

Rescuing Socrates from Hell: Personal agency in Shota Rustaveli's "Knight in Panther's Skin"

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Thirteenth century Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli in his epic poem "The Knight in Panther's Skin" introduces a personage named Socrates (Sograt). This paper argues that far from being accidental, Socrates of Rustaveli has a clear reference to Socrates as we know him from Plato's dialogues. Moreover, Rustaveli gives a clandestine message of basic affinity and continuity of Greek philosophy and Christianity, the latter being superior to the first in sense of crowning it. This he expresses metaphorically by initiating his vizier-Socrates into a higher, obviously Christian wisdom and thus "rescuing him from hell". This higher wisdom entails superiority of personal understanding of duty, divinely manifested within individual man's conscience over against societal-political dimension of duty.

This paper will discuss an issue of relationship between philosophy and Christian religion in poetry of 13th century Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli. In particular, I shall dwell upon the person of Socrates as depicted by Rustaveli in his poem "The Knight in Tiger's Skin"¹⁸. The paper intends to prove that Socrates of Rustaveli's poem, although not identifiable, yet has a clear reference to the historical Socrates, as consciously intended by Rustaveli; and that this personage stands for expression of some ideas of the Greek philosopher, or in Socrates' face, of Greek philosophy, within the setting of the medieval epic poem. Socrates stands for certain values, which are both appreciated and rivaled by Rustaveli, in a certain dialectical tension. The tension is expressed in a different understanding of ultimate human *telos* and different estimation of the value of personal conscience in reference to public duties, which must derive from Rustaveli's Christian background.

Finally, I shall show in passing, that Rustaveli is not a pioneer in Georgian culture in respect of a deep appreciation of the Greek philosophical legacy and acknowledging its affiliation with Christian religion, and that a 12th century philosopher Ioane Petritsi, himself a heir of the Comnenian Renaissance in Byzantium, paved this way before Rustaveli, providing the latter with a pattern.

¹⁸ Below everywhere while quoting Rustaveli, I provide my own translations.

Rustaveli's milieu entailed a thorough absorption of Greek philosophic legacy by Georgian culture, evidenced in the Gelati monastery school and especially in its foremost representative Ioane Petritsi. At this time and place, Greek philosophic ideas came to a closest relationship with the existing tradition of Eastern Theological thought, itself widely influenced by the Greek philosophical ideas and terminology. Such a close friction of ideas created new, synthetic visions of reality and the very truth came to be viewed in a broader perspective and not exclusively enclosed only in one singular tradition. This truth itself was contextual, nevertheless, for it implied robust conviction of real existence of the supra-material perfection in the divine realm – the true eternal house of also human beings along with angels.

The broadening of vision of this truth through influences of Greek philosophical legacy in its turn implied a belief that also great Greek philosophers – Plato, Proclus etc. could attain blessedness through ascension to the supra-material reality through philosophic contemplation. Rustaveli is an heir of such broadened vision on the truth and he provides a certain, idiosyncratic version of it. Already in the prologue "The Knight in Panther's Skin" Rustaveli gives a clue that his poem is an allegorical expression of metaphysical truth: the earthly love between man and woman being described by him as imitating, as a matter of fact, the philosophic love of soul towards the metaphysical ideas. The very purpose of poetry, in its highest expression, according to Rustaveli, is to provide a philosophic vision of reality through a special poetic language that renders "long discourse" within "terse expressions", that is to say, substitutes tedious dialectical process with immediate, effectively uttered intuitions and metaphors, that lead to the same vision. The poet should be a hierophant writing in a condition of inspired frenzy, on the verge of philosophic wisdom and beyond it – ecstatic love that defies speech. This said, I think, Rustaveli himself gives a researcher the right to search philosophic allegories in different parts of the poem, not only in its singular lines, expressions, aphorisms etc., but also in the development of plot and characters, as well as in separate protagonists of the poem and singular instances of their relationship. Of course, we always run a risk of misinterpreting Rustaveli even when the highest degree of objectivity is sought. I am thoroughly aware that the following interpretations, even if they widely do justice to the spirit of Rustaveli, may fail to do so with regard to the actual, objective implications of the poet.

Irony of Rustaveli's Socrates

To start with, there are, as I have counted, only four, or at most five, instances of ironic statements in the entire poem of more than 1600 stanzas. Tellingly, two in those

instances belongs to the Arabian King Rostevan's chief vizier – Socrates¹⁹. In the following I shall show, that those ironical sayings of the vizier may not be accidental and can have a reference to the historical Socrates, a philosopher, well known for his pedagogic irony, so vividly exhibited in the dialogues of Plato. I shall now shortly illustrate the mentioned two instances of irony.

The first occurs in the very first chapter of the poem. The setting is as follows: the Arabian King Rostevan, as he grows old, decides to crown his only-begotten daughter Tinatin as the new king. During the inaugural celebration Tinatin, following the father's advice, starts giving alms from her treasury (that is to say, from her private possessions that she has as a royal heir) "without measure and without count". Suddenly, the King's mood changes and he becomes gloomy, but the reason is a mystery to everyone. Avtandil, a youthful commander-in-chief, who is secretly in love with Tinatin, and the chief vizier Socrates decide to cheer the king up. The vizier Socrates approaches the King with a frivolous joke: "Yes, o King, you are perfectly right to be so saddened: your daughter empties the entire royal treasury; it would have been better for you not to have crowned her as the king, for this turned out to become a major nuisance for you".²⁰ The King wonders at this joke, marveling at the boldness of the vizier. At last, having discerned the perfectly good intention of Socrates, with a smile the king Rostevan approved the joke saying: "everybody who would slander me with a charge of stinginess, will be a liar." He exposed the real reason of his grieving: there is in fact nobody in the entire Arabia who could inherit from the king the "manly/valorous ethos and skills", since he was depraved by the fate and does not have a male heir. The following continuation of this story may shed light to a deeper significance of Socrate's joke, so let us proceed with the development of the plot.

Avtandil feels himself affronted by the saying of the king, who in his turn has perhaps intended this affront as a challenge to his favorite young commander. Avtandil accepts the challenge and next day he and the king have a competition-hunting, in which the young commander defeats the king to a great joy of the latter. After all, the continuity of valorous habits and skills is preserved in Arabia! But as the king and Avtandil are feasting under the open sky after the hunting, suddenly servants encounter a strange fellow in panther's skin, bitterly weeping at the nearby creek. The fellow is so much concentrated in his grief that he

¹⁹ The vizier's name in the poem is "Sograt", a form of the Greek name Socrates as it was evidently audible in the time of Rustaveli. Other poets contemporary to Rustaveli also used the name Sograt for Socrates; for instance poet-panegyrist of the King Tamar, Chakhrukhadze, writes: "Hellenes acted in way proper to them; Sograt acted as a wise man" etc. (ე ლ ნ ი ე ლ ნ ო ბ დ ე ს , ვ ი ნ ს ო გ რ ა ტ ბ რ ძ ნ ო ბ დ ე ს) (Chakhrukhadze, *Praise of the King Tamar*, in: *Monuments of Old Georgian Literature* (1978), Tbilisi: "Sabchota Sakartvelo", p. 561). This version of the name had been used in Georgia even up to late 19th century.

²⁰ "და გ ი ღ რ ე ჯ ი ა , მ ე ფ ე ო , ა ღ რ გ ი ც ი ნ ი ს პ ი რ ი ო !
მ ა რ თ ა ლ ხ ა რ : წ ა ხ დ ა ს ა ჭ უ რ ჭ ლ ე ო ქ ე ნ ი მ ძ ი მ ე დ ა მ ვ ი რ ი ო :
ყ ვ ე ლ ს ა გ ა ს ც ე მ ს ა ს უ ლ ო ო ქ ე ნ ი ს ა ბ ო მ ვ ა რ - ხ შ ი რ ი ო ;
ყ ო ლ მ ც ა მ ე ფ ე დ ნ უ დ ს ვ ი ! თ ა ვ ს ა რ ა დ უ ბ დ ე ჭ ი რ ი ო ".

fails to notice the visible world around him and is deafened to the voices of Rostevan's slaves who shout to him. Eventually, the king decides to arrest the stranger and when the latter at last hears the noise of the chainmail, he mounts his extraordinarily speedy black horse and disappears, having wounded and killed with his rod the king's chasers. Actually, the complete harmony of life including its generational continuity has been interfered by something strange and mysterious, and the king thinks himself permanently unhappy unless he resolves the mystery. However, a year-long intensive search is in vain, and the King, and all Arabs after him, decided to simply explain away the mystery, labeling it a "demonic apparition".

All but Tinatin, the newly crowned princess. Only she remained steadfast in her curiosity and wonder; and more, she feels it impossible to continue living, even to be happy with her beloved Avtandil, unless the mystery is solved. Thus, she orders Avtandil to find the strange youth and thus heal her wounds of ignorance. Now, in Rustaveli's metaphor, Tinatin must stand for an expression of unconditional philosophic wonder and curiosity, which has nothing but a desire for uncovering reality's mystery as its basis, just in tune with Aristotle's grand saying in the beginning of his *Metaphysics* – "All humans by nature desire to know". If this guess is true, then we may see Socrates' abovementioned joke in a new light: "Are you really ready to crown Tinatin (who personifies self-sufficient value and unconditional character of philosophic inquiry, or philosophy itself) as a king? Then you must be ready to continuously sacrifice everything and surrender everything earthly and material ungrudgingly – 'without measure and without count' – to the search of the Truth." Thus, from the first sight the Vizier's joke is but a tolerable or guiltless flattery with a purpose to cheering up the king; that is to say, the vizier Socrates emphasizes the king's generosity by ironical assertion of his stinginess: for everybody knows that it was by the king's advice that Tinatin emptied the royal treasury for the charity's sake. However, from the new perspective the joke appears to convey, to use Vlastos' categorization, a "complex irony":

Challenged to a beauty contest with the handsome Critoboulus, he [Socrates] pleads superior beauty to his own ugliest features – his snub nose, his oversized flaring nostrils – on the ground that useful is beautiful. Here we see a new form of irony, unprecedented in Greek literature to my knowledge, which is peculiarly Socratic. For want of better name, *I shall call it 'complex irony' to contrast it with the simple ironies I have been dealing with in this essay heretofore. In 'simple' irony what is said is simply not what is meant. In 'complex' irony what is said is both is and isn't what is meant* (italics mine L.G.). Thus when Socrates says he is a 'procurer' he does not, and yet does, mean what he says. He obviously does not in the common, vulgar sense of the word. But nonetheless he does in another sense in which he gives the word ad hoc, making 'procurer' mean simply someone 'who makes the procured attractive to those whose company he is to keep'.²¹

²¹ Vlastos, Gregory (1987) "Socratic Irony", *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 37, (1): 86.

In our present instance, similarly, the vizier-Socrates both *denies* that the king is stingy through ironical assertion of it, yet also – since we have seen that the king hardly possesses the self-denying philosophical spirit his daughter does – *asserts* that the king in fact may be stingy, i.e. not ready to sacrifice everything to the search of truth.

Socrates' initiation

The second ironic passage, which is related to the central topic of this paper and its title, comes in the 19th Chapter. Once again it is necessary to provide a setting of it, which I will try to make as short as possible. Avtandil, after having gone on search of the strange fellow, eventually finds him and is befriended by him. The stranger's name is Tariel, an Indian prince, who is in utter despair, having failed to find his lost beloved Nestan Darejan (the name in Persian meaning "The one [of such a beauty] that no one can find on earth."). Avtandil promises him help, the friends set a time for meeting and Avtandil returns back to Arabia. He reveals to the king Rostevan the secret of the strange fellow, Tariel, but does not dare yet to say that he is going to leave Arabia once again to keep his promise to the desperate friend. Avtandil decides to delegate this fragile and difficult plight to the vizier – Socrates, and pays a confidential visit to him. The young commander starts explaining to the vizier what the latter must say to the king on his behalf: that he is burning with a desire to help Tariel; that it is his duty; that he has given a promise; that his conscience will not allow him to continue as a commander-in-chief of Arabia any longer without fulfillment of his personal duty to Tariel. For this service he promises the vizier a *hundred thousand golden coins*. Here occurs the second instance of Socrates' irony in the poem: the vizier-Socrates laughingly says: "Oh, you do not have to pay me anything; it is enough for you to have taught me what and how to say to the king; for, in fact, when the king will listen to this, he will be so delighted, that he will himself give me even more money"²².

Of course, all this is breathed with irony, for instantly Socrates refutes himself and adds (I paraphrase): "He will kill me immediately, quicker than eyewink, and how will I, being dead, be able to use your money? And moreover, if even the king will let you go, what will you tell to the entire army subordinated to you? How can they remain without their commander-in-chief?"²³ Socrates' irony is an expression of the limit of his, Socrates',

²² "ვაზირმა ნ უთხარს იცილოთ: 'ქრთმი შენ გქონდეს შენია!
შენგან კმა ჩემადწყალობად, რომე გზა გაგიჩენია."

მაგას რა ვკადრებ მეფესა, რაცა აწ თქვენგან მსმენია,
ვიცი, უცილოდამავსებს, შოება არ-საწყენია".

²³ "თავმან მისმან, მუნვე მომკლავს, ვეჭვ, წამიცა არ წამაროს!
შენი ოქრო შენვე დაგრჩეს, მე, გლხ, მიწა მესამაროს;

...

"თუმეფეცა გაგიშვებდეს, თვითლ შექარნი რა დმოლოდნ!

understanding of dialectics and tension between personal consciousness and citizen's duty to his city; there cannot be a question: the first, i.e. private conscience, has to submit to the second, i.e. the duty to the city, or public duty. This limit is expressed in the vizier's words: "No road can go beyond itself" ("გზა არ წავსა თვსა წინა"). Thus, absolute point for Rustaveli's Socrates is this latter duty and his irony is thoroughly guided and conditioned by it. Accordingly, this irony can be considered as a pedagogic one as well: Socrates tries to teach Avntandil what it is for him the true hierarchy of values. This can well resonate with the logic of the dialogue "Crito", in which Socrates is asked to leave Athens, since Athenians are up to punish him unjustly. Let me adduce this lengthy quotation from the dialogue, since it can be illuminating for our case:

Well, then, since you were brought into the world and nurtured and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and slave, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us; nor can you think that you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or revile or do any other evil to a father or to your master, if you had one, when you have been struck or reviled by him, or received some other evil at his hands?--you would not say this? And because we think right to destroy you, do you think that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country as far as in you lies? And will you, O professor of true virtue, say that you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? Also to be soothed, and gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and if not persuaded, obeyed? And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; and if she leads us to wounds or death in battle, thither we follow as is right; neither may anyone yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his city and his country order him; or he must change their view of what is just: and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country (50e – 51c).

This quotation reveals a striking phenomenon: even though Socrates understands that he is right and the Athens wrong, he cannot put his conscience, *his private logos* that is to say, above that of the city and rather would undergo death at hands of the city. Thus city-value, eclipsing the value of personality and his conscience; obedience to city, apparently at least, is absolutized even at the expense of truth, or more precisely, obedience to city displays itself as the absolute point of reference when a person faces a radical dilemma²⁴.

რა დგა გიშვან, რა დღე ღონდნ, ანუ მზესა რა დმორდნ?

შენ წახვიდ, მტერნი ჩვენნი და გვთამამდნ, გაგვისწორდნ..."

²⁴ Scholars have noticed apparent discrepancy between Socrates in the "Apology", where he clearly puts philosophy, i.e. understanding of truth through *logos*, above the city values and decrees, whereas in *Crito* he proposes a radical paternalism of the city and its laws, which should be obeyed even when wrongly applied. Various solutions to this dilemma were offered, for example, M. J. Rosano (2000) ("Citizenship and Socrates in Plato's *Crito*", *The Review of Politics* 62 (3): 451-477) and G. Young (1974) ("Socrates and Obedience", *Phronesis* 19: 1-29) provide, on different grounds, reconciliation of Socrates' opposing stances. R. J. McLaughlin (1976), while rejecting Young's conclusions, provides his own vision of Socrates' understanding of public disobedience (cf. "Socrates on Political Disobedience: reply to Gary Young", *Phronesis* 21 (3): 185-197). I will not go into those interesting discussions and debates, but just note that the problem of *Crito*'s Socrates has been enough protruded to generate a substantial scholarly debate.

To say in passing, Aristotle, when unjustly sentenced to death by Athens, had no qualms to escape the city not out of cowardice, of course – even suggesting of such possibility would be disrespectful to Stagira – but out of reason of 'not making Athens guilty of still another crime against philosophy'.

The same appears to be true with Socrates as depicted by Rustaveli in this chapter: the vizier-Socrates does not even discuss the issue of whether Avtandil's duty-incited desire to leave the country is legitimate or not when the obedience to the civic function and to the king's will – both being for him the absolute reference points during moral dilemmas – are challenged. However, Avtandil does not agree with the vizier-Socrates and presents his own understanding of values, even daring to say to the vizier that “he *does not know* what is love”, that he will go anyway to help the friend, because it is better for the king not to have him at all, than to have him with a wounded conscience, the latter being the rivaling absolute reference point of moral action for Avtandil. Thus, Avtandil here is presented as a teacher of Socrates – both vizier-Socrates and perhaps the *Crito's* Socrates – himself. Unlike the *Crito's* Socrates, Avtandil is pursuing his conscience to the revolutionary utmost, even putting it above the duty due to be paid to the state. In this sense, he is, to use the abovementioned wording of the vizier, “a road that went beyond itself”, or a person fully born, fully expressed in transcending the social-political duty that has valorized itself to the claim of absolute, dethroning it with new vision of personal conscience-originated absolute. On the contrary, the vizier-Socrates still remains, in a way, “unborn” since city values completely coincide in him with personal values and if there might ever occur a dramatic divergence between the two, the priority will be granted or, in a more negative light, succumbed to the first.

Now let us see how the story continues, for further interesting things are happening in this chapter as Avtandil refuses to comply with Socrates' instruction and imploringly persists in his request; then only Socrates, yielding, says a phrase “your fire has been kindled also in me” (“შენი ცეცხლი მეცა ცეცხლდამოეღებოხ”). This can be a reminiscence of and allusion to Plato's account of philosophic initiation in his seventh letter. As a matter of fact, Plato says that it is impossible to know the type of philosophy he has become an adept of, because this philosophy is like fire kindled from the fire alight in a teacher, after long life and conversation with him, henceforth sustaining itself in student (341d). In this passage, Plato evidently refers to Socrates, his teacher. However, if my intuition is correct, Rustaveli reverses things and presents Socrates as being kindled already by somebody with a higher wisdom – Avtandil (or, actually, Rustaveli himself through Avtandil – his avatar). Socrates, kindled with new fire, agrees to go to the king, and at a risk of his life, fulfills his promise exposing himself to Rostevan's fearsome wrath: the king even hurls a chair at him and Socrates “sneaks away as a frightened fox” (გამომრწა და გამომელდა) – all this presented with an admiringly humorous air. As he returns to Avtandil, he asks him tearfully to fulfill his promise and give him the promised hundred thousand golden coins, adducing the

following proverb: “*money/bribe can conquer even hell*”. This also is done within the same humorous air. However perhaps something more than amusement is expressed here. First of all, it seems rather strange that Socrates, after having risked his life for Avtandil’s cause, now descends to such naughtiness as to ask for the money recompense. However, if one reads this passage metaphorically a strange picture emerges: Socrates, after having changed his mind, that is to say, repenting his wrong vision of relative – obedience to king/state – as absolute, and acting for the cause and value of Avtandil, even at a risk of his life, is like an initiate into mysteries, into new wisdom that will help him to get out of hell. Thus, “hundred thousand golden coins” may symbolically signify perfection – a *telesiourgy* towards ultimate personal goal and rebirth into new life. If this guess hits somehow the mark, it appears that only after having being initiated into this new wisdom, which puts human person and personal conscience higher than all political demands and conventions, Socrates can be released from hell, that is to say, be born anew as a fully formed person whose moral decision-making and actions are totally sourced within his own conscience, enlightened, to be sure by divinely inspired self-sacrificial love. Perhaps Rustaveli in earnest, yet in a secretive manner, expresses his vast appreciation of the Greek philosophy to the extent of intimating his desire to rescue Socrates from hell through initiating him into a salvific wisdom; viz., the Christian tenet concerning the absolute and eternal value of the conscience-led human, who is by no means reducible to any social-political function. No wonder, that in the next chapter, where Avtandil writes letter to the king Rostevan explaining the reasons for his fleeing, next to the Apostles quotes also Plato, thus underscoring the basic affinity between the founders of the Churches and the founder of the Academy.

Just to add in passing, the very poem of Rustaveli has a certain subversive dimension: Rustaveli himself undermines established values that unjustly claim absolute status – for example, concerning the nature of political power, or concerning the status of eros/romantic love etc. – and introduces new ones which, insofar as the poem became a national epos, has irrevocably changed the *weltanschauung* of medieval Georgians. Thus the poet himself playing a role of mystagogue of his readers. This last issue, of course, is vast and requires a separate study. Especially interesting with this regard will be inquiry into a possible connection between the development of philosophy in 12-13th century Georgia and the sprouting of radical political ideas aiming at limiting the monarchic power to the executive function, while relegating entire legislative power to a “tent” or assembly of noblemen and merchants in the beginning of 13th century.

Rustaveli’s stance has been prefigured in Georgian culture by Ioane Petritsi, the first philosopher who translated Neoplatonic works into Georgian in 12th century. Actually, Rustaveli takes all his Platonic philosophical terms (like “idea” - იდეა, “genus” - ჯიშ, “

“element” - ჰსჰმონო) from Petritsi. Petritsi in his commentaries frequently refers to Socrates, even entering into a living dialogue with him and addressing him almost in person. Now, Petritsi speaks about the importance of the Greek wisdom, since it is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. Actually, just as Pseudo-Dionysius, Petritsi understands Paul’s saying in 1 Corinthians 1:23 as that “Paul calls Greek philosophy ‘divine wisdom’”. Nevertheless, Christian wisdom for him is higher than that of philosophers, since all the pre-Christian wisdom has bowed to Christ as disciples bow to the teacher. I think, the same balance is found in Rustaveli, who must have inherited such stance from Petritsi, for he makes Avtandil, a holder of Christian wisdom, a mystagogue of Socrates – holder of philosophic reason, thus rescuing the latter from the hell, that is to say, perfecting him. In Petritsi Socrates symbolizes also the tradition of logos/dialectical reasoning *par excellence*. Through dialectical/critical reasoning Petritsi criticizes aspects of traditions of Georgian intellectual culture that purported sacrosanct inflexibility. For instance, he boldly criticizes canonical translations of Bible, finding in them mistakes, which he dialectically dismantles. For Petritsi, inner *logos*, that is to say, personal understanding of and search for truth, which he calls “our inner Hermes”, is considered as the ultimate basis for moral orientation and action; Petritsi’s “Socrates”, thus, looks like a “rescued” Socrates of Rustaveli.

Finally, it must be said that these humanistic, renaissance-sounding ideas are reminiscent of those held by Byzantine intellectuals of the Comnenian in 11th – 12th centuries like Michael Psellus, John Mavropous, or John Italus. Petritsi directly, and Rustaveli through Petritsi, could be influenced by this climate of ideas. Actually, to John Mavropous, a bishop of Euchaita, belongs a verse in a form of prayer, or more in earnest, a prayer in a form of verse, where he asks God to take Plato and Plutarch out of hell: “If you are willing to spare some of the others [who were not Christians] from your punishment, my Christ, may you choose Plato and Plutarch, for my sake. For both of them clung very closely to your laws in both word and deed”²⁵. Rustaveli added Socrates to the pagans deserving salvation. Of course, such a high esteem of philosophy and Rustaveli’s mystagogy of Socrates could sound too bold for his contemporary Church, which explains the latter’s scruples and sometimes open warfare against the poet that now and then has surfaced in the Georgian ecclesiastic literature.

In conclusion, the paper intended to show that Rustaveli, a Christian author enamored with Greek philosophy gives a hidden message of metaphorically rescuing Socrates from hell, by underscoring the superiority of Christian understanding of personal conscience that cannot be reduced to any social-political function or expediency, and that is the sole ground for moral decision-making and personal agency. While, the metaphoric-symbolic language of Rustaveli was aimed at shrouding his bold message about the intrinsic

²⁵ *Penguin Book of Greek Verse* (1971), ed. by C. A. Trypanis, Penguin Books, P. 441.

affinity of Greek philosophy with Christianity, for the official Church the message proved neither entirely hidden, nor smoothly accepted.

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