

ON THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE *LIBER DE CAUSIS*

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The scholarly literature on the anonymous medieval treatise *Liber de Causis* is quite extensive. In this literature the treatise in question is considered from different angles and ways of research are outlined, the emphasis being laid on comprehensive textual and terminological investigations¹. A few more words would seem to be relevant in connection with the terminology of the *Liber de Causis* and the prospects of its study.

I have long been engaged in the study of Greek-Arabic-Georgian correspondences of the many-language but semantically unitary medieval philosophical terminology of the East. My approach - perhaps not infallible in some concrete cases but basically justified - has led me to the conclusion that the medieval philosophical terminology is unitary, that is, it was subject to an unitary semantics, the latter being a totality of single-valued concepts expressed by a plurality of lexico-semantic units. Single-valued but multilingual concepts were coined on the basis of classical philosophical thought, developed by the national traditions of medieval thinkers.

According to the prevalent view, the term 'philosophy' and its principles came into being in classical antiquity. Thus, ancient Greece is rightfully considered the cradle of philosophical science. This does not preclude the existence of other geographical areas of development of ancient philosophical systems, e.g. ancient India, China, and so on. In the Classical period as well as in the Middle Ages, philosophy not divorced from theology or science. Philosophy involved the concepts of not only

¹ It will suffice to mention Georges C. Anawati's important work *Etudes de Philosophie Musulmane (Prolégomènes à une nouvelle édition du Liber de Causis Arabe Kitāb al-ḥayr al-mahd)*, Paris, 1974.

philosophical but also of theosophic, religious, and scientific doctrines. Naturally enough, the many-language philosophical terminological system of the Middle Ages involved not only philosophical terms and concepts. However, this terminological system largely consists of term and special lexico-semantic units linked to medieval philosophy. Therefore, philosophical terms, special philosophical vocabulary, religious, scientific, theosophical, and technical terminology express - in their own way - the unitary meaning of the medieval philosophical terminological system. The latter system came into being on the basis of direct contacts of medieval thought with its classical counterpart. From this point of view, the elements of the middle-age terminological system are considered as primary sets. The renderings of these primary elements of the middle-age philosophical terminological system, e.g. into Latin or into Western languages, are grouped into class of secondary sets.

Special care should be given to Syriac terms. When they serve as a link between Classical and Arabic thought they belong to the primary sets, while their Arabic counterparts are relegated to the secondary sets as translations of the latter. The fact should also be noted that at times it is difficult to determine whether the Arabic term stems directly from the original Greek term or from its Syriac translation. This difficulty - not only regarding Syriac terms - is felt especially in connection with the terminology of the *Liber de Causis*. In such cases the anonymity of the work does not allow to trace the path of formation and further development of its terminology. Hence, among the terms of the *Liber de Causis*, Greek terms and their medieval counterparts, conjecturally stemming from them, are tentatively considered to be primary, while the translated material whose secondariness causes no doubt, is classed secondary.

Thus, the present study of terminological correspondences of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* is based on the above method.

It should be noted also that the anonymous terms of the *Liber de Causis* prompt some new ideas. The study of terms is gradually gaining ground among linguistic disciplines. Quite a few scholars in different

countries are engaged in terminological research resulting in significant studies. The latest findings in the field allow to formulate some general views which, in the present case, can be applied to the study of the terms of the *Liber de Causis*.

The terms of the work in question - taken as a whole - form part of medieval philosophical terminology, sharing the general features of the latter. The terminology of the *Liber de Causis* accords also with language systems, evincing wholeness and regularity at one with the environment or cultural area. As the result of the interaction of the culture area and the semantics of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* the terminology of the treatise cannot fail to reflect the cultural-historical, socio-political, and economic processes occurring the period of its formation. Each medieval thinker had his own philosophical system, forming a part of the common medieval philosophical thinking. Commonness makes for conceptual unity and regularity with thinkers of the same period, in the present case, the thinkers of the medieval intellectual heritage.

Thus, the terminology of the *Liber de Causis*, as a kind of system, is related, on the one hand, to the common medieval terminology and, on the other, to the system of medieval intellectual thought and conceptual system of particular - in the present case anonymous - thinker. As a component part of language - or to a certain extent, its subsystem - the terminology in question is related to the language system. The above correlations and the systems nature of the terminology of the *Liber de Causis* allow to detect in it a regularity common to all terms, which is open to various interpretations. At present I propose to concentrate attention on definite stages of the terms, viz. 1) origin; 2) development; 3) transference; 4) change; 5) extinction.

Terms cannot be located without taking these stages into account. A term located should, in my view, be defined from the viewpoint of its origin and development, as well as transference, change, and extinction, provided it is characterized by the above stages. But prior to its location, the term should be defined from the viewpoint of (a) language, (b) subject matter, and (c) time-period. These parameters, i.e.

the attribution of the term to a definite language within a definite time-period and subject matter, must be specified in the first place. The above stages can then be defined.

The language of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* is undefined. The many-language versions of the treatise do not allow the identification of one of them as the original. Hence the version are united by the unitary semantics, drawing into the discussion all the possible languages of the extant and conjectured variants of the treatise. Thus, the codification of the many-language versions of the *Liber de Causis* primarily based on its subject matter. That the content of the book belongs to the realm of philosophy, high scholastics, etc. is incontestable. The subject matter may be specified further through a thorough scrutiny of the contents of the treatise. The time-period of the creation of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* is determined to a certain extent; approximate data can also be arrived at on the basis of extended textual study. Any progress in the specification of the subject matter of the terms and of the time-period of their origin formation will doubtless bring us closer to the ascertainment of the language parameter. Classification of the problem of the stage of the origin and shaping of terms should play a significant part in specifying the language parameter of the terms of the *Liber de Causis*. The stage in question involves two possible variants: 1) terms take shape in definite language medium on the basis of term-creation or through a change of the semantics of ordinary words; 2) terms originate through borrowing on the basis of inter-language shifts or migrations. A comparative analysis of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* should lead to the determination of this stage. The analysis implies a thorough study and comparison of the entire extant and lost but conjectured terminology of the *Liber de Causis*. The culture areas of the terms of the lost versions should be considered on a par with the areas of the existing variants of the treatise. Terminology does not become extinct totally but is somehow preserved to a certain extent. This equally applies to the above two types of the origin and shaping of terms as well as to the varieties of term creation.

Terms may originate in the vocabulary of a national language due to the creation by a thinker, his professional activity, or on the basis of joint intellectual work. Terms may also take shape through the joint efforts of the different language writers of the same period. Comparative analysis should lead to the identification of the type of term-coining and to the establishment of their formation. Focusing the attention on the temporal lag - an indicator of the retardation or anticipation in time of a certain event as compared to others - will probably be of much help. A comparison of the terms of the *Liber de Causis* occurring in the extant versions with those found in the cultural areas of the book, carried out from the point of view of the temporal lag, may also specify the close and remote contact of the intellectual influence across the original and the receptor languages.

When intersecting unitary, meanings are identified on the basis of a comparative analysis it is particularly important to detect pattern similarity of terminology. By their patterns, some terms appear to belong to artificially coined ones, i.e. formed through the term-creation of one or many thinkers. A common pattern and law-governed change - bearing in mind the conceptual system into which they find their way - may not cause any doubt regarding their uniform origin.

There is no divergence of opinion in the specialist literature concerning the derivation of the basic terminology of the *Liber de Causis* from the original term of the celebrated Greek thinker Proclus. No one doubts that the *Liber de Causis* is an interpreted work, mainly resting on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. The language parameter on which Proclus' terms first took shape still remain an open question. The version on the interpretation of Proclus in Greek also, as well as in all the other language mentioned in the specialist literature is possible. Comparative analysis by the indicated method hold yield positive results.

Regrettably, for various reasons including technical, at the given stage of research consideration of only Greek-Arabic-Georgian corre-

spendences is feasible here². The original terms are tentatively taken to be Greek. This does not mean that I concur with the view holding that the original of the *Liber de Causis* is a short Greek redaction of Proclus' work. But it is the Greek terms that enable to trace how far their Arabic and Georgian medieval counterparts have diverged from Proclus terminology. Unlike the Arabic terms, constituting the terminology of the Arabic proper version of the *Liber de Causis*, the Georgian terms have been culled from Ioané Petritsi's commented translation of the *Elements of Theology*. In the scholarly literature Petritsi is deservedly considered a great commentator of Proclus in the East, on a par with Nicholas of Cusa in the West. The well-known English scholar E. R. Dodds wrote: "1. The old Georgian version of John Petritsi (*supra*, p. XXIX) represents a Greek text at least a century older than our earliest Greek MSS. ... 2. The Armenian version ... appears to be derived from Petritsi's Georgian (*supra*, p. XXIX, n. 8) and not directly from the Greek. 3. The second Georgian version is a retranslation from the Armenian (*supra*, p. XXIV, n. 9)"³.

The use by Petritsi of the oldest MS of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* points to the early interest evinced in the work of the celebrated Greek thinker in the medieval Georgian area. The alteration by Dodds of the above quotation in a later edition of his translation was undoubtedly caused by erroneous information supplied to him in particular to an imprecise translation of the Georgian text⁴.

It is held by some scholars that in his commentaries to Proclus' *Elements of Theology* Petritsi refers to a second commentary of the Greek thinker in Georgian. This assertion is debatable for the absence of a reference to the *Liber de Causis* in Petritsi's work does not demonstrate

² Thus, there exists a Syriac text of the *Liber de Causis* listed in the Catalogue of the British Museum under the Latin title: *De Causis universi juxta mentem Aristotelis quo demonstratur universum circulum efficere*. Sergius of Rash'ayna (d. 536) is considered the author of the version. The text is unavailable to me.

³ See: Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, ed. by E. R. Dodds. Oxford, 1963, p. xli-xlii.

⁴ See: L. Alexidze. In: *Matsne*, series of philosophy, No. 2, 1984 (in Georgian).

the absence of Proclus' work in the Georgian area. The fact is correctly noted in the scholarly literature that Petritsi in general makes no reference to Areopagitic works, whereas they had been translated prior to Petritsi by another eminent medieval Georgian thinker Eprem Mtsire. Petritsi's consistent silence is easily accounted for if we recall the fact that he belonged to thinkers that were at odds with the Areopagitics on cardinal problems. Resting largely on the teaching of Proclus, and – to cite his own words – on “the divine Plato”, on Aristotle and generally on the Classical tradition, Petritsi tried to demonstrate the existence of God logically, Petritsi's interpretation of the Classical philosophy may even seem erroneous until we gain an insight into the essence of the Georgian thinker's commentaries. No wonder that in his commentaries to Proclus Petritsi was unwilling to mention the Areopagitic creationism in which God creates this world through a volitional act. The Georgian thinker arrives at God logically as to a category emanating or producing the world. The initial cause produces what has been caused by the cause rather than giving rise to it. Herein lies one of the divergences in the interpretation of Petritsi and that of the anonymous author of the *Liber de Causis*. This difference is taken into account in comparative analysis of (a) Proclus' Greek terms, (b) the Arabic terminology of the *Liber de Causis*, and (c) the Georgian terms of Petritsi. The analysis also identifies a similarity of terms based on the similarity or identity of their semantics, and literal translations.

The first term discussed in the present paper as an example of comparative analysis of Greek-Arabic-Georgian terminology is that of the “Supreme Good”. The notion of the ‘Supreme Good’ is related to Proclus' Greek terms τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀπλῶς ἀγ., αὐτοαγαθόν. Every researcher concerned with the *Elements of Theology* can arrive at this conclusion. It is not difficult to see also that the Greek terms in the *Liber de Causis* have two parallel correspondences in its Arabic version: *al-hayr al-awwal* / *al-hayr al-mahd*⁵. The Georgian equivalents of the

⁵ Here and further the Arabic terms are considered largely on the basis of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Although the term *al-hayr al-mahd* is not allotted a special article in the

same tentatively Greek original terms are recorded in the vocabulary of Greek-Georgian and Georgian-Greek correspondences, appended to the edition of Petritsi's works. That vocabulary gives all the contexts in which Greek-Georgian correspondences occur and records all the special lexico-semantic and lexico-terminological units used by Petritsi in his works. Thus, the Georgian terms, together with the original Greek terms form the following correspondences: τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθὸν *pirveli ketilobaj*, αὐτοαγαθόν, αὐτοαγαθότης - *twitketilobaj*, *twitsaxieri* - 'primal Good', 'Good absolute', 'pure Good', 'pure excellence', 'self-goodness'⁶.

There is no doubt that these Greek-Georgian words or word combinations point out and render an identical concept. If we add to them the Arabic correspondences of the Greek terms we shall have Greek-Arabic-Georgian equivalents of the concept of the "Supreme Good". Following a comparative analysis of the connotations of the "Supreme Good", a precise specification of the term becomes feasible: τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθόν, αὐτοαγαθόν, αὐτοαγαθότης - *al-hayr al-awwal*, *al-hayr al-mahd* - *pirveli ketilobaj*, *twitketilobaj*, *twitsaxieri* - *Bonitatis prima*, *Summum bonum* - 'primal Good', 'Good-absolute', 'pure excellence', 'self-goodness'. The

EI, it is discussed in L. Gardet's article '*illa* in the *EI*'.

⁶ See: Ioanė Petritsi, *Works*, vols. I-II, Tbilisi, 1937, 1960 (in Georgian).

It should be noted that in the present paper the English correspondences of the Greek terms are mainly based on E. R. Dodds' translation of Proclus. They are also supplemented with English translations of Arabic and Georgian terms. The Latin correspondences here and further have been largely borrowed from the Latin translation published by Otto Bardenhewer. Mention should also be made of O. Bardenhewer's German correspondences as well as of the Russian terminological equivalents from the Russian translation of Proclus and Petritsi. I have also used the Latin-Georgian correspondences from the manuscript of Ia Gagua's translation from the Latin into Georgian which is gratefully acknowledged. See: *Liber de Causis* ed. by Otto Bardenhewer, Freiburg, 1882. Proclus, *The Element of Theology*. Transl. by A. E. Losev, Tbilisi 1972 (in Russian). *Ioanė Petritsi*, transl. by I. Pantshkava. Moscow, 1984 (in Russian). However, such expansion - especially of the secondary terms - would have created technical difficulties. Hence, only the English secondary equivalents are presented. The interested reader can readily find the rest in the specialist literature.

above-listed many-language meanings intersect, enabling a precise definition of the notion of the "Supreme Good" as the 'primal-pure-absolute good, self-goodness. I would like to mention here the meaning occurring in Efrem Mtire's translation of Areopagitic works: *αὐτοαγαθόν* - *twitsaxieri* - 'self-goodness', as the supreme deity⁷. Account of the latter correspondence allows the definition: 'the supreme Good, deity as the primal-pure-absolute Good, excellence, self-goodness'.

Another term discussed in the present paper is the Arabic *anniyya* from the *Liber de Causis*. In his article in the *Encyclopedia of Islam (EI)*, Simon van den Bergh identifies the term in question with the use of *an* or *anna* substantively. He believes that, in different contexts, *anniyya* is related to several Greek original terms. In Bergh's article we also find Latin terms from secondary sets of terminological units, and English terms, together with antitheses and parallels. Bergh endeavours to introduce maximum clarity into the establishment of the meaning of *anniyya*; he also pays special attention to the semantics of *anniyya*, in the *Liber de Causis*: τὸ ὄτι, τὸ ὄν, τὸ εἶναι *esse, existentia existentia* - that (substantively) i. e. 'thatness', 'being' (the category of Plotinus - τὸ ὄν)⁸.

The Greek terms τὸ ὄτι, τὸ ὄν, τὸ εἶναι original for *anniyya*, permit to link the Georgian equivalents *romel* (τὸ ὄτι), *mqopobay* (τὸ ὄν), *aobay* (τὸ εἶναι), *romel* is linked to "that" ('thatness') while *aobay* (*mqopobay*) is applied to existence, to being. The pattern identity of the Arabic *ann+iyya* is traceable to some extent in the term: *a*(= *ars*) + *oba*⁹ = 'to be' + *oba* - abstract ending, as well as in *mqop(i)* + *oba*; i.e.

⁷ See Petrus Iberus (Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita). *Opera versio iberica ab Ephrem Mctire confecta* edidit commentarius S. S. Enucaschvili. Tbilisi, 1961, p. 274. (In Georgian).

⁸ This definition can, to some extent, be correlated with the correspondence of *anniyya* 'd'être existant (existent entity)' suggested by M. T. D'Avery in *Des Mélanges Gibson*. Toronto-Paris, 1959 p. 270. Cf. Averroes, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. Translated by S. Van den Bergh vol. II, p. 131, *EI*, art. *anniyya*. S. Van den Bergh.

⁹ See *Investigations in Areopagita*. Tbilisi, 1986, p. 196-197 (in Georgian).

being and the abstract ending *oba*. The foregoing would seem to warrant the conclusion that pattern literal, and semantic repetitions of the Arabic term *anniyya* (*ann + iyya*) occur in the Georgian area. The different conceptual system into which they found their way in this area naturally gave rise to some divergence. Yet, in the conjectural Georgian version of the *Liber de Causis* they could also express a sense identical to the Arabic term *anniyya*. The existence of these terms permits to identify primary Greek-Arabic-Georgian correspondence together with secondary Latin-English terms: with parallel terms: τὸ ὄν, τὸ ὄν, τὸ εἶναι - *an, anna, anniyya - romel, aobay/mqopobay - esse, existentia (existentia) - 'that(ness)', 'existence', 'being (the category of Plotinus) 'mere existent', 'true being', 'existent entity'.*

The intersection of many-language correspondences leads to the notion that may be expressed as 'thatness' as antithesis of 'whatness', 'true existence as pure being as existent entity'.

The third term dealt with in the present paper is *huwiyya*, discussed by A. Goichon in the *EI*. She cites the Greek terms related to *huwiyya*. However, she gives "ipseity" as most closely reflecting the semantics of *huwiyya*. To the terminology adduced in the *EI* one could add *haeccitas* ('itness'), suggested by Bergh as the Latin equivalent of *huwiyya*. He also offers the correspondence ταντότης - *huwiyya - 'identity'*. Uniting this terminology an detection of the intersection of their meanings enable the identification of primary Greek-Arabic and secondary Latin-English correspondences. It is very difficult to determine the unitary meaning of the term. Its emergence in the Arabic area is ascribed to an error due to the ignorance of the Greek language. It is not advisable to look or such erroneous understanding of the original Greek term in the Georgian area. Petritsi - an adorer and a great expert of Greek, which he himself styled "language of the sun" - could have hardly committed such an error. However, in Petritsi's writings there do occur terms that echo the semantics expressed by the Arabic *huwiyya*. Proclus' common Greek original terms permit the identification of the following Greek-Arabic-Georgian correspondences τὸ ὄν, ταντότης, ταῦτος, αὐτός, ιδιότης - *huwiyya (mawǧūd) - ens, entis, haeccitas - twitobay, igivebay, masveobay*

(*mqopi*, *aobay*)¹⁰ – a concrete being, considered universally ‘itness’, ‘identity’, ‘existing in itself’, selfness, own self, without change’, ‘the very one’, ‘the same’. The Georgian terms *tvitobay*, *igiveobay*, *masveobay*, their intersection with the semantics of *hwuyyya*, with account of Proclus’ terms, yield a unitary concept of ‘selfness, identity, without change, the very one, the same of a concrete pure being - universally considered ‘itness’.

The findings of the comparative analysis, the intersection of meanings, and their union into conceptual wholes are presented in a table adduced at the end of the paper, featuring the three terms discussed above. The first columns list the names of all possible primary and secondary equivalents of the terminology of the *Liber de Causis*. Only the columns of actually compared equivalents are filled in. The terms presented are those whose comparative analysis has been carried out at the current stage of research. Hence, naturally, the generalizations adduced cannot be definitive. Yet even this scanty material gives ground for certain hypothetical statements. The primary Greek-Arabic-Georgian terms, given in the table, when their semantics, patterns and literal meanings have been found to intersect, permit to identify unitary conceptual wholes. The equivalents enrich each other, helping to specify shades of meanings. All unitary lexico-semantic many-language units are grouped together, and other secondary sets are also taken into consideration. They combine into a single whole definite concepts expressed by different-language, but single-semantic terminology. The location of terms by the above methods of terminological research will be feasible only on the basis of such unified concepts.

The three terms discussed above are associated with the trinity expressed in medieval philosophical literature: I. Supreme Being, Supreme Good, One Absolute Cause; II. Logos - intellect; III. (Universal) Soul. However, it is still early to speak about the precise data to be gained by

¹⁰ The Georgian *aobay* is mentioned here also in connection with the term *hwuyyya* on the basis of its contextual rendering as ‘selfness’; see G. Tevzadze in “To Aleksei Fedorovich Losev”, Tbilisi, 1983, p. 196 (in Russian).

a comparative analysis of terms. A thorough analysis of the many-language terminology of the *Liber de Causis* may lead to arguments not only in favour of a Christian or Muslim provenance of the anonymous author, but also of his adherence to Monophysite or Diophysite doctrines. Such specifications would seem to reduce the range of quests not only of the language but also of the temporal parameter. They may bring us closer to concrete results, e.g. to the identification of the author. This question has been repeatedly broached in the scholarly literature. The Georgian 5th-century thinker Peter the Iberian has been mentioned among the presumed authors of the *Liber de Causis*. However, this hypothesis, as well as other theories of the authorship of the *Liber de Causis*, advanced to date, have not been accepted in the specialist literature¹¹.

Irrespective of how the problem is solved - in favour of or against a Georgian area, it must be included in the study of the *Liber de Causis*. Of course, this - in the first place - is important for Georgian scholarship. Neither would it be harmful to Oriental Studies and Medievalistics in general, all the more since, from this point of view, the Georgian area has been far from well studied. It is very appropriate here to remember, for example, the anti-Muslim polemic works which occupied such an important place in Old Georgian literature. In its turn, a study of these works is necessary in order to defining clearly a phenomenon which can be called "Georgian Islam".

If the present paper evokes some interest in general and concrete problems of the Georgian medieval area its mission will have been fulfilled.

¹¹ See Ern. Honigmann, *Pierre l'Iberien et les écrits des Pseudo-Denys l'Areopagite*. Bruxelles, 1952; Sh. N. Nutsbidze, *Peter the Iberian and the Classical Philosophical Heritage*. Tbilisi, 1963, (in Russian). The fact should also be noted that recently the prominent scholar Michel von Esbrock presented a paper at the Second International Symposium: "Georgia in the context of East-Western Historical and Literary Contacts". In that paper M. van Esbrock again raised the question of the 5th-century Georgian thinker Peter the Iberian and his works.

possible equivalents

Greek	Arabic	Georgian	Latin	English
τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθόν; τὸ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθόν; αὐτοαγαθόν, αὐτοαγα θότης	<i>al-hayr</i> <i>al-awwal</i> ; <i>al-hayr</i> <i>al-mahd</i>	<i>pirveli</i> <i>ketilobay</i> ; <i>twitketi-</i> <i>lobay</i> , <i>twitsaxieri-</i> <i>umaglesi</i> <i>gvtaeba</i>	<i>Bonitatis</i> <i>prima</i> ; <i>Summum</i> <i>bonum</i>	Supreme Good, primal Good; Good absolute, pure Good, pure excellence; self goodness, Supreme deity
τὸ ὄτι, τὸ ὄν, τὸ εἶναι	<i>an</i> , <i>anna</i> , <i>anniyya</i>	<i>romel</i> , <i>aobay</i> (= <i>ars</i> + <i>obay</i>), <i>mgorobay</i>	<i>esse</i> , <i>existentia</i> , <i>exsistentia</i>	that (substantively) i.e. thatness; being (the category of Plotinus) mere existent true being existent entity
τὸ ὄν, τὸ εἶναι; ταντότης, ταντόν, αὐτός, ιδιότης	<i>huwiyya</i> (<i>mauḡūd</i>)	<i>mgori</i> <i>aobay</i> ; <i>twitobay</i> <i>igiveobay</i> <i>masveobay</i>	<i>ens</i> , <i>entis</i> ; <i>haeccitas</i>	"ipseity" (a concrete being considered universally); itness; identity; existing in itself, selfness, own self; without change, the very one, the same