is guilty. Then, <evil> is not uncreated.

In the first syllogism, the main noteworthy difference between the Greek *CMg* and the Armenian *ACH* lies in the predicate term. In the major premise of *CMg*, in fact, the predicate term is formulated from the passive verbal adjective *κολαστέος* (translated into Latin by a gerundive in Migne's edition), whereas the Armenian *ACH* has the predicate *սանջելի* which can be rendered either by an active intransitive form ("to cause suffering"/"to cause punishment") or by a passive form ("to be subjected to suffering"/"to be subjected to punishment or to be punishable"). Therefore, the latter can be translated into English either by a gerundive ("to be suffered", "to be punished", "must be punished") or by a present active participle ("causing suffering", "causing punishment")⁹³. In this case, we should render the Armenian verbal adjective *սանջելի* by the passive form not only on the basis of the Greek texts by Didymus (*CMdid*), pseudo-Gregory (*CMg*) and John of Caesarea (*OM*), but also for the sake of the syllogism's consistency. In fact, the minor premise of the Armenian *ACH* has the passive (past) participle *սանջեալ* for the subject term. Generally, the subject term of the minor premise derives from the predicate term of the major premise as follows: A (Ամենայն չար "Every evil") is B (*սանջելի* "punishable"), and (not-)B (*նչ որ սանջեալ* "Nothing which is to be punished") is C (*անսպախական* "incorruptible"). We could suppose a misreading between the terms *սանջելի* and *սանջեալ*, that could derive from the misinterpretation of the scribal abbreviations at some point in the manuscript tradition. Yet this hypothesis is not very convincing, because the manuscript tradition is unanimous in relating the term *սանջելի* in the first sentence of the *ACH*: Ամենայն չար սանջելի. Instead, the minor premise reads: *նչ որ սանջեալ անսպախական է* where the subject term *սանջեալ* (passive participle from *սանջիլմ*) must be translated by the periphrasis "subjected to suffering" or "subjected to punishment".

Second syllogism (corresponding to the second syllogism in *CMg*, *CMdid* and *OM*).

It is formulated from universal propositions, although the quantifier of the major premise is negative. The terms of the syllogism are arranged in the mood: A (*Ոչ որ սպախականացու/Οὐδὲν φθαρτὸν*) is B (*անել/ἀγέννητον*), C (*չար<ն>/τὸ κακόν*) is A (*սպախականացու/φθαρτὸν*), then C (*չար/τὸ κακόν*) is not B (*նչ է անել*).

- 1) *Οὐδὲν φθαρτὸν ἀγέννητον*
Ոչ որ սպախականացու անել

⁹³ A. BAGRATUNI, Տարեք Հայերէն Քերականութեան դարասաց տղոց համար [Elements of Armenian Grammar for the Young Students], 8^o ed. Venice 1874, 121.

- 2) Ἔστι δὲ τὸ κακὸν φθαρτόν.
 է չար<ն> սսսսսսսսսսս
 3) Τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.
 Չար ուրեմն ոչ է անէղ:

Concerning the term ἀγέννητον (անէղ in Armenian), *CMdid* and *OM* have a more adequate reading < ἀγέννητον > (“uncreated”) instead of < ἀγέννητον > (“unbegotten”): Didymus 1088C, 4–5 (*PG* 39); John of Caesarea 131 (RICHARD–AUBINEAU). On the other hand, the Armenian reads < անէղ > which is the privative form of the aorist root of the verb էղանիս corresponding to the Greek γίγνομαι. According to the NBHL, it can also mean “unbegotten” corresponding to the Greek ἀγέννητον from γεννάω, albeit in different contexts⁹⁴. In all likelihood, the reading < ἀγέννητον > attested in *CMg* is a misreading for the adequate reading < ἀγέννητον > as we read in *CMdid* and *OM*. In this case, the Armenian shows the correct reading, and seems to depend once again on Didymus and John of Caesarea.

Third syllogism (corresponding to the sixth syllogism in *OM*, and to the third in *CMdid*: the formulation is identical in *CMdid*, *OM* and *CMg*).

ACH and *CMg* formulate the same syllogism (which belongs to the same type as the first one) by the use but of different terms:

ACH	CMg
1) Nothing is evil by nature	1) Nothing is evil by essence
2) Evil is an accident and no accident is substance	2) Evil is a quality and no quality is essence
3) Evil is not substance	3) Evil is not essence

It is worth reflecting on the lexical differences between the two texts: 1) In the major premise we read ըստ բնութան vs. κατ’ οὐσίαν. In this case, the Armenian does not translate *ousia* into *ēut’iwn*, which we would expect to be used here, but into the term *bnut’iwn*, which renders both *physis* and *ousia*. In the latter case, the word բնութիւն and its cognates recur more frequently in the early Armenian translations from the Greek (but also from the Syriac) as, for instance, in the Nicene Creed and in the Bible, in order to translate both *physis* and *ousia*, whereas the word էութիւն occurs only once in *Heb* 1.3 and corresponds indeed to *hypostasis* and not to *ousia*, as argued by Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev⁹⁵. According to the scholar, a sharp distinction between “nature” (in the sense of “hereditary” essence) and “essence/substance” becomes a common feature in Armenian theological literature after the beginning of the sixth century, and especially after the second Council of Dvin in 553/555. This linguistic peculiarity could be assumed as a chronological indicator to date the *ACH* prior to the mid-6th century. Yet, the use of the term *goyats’ut’iwn* both in the minor premise and in the conclusion suggest to us that the *ACH* would have been translated after the beginning of the 6th century or later, for *goyats’ut’iwn* (“substance”) penetrates into the Armenian theological literature in the first half of the sixth century⁹⁶. Nonetheless, the use of the same term in the Armenian philosophical literature is attested only at the time of David the Invincible, from the second half of the 6th century

⁹⁴ G. AWETIK’EAN – K. SIWRMÉLEAN – M. AWGEREAN, Նոր բառգիրք հայկազգեսն լեզուի [New Dictionary of Armenian Language]. Venice 1836, *sub voce* անէղ (abbreviated as NBHL).

⁹⁵ See I. DORFMANN-LAZAREV, Christ’s ‘Being’ and ‘Activity’: Some Aspects of the Development of Armenian Christological Vocabulary from its Origins to the Tenth Century. *The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 68 (3–4; Christ in Armenian Tradition: Doctrine, Apocrypha, Art [Sixth–Tenth Centuries]) 231–254.

⁹⁶ DORFMANN-LAZAREV, Christ’s ‘Being’ 238–239.

onwards⁹⁷. According to the catholicos Nersēs Shnorhali, the term *bnut'awn* should be interpreted as “nature” in its first sense of “matter”: “Men should not be deceived by the opinion that something has [the disposition to] badness by nature, for the whole nature has been created by God and God’s creation is always good”⁹⁸. At the beginning of his *Against the Sects*, Eznik states: “There is no evil which is evil by nature, and there is no creator of evil things but of good ones”⁹⁹. The me-ontological status of evil is re-assessed, once more, on the basis of the strong claim to the benevolence of God’s creative activity. 2) In the minor premise, we read *ստարկութիւն* vs. *ποιόν*, and *զոյացութիւն* vs. *οὐσία*. The Armenian seems to depend neither on *CMg* nor on *OM* nor on *CMdid* (all of them read: *Οὐδὲν κατ’ οὐσίαν κακόν, τῷ τὸ κακὸν ποιὸν εἶναι· οὐδὲν δὲ ποιὸν οὐσία. Τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ οὐσία*), because it does not translate the Greek terms *to poion* and *ousia* in the manner we would expect. In fact, instead of *orakut'awn* for *to poion* and *ēut'awn* for *ousia*, we find respectively *ararkut'awn* and *goyats'ut'awn*. The former term has a wide range of meanings, but in this context, it means “something which is put beside the nature of the reality and does not belong to its essence” or “something which happens to be” as confirmed by Nersēs Shnorhali in his *Commentary on the ACH*¹⁰⁰. Should it be regarded as a doublet of the term *ղէւ(ք)* (“accident(s)”) as opposed to *ընթերակաց/ւառ* *ընթեր* (“adjacent” corresponding to the Greek *pareimi*), which is used by Eznik?¹⁰¹ For Eznik, in fact, the former means something that happens to come into being but does not exist by itself, whereas the latter means something which is self-existent, as, for instance, matter is supposed to be according to some false opinions¹⁰². On the other hand, the definition of evil as something “added to the substance” or “thrown beside the substance” recalls the vocabulary of Gregory of Nyssa, as well as the linguistic context of the sophisticated theory on evil elaborated by Proclus and then developed by Simplicius. Linguistic evidence may substantiate the hypothesis that the Armenian term *ararkut'awn* has been used in the context of the *ACH* as a synonym of *parhypostasis*. In fact, the prepositional suffix *ar-* can also render the Greek *para-*, as, for instance, in the *Definitions*, where David uses the periphrasis *arənt'er golov* in order to render the Greek *paron* (in this case David uses the Eznikian vocabulary but in a different manner), but also in the Bible¹⁰³. Yet, the second term of the compound is *arkut'awn*, which derives from the verb *arkanem* (corresponding to the Greek *ballo*–βάλλω), which would have sounded less technical than a compound calqued on the Greek *hypostasis* (*parhypostasis*).

⁹⁷ CONTIN, David l’Arménien 46–51.

⁹⁸ Nersēs Shnorhali 297 (Const 1731): Մի խարեցին մարդիկ կարծել զոք բնութեամբ ունել զչարութիւն. Ջի բնութիւն ամենայն աստուծոյ է ստեղծուած. Եւ ստեղծեալքն յաստուծոյ բարի են յոյժ: Translation by me.

⁹⁹ Eznik I 2 (Venice 1926, 12): [...] եւ չիք ինչ չար որ բնութեամբ չար իցէ. Եւ ոչ է արարիչ չարաց իրաց, այլ բարեաց: Translation by me.

¹⁰⁰ Nersēs Shnorhali 298 (Const 1731): Եւ վասն զի չար ստարկութիւն է: Չառաջին ասացեալսն յաջորդօքս հաստատէ. Չարն ոչ է բնութիւն ասէ, այլ ստարկութիւն. Այսինքն արկումն ի բնութիւնս: Որպէս յանօթ արկեալ իրս ինչ օտար է եւ ոչ յանօթոյն բնութենէ. Այսպէս չարութիւնն թէպէտ մտանէ յոք բնակիլ՝ ոչ է ի նորին բնութենէ:

¹⁰¹ Eznik of Koghb I 6 (Venice 1926, 29–30): Արդ հարկ է ի պատճառս չարեացն զայ եւ ցուցանել՝ թէ ուստի՞ լինին չարիքն, եւ չէ պատճառ չարեաց Աստուած՝ այնու զի առ ընթեր մնա զհիւղն դնեն: [...] Իսկ եթէ արարչի այն գործ է՝ զբնութիւնս առնել, ոչ միայն արդս եւ զարդս եւ կերպարանս, յայտ է եթէ աւելորդ է կարծել՝ թէ ի նիւթոյ ինչ իմեքէ յընթերակացէ արար Աստուած զաշխարհս, այլ յոչընչէ եւ ի չզոյէ:

“Thus, it is necessary to come to the causes of evils, and to demonstrate where evils come from; and also to show that because they posit matter alongside Him <it is impossible to say He is not> the cause of evils. But if this work is the creator’s—to make natures and not just smoothness and ornaments and forms—it is manifestly superfluous to consider that God made the world from nearby matter, instead of thinking that He made it from nothing and from non-being” (BLANCHARD–YOUNG 45–46)

¹⁰² Eznik of Koghb I 7 (Venice 1926, 31–32): Եւ հիւղն, զոր ասեն անարգաստոր եւ անկերպարան, զիսորդ անարգաստորն եւ անկերպարանն յայլս կարէր արդիւնս ծնուցանել, եթէ ոչ ի դիպացն լինիցին չարիքն, եւ ոչ ի մնանէ: Ջի սպանութիւնն չէ անձն ինչ, եւ ոչ շնութիւնն անձն ինչ է, եւ ոչ դարձեալ այլքն մի ըստ միոջէ ի չարեացն. Այլ որպէս դպրութենէն դպիր կոչի, եւ ի ճարտարութենէ ճարտար, եւ ի բժշկութենէ բժիշկ, եւ այն ոչ եթէ անձինք ինչ են, այլ յիրաց անտի առնուն զանուանս, նոյնպէս եւ չարիքն ի դիպացն առնուն զանուանումս: The reader can find an English translation of this passage above, n. 44.

¹⁰³ NHBL, s.v. *ւառ*.

The early 8th-century theologian and philosopher Catholicos John of Ȫdzun (717–728) provides a clear distinction between the natural dispositions and the post-substantial dispositions in his treatise *Against the Phantasiasts*, which is largely addressed to the Aphthartodocetists:

“Because some among these ones [i.e. dispositions] are called ‘natural’ for they have been arranged in us by nature as hunger and thirst, sleep and work, grief and fear, anger and ignorance. Others, instead, are post-substantial in us. Among the latter there is one disposition which has been received by us from the beginning, that is sin, which taught us to disparage the commandment. And the chastisement disposed by the Creator for the transgressions is death. Thus, corruption is said to be the consequence of death. It was not added by us and by the Creator to our nature, but in it (i.e. in our nature) it [i.e. corruption] has found and constituted as nourishment our being subjected to death. For, [corruption] is opposite to generation, as previously I stated that it corrupts the thing, and indeed strives to guide the being to non-existence.”¹⁰⁴

Here, the catholicos John uses the rare adjective յետամտական (“adjacent” “joined to the substance”) to define sin and evil. This term is a compound from two roots: the prefix յետ- and the verbal root մտն (“to go into”) to which is joined the final adjective suffix -ական. It is attested also in the Armenian translation of Porphyry’s *Isagoge* to define the nature of the accidents (“Accidents are disposed by nature after the genus, and are joined *a posteriori* [after the many/the *praedicamenta*] to the substance”)¹⁰⁵. From a theoretical viewpoint, *yetamtakan* is a synonym of *makeghut* (“post-substantial”, a calque of the Greek compound *ephousiodes*), very frequently used by David in the *Commentary to Porphyry’s Isagoge*. The passage shows how deeply the logical vocabulary—likely through the mediation of David (but not necessarily, for the catholicos could have had on his desk the Armenian version of the *Introduction* by Porphyry)—penetrated in the Christological argumentations and discussions. The catholicos John considers sin and evil as something which has been added to the substance, but does not affect the substance of the individual. Yet what affects the substance of the being and provokes its destruction is corruption (the main effect of sin) as something opposite and contrary to generation and life. Thus, the adjective *yetamtakan* is not used in the sense of “post-substantial”, which we find in David’s *Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge*, but rather as the author of the *Amenayn* uses the term *ararkut’iwn* to define evil in the third syllogism¹⁰⁶.

To sum up, it is evident that the term *ararkut’iwn* does not correspond to *poion* but is a compound of the prefix *ar-* (*pros-*) *arkumn* (deriving from *arkanem* corresponding to *ballo*). The term *goyats’ut’iwn* is a synonym for *goyut’iwn* which means *ousia* in the sense of primary essence (individual), at least if we consider as reference vocabulary the philosophical one introduced in Armenia by David the Invincible (cf. above). The Armenian could depend on one of the three Greek texts

¹⁰⁴ Yovhan of Ȫdzun, Ընդդէմ Երեսուրթականաց [Against the Phantasiasts] (Յովհաննու Իմաստասիրի Անճնեցոյ Մատենագրութիւնք. Երկրորդ տպագրութիւն [The Works by Yovhan the Philosopher of Ȫdzun. Second Edition]. Venice 1953, 91–92: Քանզի ոմանք ի նոցանէ բնականք ասին՝ ըստ բնութեան ի մեզ տրամադրեալք. որպէս քաղցն եւ ծարսան եւ քունն եւ աշխատութիւնն, տրտմութիւնն եւ երկիւղն եւ ցասումն եւ անզիտութիւնն: Իսկ ոմանք յետամտականք ի մեզ եղեն. յորոց մին ի նոցանէ ի մէնջ ընկալաւ զսկզբնատրութիւնն, այս ինքն մեղքն, որ զպատուիրանն ուսոյզ արհամարհել. Իսկ ոմն յարարչէն պատուիաս ընդ յանցանացն ի վերայ եղաւ մահն: Իսկ ապականութիւն հետեանք ասին մահուն. ոչ ի մէնջ եւ ոչ արարչէն յարեալ եղել ի բնութիւնս, այլ որս գտեալ եւ կերակուր արարեալ իւր զընտ մահուամբ անկանեալսն. քանզի ներլինելութեանն է ներհական, որպէս յառաջն ասացի, որ ապականէ զիրն, եւ զոգցես թէ յանգոյթիւն զգոյն խնդրէ ներածել: For a general overview on John of Ȫdzun’s Christology, P. COWE, Armenian Christology in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries with Particular Reference to the Contributions of Catholicos Yovhan Ȫjneec’i and Xosrovik T’argmanič’. *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 55 (2004) 30–54.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted by NHBL (s.v. յետամտական): Պատահմունքն վերջասէռք բնատրեցան, եւ յետամտական բնութիւն ունին:

¹⁰⁶ Dav, in Is. 2.7 (MURADYAN 74–75): “Now we have to know what is substantial and what is post-substantial. The substantial is that which, when present, preserves a thing and, when absent, destroys it, like the rational. The post-substantial is that which, if present, does not preserve a thing nor does, if absent, destroy it, like black and white.”

on logical and formal grounds, because they all formulate the terms of the syllogism in the same way. Nonetheless, on linguistic and conceptual grounds, the Armenian has some textual peculiarities which show how the translator strove to adapt the source text to his religious and theological landscape.

Fourth syllogism (corresponding to the fourth syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, and to the seventh in *OM*).

This syllogism has many problematic features: in *CMg* it is not valid on logical grounds, whereas in the *ACH* we do not read the major premise of the argumentation. Before surveying the Armenian, it is worth comparing the Greek *CMg*, *CMdid* and *OM*:

CMg	CMdid	OM
Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἀλλήλων φθαρτά· τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα ὄντα <u>οὐ φθαρτά</u> . Τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία οὐκ ἄφθαρτα.	Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἀλλήλων φθαρτικά· τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα ἄφθαρτα· οὐκ ἄρα ἐναντία· τὰ γὰρ ἐναντία οὐκ ἄφθαρτα	Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἀλλήλων ἔστι φθαρτικά· τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα ἄφθαρτα· τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία οὐκ ἀγέννητα

CMg does not seem to depend on either *CMdid* or *OM*, or to depend on a corrupted version of either of them because of some logical and linguistic anomalies. On logical grounds, in *CMg* the terms are formulated from the third syllogistic figure (AaB, Ca {not-} B, Aa {not-} C) but not in an appropriate mood, for it reads: A (Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία) is B ([ἀλλήλων] φθαρτά), C (τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα/* ἀγέννητα ὄντα) is not-B (οὐ φθαρτά), therefore A (Τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία) is not-D (οὐκ ἄφθαρτα/or we can suppose “is not-non-B”). If the syllogism were valid on formal grounds, we would expect to find the following formulation: A (Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία) is B ([ἀλλήλων] φθαρτά), C (τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα/* ἀγέννητα ὄντα) is not-B (οὐ φθαρτά), therefore A (Τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία) is not-C (οὐκ ἀγέννητα/* ἀγέννητα). On linguistic grounds, we can point out that the term ἀγέννητα takes the place of the more likely term ἀγέννητα as already discussed (cf. below), and that the term φθαρτά takes the place of φθαρτικά as we read in *CMdid* and *OM*. The term φθαρτικά that is used in both *CMdid* and *OM*, seems to be more appropriate in the context: the minor premise, in fact, reproduces almost *verbatim* Aristotle’s *Physics* I.21–22 (φθαρτικά γὰρ ἀλλήλων τὰ ἐναντία “the contraries are, in fact, destructive one of another”)¹⁰⁷. The Armenian text (Ամենայն ընդհանրին միմեանց սպախանիչք) corroborates this hypothesis, for instead of reading *apakanats* ‘u/սպախանիւցն (φθαρτός in Greek), it reads *apakanich* ‘/սպախանիչ (φθαρτικός in Greek)¹⁰⁸. In *CMdid* and *OM*, the minor and the major premises are formulated in the same way, but in *CMdid* we find one more term which belongs to the major premise: οὐκ ἄρα ἐναντία. The latter is necessary to justify the conclusion: τὰ γὰρ ἐναντία οὐκ ἄφθαρτα, in order not to invalidate the syllogism. By contrast, in *OM*, the syllogism seems to be formulated in the more appropriate mood: A (Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία) is B (ἀλλήλων φθαρτικά), C (τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα) is {not-}B (ἄφθαρτα), A (τὰ ἄρα ἐναντία) is {not-}C (οὐκ ἀγέννητα). For the Armenian, it is evident that it depends on *CMdid*, even if the major premise (underlined in the Greek text) is lacking:

ACH	CMdid
Ամենայն ընդհանրին միմեանց սպախանիչք. հսկառաւք արեմն ոչ եմ անսպախանք	Πάντα τὰ ἐναντία ἀλλήλων φθαρτικά· <u>τὰ δὲ ἀγέννητα ἄφθαρτα</u> · οὐκ ἄρα ἐναντία· τὰ γὰρ ἐναντία οὐκ ἄφθαρτα

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *Phys.* I 9 (ed. I. BEKKER, *Aristotelis Physica*. Berlin 1843, 18, l. 14). Cf. Olympiodorus, *InCat.* 74.4–13.

¹⁰⁸ NHBL, s.v. *apakanats* ‘u vs. *apakanich* ‘

Fifth syllogism (corresponding to the fifth syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, and to the fourth in *OM*). In this case, *ACH* depends on *CMg* and *CMdid*, but not on *OM*:

<i>CMg</i>	<i>CMdid</i>	<i>ACH</i>	<i>OM</i>
Οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον τρεπτόν· τρέπεται δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ. Τὸ ἄρα ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.	Οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον τρεπτόν· τρέπεται δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ. Τὸ ἄρα ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον.	Ոչ ինչ անելի փոփոխելի էի փոփոխելի բարին պարտեալ ի չարին. բարի ուրեմն ոչ է անելի	Οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον τρεπτόν· τρέπεται δὲ τὸ κακὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ· τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐκ ἀγέννητον

On logical grounds, both groups of syllogisms are valid in the mood: A (Οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον) is B (τρεπτόν), B (τρεπτόν) is C (τὸ ἀγαθὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ/τὸ κακὸν κρατηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ), therefore C (τὸ ἄρα ἀγαθὸν/τὸ ἄρα κακὸν) is {not-}A (οὐκ ἀγέννητον), but it is worth remarking the different perspective of the authors. In fact, in *CMdid*, *CMg* and *ACH* there is no hint at the mutability of the creatures which have been created not necessarily good but still good. Instead, John of Caesarea (*OM*) seems to have intentionally modified the *Vorlage* (very likely *CMdid* on the basis of chronological priority), probably in order to maintain consistency and coherence across the text. This was meant, in fact, to refute the Manichean arguments in favor of the existence of an engendered negative principle that is opposed to the highest good.

Sixth syllogism (corresponding to the sixth syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, and with slight differences to the twelfth syllogism in *OM*).

The syllogism is arranged in the same mood in *ACH*, *CMdid* and *CMg*: A (Τὸ ἀγέννητον in pseudo-Gregory, Τὸ ἀγέννητον in Didymus) is not-B (οὐκ ἔστιν ὀρεκτικὸν φθορᾶς τινοσ, οὐδὲ γε φθαρτικόν), C (τὸ δὲ γε κακόν) is B (ὀρεκτικὸν φθορᾶς), therefore C (Τὸ ἄρα κακόν) is not-A (οὐκ ἀγέννητον in *CMg*, οὐκ ἀγέννητον in *CMdid*).

Seventh syllogism (corresponding to the seventh syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, and to the third in *OM*).

The syllogism is introduced by a sentence which provides the context and the terms for the major premise: Իսկ աստուածային զիրք տանջանաց մասնեն ոչ միայն զայլ չարսն, այլ էլ զինչն ինքն զբանասրկումն/Αί θεΐαι γραφαί ταῖς κολάσσει παραδίδοσθαι οὐ τοὺς ἄλλοις μόνους κακοὺς, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν διάβολον λέγουσι. In fact, the sentence explains that what is consigned to suffering and punishment is not only the evil activity, but also the original cause of any evil activity which is Satan, the Liar. This sentence stands for the subject term of the first premise and makes sense of the conclusion, for if “Everything which is consigned to suffering/punishment is evil”, we can substitute the term “evil” for the subject term of the first premise (“everything which is handed down to suffering/punishment”). Thus we will obtain a syllogism arranged as follows: A (անենայն տանջանաց մասնեալն, that is անենայն չար “everything which is consigned to suffering/punishment”, that is “every evil”) is B (այլայելի “alterable”), no B (ոչ ոք այլայելի “no alterable”) is C (անել “uncreated”), therefore no A (ոչ ինչ ի չարեացն “no evil”) is C (անել “uncreated”).

It is worth reflecting on the Armenian verbal adjective այլայելի that is preferred here to փոփոխելի (“mutable”), which is used in the fifth syllogism in order to render the Greek *treptos*. The Armenian translator seems to have intentionally modified the Greek term and adopted a synonym of the Greek *treptos* and the Armenian *p’op’okheli*. The Armenian doublet for *p’op’okheli/treptos* corresponds to

the Greek present participle ἀλλοιούμενος and its use is attested in the Armenian translation of the treatise “On the Divine Names” by pseudo-Dionysius¹⁰⁹.

Eighth syllogism (corresponding to the eighth syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, but to the thirteenth syllogism in *OM*).

The formulation that *CMg* adopts for his argument differs markedly from the formulation as found in *CMdid* and *OM*. The latter depends on *CMdid*, whereas *CMg* seems to rely on another source. The Armenian text, in turn, depends on either of or both the last two, although with several noteworthy lexical divergences.

<i>CMg</i>	<i>CMdid</i>	<i>OM</i>	<i>ACH</i>
Τῶν δι' ὅλου ἐναντιουμένων, οὐδὲν κοινόν. Ὡστε πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχει (sic !), μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν.	Τῶν δι' ὅλων ἐναντιουμένων οὐδὲν κοινόν. Ὡστε πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸ θατέρω ὑπάρχον, τῷ λοιπῷ μὴ ὑπάρχειν· ὑπάρχει δὲ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ εἶναι ἀγέννητον· τῷ ἄρα κακῷ οὐδέτερον τούτων ὑπάρχει. μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν	Τῶν δι' ὅλων ἐναντιουμένων οὐδὲν κοινόν. Ὡστε πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τὸ θατέρω ὑπάρχον, τῷ λοιπῷ μὴ ὑπάρχειν· ὑπάρχει δὲ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ εἶναι ἀγέννητον· τῷ ἄρα κακῷ οὐδέτερον τούτων ὑπάρχει. μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν	Որք բրդրորդիւն ընդդիմակք են՝ ոչ ինչ ունին հաւասար: Որպէսզի ամենայն հարկաւորութեամբ որ միումն է գոյացեալ միւսումն եւ ոչ գոյանայ: Եւ է գոյացեալ բարութեան գոյ անեղն. չար ուրեմն ոչ ինչ յայցանէ գոյանայ, բայց միայն չարութիւն:

The first main divergence between the Greek texts and the *ACH* is the term ընդդիմակ which means “opposite” and corresponds to the Greek *antikeimenon*. As already argued, this term is not a simple synonym of հակառակ (“contrary”) in the Armenian philosophical vocabulary, and especially in the vocabulary shaped by David the Invincible. As I tried to demonstrate, in the Armenian *Commentary on Porphyry’s Isagoge* by David, there is a clear conceptual distinction between the terms pertaining to the semantic sphere of ընդդիմակ and the terms pertaining to the semantic sphere of հակառակ, especially when David discusses the problem of “opposition” and the correlated concepts of “privation” (and “abundance”). With respect to the Greek texts, the translator of the Armenian text (*ACH*) displays his command of philosophical and logical knowledge when he prefers the term ընդդիմակ to հակառակ (corresponding to the Greek *enantios*) in the context of the discussion about the opposition between good and evil. The premise of the syllogism in question affirms, in fact, that there is no possibility of equality in something wholly opposed, for the opposites do not admit middle terms and intermediary stages as the contraries do. Here, the term հաւասար (“equal”) that we read in the sentence instead of the most common terms հասարակ that we would expect to find for the Greek *koinos*, should be regarded as a technical term and not a general synonym of *koinos*¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* IV 18–35 (716A–736B) (ed. B. R. SUCHLA, *Corpus Dionysiacum* 1. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus* [*Patristische Texte und Studien* 33]. Berlin – New York 1990, 162–180): Καίτοι ἄτοπον ἐξ ἑνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ δύο παντελῶς ἐναντία προτείνει καὶ εἶναι καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀρχὴν οὐχ ἀπλήν καὶ ἐνιαίαν, ἀλλὰ μεριστὴν καὶ δυοειδῆ καὶ ἐναντίαν ἑαυτῇ καὶ ἠλλοιωμένην. Cf. also NBHL (as in fn. 94), s.v. այլալիլի.

¹¹⁰ The term *hawasar* also means “common” (*koinos*) and we cannot exclude *a priori* that the translator intended to render just the Greek term *koinos*. Yet, it is necessary to verify which nuance the translator gives when translating from the source language to the target one, and to evaluate his technical competence when intentionally modifying the source text. Since the context of the present syllogism is philosophy and logic, the point of reference to the Armenian technical vocabulary in these

The use of *hawasar* in relation to the opposites reveals the translator's linguistic and philosophical competences, which allowed him to modify the source text and reveals his attempts to be consistent with Aristotle's thought. In *Metaph.* 1056a 22–24, in fact, the equal is defined as “that which is neither great nor small but is naturally fitted to be either great or small; and it is opposed to both as privative negation (and therefore is also intermediate)”¹¹¹, being therefore the balance or the middle term between two contraries. But the opposites do not admit intermediate terms and therefore do not admit any equality among them. The translator of the *ACH* intentionally modifies the source text (or texts) in order to keep the coherence with what comes after the first premise of the syllogism. Because of the contradiction implied by the opposites, among which good and evil are included, there must be no equality, namely no intermediate term, between good and evil. As the uncreated being is substantially goodness and not evil—evil, in fact, is not uncreated because its nature is mutable and alterable—it is inconceivable that good be equal to evil, and vice-versa. Evil is equal and substantial only to evilness.

The Greek text that goes under the name of Gregory, Didymus and John of Caesarea raises several problems: pseudo-Gregory (*CMg*) is the shorter one and does not depend on either Didymus (*CMdid*) or John (*OM*), whereas John ostensibly reports *verbum de verbo* Didymus' passage. Pseudo-Gregory's syllogism seems to be lacking, because there is no relation between the premise and the conclusion: “Among things which are wholly contrary, nothing is common, for it is absolutely necessary that good exists and evil does not”. Didymus' and John's formulation, in turn, is quite strange because of syntactic incorrectness: ὑπάρχει δὲ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ εἶναι ἀγέννητον· τῷ ἄρα κακῷ οὐδέτερον τούτων ὑπάρχει. μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν (“The being uncreated exists in good, but neither of the two exist in evil. Therefore, evil does not exist”). If correct, the sentence should have been formulated as follows: ὑπάρχει δὲ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ εἶναι ἀγέννητον· τῷ ἄρα κακῷ οὐχ ὑπάρχει. μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν. On the other hand, it is very likely that either the Armenian translator changed the source text because of its syntactic incorrectness (either as by Didymus or by John of Caesarea) or he had access to Greek models different from those which have been handed down to us. In fact, instead of the dative τῷ (ἄρα) κακῷ we read a nominative form շար (նրեմն), the verb *hyparkhein* is rendered by գոյաւիսւմ which generally corresponds to the Greek *ousiounai*, and the Greek partitive οὐδέτερον τούτων is expressed throughout by a marked ablative (the preposition *y-* used to mark the ablative as in Classical Armenian) preceded by *նչ ինչ* which reproduces the Greek indefinite neut. pronoun *ouden*. Therefore, we should translate the conclusion of the syllogism into English as follows: “Hence, evil becomes existent (or comes into existence) from neither of the two [i.e. neither from goodness nor from the uncreated]”. The Armenian differs once again as regards the rendering of the last sentence in the conclusion. In fact, in Greek we read μὴ ὄν ἄρα τὸ κακόν (unanimously reported by the three Greek Fathers), whereas in Armenian we read բայց միայն շարունքին which would suppose an underlying Greek ἀλλὰ μόνον ἢ κακία. Here, the Armenian omits *ի շարեմն*, which, if present, would have clarified the general sense of the sentence, that means “only evilness comes into existence from evil”.

Ninth syllogism (corresponding to the ninth syllogism in *CMg* and *CMdid*, but to the eighth syllogism in *OM*).

In all likelihood, this syllogism is a syllogism of the second figure according to the Aristotelian combinations (*Prior Analytics* I 4–6). Yet, it raises several difficulties on formal grounds. In fact,

fields must be David's philosophical works. In David's commentaries, including the *Definitions*, the term *hasarak* generally renders the Greek *koinos*, whereas the abstract term *koinoia* is rendered by *haghordut' iwn*.

¹¹¹ Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1056a 20–24 (The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation, ed. by J. Barnes, vol. 2 [Bollingen Series 71, 2]. Princeton NJ 1884, 1668).

<i>CMg</i>	<i>CMdid</i>	<i>OM</i>	<i>ACH</i>
<p>Ἀγέννητον τὸ κακὸν, κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει τὸ κακὸν εἶναι. Οὐδεὶς δὲ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἀμαρτάνει· τὸ ἄρα ἀγέννητον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει.</p>	<p>Εἰ ἀγέννητον τὸ κακὸν, κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει τὸ κακὸν εἶναι. Οὐδεὶς δὲ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἀμαρτάνει· τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει.</p>	<p>Εἰ ἀγέννητον τὸ κακὸν, κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει τὸ κακὸν εἶναι· οὐδεὶς δὲ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἀμαρτάνει· τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει.</p>	<p>Եւ երբ անէղ իցէ չարութիւն՝ ըստ բնութեան նմա գոյանայ չարն գղ. ոչ որ ըստ բնութեան գործելով մեղանչէ. <չար ուրեմն մեղանչէ.></p>
<p>Τὸ μὴ ἀμαρτάνον οὐχ ὑπαίτιον· ὑπαίτιος δὲ ὁ Σατανᾶς. Οὐκ ἄρα ἀγέννητον</p>	<p>Τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀμαρτάνον, οὐχ ὑπαίτιον· Ὑπαίτιος δὲ ὁ Σατανᾶς. οὐκ ἄρα ἀγέννητον</p>	<p>Τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀμαρτάνον, οὐχ ὑπαίτιον· Ὑπαίτιος δὲ ὁ Σατανᾶς. οὐκ ἄρα ἀγέννητον</p>	<p>եւ որ ոչն մեղանչէ՛ ոչ է ընդ բանբասանօր է եւ ընդ բանբասանօր սատանայ. <սատանայ> ապա <ուրեմն> եւ ոչ է անէղ: <ն՛վ որ անէղ ստորոգ է, ճշմարտապէս եւ ինքն է չար></p>

This last syllogism is very complicated on logical, intra- and inter-linguistic grounds. From an intra-linguistic comparison among the three Greek texts, we can argue that *OM* depends on *CMdid*, whereas *CMg* shows some slight textual modifications in respect of the source text that is likely to have been *CMdid*. Except for the conditional *εἰ* whose omission could be explained as the result of a misreading or of a corruption in the manuscript transmission, there is a discrepancy among the three authors in the second premise: τὸ ἄρα ἀγέννητον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει (“therefore, what is uncreated does not commit sin”, *CMg*) or τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει (“therefore, evil does not commit sin”, *CMdid* and *OM*). By contrast, *ACH* modified the sentence τὸ ἄρα κακὸν οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει as referred to in *CMdid* and *OM*, into չար ուրեմն մեղանչէ (*τὸ ἄρα κακὸν ἀμαρτάνει) for the sake of inner consistency in the syllogism. In fact, *CMdid*’s and *OM*’s statements that evil does not commit sin, sounds quite uncommon, whereas the same reading without the negative οὐχ would have been more reasonable: τὸ ἄρα κακὸν ἀμαρτάνει—that seems to be the reading the Armenian had at its disposal. In this case, *CMg*’s reading τὸ ἄρα ἀγέννητον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει, seems to be more reasonable than the one that we read in *CMdid* and *OM*.

Apart from these textual discrepancies in the three Greek texts that could be explained as the result of a corruption in the manuscript transmission, there is still something lacking in all the four texts. There is, in fact, no inference from the premises. If valid, the first part of this categorical syllogism arranged according to the third Aristotelian figure, should be ordered in the following mood: A (“Nothing who acts according to nature”) is C (“commits sins”), then B (“evil”) is C (“commits sins”), therefore A (“nothing which acts according to nature”) is B (“evil”). A possible reconstruction of this syllogism would be: Εἰ ἀγέννητον τὸ κακὸν, κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῷ ὑπάρχει τὸ κακὸν εἶναι. Οὐδεὶς δὲ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἀμαρτάνει· τὸ δὲ κακὸν ἀμαρτάνει. Οὐδεὶς κατὰ φύσιν ἐνεργῶν ἄρα ἐστὶν κακόν, in Greek and Եւ երբ անէղ իցէ չարութիւն՝ ըստ բնութեան նմա գոյանայ չարն գղ. ոչ որ ըստ բնութեան գործելով մեղանչէ. <եւ>չար<ն> մեղանչէ. *ապա ուրեմն ոչ որ ըստ բնութեան գործելով չար է, in Armenian.

The second part of the syllogism provides the correct conclusion and the refutation of the hypothetical clause that we read at the beginning of the tenth syllogism: “Satan, that is evil, is not uncreated because he does not act according to nature (first conclusion), and is guilty because he

commits sins (secondo conclusion)”. It is worth pointing to the Armenian “free” rendering of the Greek compound *hypaitios* which is not translated with a lexical calque according to the translation technique of the Hellenizing school, but with the preposition *and* accompanied by the instrumental case (*bambasanōk*’) to mean “subjected/under apprehension” according to the linguistic features of the Classical Armenian.

On the whole, we have the impression that there are more linguistic and textual similarities between the *ACH* and Didymus the Blind than between the *ACH* and pseudo-Gregory. Hence, we should reassess the traditional scholarly opinion that regards the *ACH* as a translation of Gregory of Nyssa’s *Contra Manicheos* made by David. In our opinion, in fact, the *ACH* is more likely a re-elaboration of Didymus’ Greek text in Armenian in a period prior to the mid-12th century and later than the mid-6th century. In the absence of external evidence coming from other literary works or from the manuscript tradition, it is not possible to date the text more precisely. Concerning the paternity, one should not disregard the attribution of the *ACH* to David, since there are strong textual and linguistic similarities between this text and David’s Armenian works, especially the *Definitions*. Whoever is the author of the *ACH* and whenever he composed his text on the basis of Didymus’ text, one is stunned by the complexity and tremendous variety of the transmission of Greek thought to Armenian philosophy and theology. Ideas developed by Christian and non-Christian philosophers were absorbed and re-elaborated in an original manner according to the Armenian cultural and religious world that was continuously being challenged by various political and religious actors in a period marked by intense intellectual, diplomatic and political changes between Armenia and Byzantium, on the one hand, and between Armenia and the Caliphate, on the other.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has sought to trace the trajectories in the transmission of the debate on evil from the Greco-Hellenistic thought to Armenia. In philosophy, the question received more and more attention from Plotinus onwards because it had strong implications for several fields of philosophy, such as logic, ontology, cosmology and ethics. On the whole, we have two different tendencies in the philosophical arguments: the ontological one developed by Plotinus and Proclus, and the logical one set out by their heirs in Athens and Alexandria, namely Simplicius, Ammonius, Philoponus, Olympiodorus and David. As regards the ontological arguments, Plotinus and Proclus elaborated two different theories about evil and matter: for the former, evil is brought into existence by matter which, in turn, is produced by the lower soul that generates matter because of the intrinsic imperfection of its nature. For the latter, matter cannot be a principle of evil for if one believes that there is a principle of any sort of evil one should consequently admit an ontological dualism, something that Proclus wanted to avoid at all cost. Plotinus himself had sought to solve this problem by claiming that matter is evil not as something generated and caused by the Good principle but as the last product and stage of the decline in the process of emanation. Hence, matter and its effect, evil, are the absolute privation of the good. Proclus objects to this theory, arguing that matter is produced by the good and therefore cannot be other than good. In order to advance arguments that would allow him to refute Plotinus’ anti-Aristotelian argument (according to which there can be something contrary to substance), Proclus reassessed the Platonic theory of evil as something subcontrary to good (*Theaetetus* 176A) by introducing the concept of *parhypostasis*¹¹². Thus evil is a parasitic existence that stands beside substance but has no substance, and therefore cannot be contrary to its own principle within the context of the theory of causation. In fact, in the context of causation, effects are endowed with existence

¹¹² For the concept of *parhypostasis*, Proclus and Simplicius were largely indebted to Iamblichus, and probably also to some Platonic Church Fathers, as, for instance, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, see: OPSOMER, Proclus vs Plotinus 186–7.

if they reach the goal for which they are destined by nature. Effects that are not of this kind are not endowed with existence, and thus parasitical. In this context, evils are not meant to be by any cause and principle, but they are rather caused by accident and properly defined as *parhypostaseis*. Proclus' ontological argument, which, however, implies strong logical tenets, is applied to pure logic by the Neoplatonic commentators, especially Simplicius on the Athenian side, and Philoponus and David on the Alexandrian side. Nonetheless, we could point at two different tendencies in the bosom of the Alexandrian school: on the one hand, Ammonius and Olympiodorus confine the analysis of the problem to the matter in question, that is the analysis of Aristotle's *Categories* lemma by lemma. On the other hand, Philoponus and David apply Proclus' ontological argument and linguistic peculiarities to their own analysis of the problem of evil in the context of the *Categories*. Concerning the question of evil and its definition in a logical context, it is worth highlighting the remarkable epistemic similarities between the school of Alexandria and Athens, especially between Simplicius and Philoponus. On the whole, despite the fact that some of the arguments advanced by Simplicius, Philoponus and David overlap with those of Proclus, they are discussed from a different viewpoint and reframed in terms of pure logical reasoning. Finally, in Simplicius and Philoponus, the logical argument of evil as something opposed by privation and asymmetry to good because of its "being aside" substance (*parhypostasis*) became a powerful argument in order to refute the ontic and theological dualism of the Manicheans.

The debate about evil reverberated across Armenia in a twofold manner. We have ascertained that the reception of the debate on evil followed two main trajectories: the first one can be traced back to the Armenian Church Father Eznik of Koghb and takes a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, he relies on the Bible and the Cappadocian exegesis for the theory on voluntarism in order to justify the existence of evil in the context of divine creation; and on the other hand, he shows interesting conceptual similarities with the ontological argument as developed by the philosophers, and partly also by Gregory of Nyssa. As already mentioned, there is a striking similarity between Eznik's idea of anomaly and unevenness of due mixture as the source of illness and the idea of a disproportion of due mixture as the source of hectic fever, as we read in David's *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*. Despite the fact that Eznik does not use the terms disproportion (*ametria/anch'ap'ut'iwn*) and privation (*steresis/anliwt'iwn*) as David does, Eznik seems to refer to the idea of disproportion and privation in relation to evil by the use of synonyms such as "anomaly" (*anhart'ut'iwn*) and "unevenness" (*ch'kshrut'iwn*) that belong the same semantic area as the former. The second trajectory of reception was traced back to David and to the process of "translating" his works into Armenian. The standard argument of the accidentality of evil and its parasitical existence in relation to substance, is attested in two contexts: in the Armenian version of David's commentaries; and in the Armenian version of a Greek pseudepigraphical text, which deals with the issue through syllogistic reasoning, and whose *Vorlage* is a section of the *Contra Manicheos* by Didymus the Blind. Nonetheless, the Armenian version of this text or *ACH* shows both a respectful and a creative approach to the source text, for the Greek syntactical and morphological elements are rendered in a systematic but not slavish way, and sometimes indeed in a very original one, as in the case of the third syllogism. Finally, the *ACH* reveals also the strong influence that both the Aristotelian demonstrative method and the Neoplatonic logical argument as developed by Simplicius in Athens and Philoponus in Alexandria, had on Armenian philosophical and theological literature.