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ON THE CHRONOLOGY AND ATTRIBUTION OF THE OLD ARMENIAN TIMAEUS: A STATUS QUAESTIONIS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES*

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1. Introductory Note

The present article relates the results of an enquiry conducted as part of broader research focusing on the language of the Platonic *Timaeus* and its old Armenian version¹. As is well known among scholars, the Armenian Platonic translations are anonymous and undated, and their attribution and chronology have been the subject of much debate. While perusing the existing bibliography on the matter, the need for a critical review of the most significant competing proposals, which would verify the relevant data on the Armenian text of the dialogue and rectify some inaccuracies, often handed down from one work to the other, came to my attention. The endeavour will hopefully be of interest not only for Armenologists, but also for researchers in other fields, such as Historians of Philosophy and Philologists, who may not be able to read part of the original scholarly literature, because of linguistic barriers.

Moreover, some new data, that might shed further light on the matter and suggest a profitable line of enquiry, will be presented in the final section.

2. Textual Witnesses

According to the present state of knowledge, the Armenian version of the *Timaeus* is preserved, in its entirety, only in manuscript 1123 from the Mekhitarist library of St. Lazarus, Venice (pp. 1-91)². The *Euthyphro*, the *Apology of Socrates*, the *Laws*, and the Pseudo-Platonic *Minos* are also preserved in the same witness, whereas a second section, with different codicological and paleographic features, contains a version of Proclus's

* I wish to thank Dr. Alessandro Orenco (University of Pisa) for reviewing a preliminary version of this article, and Prof. István Perzel (CEU, Budapest) for sharing his insights. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine..

¹ The bulk of such research has been published separately as a monograph (TINTI 2012).

² The survival of a text, even an extremely significant one, through one or few witnesses, is not uncommon in the Armenian tradition. Eznik's work, for instance, is apparently preserved in only one manuscript (ms. 1097 of the Matenadaran: see ORENCO 1996: 13), although it has been suggested that the 1762 *editio princeps* (as the 1826 edition, and consequently all the following Venetian editions in the 1800s) might depend on a different witness (cf. *ibid.*: 24 ff., with references).

Institutiones Theologicae and a commentary on the same work (by Ioane Petritsi, a Georgian: see below)³.

CONYBEARE (1889 and 1891a), quoting information provided by Father Garegin Zarbhanalean, relates that the manuscript arrived in Venice from Madras (India) in the first half of the 19th century; previously, it had been in Ispahan (Iran). More precisely, according to the memorials present in the codex itself (translated in AIMI 2008-2009: 14; cf. AIMI 2011: 18), the manuscript was brought to St. Lazarus by Sargis T^eodorean on November 3rd, 1835. Another copy, also originally kept in Madras, was lost in a shipwreck near the Cape of Good Hope on its way to Venice. The surviving manuscript does not mention the name of the copyist of the Platonic section, nor the time in which the copy was made; however, it probably dates back to the 16th or 17th centuries (the 17th century is mentioned in the library catalogue of St. Lazarus: see ČEMČEMEAN 1998: 556)⁴. According to Zarbhanalean (CONYBEARE 1889: 341), its direct antigraph was probably much older, and on occasion scarcely readable, hence the *lacunae* present in the text. However, according to CONYBEARE (1891a: 193-194), the extant witness likely descended from the archetype of the Armenian tradition through a considerable number of intermediate copies, hence its corruptions (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 15 ff. for some remarks on the matter).

A critical edition of the *Timaeus* is not available yet. The text was indeed edited by Arsēn Sowk^ʿrean, alongside the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology of Socrates* (*Tramaxōsowt^ʿiwnk^ʿ* 1877: the *Timaeus* occupies pages 75-174), whereas the *Laws* and the pseudo-Platonic *Minos* were later edited by Garegin Zarbhanalean (*Tramaxōsowt^ʿiwnk^ʿ* 1890). Unfortunately, however, Sowk^ʿrean did not merely reproduce the text as preserved in the manuscript or normalise aberrant forms; instead, on occasion he significantly changed its wording, whether by mistake or on purpose, often trying to make it adhere more closely to the Greek text he had available (which has not been identified yet)⁵. Since the nineteenth-century edition does not represent a reliable source⁶, DRAGONETTI (1986) proposed several emendations in order to bring the text of the *Timaeus* closer to its manuscript source. However, even her laudable contribution does not indicate all the discrepancies between the two texts: therefore, any reliable research must be conducted on the codex itself, emending its wording when strictly necessary, and when the proposed emendation is acceptable from a palaeographic point of view. I had the chance to examine the codex directly in December, 2010; however, I mainly worked on a digital copy of the microfilm belonging to the Catholic University of Milan, and on colour photographs of the manuscript, partly provided by the Mekhitarist Fathers, partly taken by Ms. Chiara Aimi (Ph.D. student) and Dr. Maddalena Modesti, both from the University of Bologna.

Smaller sections of the *Timaeus* are also preserved in earlier witnesses. An excerpt from the same Armenian version of the dialogue has been handed down, as a chapter *On Colours*

³ For a description of the codex and its two sections, see ZANOLLI (1947: 158 ff.) and AIMI (2008-2009: 11 ff.; 2011: 18-19).

⁴ For some clues on the matter, see AIMI (2008-2009: 13 ff.).

⁵ Cf. FINAZZI (1977: 28 and 1990a: 68). AIMI (2008-2009: 19; 2011: 18) shows three instances in which Sowk^ʿrean's corrections on the text of the *Apology* match the wording of codex *Venetus Graecus* 184.

⁶ Cf. SOLARI (1969), ROSSI (1982-1983); DRAGONETTI (1986 and 1988); AIMI (2008-2009; 2011). On the scarce reliability of the 1890 edition, cf. FINAZZI (1974, 1990a and 1990b), SCALA (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002), BOLOGNESI (2000b).

(*Vasn gownoc*⁶), in several of the manuscripts containing the *Book on Nature* (*Girk⁶ i veray bnowt⁶ean*) by Išo⁶x, a Syrian working in Cilicy in the 13th century (cf. THOMSON 1995: s.v.). VARDANYAN (1979: 70 ss.) correctly identified the source of this passage by comparing it with the text of Sowk⁶rean's edition; however, such information is generally ignored within later studies devoted to the Platonic translations⁷. The chapter, which diverges from the corresponding section of the *Timaeus* (59.17 - 60.21 ms.; 142.24 - 143.27 printed edition) only in minor details, has been critically edited by VARDANYAN herself (1979: 104-105), on the basis of several manuscripts from the Matenadaran of Erevan (the most ancient of which, n. 4268, dates back to the 15th century)⁸. Clearly, the wording of this excerpt should be taken into consideration in any analysis of the passage in question.

According to AIMI (forthcoming, consulted by courtesy of the Author), another short passage from the Armenian *Timaeus* is preserved in manuscript 437 from the Matenadaran, which dates back to the 13th or 14th century; such text should be published shortly by Aimi herself. Given the great prestige of the *Timaeus*, even among Platonic works, it is not surprising that excerpts from the dialogue might circulate independently from the complete translation; such smaller sections, whether they are preserved in manuscripts earlier than codex 1123 or quoted by well-known Armenian authors (see below), can provide insights on the chronology of the version itself, at least providing an earlier *terminus ante quem* for it.

3. The Origins of the «Platonic Problem»

The chronological collocation of the Armenian Platonic dossier became a matter of debate almost as soon as the translations were discovered. Indeed, the issue was already addressed in the entry devoted to Plato (*Plat.*) at the beginning of the *Nor bargirk⁶* (NB: 18), which was published shortly after ms. 1123 arrived in Venice (more precisely, the manuscript came to St. Lazarus while the section devoted to the letter A was being printed in the dictionary)⁹. Here it is mentioned that Grigor Magistros (a learned nobleman who lived between the 10th and 11th centuries), by his own admission, devoted himself to translating the *Timeaus* among other works. However, it is also stated that the extant version of the dialogue, ancient and adherent to the Greek text, looks “even older” («*erewi ew ews hnagoyn*») than Grigor himself (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 18).

While detailing Grigor's life, LANGLOIS (1869: 22) also briefly deals with this issue, stating that Magistros's translations – apart from a fragment from Euclides's work, whose attribution has been long debated – have not survived. Furthermore, he ascribes to «quelques critiques» the hypothesis that the extant *Timeaus* might date back to the 5th century; the same would be true of the *Phaedo*, which he mentions as extant¹⁰, perhaps by mistake, since it appears in the

⁷ I owe this knowledge to Dr. Alessandro Orenco, who brought Vardanyan's work to my attention.

⁸ Copies of Išo⁶x's work are also preserved in other libraries (cf. VARDANYAN 1979: 55); some of these manuscripts include the excerpt *On Colours* as well (cf., for instance, TAŞEAN 1895: 386 arm).

⁹ Such information can be found in the NB itself (18).

¹⁰ «[...] la traduction du *Phédon* et du *Timée*, qui nous est parvenue». Cf. LANGLOIS (1880: 403), where the wording is unequivocal: «il ne nous reste de toutes ces traductions que le *Timée* et le *Phédon*, et environ une page de la Géométrie d'Euclide». This is likely a mistake – which would also occur in later studies – and does not necessarily suggest that the Armenian *Phaedo* was still extant in the second half of XIX century, especially since such information is not otherwise confirmed. On that account, it should be noted

list of Grigor's translations (see below). Elsewhere (LANGLOIS 1880: 403) he honestly declares to be unable to take a stand on the matter. Strangely enough, though, while mentioning a possible attribution of the Platonic versions to fifth-century translators, he states that to these people «on doit la version des ouvrages philosophiques de Platon et de Philon le juif» (the wording is almost identical in ID. 1869: 22), as if there were some undisputed knowledge of other Platonic translations from an older period¹¹.

In *Tramaxōsowt'iwink'* (1877: 10), Sowk'rean attributes the Platonic versions to Grigor, who would have translated them «iwrov əndel mařaxlapat ew hellenaban xrt'nowt'eambn», “with his familiar, vague and Hellenising abstruseness” (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 27). It is worth mentioning that Grigor's language had already been described in a similar way by LANGLOIS (1869: 7): «ses écrits fourmillent en effet d'expressions étrangères à l'arménien et présentent une foule de tournures bizarres qui rendent de prime abord son style fort difficile à saisir».

A similar opinion on the attribution is initially expressed by ZARBHANALEAN (1889: 656 ff.), who underlines that there is no knowledge of any Platonic translation in earlier times, although the philosopher was already well-known in the Armenian-speaking area in the 5th century. He also mentions Grigor's own account, according to which he would have translated some Platonic dialogues, since he had not found them in Armenian. Then, Zarbhanalean lists all the extant Platonic dialogues as translated in Grigor's «particular style and language». However, he later generically refers to «some philologists» who would favour an earlier chronology: more precisely, some of them would ascribe the translations to the 5th century and to Dawit' Anyalt¹², who also translated Aristotle, because of a “similarity of language and style” between the two sets of translations. While challenging the latter hypothesis, Zarbhanalean implicitly rejects the former as well: indeed, he argues that the dialogues were probably not translated by the same person, since their writing is not homogeneous, and that there is no sufficient evidence to determine a chronology and attribution for any of them¹³. He also points out that the Platonic translations seem to show a lack of precision and even a faulty understanding of the original Greek version, which would not be consistent with the available information on Dawit's competence. Actually, he does not entirely rule out the possibility that some of these obscurities might be due to the copyist instead; however, despite perusing several library catalogues, he could not find any other textual witness (which might have been useful in order to pursue this line of investigation).

The issue of the historical contextualisation of the dialogues was also addressed in a contemporary article by Frederick C. CONYBEARE (1889), which would be the first of a series of contributions he devoted to the Armenian Platonic dossier. Here, the author presents some data that would reoccur in several later studies on the topic. Indeed, being written in

that SUKIAS SOMAL (1825: 33), before ms. 1123 came to Venice, argued that Grigor's Platonic translations were lost.

¹¹ The chronology of Philo's translations has been much debated, within the wider debate concerning the periodisation and chronology of the so-called Hellenising School (see below). On the Armenian versions of his works, see the references listed by THOMSON (1995 and 2007, *s.v.*).

¹² On Dawit' and the works attributed to him, see at least SANJIAN (1986); CONTIN (2007); CALZOLARI-BARNES (2009) and the references listed in THOMSON (1995 and 2007, *s.v.*). The chronology of the Armenian versions of his works has been debated as well (see below).

¹³ Another relevant statement by Zarbhanalean is quoted in CONYBEARE (1889): see below.

English, Conybeare's works long represented – and occasionally still represent – the main bibliographical reference for Western scholars who wanted to deal, even marginally, with the Armenian Platonic versions, their textual dependencies and translation technique and their chronological and cultural contextualisation¹⁴. However, besides being inevitably outdated at present, such analyses are also inherently tainted by Conybeare's trust in the nineteenth-century editions (*Tramaxōsowt'iwink'* 1877 and 1890), which represent his main reference point, if not the only one, as far as the wording of the text is concerned (cf. FINAZZI 1990a: 67 for the *Laws*; AIMI 2008-2009: 13; 18). Indeed, according to CONYBEARE (1891a: 193), «A. Suqrean [*sic*: I.T.] [...] deserves all praise for the careful manner in which he gives the text of the manuscript».

In the course of time, Conybeare's opinion on the chronology of the Armenian translations has not been consistent, ranging from the 5th to the 11th century, and then stabilising on the later date, although in CONYBEARE (1895: 300) he still showed a certain degree of flexibility, stating that «the old Armenian Version [...] was made not later and perhaps two or three centuries earlier than the year 1030 A.D.»¹⁵. As for the paternity – common or otherwise – of all the translations, at first he maintained a cautious stance (CONYBEARE 1889: 340), emphasising an alleged stylistic difference between the *Timaeus* and the other works; however, later on (ID. 1891a: 193), he argued that all five dialogues were rendered by the same hand.

¹⁴ Actually, this is not true of Western scholarly literature only: cf., for instance, the exposition of the Platonic Problem in ARAK'ELYAN (1959: 631-635). Sometimes, especially for scholars who are not specialised in Armenian studies and/or cannot read modern Armenian but still have an interest in the Platonic versions, Conybeare is the only direct or indirect source of information; therefore, some mistakes are handed down from one work to the other, and possible misunderstandings of his statements are not fixed. For instance, as already signalled by LEROY (1935: 284), FINAZZI (1990a: 66-67) and AIMI (2008-2009: 20), BURNET (1900: VIII), who relies heavily on Conybeare's collations of the Armenian text in his edition of the *Apology* and *Euthyphro* (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 20 and ROSSI 1982-1983: 127 ff.), mistakenly refers to an Armenian version of the *Crito*, which would have been also studied by CONYBEARE (1891a). This false information is repeated by CROISSET (1980: 17; first published in 1920), who quotes Conybeare and Burnet; moreover, not having any first-hand information, he considers the variants preserved in the Armenian versions to be scarcely relevant for the reconstruction of the Greek text, because, allegedly, they would all be preserved by other witnesses as well. ALLINE (1915: 202) correctly lists the five Armenian translations, but then wrongly affirms that Conybeare analysed all of them (whereas he actually did not perform a philological analysis on the *Timaeus*).

¹⁵ Besides his own opinion (the Armenian versions might date back to the 8th or perhaps even the 5th century), CONYBEARE (1889: 340) quotes those of Zarbhanalean (the translations are, at the latest, the work of Grigor Magistros, but they might date back to the 7th century) and of the authors of the NB (wrongly stating that they are inclined to accept an attribution to the 7th century). Later on (ID. 1891a: 194), he states that «the date at which this version was made is not known, and the style gives but little clue. It is not likely to be earlier than the seventh nor later than the eleventh century. Probably it is of the latter date». The later chronology is linked here to the possibility that the translations were based on a minuscule manuscript (210). Then (ID. 1891b: 399), he seems to favour the later chronology: «there is good evidence for supposing that the Armenian Version was made by Gregory Magistros early in the eleventh century» (cf. *ibid.*: 413). Finally (ID. 1924: 105) he clearly mentions Grigor Magistros as the author, and ascribes the versions to a date close to year 1000.

4. The Attribution to Grigor Magistros

Despite the evolution summarised above, Conybeare never disputed his initial assumption that the *terminus ante quem* for the Platonic translations should be identified in the early decades of the 11th century. According to him, Grigor Magistros (c. 990-1058: see ALPI 2009-2010), a descendant of St. Grigor Lowsaworič¹⁶, would be «the latest Armenian writer who could have produced them, for the practice of translating from the Greek died with him» (CONYBEARE 1889: 340)¹⁷. LEROY (1935: 283-284) is of a similar opinion: given the political and cultural history of Armenia, he does not believe that the Platonic versions could be later than the 11th century.

However, as AIMI (2008-2009: 27; 2011: 20) correctly points out, the practice of translating from Greek did not actually die with Grigor Magistros. According to YARNLEY (1976: 51), such an activity continued throughout the 11th century, concerning both ancient and patristic texts, and culminated with Grigor Vkayasēr¹⁸, son of Magistros. He realised and prompted translations of religious texts (lives of the Saints, martyrologies, works of the Church Fathers) and of significant foreign works not yet available in Armenian, gathering other learned men (according to a colophon from 1098, Gēorg Melr and Kirakos, who are mentioned in other memorials as well, were among his collaborators: cf. AKINEAN 1930: 561 ff., particularly notes 22-24)¹⁹ around himself, for that purpose. These scholars, as other contemporaries, often adopted a synergic translation strategy: rough versions made by Grigor Vkayasēr from Greek were later entrusted to others, for a linguistic and rhetorical review (cf. TER PETROSYAN 1992: 22). Later on, another member of the same family, Nersēs Lambronac'i (1153/4-1198), worked on translating religious texts from Greek, with the help of a Greek-speaking assistant who dealt with the actual linguistic transposition (see below). Other examples could be mentioned²⁰.

In any case, besides the historical and political plausibility, the main external clue for attributing the extant Platonic translations to Grigor Magistros, that is, the testimony that initially led scholars to consider him as a possible author, is contained in his own correspondence²¹.

¹⁶ On Grigor Magistros life and personality, cf. at least LANGLOIS (1869 and 1880: 401-403); LEROY (1935: Grigor's family tree can be found between pages 272 and 273); XAČ'EREAN (1987); SANJIAN (1993); ALPI (2009-2010), and the references they quote. On his interest in the Greek-speaking world and his political relations with the Byzantine empire, cf. also YARNLEY (1976: 49 ff.).

¹⁷ According to TERIAN (1980: 206), who supports an earlier chronology for the Platonic versions, Grigor «may belong to the last generation of those who were aware of the underlying Greek syntax», and thus would have been able to understand heavily Hellenised Armenian texts.

¹⁸ For his translating activity – that included Greek and Syriac – and for the difficulties he encountered, see TER PETROSYAN (1992: 9, 21-22).

¹⁹ A Latin translation of this colophon can be found in PEETERS (1946: 374-377).

²⁰ See TER PETROSYAN (19 ff.) for a few testimonies concerning translations realised after Grigor Magistros's death; these enterprises often involved a collaboration between Armenians, Greeks and Syrians (the Armenians mainly edited preliminary versions realised by their foreign collaborators). Cf. AIMI (2011: 21) for further references.

²¹ On that account, it should be noted that passages from Platonic works were part of the curriculum he recommended to his disciples: cf. his letter 45 (KOSTANEANC' 1910: 105 ff.; number 8 in LANGLOIS 1869: 36). The same letter suggests that their education encompassed texts preserved in different linguistic traditions (Greek, Arab, Persian); on the subject, cf., with some caution, SANJIAN (1993: 139).

Indeed, in his letter 21, addressed to the *vardapet* Sargis (LANGLOIS 1869: 52-53; KOSTANEANC⁶ 1910: 64-66; LEROY 1935: 279 ff.)²², he apparently claims to have undertaken a translation of the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo*.

The relevant section reads:

vasnzi oc⁶ emk⁶ erbēk⁶ dadareal i t⁶argmanowt⁶enē ews. bazowm mateans, zors oc⁶ emk⁶ gteal i mer lezows` zerkows mateansn Platoni, zTimēosi tramabanowt⁶eann [tramabanowt⁶iwnn in ZARBHANALEAN 1889: 42] ew zP⁶edovni [...] bayz ew gteal mer isk i hay lezow gteal t⁶argmanč⁶ac⁶n, zgirs [...] (KOSTANEANC⁶ 1910: 66)²³,

“since we have never stopped translating yet: many books, that we did not find in our language, the two works by Plato, the dialogue of Timaeus and the dialogue of Phaedo [...]; but we also found in our Armenian language, written by translators, the following books [...]”.

Actually, in his 1889 article, Conybeare does not seem confident that this is indeed the correct interpretation of the passage: «I do not feel sure that the writer did not mean to say that the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus* are among the books he had found already translated into Armenian» (340). In that regard, the (peculiar) translation by YARNLEY (1976: 49) is also worth mentioning: «[I have found] many works which we have not known in our language: two works by Plato, and [*sic*; I.T.] the plays *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*». In the same note, Yarnley actually talks about «discoveries»; however, in the text, he refers to Grigor’s activity as a translator, and attributes the two Platonic dialogues and the version of Euclid’s work to him²⁴.

Nevertheless, a couple of years later, having apparently overcome his doubts, CONYBEARE (1891a: 209) states that Grigor «in his letters claims to have translated the *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*». On the contrary, according to AREVŠATYAN (1971: 10), the wording of the passage just allows the inference that Grigor began the translations of the two dialogues, not that he actually completed them.

In any case, the information provided by letter 21 is not conclusive: the Armenian *Phaedo* is not preserved, while the *Timeaus* could be identified or not with the extant text. Obviously, even if such identification should be accepted, the other Platonic dialogues, which are not mentioned by Grigor and, according to CONYBEARE (1889: 340; cf. FINAZZI 1990a: 65)²⁵, «differ

²² A critical edition of the *Letters* should be published shortly by Dr. Gohar Mowradyan (Matenadaran, Erevan), in the *Matenagirk⁶ Hayoc⁶* series.

²³ TAŠEAN (1890: 159), following a manuscript from Vienna (probably n. 27; cf. TAŠEAN 1895: 147 Arm., 21 Ger.), quotes a slightly different text: *Vasn zi oc⁶ emk⁶ erbēk⁶ dadareal i t⁶argmanowt⁶ean. ews bazowm mateans` zors oc⁶ emk⁶ gteal i mer lezows, zerkows mateansn Platonē (ayspēs), zTimēosi tramabanowt⁶iwnn ew zP⁶edovni [...] bayz gteal mer isk i hay lezow gteal [Tašean relates that the manuscript originally read *greal*, but such reading was later corrected, by the same hand, into *gteal*] t⁶argmanč⁶ac⁶ zgirs [...]*; “since we never stopped translating: many more books, that we did not find in our language, the two works by Plato, the dialogue of Timaeus and the dialogue of Phaedo [...]; but we found in our Armenian language, found by translators, the following books [...]”.

²⁴ Yarnley judges Grigor to be a competent translator, «or so it seems from the fragments which survive» (49); although he does not specify to which fragments he is referring, he is likely alluding to the translation of Euclid’s work.

²⁵ According to her, the *Timaeus* is more freely translated, with expansions and explanations of the text, whereas the other Platonic versions, following a well-known practice, preserve the original text word by word.

somewhat in style» from the *Timaeus* itself, should not necessarily be attributed to the same hand. On that account, it is worth mentioning that TAŠEAN (1890: 160) supports an opinion expressed in «Arjagank⁵» (page 6 of issue I, 1890), according to which Grigor’s letter would not be in the least obscure: he would have translated just the *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*, since Armenian versions of all the other Platonic dialogues were already available. Clearly, this interpretation arbitrarily assumes unproven elements, namely, that other Platonic translations besides those still extant (and possibly the *Phaedo*) actually existed. Furthermore, at the present state of knowledge, the version of the *Timaeus* cannot be proved to be more recent than the others: scholars have underlined either the differences or the analogies (AREVŠATYAN 1971: 9) between them, but a systematic linguistic comparison has not yet been conducted. However, generally speaking, several translations of works attributed to the same Greek author could indeed have been collected at a later time, thus creating a small Armenian *corpus* devoted to the author himself.

Both the attribution of the *Timaeus* to Grigor and the common paternity of the five extant dialogues are supported by LEROY (1935)²⁶. He refers to CONYBEARE’s opinion (1891a: 210), according to which the Armenian versions were probably based on a minuscule Greek manuscript, with the words already separated: in that case, the translations should clearly be later than the 9th century (see below). Moreover, according to Leroy, if Grigor, with his wide culture, had known any earlier Platonic version, he would not have devoted himself to translating the same dialogues (hence the distinction he makes in letter 21, between works already existing in Armenian and others that still need to be adapted).

On that account, it is worth mentioning that, in a period very close to Grigor’s (c. 986: see POLAREAN 1971: 162), Samowēl Kamrājorec’i (940?-1010?), wrote as follows in his *Apologetic Letter* to the Metropolitan Theodorus:

ard t’ēpēt ew oč’ ic’emk’ hmowt ew teleak platonakan perčabanowt’eamb barjrayōnak varžic’ ew krt’owt’eanc’, saks oč’ owneloy nma hałordowt’iwn and awetaranin
(Girk’ t’lt’oc’ 1901: 305).

“although we are not experts and familiar with the Platonic eloquence of high sciences and doctrines, because he *is not associated / united / in communion*²⁷ with the Gospel”.

SHIRINIAN (2001: 231; cf. STONE-SHIRINIAN 2000) argues that, according to the author, «Armenians of his time are not well informed about Plato because he is not transmitted with the Gospel». She is likely not identifying a reference to textual transmission here – meaning that the Platonic dialogues were not handed down in the same codices as the Gospel – because the sacred texts would have hardly been physically associated with profane texts anyway. An allusion to the practice of teaching might be more plausible: Plato’s doctrines would not have been explained and divulged together with the Sacred Writings. The quotation would then testify that the philosopher’s works were not well known in the Armenian-speaking area between the 10th and 11th centuries, which would be consistent with the documentary situation possibly attested by Grigor’s letter 21. However, the most probable interpretation is

²⁶ In his opinion, there is no definite proof against a common attribution.

²⁷ Cf. NB, CIAKCIK (1837), BEDROSSIAN (1875-1879) and LAZARYAN (2000), s.v. *hałordowt’iwn*.

that the Platonic doctrines were not always and utterly compatible with the Sacred Books²⁸. Thus, the passage would testify not only (or not so much) a scarce diffusion of Plato's works, but also (or mostly) the perception of their only partial integrability with religious doctrines. According to SHIRINIAN (2005), these exhibitions of ignorance, sometimes exaggerated, were precisely meant to emphasise an explicit ideological detachment from pagan thought²⁹. Moreover, it should be noted that Plato is not named here directly: the reference is to the eloquence (*perčabanowt'eamb*), while the adjective *platonakan* may mean both "Platonic" and "worthy of Plato" («or inč' ank ē Płatoni»; ЦІАКЦІАК 1837: s.v.). Indeed, the philosopher is often mentioned as the Eloquent par excellence: for instance, in a passage from the *History in Verses* by Nersēs IV Šnorhali, Grigor Magistros is described as gifted with the same eloquence as Plato (see below). Thus, Samowēl might be generally referring here to the practice of addressing high topics in a rhetorically elaborate language, traditionally associated with pagan philosophy (whose contents and priorities were different from those addressed by the Sacred Books)³⁰.

In any case, concerning Grigor's lack of knowledge of any Platonic versions in Armenian, it is worth mentioning that, depending on the purposes for which it was realised (see below), an earlier translation of the *Timaeus* might have had such a limited circulation as to escape the notice even of a prodigiously learned scholar.

Grigor's correspondence contains another potentially significant clue: in his letter 70, addressed to Emir Ibrahim (a Muslim, born of an Armenian mother and on the verge of conversion: see LANGLOIS 1869: 34-35; KOSTANEANC' 1910: 170 ff.), a section of the *Timaeus* (41) is paraphrased. Its wording seems to be influenced by the analogous section in the preface to the *Definitions of Philosophy* by Dawit' Anyalt' (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 4); therefore, according to LEROY (1935: 286), when this letter was written (c. 1045-1048?) Grigor had not yet realised his own translation – whether it can be identified or not with the extant one – because otherwise he would have quoted his own work and not Dawit's relatively free translation. The relationship between the Armenian *Timaeus*, Dawit' and Grigor will be addressed more extensively in the next paragraph.

5. Arevšatyan and the Early Chronology

5.1. Introduction

According to LEROY (1935: 284-285), the language and style of the translations cannot provide any useful clue regarding their chronology because of their significant degree of artificiality and Hellenisation. On the contrary, AREVŠATYAN (1971), believing that Grigor's letters cannot offer any compulsory evidence on the subject, has compared the language of

²⁸ Prof. Erna Shirinian (Matenadaran; Erevan State University) has been kind enough to discuss the matter with me via electronic mail (May 24th, 2011).

²⁹ On the seminal, but inevitably conflicting and complex relationship between Christian thought and ancient pagan and Hellenistic culture, cf. SHIRINIAN (2005); Samowēl's passage and some *loci paralleli* are also analysed and contextualised (61 ff.).

³⁰ Cf. the passage by Sahak (?) quoted by SHIRINIAN (2005: 61). The pronoun *nma* in Samowēl's passage could also refer to the «eloquence» itself, which would thus not be «associated with the Gospel».

the dialogues with other translations from Greek. On this basis, he has proposed an early chronology that has been widely accepted, especially in Armenia, and has not yet been thoroughly refuted in any original contribution (although the need to revise the matter has been stated a few times).

AREVŠATYAN (1971) analyses a few philosophically relevant lexical units, taken from the Platonic dossier, in the light of the periodisation suggested by MANANDEAN (1928) for the so-called Hellenising School (*Yownaban Dproc*)³¹. According to him, the Platonic translations cannot be ascribed to the first phase of the School's activity, because they include some lexical items typical of subsequent phases. Earlier chronologies, such as XAČ'IKYAN's proposal (1945)³², which attributed them to the first phase and the 5th century (because of alleged, unconvincing convergences between the Armenian *Timaeus* and the *Araracoc' meknowt' iwn* by Elišē)³³, are thus rejected. The Platonic dossier would belong instead to the third group (the *Timaeus* is actually listed as the first work of this group) and date back to the first half of the 6th century, thus being later than the translations of Aristotle and Porphyry. However, it should be noted that, according to TERIAN (1982: 176; cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 30), who favours a less rigid classification, some of the words that Manandean considered typical of the third group (*nerhakan*, *makac' owt' iwn*, *andhanrakan*)³⁴, and which are also present in the Platonic dialogues (all three are used in the *Timaeus*)³⁵, are actually attested in some Philonic versions belonging to the first group.

5.2. *The Timaeus and Dawit' Anyalt'*

According to Arevšatyan, since a few artificial genitive forms (expanded in *-r*) occur in the *Minos*, the Platonic versions should be closer to the second group, and therefore earlier, than the works attributed to Dawit' Anyalt'³⁶. Dawit's texts were actually written in Greek at first, and then translated into Armenian; however, according to AREVŠATYAN himself (1981: 35), their transposition would have taken place almost immediately. That would testify in favour «ou bien de traductions autorisées ou bien de l'existence d'un groupe de traducteurs dirigés par l'auteur au cours de la troisième étape de l'activité de l'école hellénisante».

³¹ AREVŠATYAN himself follows a revised version of this chronology (cf. 1973: 186 ff.); first phase: 450-480; second phase: 480-c. 510; third phase: 510-c. 600; fourth phase: 610-720. The chronology of the *Yownaban Dproc* has been, and still is, much debated: cf. at least TERIAN (1982), who sets the beginning of its activity around 570, and ZEKIYAN (1997: 84 ff.) and CONTIN (2007: 34 ff.), who favour the second half of the 5th century (these contributions also provide bibliographic references concerning the history of the debate). Cf. also MERCIER (1978-1979).

³² The work in question is a dissertation, posthumously edited by L. Ter Petrosyan in 1992.

³³ On the author and the work, cf. HAIRAPETIAN (1995: 127 ff.) and the bibliographic references listed by THOMSON (1995 e 2007: s.v.). Cf. also ZEKIYAN (1997).

³⁴ According to MANANDEAN (1928: 115, 133-134, 154, 195), *makac' owt' iwn* (which corresponds to ἐπιστήμη) and *nerhak* (ἐνάντιος), from which *nerhakan* derives, were created in the second group and widely used in the third; *andhanowr* (καθολικός), from which *andhanrakan* derives, was allegedly introduced instead in the third group (*ibid.*: 160).

³⁵ *Nerhakan* occurs frequently (23.20 ms. = 102.25 pr. ed.; 32.29 ms. = 114.5 pr. ed., *bis*; 38.8 ms. = 119.31 pr. ed.; 42.28/29 ms. = 125.8 pr. ed., etc.), *makac' owt' iwn* twice (22.3 ms. = 100.32 pr. ed.; 33.15 ms. = 114.27 pr. ed.), *andhanrakan* just once (25.17 ms. = 105.5/6 pr. ed.).

³⁶ Cf. TER PETROSYAN (1992: 7).

These translations would also contain evidence that their author(s) knew the Armenian Platonic versions (or the *Timaeus* at least). Such assumption plays a major role in Arevšatyan's argumentation, since he is fully aware that the linguistic similarities between the Platonic dialogues and works attributed to the *Yownaban Dproc*³⁷ might also be explained through a conscious selection of Hellenising features on a later author's part (cf. AREVŠATYAN 1973: 220). On that account, it is worth mentioning that, according to ZANOLLI (1957: 158), the Armenian philosophical vocabulary was consecrated by a tradition that had begun with Dawit^c, and went on to reach Grigor Magistros (to whom Zanolli attributed the Platonic dossier). Moreover, as AIMI (1008-2009: 26) points out, a degree of Hellenisation does not characterise just the translations of the *Yownaban Dproc*³⁷, or even translated literature in general. The language of Grigor's letters is a relevant example³⁸: «the influence of the Greek language, rather than that of the Greek syntax of translations, may be discerned in writers as early as Eznik Kołbac'i [...] and as late as Grigor Magistros» (TERIAN 1982: 182)³⁹.

On the other hand, if the Platonic versions could indeed be proved to have influenced Dawit^c's works that would represent a *terminus ante quem* for the translations as well (to be further defined according to the chronology accepted for Dawit^c's Armenian versions: cf. CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 20 ff.). However, the evidence brought forward by Arevšatyan does not seem to be irrefutable.

He focuses especially on the lexical similarities between two passages from the *Definitions of Philosophy* (AREVŠATYAN 1960⁴⁰: 4.34-6.1 and 110.13-16), which belong to explicit Platonic quotations, and the corresponding sections of the Armenian *Timaeus* (27.3-5 ms. = 107.8-9 pr. ed.; 33.32 - 34.1 ms. = 115.14-17 pr. ed.). The first one is a paraphrase of *Tim* 41 b 7-8, which finds a match within Grigor Magistros's letter 70: according to Arevšatyan's interpretation, the Platonic version influenced the Armenian version of the *Definitions*, to which Grigor would later refer.

In order to properly evaluate these elements, I will compare the Armenian texts with their Greek sources: it will thus be possible to verify whether the alleged coincidences may depend on the similarity of the source texts and the application of well attested interlinguistic correspondences. On that account, it is worth mentioning that TERIAN (1980: 206), despite being a supporter of the early chronology, believes that, in this case, any lexical matches might be due to the translators' using similar lexicographical tools, rather than to intertextual contact. It should be noted that the Armenian version of Dawit^c's work displays an uneven translation technique: some passages are rendered with extreme faithfulness to the original, whereas others show a more autonomous approach (cf. Calzolari, in CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 45 ff.). Moreover, since the translation might have been supervised by the author himself (cf.

³⁷ Cf. the features of the so-called «pre-Hellenising» versions (particularly of patristic texts), described in MOWRADYAN (2004). See *ibid.* (298 and related bibliographic references) for the co-existence of Hellenising and Classical translations in the same time frame.

³⁸ On the Hellenising style of the *Letters*, and in general of Grigor Magistros's works, cf. at least LANGLOIS (1869: 23); LEROY (1935: 276-277); YARNLEY (1976: 49-50), SANJIAN (1993: 141).

³⁹ Even authors who generally adopt a more Classical language can occasionally use Hellenising features: cf. CONTIN (2007: 35). On the Classical origin of some Hellenising structures, cf. WEITENBERG (1997).

⁴⁰ I will refer here to the 1960 critical edition, reproduced in THOMSON-KENDALL (1983) and, for obvious chronological reasons, quoted in AREVŠATYAN (1971), and not to the 1980 revised edition, since the latter lacks a critical apparatus.

AREVŠATYAN 1981: 35), the influence of Greek variant readings on the discrepancies between the Greek and Armenian texts is difficult to evaluate: such variations could be authorised by the author, rather than depend on a different underlying text.

In the *Timaeus*, the first passage reads as follows (a larger section is quoted, in order to put the relevant section into context):

θνητὰ ἔτι γένη λοιπὰ τρία ἀγέννητα· τούτων
 δὲ μὴ γενομένων οὐρανὸς ἀτελής ἔσται· τὰ γὰρ ἅπαντ' ἐν
 αὐτῷ γένη ζώων οὐχ ἔξει, δεῖ δέ, εἰ μέλλει τέλος ἰκανῶς / εἶναι. (41 b 7 - c 2)
 “as for mortal species, three are left, not generated yet; but, as long as these are not born, the sky
 will be incomplete, because it will not have all the living species within itself; and yet it must have
 them, if it is to be properly complete”,

*mah/kanac'ow`ews ayl eris serk' anelk' en`ew soc'a oc' eleloc`
 erkin' n [?]⁴¹ ankatar ic'ē`zi zamenayn seris kendaneac` yink'ean oc`
 ownic'i ew part ē`et'ē handerjeal ē kataréal gol bavaka/nabar` (27.3-7 ms. = 107.8-12 pr. ed.)
 “among mortal species, three more are not generated yet; and, as long as these are not born, the
 sky will be incomplete, because it will not have all the living species within itself; and yet it is
 necessary (for it to have them), if it is to be properly complete”.*

On the other hand, in its Greek and Armenian versions, Dawit's text reads as follows:

καὶ γὰρ τὸ πᾶν [τὸ *omittit* V] ἀτελὲς ἦν, εἰ μὴ ἦν τὸ
 ἀνθρώπειον γένος, ὡς δηλοῖ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Τιμαίῳ· ποιεῖ γὰρ τὸν
 δημιουργὸν λέγοντα μετὰ τὴν ποίησιν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ἔτι λείπεται τρία
 γένη ἡμῖν θνητὰ καὶ ἀγέννητα, ὧν μὴπω γενομένων ὁ οὐρανός, φησὶν, ἔστιν
 ἀτελής'. οὐρανὸν δὲ ἐκάλεσε τὸν κόσμον ἐκ τοῦ περιέχοντος ὀνομάσας τὸ
 περιεχόμενον (BUSSE 1904: 2.16-21)
 “and indeed the universe (or “everything”: V) would be incomplete, if mankind did not exist, as Plato
 himself shows within the *Timaeus*; he depicts the demiurge as saying, after creating the sky and the
 earth: ‘three species are still left, mortal and not generated; as long as these are not born, the sky – he
 says – is incomplete’. He called *sky* the universe, naming what is in the vessel from the vessel itself”,

*k'anzi / et'ē oc' ēr mardkayin serñ, amenayn⁴² ankatar goyr; orpēs / yayt arñē ew Platon i
 «Timēosi» tramabanowt'eann, k'anzi / ayspēs asē yalags [C: vasn] ararē'in, et'ē yet arneloyn
 zerkins ew / zerkir, hratarakēr ar imanali zōrowt'iwnsn ayspēs ew ast / aysm ōrinaki, et'ē ayl ews
 erek' serk' mez mahkanac'owk' ane/lanelik' [F: mahkanac'owk' pakas gon mez], oroc' oc' eleloc`
 erkin ankatar: Isk mitk' asac'e/loc'd ē ast aysm ōrinaki, et'ē ayl ews erek' serk' mahkanac'owk' /
 pakas gon mez anelanelik'. aysink' n takawin oc' ews [A: č'ew ews] elealk': / Ard, en erek' serk'
 mahkanac'owk. ōdayink', jrayink' ew erkra/yink', yoroc' ew mardn ē, oroc' oc' eleloc', orpēs asē,
 erkin an/katar: Erkin koč'eac' zašxarh, i parownakołēn zparowna/kealn nšanakelov, k'anzi erkin
 parownakē zašxarh (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 4.29 - 6.7)⁴³*

⁴¹ See below.

⁴² This renders the variant reading πᾶν, without the article, attested in V (BUSSE 1904: 2).

⁴³ The Armenian passages quoted by AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15) show a few minor divergences from the text of the *Timaeus* as edited by Sowk'rean (*Tramaxōsowt'iwink'* 1877) and as present in the manuscript,

“because, if mankind did not exist, everything would be incomplete, as Plato himself shows within his dialogue, the *Timaeus*; because, about the demiurge, he says as follows: that, after creating the sky and the earth, he made a declaration to the Intelligent Powers, thus and according to this model: ‘three more mortal species are still not generated (for us); as long as they are not born, the sky will be incomplete’. But the meaning of these words is to be interpreted as follows: that there are three more mortal species missing to us and not generated, that is, not yet born. Now, there are three mortal species: aerial, aquatic and terrestrial beings, among which there is also the human being; as long as these are not born, as he says, the sky will be incomplete. He called *sky* the universe, naming what is in the vessel from the vessel itself, because the sky contains the world”.

Among the lexical similarities which would allegedly suggest a contact between the Armenian version of the *Timaeus* and Dawit’s text, AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15) initially draws attention toward two sequences: *mahkanac’ow`ews ayl eris serk’ anelk’ en* (*Timaeus*) and *ayl ews erek’ serk’ mez mahkanac’owk’ anelanelik’* (Dawit’). However, despite a general affinity between the two passages, which can be explained through the similarity of the underlying Greek texts (Θνητὰ ἔτι γένη λοιπὰ τρία ἀγέννητα and ἔτι λείπεται τρία γένη ἡμῶν Θνητὰ καὶ ἀγέννητα respectively), a few differences can be seen at first glance.

The correspondence between the adjectives *mahkanac’ow* and θνητός is well documented (cf. NB: *s.v.*), and thus not particularly meaningful; moreover, whereas the *Timaeus* uses the singular form, Dawit’ uses the plural form (although such a change could have occurred at some point during the textual transmission; the difference could also be due to the position and/or function of the elements within the sentence: see below). Again, the numeral for «three» (*erek’*) which can be found in this passage by Dawit’ according to the critical edition (AREVŠATYAN 1960), is different from the form written extensively in the Platonic manuscript (*eris*). The critical apparatus does not actually specify whether the numeral was ever written with the corresponding Armenian letter (<g>) within the manuscript tradition of Dawit’’s work, as happens in other passages within the Platonic manuscript; in that case, the *erek’* reading could be due to the modern editor rather than to Dawit’’s translator. Since the editor is Arevšatyan himself, though, he probably would not have lost the opportunity to signal a similarity between the numerals as well. However, the discrepancy is of little significance, since it cannot be proved to date back to the original texts, rather than being due to a different rendering of the letter <g> on a copyist’s part.

Undoubtedly more meaningful is the different rendering of ἀγέννητος a philosophically relevant term within the *Timaeus*, with *anel* and *anelaneli* respectively. In this Platonic passage, ἀγέννητος means «*nondum creatus*» (cf. AST 1956: *s.v.*), or more precisely, “not (yet) generated”, as the context suggests: three mortal species are not yet come into being, and without their coming into being, the universe would be incomplete. They will later be brought about by lesser gods, the θεοὶ θεῶν to whom the demiurge speaks (mentioned in 41 a 7)⁴⁴,

and from the critical edition of the *Definitions of Philosophy*. Namely, Arevšatyan writes *anel* for *anelk’* in the *Timaeus* and omits *serk’* after *ews erek’* in the quotation from Dawit’. Since AREVŠATYAN (1960) and *Tramaxōsowt’iwink’* (1877) are mentioned there as references, and since these divergences are not present in AREVŠATYAN (1973: 224), they can probably be ruled out as typos.

⁴⁴ On the Armenian rendering of this passage and the interpretation of the Greek text, cf. DRAGONETTI (1988: 80-81).

because, if they should be generated by the demiurge himself, they too would be immortal (the Armenian version of Dawit^c's work mentions instead, in one of its numerous expansions from the Greek model, the "Intelligent Powers" or *imanali zōrowt' iwnek*^c: see above). Both *anel* and *anelaneli* are listed, in NB (*s.v.*), as adequate correspondents for ἀγέννητος or ἀγέννητος. Actually, while listing the possible meanings of *anelaneli*, the authors refer to the first two meanings ascribed to *anel*, that is, «ungenerated, but having existence by itself» and «not (yet) come into being, but destined or likely to exist», respectively. As examples of the latter meaning of *anelaneli*, this passage by Dawit^c, marked as deriving from Plato (*i Platonē*), as well as Grigor Magistros (his letter 70) are quoted. On the other hand, another passage from Dawit^c is mentioned as relevant for the first meaning of *anel*⁴⁵.

As for *ayl* being used in Dawit^c whereas the Greek text had λείπεται that is indeed a point of similarity with the Armenian *Timaeus*. In the Platonic passage, the presence of *ayl* can be easily explained, since the Greek text read λοιπά (cf. the list of Greek correspondents for *ayl* in NB: *s.v.*), which the translator probably interpreted as an attribute of γένη, thus inserting the verb "to be" after *anelk^c* ("about the mortal species, still *other* three / three more are not generated"). It must be noted, however, that, given the order of the elements in the Greek text, λοιπά should probably be interpreted instead as having a predicative function ("still, of mortal species, three *are left*, not generated [yet]"). Such an interpretation of the Platonic passage is clearly shared by the author of the *Definitions*, whose Greek text reads λείπεται ("three species are still left, mortal and not generated"). In the Armenian version, however, λείπεται is rendered with *ayl* rather than with a verbal form (such as *mnan* or *mnaγ*); besides, the conjunction between *mahkanac^c owk^c* and *anelanelik* is omitted, so that the latter seems to have a predicative function⁴⁶. All this could indeed be due to an influence of the Armenian *Timaeus*, but it could as easily be independent of it: λείπεται might have been interpreted as merely reinforcing the meaning of ἔτι (cf. LSJ: *s.v.* for its impersonal use, meaning "it remains"), or the text could have simply been rendered more freely. These data are therefore not enough to prove that the Armenian version of the *Definitions* was influenced by the Armenian *Timaeus*. That is especially true because, while examining the relationship between these four texts (Greek and Armenian *Timaeus*, Greek and Armenian text of Dawit^c), one cannot rule out the possibility that the translator of Dawit^c's work knew and had access to the Greek *Timaeus* itself: that could have influenced his rendering of the Platonic quotations in Dawit^c, especially when they did not exactly match their original source.

The *ayl ewš* sequence reoccurs later in the same passage, when the Armenian text of Dawit^c, diverging from its Greek model, rewords and explains the Platonic quotation. In this second occurrence, however, *pakas gon* ("they are missing") renders the meaning of λείπεται (for this correspondence, cf. NB: *s.v.*); unsurprisingly, within the manuscript tradition (ms. F), these two words are also sometimes introduced in the quotation itself.

The sequence *oč^c eleloc^c erkin ankatar*, to which AREVŠATYAN (1971) also draws attention, is, indeed, identical within the two Armenian texts (the "sky" is probably mentioned in the

⁴⁵ This could perhaps suggest a different semantic specialisation of the two terms in Dawit^c. The matter would undoubtedly require further investigation, but that would exceed the scope of the present enquiry.

⁴⁶ Cf. the translation by THOMSON-KENDALL (1983: 5-7): «there still remained three mortal genera to be made».

singular form in both of them: see below), although the subject of the genitive absolute is, in the Armenian version of Dawit' as well as in its Greek source, a relative pronoun (*oroc'*, ὧν), whereas the Armenian *Timaeus* uses a demonstrative pronoun (*ew soc'a*). In this instance, the translator renders the text of the Platonic dialogue *verbum de verbo*, and that is also true of *ic'ē* (following *ankatar*), which corresponds to ἔσται. Since the Armenian version of Dawit', on the other hand, does not exactly match its Greek source (ὧν μήπω γενομένων ὁ οὐρανός φησίν, ἐστὶν ἀτελής), it could be argued in this instance as well that such small discrepancies are due to an intertextual contact with the *Timaeus*. However, they are not so significant as to be impossible to explain otherwise, especially within a passage which, generally speaking, shows a very free approach to its source. For instance, although the parenthetic φησίν does not have any exact correspondent, that could be easily accounted for because, in the Armenian text of Dawit', the finite form of a *verbum dicendi* had already been inserted above: as a matter of fact, ποιεῖ γὰρ τὸν δημιουργὸν λέγοντα (“he depicts the demiurge as saying”) is rendered with the much more complex *k'anzi ayspēs asē yalags ararč'in, et'ē [...]* *hratarakēr ar imanali zōrowt'iwnsn ayspēs ew ast aysm ōrinaki, et'ē...* (“because, about the demiurge, he says as follows: that [...] he made a declaration to the Intelligent Powers, thus and according to this model:...”).

In regard to the absence of a copula between *erkin* and *ankatar*, the preference for a nominal clause, in itself quite common, goes against a prevalent tendency within the Armenian *Timaeus*, where copulas are more often added to the text than suppressed. Moreover, had the translator of Dawit's text meant to follow the sequence of the Platonic passage literally by preserving the immediate juxtaposition between *erkin* and *ankatar*, the copula could have been added after *ankatar*, in the same position as in the *Timaeus*.

The rendering of μήπω with *oč'* (while the former's most common Armenian correspondents are *oč' ew* or *č'ew*, *č'ew ew*: cf. NB: s.v.) cannot be ascribed to a specific cause: the choice could be due to the context, which is already unambiguous, or indeed to the influence of the *Timaeus* (not necessarily, however, in its Armenian version: see above).

As for the sequence *erkin ankatar*, which occurs twice within Dawit's passage, the presence of a singular form for the “sky”, whereas the plural form (albeit singular in meaning) occurs earlier in the text (*yet arneloyn zerkins ew zerkir*, “after creating the sky and the earth”)⁴⁷, is coherent with the general tendency within the Armenian *Timaeus*. In the parallel passage, however, the *Timaeus* itself reads *erkink'n ankatar*, at least according to Sowk'rean (*Tramaxōsowt'iwnc'* 1877: 107.9), followed by AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15). Actually, it is not clear whether such a reading is correct or not, since the name of the “sky” is noted in the manuscript (27.5) with an abbreviation followed by the deictic *-n*. It would be possible to infer that the abbreviation itself must be read, as it usually is, as *erkink'* (cf. ABRAHAMYAN

⁴⁷ Grigor Magistros, in his letter 70 (KOSTANEANC', 1910: 179), uses the singular form in this instance as well (*zerkin ew zerkir*). This could simply be due to an assimilation to the other instances in the same passage (all in the singular form, as they are in Dawit'); however, the sequence *zerkin ew zerkir* in a context where creation is mentioned would undoubtedly be familiar to the author, since it occurs in the first line of the *Book of Genesis* (*i skzbanē arar Astowac zerkin ew zerkir*, “in the beginning God created the heaven / sky and the earth”). For a few other examples of the alternance *erkin* / *erkink'* within Armenian literature, see TINTI (2010: 14-15).

1973: 206)⁴⁸, except for those instances in which further clues suggest that the name must be read in a case different than the nominative (in all the other instances in the *Timaeus*, the abbreviation for the “sky” is followed by *-s*, as an article or as the plural accusative desinence, and sometimes also by the deictic *-n*, in which case, *-s* is surely to be interpreted as a desinence). This would then be the only instance in the *Timaeus* in which the nominative plural form for the name of the «sky» is followed by a deictic particle (*erkink^sn*); the singular form, being less common, would be written out instead in its entirety (cf. the lines 14.8, 16.17, 17.21, 19.14, 21.16, 22.15, *etc.*, in the manuscript). However, the abbreviation itself might also be read as *erkin*: in that case, further morphological and/or syntactical information would be conveyed by the letters added to it, and the sequence in 27.5 should be read *erkinn*. As a matter of fact, since the verb *ic^sē* is singular in form, whereas usually when a *plurale tantum* is the syntactical subject a plural verb is used⁴⁹, the name of the “sky” should probably be read here as singular (as in most of the instances in the *Timaeus*).

Be this as it may, the presence of a singular form within the sequence *erkin ankatar* – which coexists with a plural form in the sequence *zerkins ew zerkir* in the passage by Dawit^s – can be explained even without taking into account the problematic Platonic example. Indeed, a few lines later Dawit^s explains that Plato uses the word “sky”, metonymically, as a synonym for “world”: *erkin koč^seac^s zašxarh, i parownakolēn zparownakealn nšanakelov, k^sanzi erkin parownakē zašxarh* (“he called *sky* the universe, naming what is in the vessel from the vessel itself, because the sky contains the world”). That is enough to account for the choice of the singular form *erkin*.

A passage that deals with suitable names for the world can also be found in *Timaeus*, 28 b 2-4:

ὁ δὴ πᾶς οὐρανὸς / —ἢ κόσμος ἢ καὶ [om. F] ἄλλο ὅτι ποτὲ ὀνομαζόμενος μάλιστα ἂν
δέχοιτο, τοῦθ' ἡμῖν [om. F ante correctionem]⁵⁰ ὀνομάσθω—

“indeed the whole sky – or the world or whatever other name it is most appropriate to give it, let us call it so –”,

freely but adequately translated in 14.8-10 ms. (= 91.23-25 pr. ed.):

*ew ard` amenayn erkin` kam ašxarh, kam / et^sē ayl inč^s əndowni a/nowanakoč^sowt^siwn, zayn inč^s
ew anowa/nesc^si*

“and now, the whole sky, or the world, or if another denomination is possible (lit. ‘if it allows for another denomination’), let it be called so”.

⁴⁸ On the use of abbreviations for the name of the “sky” in Armenian manuscripts, in conformity with a well attested practice in the Greek tradition, see MERK (1924: 13).

⁴⁹ See MINASSIAN (1996: 93). Several examples of *erkink^s* in association with a plural verb can be found in the *Bible*: see, for instance, *Isaiah*, 66.1; *Job*, 11.8; 1 *Chronicles*, 16.31; *Joel*, 2.10; *Acts*, 7.49. Actually, in Hellenised Armenian a verb does not always agree in number with its subject: however, such structures generally reproduce Greek sequences in which a singular verb is associated to a subject in the neuter plural (see MERCIER 1978-1979: 72).

⁵⁰ For the Greek variant readings noted above, see JONKERS (1989: 150 and 186) and the critical editions by BURNET (1902) and RIVAUD (1963), *ad loc.*

However, there is no similarity in the verbs used for “to call” / “to name” in the two passages: the translator of the *Definitions* uses *koč'em* (which renders *καλέω*) and *nšanakem* (“to designate”, which renders *ὀνομάζω*), whereas in the *Timaeus* the two occurrences of *ὀνομάζω* are rendered with *anowanem* and with a periphrasis containing the name *anowanakoč'owt'iwn*, respectively.

Other clues, which can be useful for a comparative analysis of the Armenian text of Dawit^c and the translation of the *Timaeus* can be found in the sentences immediately following the textual section analysed by AREVŠATYAN (1971). As noted above, the Armenian version of the *Definitions of Philosophy*, 4-6, includes a few elements which are not already present in its Greek source. On that account, the section in which the three mortal species (aerial, aquatic, and terrestrial beings)⁵¹ are explicitly mentioned is particularly significant. The author is getting these elements from another passage of the *Timaeus* (39 e 10 - 40 a 2 Gr. = 25. 8-10 ms. = 104.25-28 pr. ed.):

εἰσὶν δὴ τέτταρες, μία μὲν οὐράνιον θεῶν γένος, ἄλλη δὲ
 πτηνὸν καὶ ἀεροπόρον, τρίτη δὲ ἔνυδρον εἶδος, πεζὸν δὲ καὶ / χερσαῖον τέταρτον
 “there are four of them: one is the heavenly species of the gods, another is the winged, airborne one, the third is the aquatic species, and the walking, terrestrial one is the fourth”,

*ew en. d [sc. č'ork^c]: miwsk^c [sic; lege: mi isk]⁵² erknyayin`astow/acoc^c ser: Ew ayl t'rc^cnoc^c, ew
 odagnac^cic^c: ew errord j/rayin tesak: ew hetewak, ew c'amak^cayin ays č'orrord
 “and there are four of them. A heavenly one, the species of the gods, and another, of birds and airborne beings⁵³, and a third, the aquatic species; and the walking and terrestrial one, this is the fourth”.*

As far as the names for the species are concerned, as Calzolari points out (in CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 64), only one element is common to both series (*odayin*, *jrayin*, *erkrayin* and *odagnac^c*, *jrayin*, *c'amak^cayin*, respectively). On these grounds, Calzolari herself – who does not take a definite stance on the attribution of the Platonic translations, despite laying out some data which could support the later dating (*ibid.*: 18; see below) – remarks that, in this instance at least, the two translations were undoubtedly done independently.

Regarding the second pair of passages quoted by AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15), it is worth mentioning that, as TERIAN (1986, *passim*) relates, the same section of the *Timaeus* (47 a-b, in which sight and hearing and their role in allowing mankind to contemplate the universe, and therefore reach wisdom, are discussed) is quoted by Dawit^c in two other passages (AREVŠATYAN

⁵¹ Calzolari suggests that the Greek version might have actually included a similar passage, which would have been later lost because of a *saut du même au même*. Cf. CALZOLARI-BARNES (2009: 64), with references.

⁵² The emendation is Sowk^crean's; a recent, hand-written note in the margin of the manuscript (possibly due to Sowk^crean himself) reads: *yn. mi isk*, therefore showing the correct reading according to the Greek text. In the manuscript, after *miwsk^c*, the punctuation mark <:> is present.

⁵³ The Armenian translator uses genitive plurals, whereas, in the Greek text, neuter adjectives in the nominative case occur. This could be an instance of free rendering, but, more likely, the translator found in his source forms with an <ω>. It is worth mentioning that the alternating forms οὐράνιον / οὐρανίων are both attested in 39 e 10 (see RIVAUD 1963: *ad loc.* and JONKERS 1989: 320).

1960: 12 and 156 respectively). To be more specific, on page 156 of the critical edition the same Platonic section which was already referred to on page 110 is quoted⁵⁴, whereas on page 12 the immediately preceding sentence, along with others, is alluded to (in this case, the passage of the *Timaeus* is summed up rather than quoted, and several segments of the Greek text can be recognised in it). In quoting the *Timaeus* to compare it with the *Definitions* (110), AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15) actually recopies that sentence too, but does not mention the passage of Dawit^c (12), which is a far better match for it as far as sense goes, and would therefore be more useful for a comparison.

The relevant sections within the *Timaeus* read as follows:

ἐξ ὧν / ἐπορισάμεθα φιλοσοφίας γένος, οὐ μείζον ἀγαθὸν οὐτ' ἦλθεν
οὐτε ἦξει ποτὲ τῷ θνητῷ γένει δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν (47 a 7 - b 2)

“from these things⁵⁵ we got the genus of philosophy, a greater good than which never came nor will ever come to the mortal genus, given by the gods”;

owsti ew mek^c barebaxtec^c ak^c ` zser^c i/mastasirowt^c ean⁵⁶, oroy mecagoyn bari oc^c ekn erbēk^c ` ew oc^c e/kic^c ē [sic] mahkanac^c ow azgis^c ` pargeweal yastowacoc^c n (33.32 - 34.1 ms. = 115.14-17 pr. ed.)

“from which we also got good fortune, (getting) the genus of philosophy⁵⁷, and a greater good than which never came nor will ever come to this mortal genus, given by the gods”;

θεὸν ἡμῖν ἀνευρεῖν δωρήσασθαί τε ὄψιν, ἵνα [...] (47 b 6)

“that the god found for us and gave us sight, so that...”;

zastowac gta/nel⁵⁸, ew tal tesowt^c iwn, zi [...] (34.5-6 ms. = 115.21-22 pr. ed.)

“that god finds and gives sight, so that...”;

⁵⁴ Both passages mention Theodorus as Plato’s interlocutor; he is not, however, mentioned within the *Timaeus*: cf. THOMSON-KENDALL (1983: 178, note 13). Theodorus of Cyrene is indeed mentioned within the *Theaetetus*, which is quoted by Dawit^c elsewhere: cf., for instance, BUSSE (1904: 26) for the Greek text and AREVŠATYAN (1960: 62) for the Armenian one.

⁵⁵ That is, the notions of number and time, and all the other discoveries prompted by gazing at the sky (which is possible thanks to the gift of sight).

⁵⁶ In the manuscript the punctuation mark <`> is present after *zser^c*.

⁵⁷ Such rendering adapts the Armenian text to the meaning of the Greek one, since the verb *barebaxtim*, “to prosper, to be fortunate”, should not be possibly used in a transitive meaning. Actually, φιλοσοφίας γένος might have been interpreted by the translator as an accusative of limitation, in which case the Armenian text might be adequately rendered as “we were fortunate in the genus of philosophy”. Otherwise, since an overextension of the accusative marker *z-* occurs elsewhere within the *Timaeus*, *zser^c imastasirowt^c ean* might actually be the subject of *pargeweal*, and the sentence might be rendered as follows: «we were fortunate; the genus of philosophy, than which a greater good never came and never will to this mortal genus, (has been) given by the gods». On a possible explanation for the choice of *barebaxtim*, see below.

⁵⁸ *Mez*, the Armenian correspondent of ἡμῖν, is moved within the sentence and referred to another element. As for the correspondence between *gtanel* and the compound verb ἀνευρεῖν (which is, from a semantic point of view, perfectly acceptable), it should be noted that part of the manuscript tradition reads instead εὐρεῖν (ms. A and P according to BURNET 1902 and RIVAUD 1963, *ad loc.*; JONKERS 1989: 115 and 119, believing that P depends on A, obviously mentions just A).

φωνῆς τε δὴ καὶ ἀκοῆς πέρι πάλιν
ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος, ἐπὶ ταῦτα τῶν αὐτῶν ἕνεκα παρὰ θεῶν
δεδωρησθαι (47 c 4-6)

“therefore, the same is true about voice and hearing, that they have been given by the gods for the same purposes and motives”,

isk ard`yalags jaini ew lseleac` / darjeal noynd ē mez ban i veray aysoc`ik⁵⁹` i saks noc`ownc` ar` / i yastowacoc`n [sic] pargewel (34.12-14 ms. = 115.29-31 pr. ed.)

“so, about voice and hearing, what has been said applies, again, to such things (lit. the discourse on such things is again the same for us); they are given by the gods for the same reasons”.

The relevant passages by Dawit^c instead read as follows:

καὶ ὅτι κάλλιστον πάντων ἐστὶν ἡ φιλοσοφία, ὡς καὶ ὁ Πλάτων πρὸς τινα
Θεόδωρον γεωμέτρην ποιούμενος τὸν λόγον δηλοῖ λέγων ὅτι ‘τοιούτον τι, ὦ
Θεόδωρε, οὔτε ἦκέ ποτε εἰς ἀνθρώπους οὔτε ἦξει ποτὲ δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεοῦ’ (BUSSE 1904:
48.11-13)

“and that the most beautiful of all things is philosophy, as Plato himself shows while talking to one Theodorus geometer, saying: ‘such a thing, Theodorus, has never come to mankind nor will ever come, given by the god’”,

*ew et`ē lawagoyn amenayn arhestic` ew makac`ow/t`eanc` ē imastasirowt`iwn, orpēs ew Platon ar`
omn T`ēodoros / erkrač`ap` yagt arnē aselov, et`ē ayspisi inč`, ov T`ēodorē, oč` / ekn erbēk` ar` i
mardik ew oč` ekesc`ē erbēk` pargeweal ar` i / yastowcoy* (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 110.12-16)

“and that the most beautiful of all arts and sciences is philosophy, as Plato himself shows by saying to one Theodorus geometer: ‘such a thing, Theodorus, never came to mankind nor will ever come, given by the god’”,

οὐδὲ γὰρ μάτην ἐστὶν ἡ φιλοσοφία, εἴ γε, ὡς φησιν ὁ Πλάτων
πρὸς τινα Θεόδωρον ποιούμενος τοὺς λόγους, ‘τοιούτον τι, ὦ Θεόδωρε,
ἀγαθὸν οὔτε ἦκέ ποτε εἰς ἀνθρώπους δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεοῦ οὔτε ἦξει ποτέ’ (BUSSE 1904:
78.28 - 79.1)

“and, truly, philosophy is not useless, if indeed, as Plato says while talking to one Theodorus, ‘such a good thing, Theodorus, has never come to mankind, given by the god, nor will ever come’”,

vasn zi oč` varkparazi ē imastasirow/t`iwn, orpēs yagt arnē Platon⁶⁰, ar` omn T`ēodoros arnelov /

⁵⁹ *Aysoc`ik* would be a better counterpart for ταῦτα than for ταῦτά; the former is not attested as a variant reading in BURNET (1902), RIVAUD (1963) or JONKERS (1989), but the transition from one to the other can occur quite easily (especially because the two words would have been written without diacritics within earlier codices, in the exact same way: a variant reading thus originated could have survived in later codices too). Clearly, the pronoun has been interpreted as referring to sight and hearing, rather than to the purposes of such a gift, as it was in Greek.

⁶⁰ *Yagt arnē* (“shows”, “makes it clear”) is a better counterpart for δηλοῖ, present in BUSSE (1904: 48), than for φησιν. Interference between the two passages of the *Definitions* could indeed have happened, although this might also be just another example of a freer translation technique. Relevant variant readings are not attested within the Greek tradition (where the only alternative to φησιν is φασιν), but that does not necessarily mean they never existed. It should also be noted that the Armenian version of the *Definitions*

57), but also well attested in Armenian since the translation of the *Bible* (cf. LYONNET 1933: 61-62)⁶². As for the common lexical choice, the suppletive paradigm *gam* / *eki* is a suitable correspondent for both ἔρχομαι and ἦκω (cf. NB, s.v. *gam*).

Undoubtedly, though, the two passages show a greater degree of mutual similarity, as far as the rendering of verbal forms is concerned, than the Armenian translation of the *Definitions* (110) shows with itself (156). The passage on page 156, which translates a very similar Greek text to the one rendered on page 110⁶³ and quotes the same Platonic segment, is freer in its lexical choices. For instance, *erewim* means “to appear, to result, do derive” (cf. ЦИАКЦΙΑК 1837: s.v.), and therefore can adequately render ἦκω in this context; it is not, however, its most usual correspondent from a denotative point of view. Δωρηθέν is not even translated⁶⁴. A different choice has also been made on the morphological level: ἦξει is rendered with a periphrasis involving a future participle and the verb “to be”, whereas, as seen above, in the *Timaeus* and in the parallel passage by Dawit’ a subjunctive / future synthetic form is used.

This prompts an observation: if the translator of Dawit’'s work knew the Armenian *Timaeus*, he certainly did not turn to it for reference on a systematic basis; in this instance, two potentially similar passages by Dawit’ adapt the same Platonic quotation very differently, and at least one of them diverges significantly from the Armenian version of the *Timaeus*. From an opposite perspective, the translator of the *Timaeus* himself might have known at least a few sections of the Armenian version of the *Definitions* (such knowledge could be proved, for instance, for Grigor Magistros), and therefore might have been influenced in his lexical choices by (one of) the Platonic quotations in it. This could explain as easily, or perhaps even more convincingly, the similarity between the passage by Dawit’ (110) and the one from the *Timaeus* (33.32 - 34.1 ms. = 115.14-17 pr. ed.), which is, however, rather unremarkable in itself. On this account, the position of *erbēk* within the passage from the *Timaeus* mirrors its first occurrence in the passage by Dawit’ but does not match the collocation of ποτέ in the Greek source. Changes in word order are not at all uncommon within the translation of the *Timaeus*; however, if the possibility of an intertextual contact must be considered, in this instance the Platonic translation might be influenced by the Armenian version of Dawit’, which follows exactly the word order of its Greek source, and not otherwise.

AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15) also draws attention to the alleged similarity between the sequences *mahkanac’ow azgis`pargewal yastowac’n*, from the *Timaeus*, and *ar i mardik [...]* *pargewal ar i yastowcoy*, by Dawit’. However, in this instance as well, the common points are clearly not remarkable enough to prove anything. Both texts closely match their Greek sources: therefore, the former mentions the “mortal genus”, in the dative case, whereas the latter mentions “human beings” / “mankind”, in a prepositional phrase with the accusative case (as does the parallel passage at page 156, where the simple preposition *i* is

⁶² That is unsurprising, since Greek perfect forms progressively came to be perceived simply as preterits: cf. for instance MEILLET (1930: 287-288) and HEWSON-BUBENIK (1997: 79 and ch. 13).

⁶³ The only differences lie in the word order and the presence of ἀγαθόν (also present in the *Timaeus*), correctly rendered with *bari* at page 156.

⁶⁴ The critical edition of the Greek text (BUSSE 1904: 79) does not report any omission of this participle within the manuscript tradition; clearly, that cannot guarantee that an omission never occurred at all.

used)⁶⁵. The correspondence between *mahkanac'ow* and θνητός, which, as seen above, is attested elsewhere in both the *Timaeus* (27.3 ms.) and the *Definitions of Philosophy* (4), is not uncommon and therefore not especially meaningful (see NB: *s.v.*). As for the final segment, the two instances of *astowac* (regular correspondent of θεός used in the *Timaeus* in the plural form as well, with reference to pagan gods)⁶⁶ not only differ in number, as they do in the Greek texts, but also occur in different prepositional phrases: the *Timaeus* selects a simple preposition (*y-*), whereas the translator of the *Definitions* uses a double one (*ar' y-*)⁶⁷. As a matter of fact, the only common element between the two texts is the rendering of δωρηθέν as *pargewal*. Such a correspondence is not unusual (see NB: *s.v. pargewem*), but this is not the only viable option either, as the *Timaeus* and *Definitions* themselves show.

On that account, another relevant passage by Dawit' (12: see above), which also deals with themes taken from the *Timaeus*, should be taken into consideration. While the sequence *i yastowacoc' pargewel* renders παρὰ θεῶν δεδωρησθαι in *Tim* 34.14 ms. (= 47 c 6 Gr.)⁶⁸, a text section that deals with the gift of hearing, δωρήσασθαι (47 b 6) is rendered by *tal* in 34.6 (ms.), where the gift of sight is discussed. On the other hand, the Armenian version of Dawit's work (12) renders ἐδωρήσατο with *šnorheac'*. The rendering of ὄψις and ἀκοή, with *tesolowt'iwn* and *Isolowt'iwn* respectively, does not match the lexical choices made by the Platonic translator either (*tesowt'iwn* in 34.6 and *Iselik'* in 34.12). Moreover, the demiurge (δημιουργός in Greek) is called *ararič'* rather than *goyac'owc'ic'*, which is its usual correspondent within the Armenian *Timaeus* (although, in 47 b-c, the demiurge is actually not mentioned, but only the “god” or “gods”, θεός / θεοί, are). Therefore, it can be safely assumed that, in this instance at least, the translation of the *Timaeus* and the Armenian version of the *Definitions* do not show any evidence of a textual interference.

To conclude this comparative analysis between the Armenian *Timaeus* and the *Definitions*, it is worth mentioning that at least one clue might suggest the influence on the former by the Greek text of the latter: it is, however, little more than a suggestion. As seen above, ἐπορισάμεθα (*Tim* 47 b 1), meaning “we got”, “we obtained” and having the “genus of philosophy” as its object, is rendered by *barebaxtec'ak'*, “we had good fortune” (33.32 ms.). The manuscript tradition of the Greek *Timaeus* does not know any alternative reading (cf. BURNET 1902 and RIVAUD 1963: *ad loc.*; JONKERS 1989). Of course, as usual, the possibility of

⁶⁵ Oddly enough, TERIAN (1986: 33; 35), who explicitly states (28) to be chiefly following the Greek text (which reads εἰς ἀνθρώπους in both instances and does not know any variant reading within the extant manuscript tradition: see BUSSE 1904: 48 and 79), translates both *ar' i mardik* (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 15) and *i mardik* (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 156) as “by men”, as if reading (*ar'*) *i mardkanē*, with the ablative case. That may be due to an influence of the following “by God”, which correctly renders the Greek and Armenian texts.

⁶⁶ Within the Platonic manuscript, the name of God is often abbreviated (as it is usual for the *nomina sacra*: cf. TRAUBE 1907: 276; MERK 1924: 13 ff.; ABRAHAMYAN 1973: 195; SIRINIAN-D'AIUTO 1996: 7, with references; the practice is also well known in Greek and Latin manuscripts). In conformity with the occurrences in which the name is spelled out (cf. 25.8-9 ms.), the forms *astowacoy*, *astowacoc'* are adopted here (as in *Tramaxōsowt'iwnk'* 1877). In the critical edition of the *Definitions of Philosophy*, the syncopated variants *astowcoy*, *astowcoc'* (cf. MEILLET 1936: 22) are used instead.

⁶⁷ The spelling *ar' i y-*, with reduplication, is clearly due to the reduced phonic relevance of initial *y-*, and perhaps to the influence of *ar' i*, regularly used before a consonant in *ar' i mardik*.

⁶⁸ The Greek perfect infinitive is rendered with the only infinitive form existing in Armenian.

a free rendering cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this particular lexical choice within the Armenian *Timaeus* would be a better counterpart for a Greek verb like κατορθόω which is used by Dawit⁶ (BUSSE 1904: 5.4; κατορθώσωμεν: see above), with reference to the “genus of philosophy” and in a similar context, albeit in a different tense. The verb, which means, in this passage by Dawit⁶, “tu put order into” or rather “to lay the ground for”, can indeed mean “to have fortune, to be prosperous” as well. In any case, this – admittedly tenuous – connection might at best suggest, as noted above, that the translator of the *Timaeus* knew the Greek text of the *Definitions* (or perhaps a lost variant reading within the Platonic tradition, on which both passages might depend); it would not provide any positive information about a mutual relationship between the two Armenian texts. If any, a negative clue might be detected, since the translator of the *Definitions* (12.24) renders κατορθώσωμεν with *owllesc’owk⁶*.

In conclusion, by analysing the passages in which *The Definitions of Philosophy* undoubtedly refer to the *Timaeus* (openly or otherwise), it is possible to detect a few clues that might suggest a textual contact between their Armenian versions. Such clues are not, however, undisputable, and, moreover, they do not clarify which text possibly influenced the other. On the other hand, some sections were certainly translated independently. It is worth mentioning that these conclusions agree with the preliminary judgement that AİMİ (2008-2009: 30) had expressed, without conducting a detailed comparative analysis of the texts involved; according to her, no convincing congruencies are brought about by AREVŠATYAN (1971: 15), especially since a similarity between different renderings of the same passage is to be expected.

Another clue, according to AREVŠATYAN (1971), might suggest that the translator of the *Definitions* knew the Armenian Platonic versions. In a passage where Plato is explicitly mentioned and the *Phaedo* is referred to (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 66.25 ff.), the artificial form *ēmeranel⁶⁹*, modeled on the Greek perfect infinitive τεθνάναι (BUSSE 1904: 29.17 ff.), occurs four times. It is used, within the context, in opposition to the regular infinitive *meranel*, which renders instead θνήσκειν (and in one instance τελευτᾶν)⁷⁰. Elsewhere (AREVŠATYAN 1960: 62.8-9), while quoting the same passage from the *Phaedo* (64 a; cf. TERIAN 1986: 31-32), the Armenian translator renders instead the original opposition, involving aspect and actionality, through a lexical one. So, *meranel* and *mahanal* (both meaning “to die”, without a significant difference in actionality)⁷¹ render, respectively, the present infinitive θνήσκειν, an achievement verb (cf. VENDLER 1957), and the stative perfect infinitive τεθνάναι (BUSSE 1904: 26.19) in which the dynamic component of the verb is neutralised (cf. ROMAGNO 2005).

Allegedly, the artificial form *ēmeranel* can also be found in the Armenian version of the *Apology of Socrates* (596.22 ms. = 71.25 pr. ed.), where the Greek sequence δυοῖν γὰρ θάτερόν ἐστιν τὸ τεθνάναι, “being dead is indeed one of two things” (40 c 5), is translated. The Armenian text reads as follows: *k’anzi yerkoč’ownc’ yaysc’anē mi inč ē / ēmeraneln*, “because, of both these things, one is being dead”. However, ROSSI (1982-1983: 54) and AİMİ

⁶⁹ Cf. MANANDEAN (1928: 145 ff.).

⁷⁰ Τεθνάναι actually occurs five times within the relevant passage; μετὰ τὸ τεθνάναι (“after being dead”) is rendered, though, with *yet meraneloyñ* (“after dying”). In this instance, both expressions can suitably refer to the state following death.

⁷¹ Cf. NB; CIAKCIK (1837); BEDROSSIAN (1875-1879); LAZARYAN (2000): s.v.

(2008-2009: 98) expunge the \bar{e} -prefixed to the verb, since its presence is probably due to dittography: the emendated sequence would therefore read *mi inč ē meṛaneln* (“one thing is dying”). Actually, based on the two relevant lines of the manuscript (596.21-22), it is not even certain that the so-called prefix, which is the first letter of line 22, is indeed attached to the verb, since there is a small space between this $\langle\bar{e}\rangle$ and the following $\langle m\rangle$. That does not entirely rule out the possibility that a direct or indirect antigraph of the extant manuscript might have included the (possibly corrupt) form *ēmeṛanel(n)*, and thus influenced the Armenian translator of Dawit^c's work. Once again, though, a dependency cannot be definitely proved, especially since artificial perfect infinitives, albeit of a different verb⁷², could easily be found within the Armenian version of the Τέχνη γοαμματική attributed to Dionysius Thrax (cf. MANANDEAN 1928: 147). The idea that the translator of the *Apology* might have taken the form *ēmeṛanel*, whose genesis in that particular context seems more easily explained through palaeography, from the Armenian version of the *Definitions*, is, of course, even less plausible, especially since the regular, un-prefixed infinitive is used elsewhere within the dialogue, even when the underlying Greek text had a perfect infinitive (cf., for instance, the nearby occurrence in 596.17 = 40 c 1 Gr.).

5.3. The Historical and Cultural Context

Along with philological and textual clues, Arevšatyan brings forward some historical and cultural data in order to support his hypothesis. The learned authors and translators of the Hellenising School had a Greek education, acquired in the main Neoplatonic centres of the time (Alexandria, Athens, Constantinople: cf. TER PETROSYAN 1992: 19), and were responsible for spreading Neoplatonism itself in Armenia. Since Plato was invested with a particular authority, even in the Neoplatonists' eclectic approach, which aimed to merge Platonic and Aristotelian teachings⁷³, it would not be possible, according to Arevšatyan, that the works of the Stagirite and the commentators were translated into Armenian at an early date, while Plato's works were not.

However, the Armenian dossier does not match the usual curriculum taught in Greek Neoplatonic schools (cf. TARRANT 1998: 11 ff.; particularly 13), where the final and most difficult part of the program was reserved to Plato⁷⁴. Actually, among the dialogues which are preserved in Armenian, only the *Timaeus* belonged to such curriculum. According to Calzolari (in CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 18-19), this discrepancy could be more easily explained if a later chronology for the translations were favoured. Moreover, given the composition of the

⁷² See the forms *ēkop^cel*, *ēkop^coc^cel*, built on *kop^cem*, “to bea”, used to render the perfect infinitive τετυφέναι, from τυπτω, “to beat” (ADONTZ 1970: 49; cf. 46 ff. for other artificial “perfect” forms, built with the \bar{e} -prefix).

⁷³ Cf. HADOT (1997: 170 ff.). On the presence, importance and mutual integration of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines in the history of Armenian philosophy, see also GABRIELIAN (1956-1965: tome I, *passim*). According to him, besides Euclide's work, Grigor Magistros translated “several [‘mi šark^c] Platonic works” (tome II, 65); this might be meant to include not only the *Timaeus* and *Phaedo*, but also the extant Platonic dialogues: however, the statement is – perhaps intentionally – generic.

⁷⁴ Cf. TARRANT (1998: 11 ff., with references) for a discussion on the role played by Neoplatonists of Pythagorean background in the selection of the works, for the importance attributed to Plato in different schools, and for the sequence in which the dialogues were approached.

manuscript (or of its antigraph, whether immediate or not), which includes an ἠθικός dialogue (*Apology*), a περιραστικός one (*Euthyphro*), a φυσικός one (*Timaeus*) and two πολιτικοί (*Minos* and *Laws*), according to the classifications attributed to Thrasyllus (cf. FINAZZI 1977: 28), FINAZZI (1990a: 65) wonders whether these works were chosen from a wider group of existing Platonic versions, or the selection was rather made by the translator himself. This issue is clearly connected to the matter of the common paternity of all the translations, as opposed to the possible subsequent creation of a corpus of heterogeneous origin.

Furthermore, as Calzolari points out (CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 19), the Syriac philosophical corpus, developed at the same time as the Armenian one (6th-13th century) and sharing many features with it – which suggests that the same Greek and Hellenistic texts were likely circulating in both areas – did not include any Platonic translations (not even in the later phases: cf. Hugonnard-Roche in CALZOLARI-BARNES 2009: 154). Indeed, according to BROCK (1984: II.7), «the name of Plato is chiefly known in Syriac from a number of apocryphal sayings, transmitted under his name»⁷⁵. However, it is worth mentioning that, according to HUGONNARD-ROCHE (2007: 7), «affirmer que les textes de Platon n'étaient pas traduits ne signifie pas qu'ils n'étaient pas disponibles ou accessibles [...]. Les textes platoniciens étaient [...] évidemment accessibles à qui aurait voulu les traduire du grec au syriaque». Although one of the elements supporting this statement is the alleged existence of contemporary Armenian versions, other data, such as the attendance of Greek-speaking schools by learned Syrians, keep their validity; this can suggest that the knowledge of Plato's works in a foreign area was not necessarily linked to the existence of translations. As for the lack of any Platonic versions, HUGONNARD-ROCHE (2007: 14 ff.), following BETTILOLO (2005), suggests that the position which had been occupied by Plato in the Greek curriculum might have been taken, in Syriac philosophical circles influenced by Christianity, by the Neoplatonic works attributed to the Pseudo-Dionysius.

In the Georgian area, which is also geographically and culturally close to Armenia, there is no evidence of Platonic translations contemporary to the Hellenising School, either. NUCUBIDZE (1960) emphasises that the Georgian philosophical tradition did not lose contact with ancient philosophy and maintained a knowledge of Greek⁷⁶: in the 8th century, learned Georgians could read Greek works in the original, as could Georgian exponents of Scholasticism in the following centuries. Consequently, it is assumed that the learned Ioane Sabanidze (8th-9th C) read Plato's works in Greek. However, later on, during the so-called Georgian Renaissance (11th-12th C), the Neoplatonist Ioane Petritsi (12th C), who translated and commented on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*⁷⁷ and was a fervent admirer of Plato (ZANOLLI 1950: 122), allegedly also realised translations of Aristotle's and Plato's works (which have been lost, if they ever existed: NUCUBIDZE 1960). In his commentary on the *Elements of Theology*, Petritsi indeed mentions many Platonic dialogues and shows his knowledge of Proclus's

⁷⁵ Examples of these anecdotes and sentences can be found in HUGONNARD-ROCHE (2007: read online on August, 31st, 2011).

⁷⁶ According to ZANOLLI (1950: 123), the same is true of the Georgians of the 10th and 11th centuries.

⁷⁷ While denying its validity, ZANOLLI (1950: 123) mentions the hypothesis that Petritsi's Georgian version, that would later be translated into Armenian by Simēon Ieromonachus, might have depended not on the Greek text, but on an earlier Armenian version. On this issue, see also NUCUBIDZE (1960).

commentary on the *Timaeus* (cf. IREMADZE 2008). Although little is known about Petritsi's life and work, and much of that information is under debate (cf. GIGINEISHVILI 2007: 12 ff., with bibliographic references), it is worth mentioning that his activity, like, possibly, Grigor Magistros's (see below), was likely connected with the contemporary Neoplatonic school in Constantinople, led by Michael Psellus and later by John Italus (cf. KANTOROWICZ 1942: 319). On that account, IREMADZE (2008) sees a similarity between Petritsi's and the Byzantine Neoplatonists' philosophical methods; ZANOLLI (1950: 122) explicitly defines Petritsi as a disciple of Psellus (cf., on the matter, GIGINEISHVILI 2007: 14 ff.).

As for the Persian area, some clues on the existence of Platonic translations contemporary to the activity of the *Yownaban Dproc'* are actually available. According to KANTOROWICZ (1942: 319), who does not mention his source, a scholar called Uranios «is said to have made a translation of the Platonic dialogues into Persian», at the request of the King of Kings Chosroes (Xusrō) I⁷⁸. The reference is probably to a passage in Agathias's *Histories* (II.28.1-2), where the Persian king's interest in Occidental literature and philosophy is described⁷⁹:

ὑμνοῦσι γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ ἄγανται πέρα
 τῆς ἀξίας, μὴ ὅτι οἱ Πέρσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνιοι τῶν Ῥωμαίων, ὡς λόγων
 ἐραστὴν καὶ φιλοσοφίας τῆς παρ' ἡμῖν ἐς ἄκρον ἐλθόντα, μεταβεβλημένων
 αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐς τὴν Περσίδα φωνῆν τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν συγγραμμάτων.
 καὶ τοίνυν φασίν, ὅτι δὴ ὅλον τὸν Σταγειρίτην καταπιῶν εἶη μᾶλλον
 ἢ ὁ ῥήτωρ ὁ Παιανιεὺς τὸν Ὀλόρου τῶν τε Πλάτωνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος
 ἀναπέπλησται δογμάτων καὶ οὔτε ὁ Τίμαιος αὐτὸν ἀποδράσειεν ἄν, εἰ
 καὶ σφόδρα γραμμικῆ θεωρίᾳ πεποίκιλται καὶ τὰς τῆς φύσεως ἀνιχνεύει
 κινήσεις, οὔτε ὁ Φαίδων οὔτε ὁ Γοργίας, οὐ μὲν οὖν οὐδὲ ἄλλος τις τῶν
 γλαφυρῶν τε καὶ ἀγκυλωτέρων διαλόγων, ὅποῖος, οἶμαι, ὁ Παρμενίδης.

“in fact, not only the Persians, but also some of the Romans celebrate and admire him beyond his merit, as a lover of literature and as having reached the peak of our philosophy, since someone has translated the Greek works into Persian for him. Thus they say that he has drunk in all the (work of the) Stagirite [Aristotle], more that the Paeonian rhetorician [Demosthenes] had drunk in (the work of) the son of Oloros [Thucydides], and that he has filled himself of the doctrine of Plato, son of Ariston, and that neither the *Timaeus*, although it is deeply interwoven with geometry and studies the movements of natures, nor the *Phaedo*, nor the *Gorgias*, nor any other of the subtle and most intricate dialogues, such as, I guess, the *Parmenides*, would be beyond his reach”.

Actually, the text does not explicitly say that Xusrō had Plato's works translated; however, the wording seems to allow for such an interpretation. According to Agathias, who is a contemporary source (cf. CAMERON 1969-1970: 172), an unspecified person translated Greek

⁷⁸ According to KANTOROWICZ, collecting information about the «Persian Plato», as well as studying the Armenian translations, «would broaden our views of these remote Platonic centers through which Greek learning eventually passed into Inner Asia» (cf. 1942: 319, with bibliographical references).

⁷⁹ For the Greek text, a translation and a detailed commentary of the pages devoted by Agathias to Xusrō, and for an assessment of the historian's attitude towards the king, based on a comparison with other testimonies and reports, see Appendix A (*Agathias on Chosroes*) in CAMERON (1969-1970: 164 ff.). The Greek text of the *Histories* by Agathias, according to KEYDELL's edition (1967), is also available in the TLG database (77.5 ff. for the passage at hand).

authors into Persian (that is, into Middle Persian) for Xusrō. The king would have been “full of the doctrines of Plato”; not even the *Timeaus*, in spite of its technicality, nor the *Phaedo*, the *Gorgias* or complex dialogues such as the *Parmenides* would have been out of his reach. However, CAMERON (1969-1970: 174) suspects that this list might be meant to display Agathias’s own knowledge of Plato, rather than to name Platonic dialogues truly associated to Xusrō. No man named Uranius is actually mentioned here; however, further on (II.29 ff.) Agathias describes a self-professed Syriac philosopher thus named, who, after leaving Constantinople, had reached the Persian court and managed to impress the king, despite lacking any real knowledge. Nevertheless, he was not the only scholar (real or fake) to seek asylum at the Persian court: before him, Damascius and his companions (II.30), who had been forced to emigrate after the School of Athens was closed by Justinian in 529, had found refuge there.

It should be noted that Agathias himself expresses a few doubts about the truthfulness of the related information. Not only does he underline how Xusrō was praised «beyond his merit», but soon afterwards (II.28.3) he also expresses his skepticism about the possibility that, in a “graceless and uncultured language” (ἀγροία τινὶ γλώττῃ καὶ ἀμουσοτάτῃ) such as Persian, “that purity and nobility of the ancient words, and their being apt and suitable to the nature of the topics” (τὸ ἀκραιβνὲς ἐκεῖνο τῶν παλαιῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ἐλευθέριον καὶ πρὸς γε τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων φύσει πρόσφορόν τε καὶ ἐπικαιρότατον) might be preserved. However, such a remark, while referring to the actual difficulty of transferring technical texts and their specific lexicon into a different language, seems to chiefly show the prejudices of the historian. On that account, it is worth mentioning that, according to DIGNAS and WINTER (2008: 263), Agathias’s words (II.28.1-2) “express a fundamentally critical attitude towards Eastern culture and the “barbarians” rather than precise knowledge about Xusrō’s activities”. Indeed, he reacts with outrage to the suggestion that Xusrō could know Aristotle’s works more than Demosthenes knew Thucydides’s; he is willing to grant him, at the most, a superiority over the other barbarians (μείζονα [...] τῶν ἄλλων βαρβάρων: II.28.5), and the desire to acquire a mere smattering of knowledge. To support this portrayal, he mentions examples of Xusrō’s bad judgement, such as his respect for Uranius, and relates the opinions of the philosophers whom he had once welcomed, who were allegedly disappointed both by Persian society in general and by the king’s scarce philosophical knowledge in particular (II.31). Moreover, Agathias argues that, as a busy ruler, used to luxury and adulation and bound to a «very barbaric» lifestyle (βαρβαρικωτάτην: II.28.4) that consisted in a successions of wars, Xusrō could not truly devote himself to the pursuit of knowledge.

Despite the historian’s bias, the possibility that some Platonic translations were actually realised in Persia in the 6th century must not necessarily be discounted. In order to assess how this eventuality could represent a meaningful term of comparison for an earlier chronology of the Armenian Platonic dossier, it should be considered that part of the Armenian-speaking area was then under the authority of the King of Kings (cf. Garsoïan in HOVANISSIAN 2004: chap. 5). Xusrō I enjoyed a good reputation in the Armenian sources, which praised his goodwill towards Christians and even argued, wrongly, that he converted to Christianity on his deathbed⁸⁰. In any

⁸⁰ The positive attitude of the Armenian sources is also probably due to broader religious and political reasons. Between the second half of the 6th century and the early 7th century, the Armenian Church progressively detached itself from Byzantine doctrines (this process culminated in 607, with the explicit

case, even considering Cameron's caution on the list of dialogues transmitted by Agathias, it should be noted that only the *Timaeus*, among the Platonic works preserved in Armenian, is said to have been known to the Persian king. Moreover, the actual geographic location of the so-called Hellenising School is unknown: if, as many scholars think (see below), its activity really took place in a Greek-speaking area, a comparison with the Persian area would be less meaningful. On the other hand, a Western setting might explain why some Platonic dialogues were translated into Armenian, while a similar undertaking is not attested in Syria nor, with any certainty, in Georgia; this, however, would make the selection of dialogues that did not belong to the traditional Neoplatonic curriculum even more puzzling.

Arevšatyan's remark, according to which the early Armenian Neoplatonists must have had at their disposal translations of Plato's works as well as Aristotle's, also needs to be assessed on the basis of a few elements which have been broadly discussed in recent times. First of all, it is not clear what the aim of the Hellenising translations was (if it is legitimate to even talk about a unitary aim: different versions, with different linguistic and translational features⁸¹, could have had a different purpose as well) and whether they were actually meant to spread the knowledge of the translated texts⁸². It has been suggested, especially for the most literal translations, that these were merely interlinear versions – meant to make the comprehension of Greek easier – or even school exercises⁸³. Secondly, the lack of an Armenian translation would not necessarily prevent learned people from reading Plato, since the knowledge of Greek, at least at a high cultural level, was widespread.

Furthermore, Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines were likely spread more by commentaries, summaries and secondary literature in general, than by the original texts themselves. AS HADOT

condemnation of the positions reached by the Council of Chalcedon, although a pro-Chalcedonian faction continued to exist). Thus, the Armenians who did not follow religious orthodoxy became more and more *personae non gratae* to the Byzantine power, since the price for obtaining the support and protection of the empire involved religious conformity. Consequently, the position of those who lived under Persian rule improved considerably, because the Sassanians had less reasons to fear an alliance of the Armenians with the Byzantine Empire. Cf. Garsoïan in HOVANNISIAN (2004: 103, 108, 110 ff.).

⁸¹ Cf. TERIAN (1982: 182). For instance, according to MOWRADYAN (1996: 280), «although the Armenian version of Philo's works belongs to the Hellenising School and contains all types of grecisms, it is far from a word by word translation in which every Greek word and every construction has its strict Armenian equivalent. Moreover, the 'ideal' level of literalness in rendering the original also cannot be found in the case of such scientific texts as the Grammar of Dionysius, the Progymnasms of Aphthonius and even the Categories of Aristotle».

⁸² Cf. FINAZZI's remarks (1990b: 177).

⁸³ LEWY (1936: 9-16), according to whom the so-called Hellenising School – name that includes different groups active in several years – originated in Constantinople, thinks, for instance, that the translations were at first realised to help Armenians get into Byzantine school, and to favour the task of those who did not know Greek enough to follow the lessons of Greek-speaking teachers (on the 'subsidiary' function of the translations, see AKINEAN 1932, particularly 285-286). These translations («not versions in the proper sense of the word, but purely mechanical, and to some extent interlinear, translations of the words of the Greek original, with a partly conscious neglect of Armenian syntax») would later have a greater fortune than was expected by their authors, since they were studied without reference to the original Greek versions, and also exerted an influence on original literature. For further bibliographical references, see TERIAN (1982: 183), who places the activity of the *Yownaban Dproc*^c in Constantinople, in connection with Byzantine schools. Cf. also ID. (1980).

(1997: 169) points out, «a la fin de l'Antiquité le commentaire continu était devenu la forme littéraire la plus répandue de l'enseignement philosophique»⁸⁴. Thus, when ZUCKERMAN (1995: 27), while evaluating the possible attribution of the Platonic dossier to the Hellenising School, states that «for such an early text [...] Plato *armenicus* made surprisingly little impact on Armenian literature and thought», he is referring to the scarce impact the *translations* had (which might favour the hypothesis of a later chronology); however, Platonic themes could circulate through other means⁸⁵. Epitomes and synopses were already available to the Greek Middle Platonists (for the *Timaeus*, cf. RUNIA 1986: 55 ff.), who would have had access to the original as well. The Church Fathers, often native Greek speakers, frequently turned to secondary literature and handbooks (cf. FESTUGIÈRE 1932); indeed, according to RUNIA (1989: 16), by the 4th and 5th centuries, much material was already «being handed down from the one author to another». Similar examples can also be found in later times: in the Latin Occident of the 12th century, although there was a «diffused platonism [*sic*: I.T.]» (BELL 1997: 87), Plato's doctrines were chiefly known through later authors (such as Cicero, Augustine, etc.), for clear linguistic reasons, but also for doctrinal ones (specific Platonic interpretations were considered objectionable, and that determined a cautious approach to the philosopher himself). As for the Armenian-speaking area, while referring to Grigor Magistros, LEROY (1935: 287) describes a second-hand approach to the classics as well: «ne travaillant pas ordinairement sur les textes même des anciens, puisait probablement la plupart de ses renseignements sur l'antiquité classique dans les oeuvres de compilateurs tardifs et connaissait la philosophie antique plus souvent d'après les interprétations ou les commentaires des premiers philosophes chrétiens que d'après le texte même des anciens».

In conclusion, cultural and historical data alone cannot be assumed as evidence in favour of an early chronology of the Armenian Platonic dossier: the necessity of the existence of early translations is denied by numerous counterexamples, in geographically and culturally close areas or in comparable milieus, whereas possible parallelisms are not documented or stringent enough.

5.4. *Arevšatyan's Later Works*

After stating his proposal in the 1971 article, AREVŠATYAN reinforced the argumentation in other contributions. According to a volume published in 1973 (220, 225) and an article published in 1979, the Armenian Platonic translations' influence can also be detected in the

⁸⁴ About the fortune of the genre of the running commentary in Armenia, see Calzolari (in CALZOLARI-BARNES, 2009: 20).

⁸⁵ ARAK'ELYAN (1959: 635) seems to assume too close an equivalence between the importance of Platonic doctrines in the Armenian speaking area and the diffusion of Platonic translations. On the contrary, while accepting the attribution of the extant dialogues to Grigor Magistros on the basis of previous scholarly literature, KANTOROWICZ (1942: 319) mentions «the Armenian studies of the sixth century focussing in Philo but dealing also with Plato», thus referring to an Armenian Neoplatonism not necessarily linked to the production of the extant translations. However, it should be noted that the *Book of Ideas*, for which Kantorowicz tentatively suggests a comparison with an Arabic treatise *On Platonic Ideas* mentioned by KLIBANSKY (1939: 41), is actually the *Girk' Ēakac'* («Book of Beings»: cf. LEWY 1936: 13). On this text, which is preserved in different forms and whose identification has been much debated, cf. at least AREVŠATYAN (1984); VAN ESBROECK (1994-1995) and, particularly, VAN ESBROECK (1996-1997), with bibliographic references.

Cosmography by Anania Širakac'i, which dates back to the 7th century (cf. THOMSON 1995 and 2007). Anania would have used the Armenian *Timaeus* as one of his sources, without explicitly mentioning it; the evidence for such contact could be found by comparing some passages from the dialogue (listed only by page numbers, according to the printed edition, without any further information) with chapters I-II of the *Cosmography*, and, more specifically (according to AREVŠATYAN 1979: 275, note 17), with pages 9, 10, 15 and 16 from Abrahamyan's edition (1940). Such comparison would allegedly make it clear that the Armenian *Timaeus* should be listed among the works of the "good philosophers" (*p'ilisop'ayk'n barik'*), who are mentioned in the first chapter (ABRAHAMYAN 1940: 3) in association with monotheism "in the manner of the Jews" (*miastowacowf' iwn xostovanelov hrēabar*).

It is not explicitly stated what kind of influence (lexical? thematic?) should be detected; however, a comparison between the aforementioned passages does not show any definite and unmistakable textual correspondences. On that account, it should be noted that a general thematic and even lexical affinity would not in itself imply a dependency, or even the knowledge of the Armenian *Timaeus* on Anania's part. Indeed, the contents could have been drawn from the Greek *Timaeus*, or from commentaries and secondary literature⁸⁶, either in Greek or in Armenian⁸⁷. Even if lexical congruences should be pointed out, they would not necessarily represent evidence of an intertextual contact either, especially if they should reproduce well attested Greek-Armenian correspondences. On the whole, although the earlier chronology cannot be entirely ruled out, there is not as yet any compelling evidence to strengthen it.

It is worth mentioning that Arevšatyan's hypothesis is also supported in a recent volume on the History of Armenian Philosophy (AREVŠATYAN-MIROVMYAN 2007). In the paragraph devoted to the translations of the Hellenising School (4.3, 238 ff.: 252), written by Arevšatyan himself, the Platonic versions are still considered to be the earliest works of the third phase (which roughly ranges from 510 to 600 C.E.), although the *Euthyphro* is listed first, followed by the *Timaeus*, *Apology*, *Minos* and *Laws*, respectively. This sequence does not match the order of the dialogues within the manuscript; however, there is no reason to believe that Arevšatyan attributes a relative chronological value to it.

6. The Later Scholarly Debate

The traditional attribution to Grigor Magistros is still accepted, for different reasons, in several works later than Arevšatyan's contributions on the subject. In most cases, however, that seems to be due to a repositioning of old theses, rather than to a conscious rejection of Arevšatyan's hypothesis (cf. also the following paragraph). For instance, DRAGONETTI (1986: 5; 1988: 53) wrongly states that *all* the previous scholars have attributed not only the

⁸⁶ For instance, Eznik Kołbac'i's knowledge of the great Greek philosophers might have been at least partially mediated by other authors: «que sa formation philosophique lui soit venue par la lecture directe des ouvrages des maîtres, ou par l'intermédiaire de florilèges – ce qui serait à déterminer [...]» (MARIÈS 1928: 195). For a discussion on Eznik's sources, *in primis*, Methodius of Olympus, cf. ORENKO (1996: 15 ff.) and related bibliography.

⁸⁷ Anania had a Greek education: he was a pupil of the scientist Tychikos in Trabzon. Cf. HAIRAPETIAN (1995: 174).

Timeaus, but also very likely the other dialogues, to Grigor Magistros. Actually, not even all the scholars to whom Dragonetti explicitly refers share that opinion. FINAZZI (1974: 203-204) merely points out that CONYBEARE (1889) considered Grigor Magistros to be the last possible author of the Platonic versions; however, she also openly states that there is no definite evidence regarding their chronology, and that they could date back to the 5th, 6th or the 11th century. Elsewhere (1977: 28; 1984: 230; 1990a: 65: these last two articles are not mentioned by DRAGONETTI, the latter, clearly, for chronological reasons)⁸⁸, she willingly avoids taking a stance on the matter. SOLARI (1969: 498), also among Dragonetti's references, states that, from a linguistic point of view, the *Euthyphro* could date back to the 11th century, since both <d> and <t'> are attested in correspondence with the first <δ> of *Daedalus* (495), and this might suggest that a consonant shift was taking place at the time. However, it should be noted that this feature could also be due to the linguistic habits of a later copyist, and not necessarily to the author of the translation. Significantly enough, the alternation <d> / <t'>, attested in the *Minos* as well, is discussed by FINAZZI (1977: 33) among Medieval spellings that also reflect an evolving pronunciation, in a paragraph devoted to the possible corruptions that had arisen within the Armenian manuscript tradition (31 ff.), rather than among the mistakes due to the translator himself (29 ff.). Moreover, clues of a consonant shift taking place would scarcely be useful in reaching a chronology, even if they should indeed be attributed to the linguistic habits of the translator, because this phenomenon, which is well-attested in Medieval times, might actually have begun much earlier (in some varieties, it might have started as early as the 6th century)⁸⁹.

Among other contributions later than Arevšatyan's first article on the subject, Rossi's opinion (1982-1983) is somewhat ambiguous: according to him, it is impossible to determine an exact chronology for the Platonic dossier, although Grigor Magistros is generally considered as a possible author, and although the versions belong to the activity of the *Yownaban Dproc*^c (2). In order to clarify Rossi's statement, the reference to the Hellenising School could be interpreted in a broader sense, as including all the translations from Greek into Armenian, realised in different times. However, since Rossi also mentions an article by Bolognesi (published in 1982 and later reprinted: BOLOGNESI 2000a) in which the term *Hellenising School* is used in a technical sense, with reference to texts dating back to the 6th and 8th centuries, the ambiguity of his words cannot be so easily overcome. Arevšatyan is not listed as a bibliographic reference (while CONYBEARE 1889; LEROY 1935 and YARNLEY 1976 are).

On the other hand, Arevšatyan's interpretation is partially followed by TERIAN (1982), according to whom, however, the activity of the Hellenising School began around 570. While underlining that the division into different «phases», as well as the phases' temporal sequence, should not be too rigidly interpreted⁹⁰, he ascribes the Platonic dossier to the third group, together with the Armenian versions of Dawit^c's works (whose peak would date back to the late 6th - early

⁸⁸ FINAZZI (1990b: 171) emphasises the importance of wide-ranging studies, which would also include lexicological and lexicographical analyses, for establishing the chronology and cultural context of anonymous and undated works.

⁸⁹ See ORENGO (2010: 462 ff., with bibliographic references).

⁹⁰ The translations of the first three groups would have all been made in one generation's time: cf. AKINEAN (1932).

7th century). More precisely, the Platonic versions would be among the «later translations of this group», whereas the translations of Dawit^c's works would be syntactically closer to the versions of the second group. Terian also underlines how «most of the translations constituting the third group [...] do not follow the Greek syntax as strictly as the earlier translations»: such statement accurately describes the translation technique displayed by the *Timaeus*.

SANJIAN (1993: 143) considers Arevšatyan's interpretation as conclusive⁹¹. MAHÉ (1998: 1131), referring to Arevšatyan, includes the Platonic versions in the Hellenising School's third group, although he also mentions the traditional attribution to Grigor Magistros. SCALA (1999: 304), despite stating that the debate is still definitely open since no explicit testimony has been found yet, believes Arevšatyan's hypothesis to be the most reliable. In a subsequent article (2002: 336-337), he explicitly states that the early chronology is the most probable and well-grounded; referring to Terian's opinion, he also states that the Platonic dossier could be as late as the beginning of the 7th century, depending on the accepted chronology for the translations of Dawit^c's works. As for the traditional attribution to Grigor, he believes it to be based on historically and culturally questionable reasonings⁹².

The early chronology is also accepted, outside strictly academic circles, in publications meant for a wider audience. Since the entries devoted to Grigor Magistros and Plato respectively within the Armenian Soviet Encyclopaedia (*Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran*) are written by Arevšatyan himself, the Platonic translations listed in Grigor's letters are considered lost (HSH 3: 217), whereas the extant versions of the *Laws*, *Euthyphro*, *Minos*, *Timaeus* and *Apology* are ascribed to the 6th century and to the Hellenising School (HSH 9: 326). Similar information is related in the more recent, abridged version of the same work (HHH 1: 716; HHH 4: 218). Clearly, the proponent's authority, and the greater prestige associated with older translations, could favour the acceptance of the earlier chronology in Armenia⁹³. Nevertheless, in HAIRAPETIAN'S volume on literary history (1995: 85, in the chapter devoted to *The Hellenizing School and Religious Literature*), which was published in the United States, the extant Platonic translations are also attributed, following AREVŠATYAN (1971)⁹⁴, to the Neoplatonic movement that developed in Armenia between the 5th and 7th centuries. The diffusion of Plato's doctrines is explicitly linked to the existence of Armenian translations of his dialogues: «the philosophic influence of the ancient philosopher Plato on Armenian life is [...] notable. Its diffusion was greatly aided by the Armenian Hellenisers' translations of his works in the sixth century». Later on, it is also stated – in a rather imprecise way – that «Armenian students, after obtaining their education in centers of Greek learning such as Alexandria, Athens, and Constantinople, introduced Neoplatonism to Armenia and immediately began work on translations of Plato's dialogues *Laws*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedo* [*sic*: I.T.], *Euthyphro*, *Meno* [*sic*: I.T.], and the *Apology*⁹⁵» (85).

⁹¹ This contribution lists further bibliographical references on the history of the debate.

⁹² The earlier chronology is also accepted in SCALA (2001: 257, n. 1).

⁹³ Cf. for instance DOLOWXANYAN (2006: 84), according to whom Grigor's philosophical translations, including the *Timaeus*, «mez č'en hasel» («have not reached us»).

⁹⁴ He is explicitly mentioned as a source (HAIRAPETIAN 1995: 550, note 18).

⁹⁵ Despite these inaccuracies, the reference is undoubtedly to the dialogues preserved in ms. 1123, since the two Venetian editions (*Tramaxōsowt'iwnc* 1877 and 1890) are mentioned as sources (550, note

Although, as mentioned above, Arevšatyan's arguments have not been explicitly and systematically refuted in any original contribution, several recent works, despite being clearly and explicitly aware of such a proposal, prefer not to take a definite stance on the chronology and attribution of the Platonic dossier⁹⁶. Thus, in the section within the LALT database (published in 2003) named «Bibliography», devoted to ancient authors, the chronology of the Platonic translations (*Plato*) is listed as «unknown». Both critical positions are coherently represented in the references: in the «Bibliography» section itself, besides Thomson's repertoire (1995), the general works by INGLISIAN (1963) and POLAREAN (1971) are listed, which mention, with different degrees of explicitness, the attribution to Grigor⁹⁷. However, the section called «The Bibliography», which is devoted to general references, also includes AREVŠATYAN'S first article (1971).

AIMI (2008-2009: 30), after referring to the most significant bibliographic references on the subject (18-22; 27-30), states that a convincing chronology cannot be reached on the basis of external clues alone. She also rightly underlines that a comparative analysis of the dialogues would be needed, in order to assess which translations might eventually be attributed to the same author, and hopefully propose a chronology based on linguistic elements (cf. EAD., 2011: 15-18). As anticipated, Calzolari (in CALZOLARI-BARNES, 2009: 18-19, 64) mentions both Arevšatyan's proposal and the attribution to Grigor Magistros; while not taking an explicit stance, she emphasises some elements that would either better fit in with a later chronology (*i.e.* the odd selection of dialogues and the lack of early translations in the Syriac area), or do not favour Arevšatyan's hypothesis (at least in one instance, the *Definitions of Philosophy* and the Armenian *Timaeus* were independently translated).

An article by SIRINIAN and D'AIUTO (1996), mainly devoted to the broader issue of using palaeographical data desumed by Greek texts in order to solve philological problems in Armenian texts, needs to be more closely examined, as it deals, tangentially, with the eventuality that the Armenian Platonic translations were realised on a minuscule Greek

19), although their titles are quoted imprecisely as well. The *Phaedo* is listed here according to a common mix-up between the extant dialogues and the ones attributed to Grigor Magistros; the *Meno* is mentioned, wrongly, instead of the pseudo-Platonic *Minos*, whose name appears, however, in the title of the 1890 edition as quoted in note 19. In the original Armenian version of this work (HAIRAPETIAN 1986: 111), also published in the United States, Plato is listed among the authors whose works were translated into classical Armenian, in the chapter devoted to the Hellenising School; however, neither Arevšatyan's contributions nor a list of dialogues are mentioned.

⁹⁶ Occasionally an author, such as JONKERS (1989: 10-11), may avoid taking a stance merely because he or she is admittedly not an expert in Armenian studies. Arevšatyan's hypothesis is mentioned, as an alternative to the traditionally accepted chronology, also in DUKE *et al.* (1995: XII).

⁹⁷ POLAREAN (1971: 182) considers Grigor as the author of the *Timaeus* (ascribed approximately to 1050) and the other four extant dialogues, which would have been translated “in a Hellenising language and with undesirable literalness” («yownaban lezowov ew oč' p'ap'ak'eli čšdowt'eamb»). The version of the *Phaedo* is listed instead as lost. INGLISIAN (1963: 189) is more cautious: mentioning the letter to Sergius (*i.e.* Sargis) Vardapet, he states that Grigor translated the *Timeaus* and the *Phaedo*. Later on, he adds that «auf uns sind auch gekommen» the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology*, the twelve books of the *Laws* and the *Minos*, without explicitly attributing them to Grigor, but quoting LEROY (1935) as a reference. As for the *Phaedo*, its being lost is not mentioned.

manuscript. The authors – who do not mention Arevšatyan directly, despite referring to some contributions in which the 1971 article is quoted – keep a cautious stance about the chronology of the Platonic dossier (which could be as early as the 5th and as late as the 11th century: 10) and stress the need for a further evaluation which would take into account linguistic and translational features as well. While examining a passage from the pseudo-Platonic *Minos*, they focus on a possible misinterpretation of a Greek abbreviation.

The manuscript (99.24) reads: *kʻanzi ov arkʻn bankʻ en` ew ovaristēsn` / zougak icʻē baniwkʻ* (a translation will be provided later); the Greek text (319 e 1-2) reads instead: οἱ γὰρ ὄαροι λόγοι / εἰσὶν, καὶ ὀαριστῆς συνουσιαστῆς ἐστὶν ἐν λόγοις⁹⁸, “the *oaroi* (‘speeches’) are indeed speeches, and the *oaristēs* (‘friend’; cf. LSJ: *s.v.*; ‘confidant’; cf. FINAZZI 1977: 29) is a partner in speeches”. The sequence *ov arkʻn* (or the form *ovarkʻn*)⁹⁹ has proved to be somewhat puzzling for modern interpreters. Evidently, *arkʻ*, “men”, is not a suitable rendering for the rare word ὄαροι (“speeches”, “chants”; cf. LSJ: *s.v.* ὄαρος): as FINAZZI (1977: 29) points out, *ov arkʻn*, “o men”, would be a better match for a Greek sequence like ὦ (οἱ) ἄνδρες. According to SIRINIAN and D’AIUTO (1996: 9), *arkʻ(n)* might be the result of an incorrect reading of the sequence οαροι: <ρ> would have been mistakenly read as <ν>, whereas the initial <ο> would have been interpreted as a vocative particle (ὦ), and therefore rendered with *ov*. Then, *ανοι* would have been read as the usual abbreviation for ἄνθρωποι (“human beings”), and thus rendered with *arkʻ* (*-n* is a deictic particle), according to a correspondence attested elsewhere within the *Minos* (see, for instance, 100.6 ms.; 320 b 1 Gr.)¹⁰⁰. Since a confusion between <ο> and <ν> would be more likely to occur within a minuscule script, and since the earlier minuscule manuscripts date back to the beginning of the 9th century (cf. MIONI 1973: 63 ff.), Sirinian and D’Aiuto cautiously propose that, if other similar clues should be found within the Armenian Platonic dossier, its chronology should be reconsidered (that is, the versions should be later than the 9th century at least).

As a matter of fact, another hypothesis might explain the matter more effectively (Sirinian and D’Aiuto themselves admit discussing such an idea with Folkert Siegert and Alessandro Orenco). *Ovarkʻ(n)* and *ovaristēs(n)*, read in their entirety without isolating *ov-* as a vocative particle, could be the transcriptions of the Greek words ὄαροι and ὀαριστῆς, respectively. They would have been assumed into the Armenian text as occasional loanwords, and the Greek nominative plural morpheme *-οι* would have been replaced by its Armenian counterpart, *-kʻ*. SIRINIAN and D’AIUTO (10) do not agree with this explanation, which allegedly goes against the translator’s *usus scribendi*, since common names are not transliterated elsewhere within the *Minos*, and even the rarest Greek forms are translated, with long periphrases if necessary. However, *ovaristēs* is, undoubtedly, at least partially the result of a transcription, whether it was

⁹⁸ Cf. the *database* TLG, which follows the critical edition by BURNET (1907).

⁹⁹ Between *ov* and *arkʻn*, as between *ov* and *aristēsn*, there is no space; that is not especially meaningful, since in the manuscript letters pertaining to the same word are sometimes written apart, whereas the separation between subsequent words is not always clearly marked. However, the *ov* preceding *arkʻn* is noted with a different diacritic, which may suggest that a copyist at least interpreted it as a vocative particle.

¹⁰⁰ It is worth mentioning that such a correspondence is never attested within the *Timaeus*, where ἄνθρωπος and ἄνθρωποι are always rendered with *mard* and *mardik* respectively (see, for instance, 13.10 ms. = 90.18 pr. ed. = 27 a 7 Gr.), while *ayr* renders ἀνήρ (see 27. 31 ms. = 108.10 pr. ed. = 42 a 3 Gr.).

interpreted as a proper name preceded by a vocative particle, as Sirinian and D’Aiuto suggest (cf. *Tramaxōsowt’iwkn^c* 1890: 474.11; *ov Aristēs*), or it was assumed as an actual loanword, as FINAZZI (1977: 29) thinks. On that account, it should be noted that, contrary to what FINAZZI (1990a: 73) and SIRINIAN and D’AIUTO (9) say and the printed edition reads (*Aristēs* in 474.10), there is no occurrence of the form *Aristēs* alone in that section of the *Minos*: in the manuscript, the initial *ov-* (or the preceding *ov*) is also maintained in 99. 5 ms. (= 473.24 pr. ed. = 319 b 5 Gr.); 99. 23 ms. (= 474.10 pr. ed. = 319 d 8 Gr.); 99.29 ms. (= 474.16-17 pr. ed. = 319 e 6 Gr.).

If *ovark^c* and *ovaristēs* should be interpreted as occasional loanwords¹⁰¹, the Armenian text of the passage would then correspond closely to its source (the only real difference would be the use of the subjunctive / future *ic’ē* for Greek *ἐστίv*). It would also not be necessary to assume that vocative forms or contextually unsuitable words, such as *ark^c*, were inserted: *k’anzi ovark’n bank’ en`ew ovaristēs n` zougak ic’ē baniwk^c* could be translated as “since the *ovark^c* are speeches, and the *ovaristēs* would be a companion in speeches”. Indeed, both words are presented, within the Greek version of the dialogue, as obscure and needing clarification, and thus are followed by a more common synonym. The use of a periphrasis would not only be more complex, and require a precise understanding of their meaning on the translator’s part, but it would also make the explanation itself meaningless. Moreover, the Armenian translator could have interpreted both *ἄριστις* and *ἄροι* not as ‘common names’, but rather as technical terms, foreign words, or even as proper names of a role and a kind of speech, respectively. Therefore, the objection put forward by Sirinian and D’Aiuto does not sound convincing, while the explanation they rejected seems at least plausible.

Even if, in this instance, the evidence is not compelling, this line of enquiry might indeed be profitable; however, the possible clues detected so far within the scholarly literature are occasionally contradictory and, on the whole, not conclusive. At first, CONYBEARE (1889: 342) defined the version of the Platonic dialogues as «by its very blunders testifying that it was made from an uncial Greek manuscript». It should be noted, however, that any such blunder might have also been present in a minuscule source, as a result of the faulty interpretation of the wording of a direct or remote majuscule antigraph. Significantly enough, in a later article (1891a: 210), devoted to a philological analysis of the *Euthyphro*, CONYBEARE assumed instead that the translations had been made on a minuscule manuscript, with words already separated and some punctuation inserted. He based such assumption on the lack of segmentation mistakes (that is, the very «blunders» to which he had referred in 1889), that would rather be expected if the source text had been written in *scriptio continua*¹⁰². Moreover, he explicitly connected this datum to a later chronology: «this, of course, militates against the view expressed by some Armenian scholars that the Version may date from the seventh or even the fifth century, but it agrees well with the hypothesis that Grigor Magistros made it about A. D. 1030». In yet another article (1891b: 410), while analysing the translation of the *Laws*, he actually identified a few segmentation mistakes; however, this did not lead him to assume

¹⁰¹ The final *-n* is added to both words, although only *ἄροι* was preceded by an article. That could simply be due to a desire for symmetry; however, the Greek manuscript on which the translator worked might have actually had a diplographic reading such as *ὁ ἄριστις*.

¹⁰² On the systematic use of punctuation and the separation between words in manuscripts written in cursive minuscule from the 8th-9th century onwards, cf. MIONI (1973: 43-44).

that the translations had been made on a majuscule source: «the text from which it was made was written cursively with the words divided. Otherwise so rude and untutored a translator would have fallen into many confusions which he avoids. The few which he makes [...] in no way warrant the conclusion that he worked with an uncial codex. Far more skillful Armenian versions made in the fourth [*sic*: I.T.] and fifth century from uncial codices teem with errors such as would arise in reading a *scriptio continua*». Although such severe judgment on the translator's skills should be mitigated, the comparison with earlier Classical translations is indeed meaningful. Later on (1924: 124), CONYBEARE identified a corruption due the confusion between two uncial letters (<Δ> e <Λ>) in the text of the *Laws*; however, since such corrupt reading is also attested within the minuscule Greek manuscript tradition, this does not imply that the version was realised on a source written in uncial fonts¹⁰³. Elsewhere (1893: 342), CONYBEARE had also pointed out a possible corruption due to the wrong reading of two uncial letters, which is attested within the Greek tradition, but absent from the Armenian version. Again, that does not necessarily imply that the translator himself rightly interpreted an uncial text; he could have simply worked on a correctly transliterated minuscule text.

According to AIMI (2008-2009: 20), Conybeare's assumption that the translations were made on a minuscule model has been echoed in all the subsequent studies (cf., for instance, LEROY 1935: 284; SOLARI 1969: 499; DRAGONETTI 1986: 4-5 and 1988: 52-53). This actually applies only to (some) supporters of the later chronology; however, it is true that this opinion has never been explicitly refuted, not even by Arevšatyan. That is probably due to Conybeare's argument being a negative one, based more on the scarceness of mistakes due to the wrong interpretation of majuscule letters and the erroneous segmentation of a *scriptio continua*, rather than on positive clues that might suggest a dependency on a minuscule source.

In any case, to my knowledge, none of the above mentioned authors has ever systematically looked for examples of confusion between similar letters in order to prove unequivocally that the Armenian translation was indeed realised on a minuscule text. In one instance, DRAGONETTI (1988: 75) argues that the Armenian translator of the *Timaeus* might have misread ἄπασιν (plausible alternative reading to πᾶσιν: 17 c 4) as a prepositional phrase similar to ἀπὸ σοῦ, which might explain the Armenian rendering *i k'ēn* (2.24 ms. = 77.2 pr. ed.). Although she does not draw any further inference from this, it should be noted that the confusion between <ν> and <υ> can happen both in a minuscule and an uncial majuscule script (BAST 1811: 735-737). However, since the majuscule <Υ> can be more easily confused, when the lower part of the letter is omitted, with a minuscule <ν> (*ibid.*: 735), this kind of mix-up might still be ascribed to the 9th century or later. The same mix-up is also attested in the *Laws* (FINAZZI 1974: 213-214) and the *Euthyphro* (SOLARI 1969: 487), and, according to Solari, it happens quite frequently «in these Armenian translations» (that is, probably, in the Platonic dossier). According to FINAZZI, a few examples of a confusion between <ου> and <ω> can also be found in the *Minos* (1977: 30) and the *Laws* (1974: 214); however, although this phenomenon is more common in minuscule texts, it can also happen in an uncial script. Likewise, the mix-up between <ι> and <τ>, also attested in the *Laws* (FINAZZI 1974: 214-215), does not rule out either script.

¹⁰³ For a terminological clarification on the use of *uncial* (*onciale*) and *majuscule* (*maiuscola*), cf. MIONI (1973: 49 ff.).

Other examples, like the alternation between <o> and <ω> (attested in the *Laws* at least: FINAZZI 1974: 214) and the frequent instances of itacism, are probably due to phonetic reasons instead¹⁰⁴, and thus cannot shed light on the graphic features of the text: the contemporary (and possibly dialectal) pronunciation of Greek might have influenced not only two people working together (one of whom would have read the source text aloud to the other)¹⁰⁵, but also a translator working alone. Some readings in the Armenian Platonic versions can also be ascribed to the erroneous segmentation of a text which was being read aloud (cf. for instance *naxagoyn* for πρῶτης instead of πρὸ τῆς in the *Euthyphro*: SOLARI 1969: 488; *sahmanakic*^s for [γῆ] ὄμοροι instead of γεώμοροι in the fifth book of the *Laws*: FINAZZI 1974: 220; etc.; other examples, from the *Laws*, are listed in BOLOGNESI 2000b: 316 ff.). Thus, such phenomena do not necessarily imply that the source text was written in *scriptio continua*, especially because the separation between words is not always clear, even in minuscule codices. The confusion between words that can be distinguished only through the presence of different diacritics (cf. FINAZZI 1974: 215-216) does not necessarily mean that the diacritics themselves were not present in the Greek source, either. First of all, this kind of mistake frequently occurs in the Greek manuscript tradition, and thus a corrupted reading could have already been present in the source manuscript; secondly, if the text was indeed read aloud, possibly by a non-native speaker, misunderstandings could have easily arisen.

7. Saffrey and Codex A

A recent article by SAFFREY (2007) needs to be thoroughly addressed, since the author not only accepts the attribution of the Platonic dossier to Grigor Magistros, but taking the lead from such an assumption, proceeds to reconstruct the movements of the manuscript *Parisinus Graecus* 1807 (A) during the Middle Ages.

This codex, which dates back to the mid-to-late 9th century, includes tetralogies VIII and IX, and can be identified as the second tome of a complete Platonic edition, whose first volume likely included tetralogies I to VII (IRIGOIN 1997b: 152; see below). Together with other books of the so-called Philosophical Collection (cf. SAFFREY 1997: 294, note 5, and ID., 2007: 4, note 4), A was allegedly destined for the imperial library in Constantinople, and according to Saffrey, it remained in the city at least until the 11th century. From the second half of the fifth book of the *Laws* onwards, A is also the source, whether direct (Saffrey) or indirect (cf. CLARK 1969¹⁰⁶: 397), of codex *Vaticanus Graecus* 1 (O)¹⁰⁷, itself a copy of the second tome of a complete Platonic edition, whose first volume should be identified with codex *Bodleianus*, *Clarke* 39 (B), copied for Arethas in 895 (cf. IRIGOIN 1997b: 157).

¹⁰⁴ FINAZZI (1990a: 68) seems to ascribe the confusion between <o> and <ω> to palaeographical reasons instead; actually, both factors, together or separately, could have favoured the mix-up.

¹⁰⁵ On the possible consequences of such a method on the rendering of the text, on the syntactical level as well, cf. MORANI (2003: 40 ff.).

¹⁰⁶ The work was initially published in 1918.

¹⁰⁷ O would depend on A from folio 201r (that is from *Laws*, V, 746 b 8) onwards: cf. IRIGOIN (1997b: 158) and SAFFREY (1997: 295; 2007: 4, note 6).

According to Saffrey's reconstruction, which is not without precedent, A would be the Greek source from which the *Timaeus* (tetralogy VIII), the *Minos* and the *Laws* (tetralogy IX) were translated into Armenian¹⁰⁸; the *Eutyphro* and the *Apology of Socrates* would depend instead on the lost first volume of the same Platonic edition. Obviously, if such an assumption should be proved beyond a doubt, the Armenian translations could not be attributed to the Hellenising School, whose activity predates the manuscript. However, since Saffrey's main interest lies in detailing A's history, he does not bring any decisive evidence in support of this hypothesis; on the contrary, he presupposes both the attribution of the translations to Grigor and the identification of codex A as their source, and integrates both elements in a coherent, but not sufficiently proved, general picture. In order to substantiate my judgement, I will address, albeit without any pretense to completeness, some strictly philological issues regarding the transmission of the Platonic dialogues. Clearly, I do not intend to take a stance on the history and the mutual relationships of the Greek manuscripts involved, but rather to show how the earlier chronology cannot be ruled out on the basis of Saffrey's findings alone.

An overall similarity with A's family is, indeed, generally ascribed to the Greek source on which the translations of the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* were made (see below)¹⁰⁹: however, Saffrey goes far beyond this general assumption. Although he explicitly refers to the works of CONYBEARE (1893 and 1894) on the *Laws*, he does not take into account the instances in which, according to Conybeare himself, the Armenian version diverges from A and agrees instead «with other genuinely independent and old sources, such as Ficino's Latin rendering or the citations of Eusebius and Stobaeus» (1893: 335; cf. 1894: 31)¹¹⁰. Moreover, Saffrey's

¹⁰⁸ DRAGONETTI (1988: 83) mentions a similar hypothesis, without supporting it; she ascribes a favourable opinion on the matter to ALLINE (1915: 284) instead. However, in the passage to which she refers, Alline does not explicitly state that Grigor Magistros, identified as the translator of the Platonic dialogues on Conybeare's authority, might have used A as his source. He only argues that the source manuscript was «très proche parente», depending on the dialogue, of codices A or B, and that this could give a good idea of the kind of text Michael Psellus and his disciples used, since Grigor was probably in touch with that intellectual circle. Furthermore, elsewhere in the same volume (202), he relates some information on the existing links between the Armenian version and the different branches of the Greek tradition (relying on Conybeare's articles and on IMMISCH 1903: 48; 59-61). Among other things, he states that, as far as the *Laws* are concerned, the translation is closely related not only to A (whose scholia it allegedly reproduces, in the first book, from 633 a onwards), but also to the family of *Florentinus Laurentianus* 80,17 – a later codex, itself close to O (cf. ALLINE 1915: 207) – and to the variant readings from the *Book of the Patriarch*. The 'Patriarch' was probably Photius; these variant readings can be found in O – to which they were added during the 10th century (both in the section derived from A and in the other) – as well as in several codices closely linked to it. Judging from the extant material, the *Book of the Patriarch* was probably closely related to A (the two would have shared a common ancestor), but clearly distinguishable from it (IRIGOIN 1997b: 159).

¹⁰⁹ As for the *Minos*, FINAZZI's work (1977) focuses on examining the Armenian text and its translation technique, without addressing the issue of its relationship with the different branches of the Greek manuscript tradition. CONYBEARE (1924) analyses a few readings from the *Minos*, with reference to the Greek critical edition by Burnet, but his evaluation of the possible affinities with Greek manuscripts is restricted to the text of the *Laws*.

¹¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that in an earlier article (1891b: 413), while indicating a similarity between the source of the Armenian version of the *Laws* and A, CONYBEARE did not actually suggest an identification between the two either: «its probable author, Gregory Magistros, lived for years at the court of Constantine Monomachus, by whom he was made duke of Mesopotamia. We may, therefore, fairly regard the Version

position is clearly not consistent with what CONYBEARE wrote in a later article (1924: 108): «it is not to exaggerate, to say that the Arm, through its often, I admit, turbid medium, sets before us a text of the same archetypal family as A, but very much purer and in order of descent, if not of time, very much older than A».

In order to support his reconstruction, Saffrey first of all needs to justify a significant dissimilarity between A and the Armenian text of the *Laws*. A shows two substantial lacunae, in books V (745 a 2 - c 3) and VI (783 b 2 - d 4) respectively, each one due to the loss of a folio, *i.e.* of two pages, in the antigraph, according to IRIGOIN (1997b: 152; cf. 2003: 93). However, only the second lacuna can be found within the Armenian translation. Both passages have been filled in, within the lower margin of the Greek codex, during the 10th century; however, the second one is preceded by the following sentence: ἔν τισι τῶν ἀντιγράφων φέρεται καὶ ταῦτα (“in some exemplars these words are also preserved”). Since the passage is not closely linked to its broader context, and its contents (the procreation and education of children), are discussed elsewhere within the *Laws* (book VI), Saffrey thinks that the corrector himself might have perceived the addition as useful, but not necessary to the continuity of the dialogue. According to him, this would also explain why this section is missing from the Armenian version, while the other one is not: the translator would have perceived this particular passage as superfluous, and therefore would not have recopied it.

On the other hand, according to SAFFREY (9), the Armenian version cannot possibly depend on O, although DES PLACES (1951, re-edited in 1976: CCXVI)¹¹¹ detected a «mot pour mot» correspondance between them as far as the *Laws* are concerned, and they both share just the second lacuna with A. Since Saffrey’s reasoning, in this instance, is a good example of his general approach, it may be useful to quote the relevant passage in its entirety:

[...] Puisque presque tous les manuscrits des Lois dependent directement ou indirectement de ce manuscrit, comme l’a établi L.A. Post dans un livre célèbre [*i.e.* POST 1934: I.T.], il est évidemment exclu que ce manuscrit ait pu quitter les centres de copie byzantins à Constantinople ou aux alentours pour venir en Arménie. A priori, le manuscrit O est indisponible en vue d’une tarduction arménienne. En conclusion, l’hypothèse selon laquelle la traduction arménienne de certains¹¹² dialogues platoniciens a pu être effectuée sur le manuscrit A de Platon comme modèle n’est pas du tout invraisemblable, et pour ce faire, que le manuscrit A soit venu en Arménie, devient une nécessité. Nous allons voir que nous avons une bonne raison de penser que le manuscrit A de Platon est réellement venu en Arménie. Il est nécessaire qu’un manuscrit grec complet de Platon soit parvenu, de quelque façon, entre les mains de Grégoire Magistros.

as representing such a codex of Plato as was accessible in the Royal Library of Constantinople early in the eleventh century. With such a supposition, the excellence of some of the readings which it implies, its correspondences with the Paris Codex 1807, and its freedom from the vices of the later apographa, are all three in harmony».

¹¹¹ The third part of the introduction (CCVII-CCXVII) to the critical edition of the first two books of the *Laws*, quoted here and elsewhere, is devoted to «Le texte des Lois», and, unlike the first two sections, was written by Des Places himself.

¹¹² Saffrey is clearly not alluding to a different origin of *some* of the extant versions, but rather to the fact that the translations of only few dialogues exist.

First of all, between A and O, O should allegedly be ruled out as a possible source, because it could not have left Constantinople¹¹³; an identification of said source with A would therefore be plausible, but, for that to be true, A *must* have left the city. The inherent problem of such a conclusion clearly lies in the fallacy of its basic assumption: it is not at all certain that the translation was actually made in Armenia, and that the source manuscript must, therefore, have left the Byzantine capital or its surroundings. On that account, it is worth recalling that, according to several scholars, the Hellenising School itself might have been based in Constantinople¹¹⁴. Clearly, this last bit of information cannot possibly reinforce an identification of the source manuscript with O, since, if the Platonic dossier should actually be attributed to the *Yownaban Dproc*⁵, O would be ruled out as a possible source, for chronological reasons. However, it shows that a manuscript cannot be excluded from evaluation solely on the basis of its continuative presence in Constantinople, especially since Saffrey does not mention any philological or textual clue against such identification (as others had done, on good authority, in earlier works: see below).

As a matter of fact, the passage quoted above is clearly and radically influenced by the presupposition that Grigor Magistros was indeed the author of the extant Armenian Platonic translations, and that he worked on them «à la fin de sa vie» (10), once he had retired to the lands in Southern Armenia and Mesopotamia which the Byzantine emperor had given him in exchange for his ancestral properties in the kingdom of Ani¹¹⁵. He would have received a Greek Platonic edition as a gift, on the occasion of his stay in Constantinople, when king Gagik II, who needed to discuss the annexation of the kingdom of Ani to the empire with Constantine IX Monomachos, was also present in the city (see ALPI 2009-2010: 14 ff.)¹¹⁶. The very idea of translating Plato would have been inspired in Grigor by his dealings with Michael Psellus¹¹⁷, *hypatos* of the philosophers at the Imperial School, which was founded around the same time (c. 1045). A clue supporting such frequentation would be «le fait que Grégoire

¹¹³ On O's numerous descendants, cf. POST (1934).

¹¹⁴ See for instance AKINEAN (1932) and LEWY (1936); the latter substantiates his opinion by mentioning the unstable military and political situation in Armenia in the 6th century, and by referring to the Neoplatonic studies thriving in Constantinople at the time. He also takes into account linguistic data – suggesting that «the Greek idioms of the renderings are most easily explained as due to Greek surroundings» (14) – and the subject of these translations: «the works of the Armenian translators of the Hellenising school fall naturally into place as intended for the *trivium*» (15); cf. also TERIAN (1982). TER PETROSYAN (1992: 19) suggests instead that the Hellenising translators might have followed the path of their predecessors, who had rendered the main texts of Christianity into Armenian; thus, they would have consulted native speakers and improved their own language skills by travelling into areas where the source language was spoken and taught (for some ancient testimonies on the matter, see TINTI 2010). According to him, then, the Hellenising translations would have been *completed* and polished within Greek centers of culture such as Constantinople, Athens, Antioch and Alexandria, where the learned Armenians themselves had studied.

¹¹⁵ On the honours the emperor bestowed on Grigor, the assignments he gave him, and the aforementioned exchange of lands, cf. at least LEROY (1935: 271 ff.); SANJIAN (1993: 134 ff.); MAHÉ (1993: 522, 528) and ALPI (2009-2010: 19 ff.).

¹¹⁶ For Grigor's stay in Constantinople, cf. YARNLEY (1976: 49 ff.).

¹¹⁷ A similar opinion is related, for instance, by ALLINE (1915: 283) and KLIBANSKY (1939: 20); the latter also ascribes the birth of the Neoplatonic movement in Georgia to Psellus's impulse. Cf. KANTOROWICZ (1942: 319).

a traduit, non seulement des dialogues de Platon, mais aussi les *Éléments de Théologie de Proclus*, qu'il a probablement connus par Psellus» (SAFFREY 2007: 6, note 12).

This last statement seems to imply that all the Armenian texts contained within ms. 1123 are due to the same translator, namely, to Grigor¹¹⁸; however, this is a rather misleading oversimplification. Proclus's version, which is also attested in other witnesses (see ZANOLLI 1947: 123-124), was actually realised in 1248 by Simēon Ieromonachos, probably on a Georgian version by Ioane Petritsi, rather than directly on Greek¹¹⁹. Its material association with the Platonic dossier might also prove to be recent. Indeed, the second part of the codex, which includes Proclus's text, is characterised by a different writing and paper and is assembled differently in fascicles (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 11 ff.; 2011: 18-19, with bibliographic references). The mutual relationship between the two parts needs to be further clarified, since the decorations at least show many similarities in both sections (AIMI 2011: 19); however, even if the manuscript should indeed have been decorated all at the same time, there is no guarantee that the two sections were even recopied from the same antigraph, thus belonging to a common tradition.

As for the Platonic dialogues, only a comprehensive comparative analysis of their translation technique, which would in turn require complete and trustworthy editions on which to work, might definitely prove the hypothesis of a common attribution. Furthermore, SAFFREY does not make a distinction between the extant Platonic versions and the dialogues which Grigor, according to his correspondence, might have translated; indeed, according to him, «nous savons que Grégoire Magistros a traduit en arménien l'*Apologie de Socrate*, l'*Eutyphron* et le *Phédon*, qui appartiennent tous à la première tétralogie» (9, note 24). It should also be noted that Saffrey does not make any references to a possible, alternative attribution for the Platonic dossier. This is rather odd, because, despite not knowing Armenian (7), he explicitly refers to Jean-Pierre Mahé as his source of information about Armenological topics (12, note 34; 13, note 39), and Mahé himself is clearly aware of Arevšatyan's hypothesis. However, Saffrey does not mention Mahé's synthesis on the subject (cf. MAHÉ 1998: 1131), but refers instead to another article (MAHÉ 1987: 199), in which Grigor's letter to Sargis is addressed. Besides Conybeare's works, Saffrey only mentions other contributions which support the later chronology (LEROY 1935) or do not directly deal with this issue (BOLOGNESI 2000b), although FINAZZI (1974) actually states that the attribution to Grigor is by no means certain¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ That does not necessarily mean that one and only person was involved within the translation process. Indeed, SAFFREY himself (9), relying on works by FINAZZI (1974) and BOLOGNESI (2000b), argues that the instances of iotacism and the «erreurs phonétiques» might be due to the collaboration between two people, one of whom read the text aloud to the other.

¹¹⁹ Cf. ZANOLLI (1950: 123 ff.); NUCUBIDZE (1960), FINAZZI (1977: 28; 1990a: 65), with bibliographic references. FINAZZI (1977) actually ascribes the 1248 version to Simēon of Garni, who worked indeed on Proclus, albeit four centuries later. As mentioned above, the association between Plato and Proclus might be attested within the Georgian tradition as well, since Petritsi might have also translated works by Plato and Aristotle (cf. NUCUBIDZE 1960); the datum itself would not prove anything, however, but the likelihood of such a thematic juxtaposition.

¹²⁰ Besides not mentioning the relevant bibliography in Armenian or Russian, Saffrey does not refer to TERIAN's article (1982) or the relatively recent contributions by SCALA (2001 and 2002) either.

Saffrey's belief in the common paternity of the extant (and documented) Platonic versions prompts him to argue that Grigor must have had at his disposal a complete Platonic edition; thus, not only codex A, but also the first tome of the same edition would have followed him to Armenia (10). As for the Armenian dossier's dependency on A, Saffrey relies almost solely on textual data concerning the *Laws*¹²¹, likely assuming that, if the plausibility of such a relationship should be proved for a dialogue belonging to tetralogy IX, the same would be true of the other versions belonging to the same tetralogy (*Minos*) and the previous one (*Timaeus*) as well¹²². However, in order to prove that codex A, together with the first tome, was brought to Armenia by Grigor – which, theoretically speaking, would not be impossible, since Grigor seems to have expressed the intention of translating two dialogues belonging to tetralogies I and VIII, respectively – evidence cannot and should not be sought only in the textual similarities between the Armenian versions and the A family, even if they should be far more stringent than they actually are. Since, at present, there is no guarantee that the extant versions were indeed realised by Grigor, no conclusive *textual* evidence can be found that Grigor's translation of the *Timaeus*, or his lost *Phaedo*, were made on a particular, extant manuscript. External clues should be produced instead.

On that account, Saffrey indeed mentions some information in order to support his reconstruction. First of all, Grigor actually travelled to Constantinople, and was in touch with the imperial court; thus, he could have possibly known Michael Psellus¹²³, and even had

¹²¹ About the lost first volume of the Platonic edition, SAFFREY (2007: 7), referring to CONYBEARE (1895: 302), states that the Armenian version of the *Euthyphro* and the *Apology* is probably related to the archetype of manuscripts *Vat. gr.* 225 (V) and *Vind. Suppl. gr.* 7 (W); Conybeare, however, does not actually mention W in that article. ALLINE (1915: 202), following IMMISCH (1903: 32), argues that, in most instances, the text of the Armenian version agrees with B, although Immisch himself indicates a few instances in which the translation actually agrees with W. IRIGOIN (1997b: 163) mentions a similarity between the Armenian version, which he ascribes to Grigor Magistros, and W (which is probably contaminated with a source close to B, but, for the section that includes the *Apology* and the *Euthyphro*, is rather close to T [codex *Marcianus app. gr.* IV 1]); W itself allegedly reflects the textual layer which was most common in Constantinople during the 11th century. It is worth mentioning that, according to Irigoin (who does not provide any reference on the subject) Grigor died in Constantinople. SOLARI (1969: 498) believes the Armenian version to belong to the same family as W; ROSSI (1982-1983: 157; 208-209) recognises an affinity with W, but thinks that the Armenian version might rather belong to a contaminated tradition. AIMI (2008-2009: 41; cf. 2011: 20), reexamining earlier works by NICOLL (1966 and 1978), believes the Armenian text of the *Apology* to be an independent witness of the δ family (to which W and V are also ascribed: see DUKE *et al.*, 1995: XII; cf. SOLARI 1969: 498), and thinks that the translation might descend from the same sub-archetype as V (different from W's). Probably relying on an opinion expressed by IRIGOIN (1997b: 156), according to whom codex T is a copy (realised a century later) of the lost first tome originally associated with A, SAFFREY (2007) suggests that this lost codex might have been the common ancestor of both T and the δ family (thus reinforcing his own opinion about the existing ties between A and the Armenian translation). Since the codex, clearly, cannot be analysed, such a claim cannot be rebutted beyond any doubts (although the Armenian version's dependency on A has indeed been ruled out); it is worth mentioning, though, that according to AIMI (2008-2009: 33), there are no significant instances of agreement between V, T and the Armenian translation.

¹²² He does not seem to be aware, or at least does not explicitly refer to Dragonetti's works on the subject.

¹²³ SAFFREY's suggestion (2007: 10), according to which the choice of translating the *Laws*, rather than the *Republic*, as an example of a Platonic city might have been influenced by Grigor's dealings with Michael

access to manuscript A. Furthermore, according to SAFFREY (10 ff.), the subsequent history of the manuscript itself would be compatible with an eventual sojourn in Armenia.

Codex A (folio 344v) includes an ownership note which reads as follows: ὠρθώθη ἡ βίβλος αὕτη ὑπὸ Κωνσταντίνου μητροπολίτου Ἱεραπόλεως τοῦ καὶ ὠνησαμένου (“this book was corrected by Constantine, Metropolitan of Hierapolis, who had also bought it”). The person in question should likely be identified with the Greek monk who brought Catholicos Grigor IV Tlay’s profession of faith to Constantinople, in 1174. Such a journey was the outcome of a period of negotiations, begun by the previous Catholicos, Nersēs IV Šnorhali, and meant to reunite the Armenian and Greek Churches; in these transactions Šnorhali’s great nephew, Nersēs Lambronac’i¹²⁴, was also involved, as a theologian in charge of drafting documents. During his two-year stay in the city, due to the emperor’s temporary absence, Constantine acted as a mediator, thanks to his deep knowledge of the two Churches, and obtained the convening of a synod. Later on, he became bishop of Hierapolis (according to SAFFREY 1997: 295, the city in question would allegedly be present-day el-Manbedsh in Syria, which, in the 4th century, had become the capital of the Euphrates province; DES PLACES 1976: CCX and IRIGOIN 1997b: 153, mention instead Hierapolis in Phrygia).

In order to explain how Constantine came into possession of codex A, SAFFREY (11 ff.) refers to his friendship and collaboration with Nersēs Lambronac’i, who, besides being related to Grigor Magistros (cf. the genealogical chart in LEROY 1935), was also a scholar, interested in collecting rare books. As mentioned above, they both worked together in translating from Greek; concerning the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Athanasius of Caesarea, for instance, Constantine actually translated the text from Greek into Armenian, while Nersēs put the Armenian version into writing¹²⁵.

According to Saffrey, the memory of Grigor’s works must have been particularly vivid among his descendants; on that account, he refers to a passage from Nersēs Šnorhali’s *Vipasanow’iwn* (History, in verse), in which Grigor is described as being endowed with an eloquence worthy of Plato (*əst Platoni perčabaneal*), and a connoisseur of the Greek language (*Yownakanin nerhown eleal*)¹²⁶. In his opinion, this would suggest that the family maintained a persistent «souvenir de ses travaux platoniciens» (12). However, besides showing Nersēs’s understandable pride for such a famous ancestor, the passage does not necessarily refer to Grigor’s activity as a translator; rather, it emphasises his literary qualities by referring to an

Psellus and the Neoplatonic circle, is obviously and admittedly mere speculation. In this perspective, the *Laws* would provide a model of a real state organisation that would allegedly find a match in the Byzantine Empire.

¹²⁴ In this case, Saffrey’s sources are TEKEYAN (1939) and TOURNEBIZE (1900); for further bibliographical references on the people involved, cf. SAFFREY (2007: 11, notes 28-30).

¹²⁵ Some information about Nersēs Lambronac’i’s activity as a bibliophile and translator can be found in colophons: cf. MAT’EVOSYAN (1988: 226-229), n. 244 and 245 (cf. SAFFREY 1997: 296, note 12; the reference is given incorrectly in SAFFREY 2007: 13, note 39, where the title of MAT’EVOSYAN 1998 is mentioned instead). Cf. DES PLACES (1976: CCX-CCXI, note 2); TER PETROSYAN (1992: 22-23); SAFFREY (1997: 295 ff.); SAFFREY (2007: 13, note 40) for further details and bibliographical references on the collaboration between Constantine and Nersēs.

¹²⁶ See *Bank’ Ć’apaw* (1928: 1113) and MKRTČ’YAN (1981), read on-line on June, 27th, 2011 through the electronic database *Digilib*.

author whom he clearly admired. Likewise, earlier in the same text, Nersēs had compared Grigor to Homer (*əst Homeri talač' ap' eal*¹²⁷, “versifying like Homer”), who was also among his models and was mentioned in his correspondence (cf. letter XLV: KOSTANEANC' 1910: 105 ff.)¹²⁸. In any case, none of these references can substantiate the idea that «le manuscrit de Platon est resté pendant un siècle, soit dans la famille des Pahlavides soit, plus probablement, dans une bibliothèque monastique», where Constantine would have found and bought it «après son retour en Arménie (en Petite Arménie = la Cilicie) en 1176» (13). Besides, it is not even clear when the manuscript would have been transferred from Armenia proper (that is, from Tarōn, where Grigor Magistros would have allegedly worked on his translations) to Cilicy, thus allowing Constantine to purchase it and possibly bring it to Tarsus, which was Nersēs Lambronac'i's see as an archbishop, or to the monastery of Skevray, where the texts on which Constantine and Nersēs worked together were later kept.

Clearly, the external evidence is not conclusive enough to justify Saffrey's assumption that «ces manuscrits [*sc.* A and the related first volume] se soient trouvés exilés en Arménie pendant deux ou trois siècles» (14), nor indeed, that Grigor Magistros was ever in possession of codex A. Constantine, who undoubtedly had access to the manuscript in the 12th century, was a Greek man, and sojourned in Constantinople for at least two years. His prolonged stay in the city would justify his knowing and purchasing the manuscript more easily than his relationship with a descendant of Grigor's could. On that account, SAFFREY himself (1997: 296) had earlier argued that, since codex A was not at the time in the imperial or patriarchal libraries, Constantine might have bought it from someone who had the right and desire to sell it: «c'était peut-être un collègue de Constantin dans l'épiscopat, *résidant comme lui quelquefois dans la Capitale byzantine* [*italics mine*]». Then, since Constantine mainly worked in Cilicy, codex A might have left the imperial capital with him: this could explain why A, unlike O, did not have a great number of descendants (IRIGOIN 1997b: 162). Furthermore, Constantine's dealings with the leaders of the Armenian Church could support – I leave this evaluation to experts in the field – the hypothesis (SAFFREY 2007: 14 ff.) that the manuscript might have later reached Western Europe during the frequent exchanges that linked the Armenian Catholicosate to the papal court, after the unification between the two Churches had taken place (this connection was pursued and obtained by Nersēs Lambronac'i, following the failed unification with the Greek Church)¹²⁹.

One last point needs to be addressed in further detail, that is, the textual relationship between the Armenian translations and A's family, with special reference to the two substantial lacunae in the text of the *Laws*. Indeed, codex O shares with A just one of these omissions (in

¹²⁷ Such is the text according to MKRTČ'YAN (1981), whereas the *Bank' Č'apaw* (1928: 1113) reads instead *əst Homeray talač' ap' eal*.

¹²⁸ SAFFREY himself (2007: 12, note 36) and HAIRAPETIAN (1995: 223) think that this might be an allusion to Grigor's poetic works. Therefore, the reference to Plato might as easily be interpreted as qualifying the author's style in general, or perhaps his prose works in particular.

¹²⁹ SAFFREY (1997: 296 ff.) assumes that the codex might have been brought to the Occident by William of Moerbeke or his entourage. On the subsequent history of the manuscript, see also PAGANI (2007-2008; the Author kindly allowed me to consult the text before it was published).

783 b 2 - d 4), not because the other one (745 a 2-3) was filled with content desumed from later integrations or other manuscripts, but because, for that part of the dialogue, O does not depend on A (as it does from 746 b 8 onwards), and it is therefore likely that its antigraph did not actually contain that lacuna. Therefore, O's particular situation is due to a change of sources (which is also underlined by the use of a different ink: IRIGOIN 1997b: 158). Since the Armenian version of the *Laws* mirrors that situation, the idea that such congruence might not be accidental is at least plausible, and has been taken into consideration, for instance, by CLARK (1969: 398; the first edition dates back to 1918) and DES PLACES (1976: CCXVI). In a broader perspective, it is necessary to verify whether the available philological data on the single translations are compatible with an attribution to the Hellenising School, or that is instead ruled out by any significant textual congruence with a specific, later manuscript. On that account, a definite answer can be found in the works of those scholars who, a century after Conybeare, have conducted new comparative analyses on the Armenian Platonic versions and the Greek textual tradition. The contributions devoted to the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* are especially relevant, since, for these dialogues, it is possible to verify or rule out a dependency on A (as noted above, such an analysis has not yet been conducted for the *Minos*). As for O, unfortunately, a comparison is possible only for the text of the *Laws*.

As for the *Timaeus*, the first of DRAGONETTI's articles (1986) chiefly deals with reconstructing correct readings for the Armenian text; nevertheless, a section (par. 2.6: 21 ff.) is also devoted to comparing the text itself, as preserved in codex 1123 and in Sowk'rean's edition, with the variant readings of the Greek tradition, in order to shed light on some of Sowk'rean's textual changes. Within this context, Dragonetti states that the Armenian translator, unlike Sowk'rean, who was likely following a different witness (cf. above), depends, at least partially, on variant readings present in codex A (cf. DRAGONETTI 1988: 64). However, despite this cautious global evaluation, Dragonetti herself lists several instances in which the Armenian version diverges instead from A. For example, in 33 a 5, whereas A reads λύπας, "pains", other manuscripts (such as F, W, Y) and a corrector of A, as well as Proclus, read λύει, "dissolves", and Philoponus reads λύσεις, "dissolutions"¹³⁰. The Armenian translation (18.3 ms. = 96.12 pr. ed.) reads instead *lowcmownk' ew trtmowt' iwnk'*, "dissolutions and pains", and this may suggest that its source contained (both within the text, or maybe one in the text and the other in the margin) both λύσεις, "dissolutions", and λύπας, "pains" (cf. also DRAGONETTI 1988: 61).

The second article (DRAGONETTI 1988), which directly concerns the relationship between the Armenian text and the various branches of the Greek tradition, is even more explicit. In her analysis, besides numerous instances in which the Armenian *Timaeus* agrees with A (solely or together with other witnesses: see par. 3.3.1-3.3.3: 64-66), Dragonetti signals 188 instances in which the former diverges from the latter (which, in turn, may or may not agree with a few other manuscripts, depending on the specific case), and agrees instead with one or several other witnesses, and with indirect sources as well (66). Moreover, she lists a few instances in which the Armenian text seems to depend on Greek variant readings not otherwise attested (73), and even on readings which, though unattested, have been independently proposed by modern scholars, as an improvement on the attested options (78). Furthermore, as in the example

¹³⁰ For a more complete list of the attested variant readings, cf. DRAGONETTI (1986: 23); BURNET (1902) and RIVAUD (1963), *ad loc.*; JONKERS (1989: 30; 137).

quoted above, several Armenian passages combine different Greek variant readings, and therefore imply their depending on different traditions (79-82). On that account, Dragonetti argues that, according to the available data, the translator might have used more than one source, or just one witness containing several variant readings (79): however, she seems to prefer the latter option (cf. 80 e 81). In her final evaluation, she underlines, in conformity with earlier studies, that a clear relation exists between the Armenian version and the tradition attested in A (83); in this context, she also relates – while not sharing it – the opinion that Grigor Magistros might have consulted the manuscript while in Constantinople¹³¹, and used it as the source for his translations. However, she also draws attention on the instances in which the translation agrees instead with other manuscripts (such as F, Y, W, etc.), usually independent from A and belonging to a more ancient tradition (83), with indirect sources (it agrees solely with them in 33 corrupt readings) or with corrections in A (usually noted as A²). She therefore concludes that the Armenian version cannot be ascribed to a specific branch of the Greek tradition, but was probably made on an eclectic manuscript (cf. 49), certainly related to A, but containing more ancient elements (84).

Therefore, although Dragonetti herself accepts the attribution of the Platonic versions to Grigor Magistros, the results of her philological enquiry do not rule out an earlier chronology; on the contrary, they explicitly go against the idea that A might have been the material source of the translation.

As mentioned above, a textual comparison between the Armenian version and codex O is not possible for the *Timaeus*, since the manuscript is mutilated and does not include the dialogue. Nevertheless, no matter how its original structure is reconstructed (see IRIGOIN 1997b: 157 ff.), this Platonic edition very likely included the *Timaeus* as well. While the second part of the *Laws* directly or indirectly depends on A, for the first part of the dialogue, and thus, possibly, for the dialogues which originally preceded it within the codex, «l'examen des fautes d'origine graphique permet qu'on remonte beaucoup plus haut dans le temps» (*ibid.*: 159). Up to *Laws*, 746 b 7, O would ultimately descend from a different majuscule manuscript than the one from which A itself descends; these two majuscule codices would themselves have depended on a common ancestor, which according to Irigoin would have been earlier than the 6th century (see below). Based on this information, and on a purely theoretical level, the lost first part of O could meet the requirements which, according to the data provided by Dragonetti, the source of the Armenian version should possess: the codex would have been related to A but not identical to it, and contained variant readings belonging to a tradition earlier than the 9th century. Of course, such a reasoning is based on the assumption that, for the *Timaeus*, O would have followed the same source as for the first part of the *Laws*, which is not at all a given. Clearly, as far as a dependency on O is concerned, nothing more than the lack of any proof to the contrary can be collected from the philological enquiries conducted on the *Timaeus*. On the other hand, if the most recent studies on the *Laws* should suggest such a dependency on the basis of textual clues, the hypothesis could be reinforced.

Unfortunately, that is not the case: indeed, the possibility is ruled out by modern philological analyses. As repeatedly stated above, excluding a dependency on a certain manuscript for one

¹³¹ There is no reference to the manuscript being brought to Armenia to serve as the source of the translations.

dialogue does not necessarily mean that it should be excluded for other dialogues as well. However, since what originally drew the scholars' attention to O as a possible source for the Armenian Platonic dialogues is the common situation regarding the two substantial lacunae in the *Laws*, and since this is the only dialogue for which a textual comparison is possible, the data on the *Timaeus* alone, although not against the identification, are decidedly void of any evidential value.

A dependency of the Armenian version of the *Laws* on O is excluded by SCALA (2002: 343), on the basis of his analysis of book XI. It is worth mentioning that, as a cautious supporter of the early chronology, he also examines the philological data with the intent of verifying whether or not they are compatible with it. According to him, the mere common presence of one substantial lacuna is not in itself conclusive, since that one great similarity goes against several instances in which the Armenian text follows the variant readings introduced by correctors instead, especially O³ (11th century) and O⁴ (11th-12th century). Clearly, an affinity with later correctors does not in itself prove the Armenian version to be independent from O, nor can it be used to support a claim of greater antiquity: theoretically, the translator could have worked on the manuscript when such additions had already been made. Much more significant, however, is the presence of non-trivial variant readings ignored by the Greek manuscript tradition: for instance, *arhawirs arnelov* ("bringing terror": 493.5-6 ms.) suggests a Greek form δειματοῦντας ("frightening"), independently proposed by critical editors as an improvement over the unacceptable reading δειμαίνοντας (933 c 3), preserved in the manuscripts¹³². Thus, according to Scala the Armenian version is not directly linked to any extant manuscript, but rather reflects a more ancient text, which, on occasion, proves to be free of corrupt readings attested, without any correction, in all the extant Greek codices (343). Basing on such evaluation, a dependency on A must clearly be ruled out as well.

On the whole, Scala's opinion on the *Laws* closely matches Dragonetti's opinion on the *Timaeus*. Similar remarks are also expressed by FINAZZI (1990a), although she does not take a stance on the attribution and chronology of the translations, and therefore is not expressly looking for any confirmation or confutation on the matter. She explicitly dismisses the approach of those who are mainly concerned in underlying the similarities between the Armenian translations and either A or O, and she rather points out the necessity of impartially evaluating each and every instance of agreement with either codex, with minor unrelated witnesses and with the indirect tradition. She concludes that the Armenian text of the *Laws*, far from following any extant manuscript, must be considered as an independent, puzzling witness, which creates bigger problems than it can resolve (75). It is worth mentioning that she had already pointed out evidence of the translation's autonomy from both A and O in a previous work (1974: 216, 221, etc.), devoted to the fifth book of the *Laws*.

The similar situation of the Armenian version and O regarding the two large lacunae must therefore be due to reasons which do not involve a textual dependency; that is especially true, as FINAZZI (1990a: 71) points out a few minor omissions in book IX, which are present in O but not in A or the Armenian text. Since a certain degree of similarity between the three witnesses is undeniable, it would be possible to assume that the manuscript on which the translation was made derived, through an unknown number of intermediaries, from the same

¹³² Cf. BOLOGNESI (2000b: 315-316).

archetype as A, when such archetype had already lost just one of the two folios. Because such an omission concerned a somewhat autonomous section, whose subject was also addressed elsewhere, a copyist might not have even realised that something was missing, and would therefore not have tried to fill the unperceived gap. Otherwise, the explanation suggested by Saffrey might be considered: the translator could have worked on an exemplar which presented both lacunae, but, judging one of the missing passages as superfluous, he would have just filled in the other, copying its content from other witnesses or from later integrations already present within the codex. It is less plausible that the same lacuna could have had a completely independent origin in A and in the Armenian text.

To provide a more complete picture, it is also worth mentioning that the available data on the *Apology* and the *Euthyphro*, which are not present in codex A, are, on the whole, coherent with Dragonetti's, Scala's and Finazzi's conclusions, since, as DRAGONETTI herself (1988: 84) points out, their Armenian versions seem to depend on an eclectic text that cannot be identified with any extant witness. According to SOLARI (1969: 498), the Armenian *Euthyphro* can be ascribed to W's family; it only shows a few mistakes and, on occasion, it agrees with readings independently proposed by modern scholars and with the indirect tradition (which might suggest that the translation reflects an ancient text). ROSSI (1982-1983: 208-209) does not take codex V into account in his analysis (cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 32), but chiefly underlines the Armenian *Apology*'s textual affinities with W, and to a lesser degree, with B, Y e T respectively: according to him, the translation would belong to a contaminated tradition (157). He also lists several instances in which the translation reinforces modern scholars' conjectures; on the other hand, he believes its affinities with the indirect tradition to be very scarce. AIMI (2008-2009: 41), more precisely, considers the Armenian *Apology* as an independent witness within the δ family, descending from the same sub-archetype as V, which would be different from W's.

In conclusion, the most recent studies do not rule out the possibility that the Armenian Platonic versions might be ascribed to an early date, since no later manuscript can be identified as their source. However, it must be noted that such studies do not imply a greater antiquity of the translations, either: even if their manuscript source should indeed be ancient (or even date back to Late Antiquity), that would not positively prove anything about the chronology of the translations themselves¹³³. It is also worth mentioning that, if the attribution of the extant *Timaeus* and *Laws* to Grigor Magistros should be proved, no particular reason would be left to think that codex A ever reached Armenia proper, since the textual data rule out the possibility that A was the source of these translations (unless, of course, a philological analysis of the *Minos* should suggest otherwise). Paradoxically, the itinerary Saffrey suggests for A would be easier to support if the extant Armenian versions should *not* be attributed to Grigor, because, in that case, it would at least be possible to argue that the codex might have been the source of Grigor's (lost) Platonic versions.

¹³³ See, for instance, NICOLL (1966: 72-73), who takes into consideration both the possible date of the translation of the *Apology* (explicitly referring to previous studies on the subject and thus considering a time frame going from the 5th to the 11th century), and that of its source. According to AIMI (2008-2009: 41) the possible traces of mistakes due to the transliteration of a majuscule text, found by NICOLL (1966: 73) in V (which he calls Δ), are not especially significant, and are not enough to prove the antiquity of the common sub-archetype to V and the source of the Armenian version.

Be this as it may, if the Armenian versions should indeed date back to the 6th or 7th century, its Greek sources would have likely been very different in their codicological features from later Byzantine manuscripts. About the Platonic edition to which A belonged, Saffrey (2007: 3) states that «ces deux tomes constituant l'œuvre complète de Platon pourraient être la copie d'un modèle datant du VI siècle, selon Jean Irigoin». Such a sentence is, however, misleading. IRIGOIN (1997b: 152), based on the size of the two great lacunae and relying on a famous work by TURNER (1977), actually reconstructs the possible structure of A's antigraph for the *Laws*. According to him, the entire dialogue might have been divided into two tomes, containing six books each; its page layout would have been similar to that of two extant parchment sheets containing a fragment from the *Theaetetus*, dating back to the 6th or perhaps the 5th century (IRIGOIN 2003: 94)¹³⁴. The latest common ancestor to A and O (for the section of the *Laws* in which the latter does not depend on the former), being earlier than A's antigraph, would thus date back to the 6th century at the very least (cf. IRIGOIN 1997b: 167). According to this scenario, the tradition to which both A and O belong, recognizable as such, would be ancient enough for an earlier witness of it to have been the source of the Armenian translation of the *Laws*, even if such version should indeed be ascribed to the Hellenising School. However, if the text of the *Laws* alone occupied two tomes, A's source could not have been a compact edition, similar in structure to A itself: the single dialogues at least, if not even smaller sections, should have been recopied from several, physically separate sources instead¹³⁵. On the other hand, if, as SCHANZ (1878) thought, each of the great lacunae were due to the loss of a text column (which, however, is less common than the loss of a folio: cf. CLARK 1969: 392), A's antigraph, for the *Laws*, would have been similar in structure to A itself, and therefore likely closer to it in time.

As noted above, several philologists share a similar opinion on the textual relations between the Armenian *Timaeus* and *Laws* and the different branches of the Greek tradition: they suggest a general affinity with A, and, for the *Laws*, with O as well. Both Greek codices, in their turn, would share a common ancestor (a majuscule codex, according to IRIGOIN 1997b: 161). If the Armenian translations should indeed be ascribed to the Hellenising School, however, the different dialogues should have had physically separate sources, even if translated by one person. Thus, in order to account for the general affinity of both the Armenian *Timaeus* and *Laws* with A's family, it would be necessary to assume that the two texts were somewhat associated, or perhaps part of a collection, and therefore ended up, through an unknown number of intermediaries, in A as well as in the Armenian versions. In other words, for both dialogues the Armenian translator(s) would have used sources which belonged to the same tradition as those used by whoever assembled A. On the other hand, if a later chronology should be accepted for the translations, both dialogues might have been translated from one source, similar in structure to A or other Byzantine codices, but possibly showing an earlier stage of the text.

¹³⁴ The studies reprinted in IRIGOIN 1997b and 2003 date back to 1985-1986 and 1985, respectively.

¹³⁵ On the composite nature of Byzantine codices, which collect Platonic works originally derived from different sources, see IRIGOIN (1997a: 232, *passim*), with bibliographic references. The article mentions several clues, like the presence of stichometrical notations in the margin (in the sections devoted to the *Cratylus* and the *Symposium* in codices B and D), or of catchwords meant to signal the right sequence of the scrolls (for instance in codex F for the *Republic*).

8. Old News and New Data

The information and testimonies collected and examined have been inevitably already analysed and discussed, in different degrees and from several perspectives, in previous works, directly or tangentially concerned with the matter of the chronology and attribution of the Armenian Platonic dialogues. None of these data has provided any compelling evidence, which might narrow down significantly the possible timeframe for the translations themselves, since no proposal, however well organized, has proven to be conclusive and, on the other hand, neither the earlier nor the later chronology can be surely ruled out. There is, however, a piece of information which, according to a survey as accurate and comprehensive as possible, never got the due amount of attention within the scholarly community. This might actually be one of the most significant and concrete leads on the matter, as far as the *Timaeus* is concerned.

Ten years before the Armenian Platonic manuscript reached Venice, SUKIAS SOMAL (1825: 34) emphatically lamented the loss of the Platonic translations on which Grigor Magistros had declared to be working. He also observed, though, that such work must have been still extant during the following century (the 12th), since Nersēs Lambronac'i could quote it in a homily devoted to the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Within the text of the homily, as edited by OSKEAN (1928: 133), an explicit reference to the *Timaeus* can indeed be found. According to Nersēs, God's role as Father and Maker is alluded to

yaseln Platoni i Timēi tramabasnowowf'eann [sic: lege tramabanowf'teann] yorowm ink'naxōf'iwn arnē vasn araracoys, ew asē i kargin zays, bayc zhayrn`ew zararičn amenec'own gorc ē gtanel ew gteal amenec'own, patmel`anhnar ē,

“within Plato's words in the dialogue of Timaeus, in which he recites a monologue about our Creation, and says, in order, as follows: ‘but finding the father and maker of all things is a difficult matter, and, once everyone has found him, it is impossible to tell’”.

It should be noted that the proposed translation follows the punctuation adopted in Oskean's article (cf. below).

The quotation itself can be profitably compared with the relevant passage from the Armenian version of the *Timaeus*, as preserved within manuscript 1123 (14.16-18) and Sowk'rean's edition (91.33-35) respectively:

Osk.: *bayc' zhayrn`ew zararič'n amenec'own gorc ē gtanel ew gteal amenec'own, patmel`anhnar ē*
Ms.: *isk ard` zhayrn ew zararič'n amenec'own` gtanel gorc ē: ew gteal` amenec'own patmel anhnar ē*¹³⁶
Pr. ed.: *isk ard zhayrn ew zararič'n amenec'own gtanel gorc ē. ew gteal` amenec'own patmel anhnar ē.*

Since the printed edition differs from the manuscript only as far as punctuation is concerned, from now on only the text as preserved within manuscript 1123 will be taken into consideration. The sentence in that form can be translated as follows:

¹³⁶ Within the manuscript, the words *amenec'own* and *gorc* are abbreviated.

“but finding the father and maker of all things is a difficult matter, and, once he has been found (lit. ‘having found him’), it is impossible to tell everyone”.

The congruences between the *Timaeus* and the passage quoted in the homily are clearly quite significant. The different punctuation, which accounts for the different translation proposed here, is not an issue, since a change could easily have occurred at some point during the textual transmission of both works. In order to evaluate adequately how meaningful the textual congruences really are, however, the possibility that such similarity might simply be due to a *verbum de verbo* rendering of the same Greek source must be ruled out.

The Greek text of the *Timaeus* (28 c 3-5), according to the critical editions by BURNET (1902) and RIVAUD (1963), reads:

τὸν μὲν οὖν ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα
τοῦδε τοῦ παντός εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον καὶ εὐρόντα εἰς πάντα
ἀδύνατον λέγειν

“thus, finding the maker and father of this Universe is a difficult matter, and, once he has been found (lit. ‘having found him’), it is impossible to tell everyone”.

On the whole, the Armenian translator of the *Timaeus* has faithfully reproduced his source; there are, however, a few minor divergencies, which could either be attributed to a less-than-slavishly faithful rendition (consistent with the translation technique generally adopted within the dialogue), or possibly to a slightly different underlying Greek text¹³⁷.

In any case, the origin of these discrepancies is not as relevant as their being shared by both the Armenian *Timaeus* and the homily. The original sequence “father and maker” is inverted in both Armenian texts, which read “maker and father” instead. Theoretically, this could be due to their being dependent on Greek sources which presented the same variant reading, since the inverted sequence is attested within the Greek indirect tradition at the least (cf. RUNIA 1986: 108-109). However, the rendering of τοῦδε τοῦ παντός with *amenec’own*, involving the omission of the demonstrative and the choice of a plural form over a singular one, does not seem explainable in the same way: assuming the existence of a variant reading τῶν πάντων, not otherwise attested and palaeographically not too close to the extant text, would be a stretch. As for the likelihood that two almost identical, yet independent translations could have been made of the same passage, it should be noted that rendering τὸ πᾶν “all things” (lit. “the whole thing”), that is “the Universe”, with a plural form (“all things”) is not the only possible solution; the NB (*s.v.*) relates examples of the use of *amenayn* in the singular form, with reference to the Universe, in the Hellenising style («hellenabanowt’eamb»). In the *Timaeus* itself both options are attested: the plural form is used, for instance, in 15.6 (ms.) = 92.22 (pr. ed.) = 29 c 5 (Gr.); 16.32 = 94.32 = 31 b 7; 17.13 = 95.15 = 32 a 8. The singular form, on the other hand, is used, for instance, in 27.25 (*zamenayni bnowt’iwn*) = 108.3 = 41 e 2 (τὴν τοῦ παντός φύσιν); 15.17 (*zays amenayn*) = 93.8 = 29 d 7 - e 1 (τὸ πᾶν τόδε); 22.11 (*zays amenayn*) = 101.6 = 37 d 2 (τόδε τὸ πᾶν). Even if the form *amenec’own* should

¹³⁷ BURNET (1902), RIVAUD (1963) and JONKERS (1989) do not relate any alternative reading for any element of the sentence.

be attributed to a later copyist influenced by the identical form used to render εἰς πάντα, the fact remains that the double occurrence of *amenec'own* is also present in the homily. Besides these macroscopic elements, the lexical choices in the two texts are identical, even when alternative, equally suitable solutions were available: λέγειν, for instance, could have been also rendered with *asel*. According to the lists of Greek-Armenian correspondences in the LALT database, *ararič'* is indeed the most common correspondent, within the corpus examined there, for ποιητής in the sense of “maker”¹³⁸; still, it is not the only one (for instance, in the adaptation of the Τέχνη Γραμματική attributed to Dionysius Thrax, *aratol* is used: ADONTZ 1970: 27.11). In addition to all this, forms of the verb “to be” are inserted within the text, in the same position, whereas the Greek source uses nominal sentences. Finally, the word order is almost identical (with one exception), even when it does not match the sequence of the Greek text.

The divergencies between the two Armenian texts, on the other hand, are not so meaningful as to imply an independent genesis of the translations from a Greek source, nor to invalidate the hypothesis that the homilist quoted the *Timaeus* from the same version still extant today (albeit, clearly, from a more ancient witness). The discrepancies could be justified simply by assuming that the translation of the *Timaeus* was quoted by heart (thus the inversion *gtanel gorc ē > gorc ē gtanel*); moreover, some small adjustment in the first part would not be unusual, since the passage was inserted within a new text (*bayc'* instead of *isk ard*). However, there is a curious assonance between the quotation in the homily (*bayc' zhayrn` ew zararič'n amenec'own gorc ē gtanel*) and a passage from the *Book of Proverbs* (20.6: *bayc' zayr hawatarim gorc ē gtanel* [cf. ZÖHRAPEAN 1805: *ad loc.*]; «but finding the faithful man is a difficult matter»). This might suggest the possibility that a mnemonic interference between the biblical quotation (which would have been well known to the homilist) and the passage from the *Timaeus* (*isk ard` zhayrn ew zararič'n amenec'own` gtanel gorc ē*) took place, thus prompting some slight change in the latter within the text of the homily.

To prove with greater certainty the likelihood of the proposed link between the homily and the Armenian *Timaeus*, it is necessary to rule out the possibility that OSKEAN (1928) might have modified the text of the former to make it closer to the latter, which at the time had already been available in print for more than fifty years, and was also explicitly quoted, for the passage under examination, within the NB (*s.v. gorc*, together with the passage from the *Book of Proverbs* quoted above)¹³⁹. It stands to reason that, if such intervention had indeed taken place, the adequation would have been complete, and thus, even the slight differences still extant would have been

¹³⁸ Its usual Armenian correspondent, in the sense of “poet”, is *k'ert'ol*, which occurs in that meaning in the *Timaeus* (ex. 5.1 ms = 79.21 pr. ed. = 19 d 5 Gr.) and the *Apology* (ex. 571.9 ms. = 44.34 pr. ed. = 22 b 9 Gr.; cf. AIMI 2008-2009: 65), as well as in works of the Hellenising School (cf. LALT: *s.v.*). Cf. instead MANANDEAN (1928: 173) for an episodic use of *ararič'* in the sense of «poet».

¹³⁹ Within manuscript 1123 (14), the passage is marked with a roughly circular sign in the margin. Someone who had access to the manuscript might have recognised the passage as being quoted elsewhere; however, this obviously cannot be proved. Moreover, similar marks are present on pages 15 and 22 as well, within the section of the manuscript devoted to the *Timaeus*. The assumption that such marks might have indicated the passages of the dialogue which would later be recopied in the NB does not seem plausible, either, since several passages are quoted within the Thesaurus which are not marked in the manuscript (ex. 65.28 ms. = 148.32 pr. ed.).

fixed. Moreover, Oskean openly states that he recopied the text of the homily as attested within one of the five witnesses he knew, namely manuscript 154 from the library of St. James in Jerusalem¹⁴⁰, through a transcription of the same, given to him by Babgēn Kiwlēserean: «Ays əndōrinakowt'iwnn ē or ard ač'k'is aṙjew ownim ew kə hratarakem» (121: “this transcription is the one I have now before my eyes and I am publishing”). The small changes, or the instances in which the editor found the transcribed text puzzling, are marked with parentheses or short notes, so the possibility of a significant, unindicated textual change should almost certainly be ruled out, even more so since Oskean does not even mention the Armenian *Timaeus*, manuscript 1123 or the printed edition in his introduction. For all these reasons, it may safely be assumed that the homilist indeed quoted a fragment of the same Armenian version which is attested in its entirety within the much later manuscript 1123.

Luckily, this assumption, as well as the attribution of the homily to Nersēs Lambronac'i¹⁴¹, are supported by an occurrence of the exact same quotation within Nersēs's *Commentary on the Wisdom of Solomon* (TANIELIAN 2007: 545). This work allegedly dates back to the last years of his life (1193-1197; *ibid.*: 83) and was recently published according to the text preserved in several manuscripts from the Matenadaran of Erevan (with ms. 4211, written in 1292, being used as the main source), save a few graphical adjustments (such as <aw> for <ō>) and occasional emendations (*ibid.*: 338)¹⁴². The quotation's punctuation is, in this case, more similar to the one adopted in the *Timaeus*, and thus allows for the same syntactical interpretation; this might not be especially significant, however, because, in the edition, «the punctuation of the base manuscript has been modified to accord with modern editorial practice» (*ibid.*: 338). The broader passage reads as follows:

bayc' t'owi t'ē grec'aw ew ays i Hellenac'i imastnoc'n, k'anzi Platon i Timēi Tramabanowf'eann andarjak baniw xawsi vasn niwf'oc's ew xaṙnowacoc' soc'in sk'anč'elapēs, ew yaṙaj ənt'ac'eal i bann, asē. «bayc' zhayrn ew zararič'n amenec'own gorc ē gtanel, ew gteal' amenec'own patmel anhnar ē»

“but it seems that this was also written by the Greek philosophers, since Plato, in the dialogue of Timaeus, speaks with a long discourse, admirably, about these elements and their compositions, and going on in the discourse, he says: ‘but finding the father and maker of all things is a difficult matter, and, once he has been found (lit. ‘having found him’), it is impossible to tell everyone’”.

Despite being aware of the existence of an Armenian version of the *Timaeus* (*ibid.*: 81)¹⁴³, Tanielian does not compare the quotation with the text of ms. 1123 or with the printed edition

¹⁴⁰ Cf. the catalogue of St. James's manuscripts (POLAREAN 1966: 442).

¹⁴¹ OSKEAN (1928) supports this attribution by pointing out thematic, linguistic and stylistic affinities with the rest of Nersēs's production. Furthermore, according to him, the name of the author is stated in two witnesses at least (the manuscript of Jerusalem and one that, in 1928, was labeled as n. 1247 in the library of Ējmiacin), as “Saint Nersēs, bishop of Tarsus” and “bishop Nersēs”, respectively. Finally, an indirect clue can be found in ms. 249 of the Mekhitarist library in Vienna (TAŠEAN 1895: 130-131 Germ., 638-642 Arm.), that ascribes to Nersēs a commentary on the “dominical parable” (*ztērownakan aṙaksn*) which, judging from the title assigned to the homily in the manuscript of Jerusalem – *Srboyn Nersēsi episkoposi Tarsoni Yaṙaks tērowni (ew asē aṙn mioj)* – should be identified as the homily on the Prodigal Son itself.

¹⁴² I owe the knowledge of this edition to Professor Peter Cowe (UCLA).

¹⁴³ He wrongly lists the *Meno* instead of the *Minos* among the translated dialogues.

(to which he does not even refer), and thus does not signal their similarity. In fact, while translating the relevant passage into English (235), he only quotes the corresponding passage from the Greek *Timaeus* (itself in English translation) for a comparison.

Since the quotation matches the one included within the homily on the Prodigal Son even in those details that the former does not share with the Armenian *Timaeus*, Nersēs might have copied one from the other (which from which, it is hard to say), simply repeated the passage as he had memorised it, or perhaps consulted a witness which reproduced the text in that form.

An explicit allusion to the contents of the *Timaeus* can also be found in another work by Nersēs, namely, *The Commentary on the Ecclesiastes* (VON SACHSEN 1929: 7), which, according to Tanielian (83), dates back to the same years as the *Commentary on the Wisdom of Solomon*.

The text reads:

orpēs ew grē Platon i Timēi tramabanowfēan ew c'owc'anē, t'ē ast eōf'n astelac'd beri ašxarh ew žamaneal i lowsinn maši ew darceal [sic] šrjan arnow ew norogi, orpēs ew asē i piria [sic] k'ahanayn ar Platon, t'ē erbemn hrov anc'aw erkir ew erbemn jrov:

“as also writes Plato in the dialogue of Timaeus, and shows that the world moves according to these seven heavenly bodies, and having reached the moon, it is consumed and again begins the cycle and renews itself, as also says the priest to Plato regarding Pyrrha (?), that sometimes the earth was destroyed by fire, sometimes by water”.

In this case, however, the reference is not literal, and it is also somewhat imprecise: as Max VON SACHSEN (7, note 1) points out, nowhere in the *Timaeus* is it said that the world is destroyed whenever it reaches the moon in its orbit. Nevertheless, the allusion might be to 22 c 7 ff., where an Egyptian priest argues that the periodical deviation of the heavenly bodies rotating around the earth causes destruction by fire on the earth itself (according to 38 d 1, the moon occupies the first orbit). As for the second part of the quotation, the allusion is likely to 22 c 2, where the same priest recalls several cataclisms caused by water and fire (a little earlier, in 22 b 1, Solon had mentioned the flood which Deucalion and Pyrrha had survived)¹⁴⁴.

Tanielian (83) underlines that the knowledge of Greek authors and culture is more obvious in the *Commentary on the Wisdom of Solomon* than it is in the *Commentary on the Ecclesiastes*. On that account, it is worth mentioning that the former includes a correct reference to the contents of the *Republic* (cf. Tanielian 2007: 562)¹⁴⁵. However, it is still

¹⁴⁴ The interpretations tentatively proposed by Max VON SACHSEN (7, note 2) for the sequence *i piria* (a place; the title of a not otherwise attested Platonic dialogue; the name of the priest, in which case *i-* would be part of the same word) seem less plausible.

¹⁴⁵ The passage mentions the military class in the *Republic* as an example of sexual promiscuity, because every man could have access to any woman, and no father could recognise his own children (cf. 457 d 1-3 Gr.). According to Tanielian (2007: 81), since no Armenian translation of the *Republic* was attested until the 20th century, «this is tangible proof that Lambronac'i was exposed to the Greek authors in the original language also». Clearly, as repeatedly stated above, Plato's works could have been known in Armenian-speaking circles even in the absence of translations; however, it should be noted that, given the gaps in the available documentation, the lack of any information on the matter does not necessarily mean that such version never existed. Furthermore, some information could have been desumed from secondary literature as well.

puzzling that Nersēs, around the same time, could insert a literal quotation from the Armenian *Timaeus* in one work, and a less than precise reference to the dialogue's contents in the other. Several explanations are possible: he might have desumed the inaccurate piece of information from commentaries and secondary literature, or written down his own recollections, without verifying the details on the *Timaeus* itself. It should also be pointed out that Lambronac'i might not have had continuous access to the Armenian translation of the dialogue; he might even have known just that one excerpt, since, as mentioned above, some passages from the *Timaeus* were handed down independently, at least during the following centuries¹⁴⁶.

In any case, Nersēs's almost literal quotations establish a definite *terminus ante quem*: the Armenian version of the *Timaeus* must date back to the end of the 12th century at least (which is a significant acquisition, since the practice of translating from Greek did not actually die with Grigor Magistros). Unfortunately, this does not guarantee anything about the other extant Platonic versions.

Thus, in the 11th century, Grigor (likely) wrote that he had not found an Armenian translation of the *Timaeus*, and expressed the intention of working on it. In the following century, a member of his family quoted, at least twice, a passage from the same dialogue, which finds an almost perfect match in a complete, anonymous and undated extant version. Whether these clues might allow the drawing of any further conclusion is open to speculation; clearly, the possibility cannot be ruled out that Nersēs quoted an earlier version, which had escaped his famous ancestor's notice, or even a later one – realised during the 150 years that separate Grigor's and Nersēs's deaths – on which no information would survive. However, it is also plausible to assume that Lambronac'i actually knew and quoted Grigor's version, or at least part of it; the family relationship could account for Nersēs's knowledge of the text, even in the eventuality that it had a limited diffusion. On that account, it might be significant that the only traces of textual circulation so far uncovered for the *Timaeus* date back to the late Middle Ages (even Iṣox's work, with which an excerpt from the Platonic translation would later be associated within part of the manuscript tradition, dates back to the 13th century). A later chronology would also fit in better with several elements which have been previously – albeit cautiously – highlighted, but which, admittedly, mostly imply a common attribution of the other extant Platonic translations as well (the odd selection of dialogues, the lack of early translations in Georgia and Syria, the eventual realization on a compact Platonic codex, and so on). It is also worth recalling that SUKIAS SOMAL (1825), without directly knowing the Platonic dossier, easily assumed that Nersēs was quoting Grigor's version (probably because he did not have any information on other ancient Armenian Platonic translations).

However, clearly these speculations do not and cannot put an end to the debate, since the same data lend themselves to different interpretations. For instance, it has been suggested to me that the family ties between Grigor and Nersēs might rather testify against this hypothesis, because if the translation was indeed Grigor's, and if Nersēs knew it, he would perhaps have

¹⁴⁶ It is also worth mentioning that references to this particular Platonic passage were especially common within the Platonic and Christian traditions, and are attested not only in Latin and Greek texts (cf. RUNIA 1986: 111), but also in Armenian ones. The Armenian version of the *Apology* of Aristides, for instance, includes a rather free reference (whose wording unsurprisingly does not match the corresponding passage in the Armenian version of the *Timaeus*: cf. POUDERON-PIERRE 2003: 307).

mentioned the name of the translator while quoting from his work, and given the version more publicity. This is a perfectly legitimate remark; however, it could also be assumed that the version's authorship was common knowledge among learned Armenians at the time, or that Nersēs might have mentioned it somewhere else.

New data should certainly be collected by comparing the language of all the dialogues not only with one another, but also with works definitely attributed to Grigor: this would at least substantiate or rule out the likelihood of the attribution to him. Clearly, a translation from Greek could potentially differ greatly from texts written in Armenian in the first place, even by the same author. However, Grigor's *Letters*, for instance, often deal with philosophical themes, and are written in a highly Hellenised, learned variety of Armenian (cf. LANGLOIS 1869; LEROY 1935; YARNLEY 1976; SANJIAN 1993), certainly different from his everyday speech; thus, potential diaphasic divergencies should at least be minimised.

Nersēs's quotations, however, suggest another, promising line of research: by examining as many Platonic references in Armenian texts as possible, other quotations from the extant dialogues could be found, and that could provide further, maybe earlier *termini ante quem*, and thus progressively narrow down the timeframe in which the translations might have been made. Thus, it could also be clarified whether the present lack of any traces of an early circulation of the Armenian *Timaeus* is merely due to gaps in our documentation, or has more significant implications instead.

9. Appendix

To begin such a collection, it is worth mentioning here a reference to the *Laws*, found in a sermon *Yalags Ōrinac* ("On the Laws") by Tiratowr Kilikec'i (1275?-1350?; POŁAREAN 1971: 379 ff.), who succeeded Esayi Nč'ec'i as the head of the University of Glajor. The relevant passage, as presented by Połarean (*ibid.*: 381), reads:

ew Platon grē z k' alak' akan ōrēns t' ē ziard part ē linel, ew orpēs bnakič' k' n kapin ar mimeans sirov, ew orpisi ōrinōk' part ē varel zsosay [sic] datavorac' n. ew ork' nax k' an zsoa kargec' in zpatiz goloc' n, ztanjans šnac' olac' n, zpatowhas spanolac' n, vrēž arnowl anirawac' n, ew ayl soynpisik' or xalatowt' ean ē arit' k' ew patčar šinowt' ean ašxarhac'

"and Plato writes down the laws of the city, what they must be like, and how the inhabitants are bound to one another by friendship, and through which laws the judges must rule them; and (he writes that) those who, before these (judges / laws), set the punishment for thieves, the penalties for adulterers, the punishments for murderers, (merely) took revenge on the wicked; and other things of the same kind, that are cause of peace and occasion for prosperity for the countries".

A sample comparison made on the text of the *Laws* does not suggest an exact correspondence with any specific passage: Tiratowr seems to be summarising here the work's contents (such a summary, it must be noted, is not present in the manuscript, at least at the beginning of the text of the *Laws*). Clearly, a mere reference to the subject of the Platonic dialogue, not supported by a literal quotation, is not a clue that may suggest a direct knowledge of the Armenian text, nor indeed, of the Greek text of the *Laws*: this kind of information can easily be transmitted through secondary literature. However, the reference, which dates back to a later time than Grigor's, deserves to be pointed out all the same, because it does not generically refer to Plato, but names instead a specific work which also belongs to the extant Platonic dossier.

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