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THE IDEA OF COSMIC AND SOCIAL RECURRENCE IN THE ARMENIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION (THE EPIC *SASNA TSRER* AND MOSES KHORENATSI)

Introduction

Some years ago, while interpreting the Lament of Moses Khorenatsi, I came to the conclusion that the author's narrative was based on the concept of cosmic circle (great year or aeon), the long temporal duration thought to comprise the crucial elements (and events) both of cosmos and human commonality¹. In the western intellectual tradition, this concept was scrutinized by Hesiod and especially by Plato in his various treatises. First of all, the said concerns his *Timaeus* and *Laws* that had influenced many philosophical concepts from the Stoics to the Neo-Pythagoreans. As to the eastern tradition, the assumption is traceable in many narratives starting from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the Old Testament and Zoroastrianism. The eminent Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria put efforts for combining the two traditions *translating* the eastern wisdom into the western philosophical terms and categories².

This author was very popular in early medieval Armenia, and by his mediation the concept of cosmic circle might have come to this country. As it is well known, the formation of the Christian identity of the Armenians was en route at that time, and a group of intellectuals (the generation of St. Mashtots) tried to bridge the national values with the Christian universals. This experience was designed to harmonize the main intellectual traditions of the time – the Biblical, Hellenistic, and Armenian. And the results of this synthesis were manifested in various areas of intellectual activity – history and philosophy, theology and hagiography, rhetoric and poetry, geography and cosmology³. And I believe that Moses Khorenatsi's experience of introducing the concept into the Armenian historiography must be

1 Ստեփանյան Ա. Ա., 2006, 248–254.

2 Runia D. T., 1999, 117–119.

3 Terian A., 1982, 175–186.

discussed in the context of this global metamorphosis.

This vision of the problem has prompted the substance and structure of the current study. It is designed to outline the aeon concept in three intellectual areas – philosophy (Plato), philosophical theology (Philo), and history (Moses Khorenatsi). It shows new colors and shades in each area preserving however its main features. Two of them have been highlighted quite amply in numerous studies⁴. My task is to use their results in interpreting the concept in the *History of Armenia* by Moses Khorenatsi.

1. Western Intellectual Tradition: Plato

Plato discerned the problem of great cosmic eons from the holistic point of view combining the data of physics and ethics, politics and logic⁵. According to him, cosmos was compiled by the great Demiurge after his own image and likeness. For this purpose he used the primordial elements establishing balance among them: “The builder built it (cosmos) from all the fire, water, air and earth there was, and left no part or power of any of them out” [Plato, Tim., 32d]. At first, the cosmos existed only in intelligible forms and it was under Demiurge’s direct guidance⁶. It was inhabited by perfect spiritual creatures. Afterwards, he abandoned “the steering-oars and retired to his observation-post, and all the gods followed him” [Plato, Leg., 272e]. It gave rise to the cosmic turmoil which caused destruction of all living things. At last, the cosmos: “[...] set itself things within it and itself, because it remembered so far as it could the teaching of its craftsman and father” [Plato, Leg., 273b]⁷.

This new universe differed from the previous one because *the bodily element* played an active role in it. Therefore, it was recognized *the realm of the casual and the random*. And the builder: “[...] gave priority and seniority to the Soul [...] to be the body’s mistress and rule over it as her subject” [Plato, Tim., 34c]⁸. The cosmic Soul, in its turn, engendered all the creatures starting from stars and planets to plants and human beings⁹. However, the cosmic balance is not eternal; it wears out periodically as a result of predominance of one of the elements. More frequently it is thought to be connected with the growth of the mass of fire or water: “[...] when heat or cold or anything else that possesses powers surrounds a composite body from outside and attacks it, it destroys that body prematurely, brings disease and old age upon it and causes it to waste away” [Plato, Tim., 33a]. In the first case, it entails a universal fire, in the second case a deluge¹⁰.

All these considerations give the philosopher reason to assert that the universe exists *from one chaos to another*. But the stages of its existence do not only de-

4 Cf. Stepanyan A. A., 2013, 1.

5 This assumption was inherent to the Greek thought starting from Hesiod to the Pythagoras and Sophists. Trompf G. W., 1979, 62–66.

6 Verlinsky A., 2009, 223–225.

7 Verlinsky A., 2009, 229.

8 Hackforth R., 1959, 17–22; Mohr R., 1982, 41–48.

9 Blyth D., 1997, 196–199, 185–217.

10 Sluijs M. A. van der, 2006, 60–62.

pend upon *the play* of the primary elements. It has profound social and moral causes as well¹¹. To prove this preposition, Plato relates an *intellectual myth* about one of cosmic eons.

The former cosmos has perished as a result of the deluge, and water covered all the levels of the Earth. The mankind is swept away, only small groups of men have found refuge on tops of mountains. They make up **the first stage of civilization**. Those hill shepherds bred flocks of cattle since they had lost all the crafts, skills and devices of the former civilization. Nonetheless, they had good supply of milk, meat and clothes: “Now the community, in which neither wealth nor poverty exists, will generally produce the finest characters because tendencies to violence and crime and feelings of jealousy and envy do not arise” [Plato, Leg., III, 679b–c]. They live in family groups or communities led by patriarchs, and feel no need for legislation. The ancestral laws are their only guidance. By the words of the philosopher, *it is the most justifiable of all forms of kingship* [Plato, Leg., III, 679d]¹².

The second stage is connected with the lowering of water. As a result, the foot-hills become inhabited, and the agriculture becomes the basic occupation of men. Consequently, some part of old technologies are restored or invented again. Smaller communities now enter into larger ones. Their representatives, working as lawgivers, set up common laws and “[...] create out a sort of aristocracy, or perhaps kingship” [Plato, Leg., III, 681d]¹³.

The third stage begins when men descend from the hills to the plains and build their cities “[...] on hills of moderate height near several rivers” [Plato, Leg., III, 682b]. These inland societies continue living under kingship but the conditions are changed essentially. Citizens are accustomed to the life based on various technologies and money. Moreover, they have lost the memory of the former catastrophe and *have taken to ships*. Plato finds these changes in Troy and the Achaean cities. Their political system and social code undergo corruption in the course of time. The younger generation revolts giving rise to murder, massacre and expulsion [Plato, Leg., III, 682e]. In other words, the inland societies are subjects to corruption¹⁴.

Further discussion shows that Plato links it with the disturbance of social and political balance when bodily goods and wealth are estimated higher than self-control and temperance (φρόνεσις καὶ σωφροσύνη) and other spiritual values [Plato, Leg., 697b]. In Greece, this opened the way for the Dorian tribes who invaded from the northern regions, conquered the Achaeans trying to restore the lost stability. However, it was impossible, and their new states declined again to corruption.

11 Sluijs M. A. van der, op. cit., 64–65; R. Tarnas discussed the concept from the point of view of the modern astrological archetypes. See Tarnas R., 2006, 357–358.

12 On the Golden age of Cronus’ rule in the Greek epic and philosophical tradition see Dillon J., 1997, 21–36.

13 Presumably, each of them was estimated as *a kingly man* (ἀνὴρ βασιλικός). Cf. Price A. W., 1997, 371–373.

14 The said indicates the situation of tyranny. Cf. Boesche R., 1996, 32–36.

According to Plato, the Persians demonstrated the most typical example of the inland societies' corruption. Their state was founded by Cyrus who put efforts to combine the liberty and subjection: "[...] after gaining their freedom they (the Persians) became the masters of a great number of other people. As a rule, they granted a degree of liberty to their subjects and put them on the same footing as themselves" [Plato, *Leg.*, 694b]. This ideal start, however, did not find its continuation. It broke down under the king's successors, and even the effective reforms of Darius I could not stop the process of decay. Plato traces the cause of that in the fact that they were educated in *womanish manner* and had no idea about justice¹⁵. Under them, the *corruption increased year by year*: "[...] they were too strict in depriving the people of liberty and too energetic in introducing authoritarian government, so that they destroyed all friendship and community in the state" [Plato, *Leg.*, 697]. The decline of Persia was irreversible.

According to Plato, from the inland dwellers only the Spartans (following the Cretans) were successful in escaping corruption. They established a unique constitution aimed at the balance of the basic components of commonality – property, social ranks and authority [Plato, *Leg.*, 691d–692c]. It was particularly motivated by the fact that: "[...] rich man, poor man, commoner and king are held in honor to the same degree and are educated in the same way, without privilege" [Plato, *Leg.*, 695b]. On this base, they reached the very rare balance of monarchy and liberty¹⁶. However, the Spartan stability had conservative character and did not look at reforms which made their social life vulnerable.

The fourth stage represents city-communities situated at sea coast. According to Plato's concept: "(Sea) fills the land with wholesaling and retailing, breeds shift and deceitful habits in man's soul, and makes the citizens distrustful and hostile, not only among themselves, but also in their dealings with the world outside" [Plato, *Leg.*, 705a]. In the course of time, it becomes obvious that the state has "[...] surrendered itself to the limitless acquisition of wealth and overstepped the boundaries of the necessity" [Plato, *Rep.*, 373e]. Limitlessness, in its turn, engenders tyranny, the worst form of government.

By the estimation of the philosopher, the most eminent example of the sea communities is Athens representing democracy: "There are two mother-constitutions, so to speak, which you could fairly say have given birth to all of others. Monarchy is the proper name for the first and democracy for the second. The former has been taken to the extreme by the Persians, the latter by my country [Athens] [Plato, *Leg.*, 693d]"¹⁷. Comparing with other forms of community, the sea-communities undergo corruption rather easily because the *extreme liberty* is the worst condition for social justice and peace¹⁸. It is appropriate for the pur-

¹⁵ The author speaks about the magi, who were the teachers of the *kingly art* (τὰ βασιλική). Cf. Horky Ph. S., 2009, 69–73.

¹⁶ Plato comes from the basic concept of ancient political philosophy viewing in law (νόμος) a balance of *violence and justice* (βία καὶ δική). See Agamben G., 1998, 24–29.

¹⁷ Domarski A., 2003, 11–12.

¹⁸ The scholars trace this theory from Hesiod's mythical tale about regress of mankind from the Golden age to the Iron age. Cf. Dombrowski D., 1981, 142.

poses of everyday life based on various pleasures and affections.

Plato traces isomorphism between human being and his social commonality. Both of them have tripartite structure consisted of somatic, affective and reasoning elements¹⁹. The dominance of pleasure gives evidence that the reason has already lost its leadership over the commonality. Under affections, people degrade into mob and democracy into ochlocracy.

However, the situation is improvable under good education. Following Socrates, Plato notes: “[...] all human actions are motivated by a set of three needs and desires. Give a man a correct education, and these instincts will lead him to virtue, but educate him badly and he’ll end up at the other extreme” [Plato, Leg., 682e]²⁰. Educated men obtain abilities to overrun social disasters by means of innovations: “If it isn’t pressures of war that overturn a constitution and rewrite the laws, it is the distress of grinding poverty; and disease too forces us to make a great many innovations, when plagues beset us for years on end and bad weather is frequent and prolonged [...]” [Plato, Leg., 709a]²¹. Plato believes in the capacity of innovations to influence the course of history and outlines the conditional (*should be*) perspective of the recent period of Greek history. Criticizing the extreme democracy, he states: “But if anyone had seen all this then, and had been able to curtail the various offices and produce a single authority out of three, he would have saved all the splendid projects of that age from destruction, and neither the Persians, nor anyone else would have ever sent a fleet to attack Greece, contemptuously supposing that we were a people who counted for very little” [Plato, Leg., 692c]²².

Though very important, the innovations are however unable to stop the decline of society in absolute sense, for it is a part of the visible cosmos and subject to periodical catastrophes. In other words, the total social corruption is inevitable, and it indicates the cyclic growth of universal chaos connected with the movement of cosmos in opposite direction: “[...] there occur at that time cases of destruction of other living creatures on a very large scale, and humankind itself survives only in small numbers” [Plato, Polit., 270d]²³. This is the end of one cosmic age and the starting point of the other. In this way, according to Plato, Demiurge saves his creatures from evil and gives chance for resurrection to the virtuous part of mankind. In other words, the catastrophes are used by Demiurge for improving the world²⁴.

19 This is thought to be one of the fundamental concepts of Plato’s philosophy. Cf. Ferrari G.R.F., 2005, 59–64.

20 McCabe M., 1997, 94–117.

21 In essential sense, an isomorphism is traceable between the narratives, citizens and ideal city structure molded in accordance with the harmony of the three basic functions of the soul. Saxohouse A. W., 1991, 134–135.

22 Plato links the possibility of *improving history* with the *σωφροσύνη* – one of the fundamental virtues of true citizens. See Bury R. G., 1951, 8; North H., 1966, 195–196.

23 Price A. W., 1997, 371–373.

24 Price A. W., 1997, 381–384; Gill Ch., 1979, 152–154.

2. Eastern Intellectual Tradition

a. Philo of Alexandria

I have decided to discuss this tradition for the first time within the scope of the intellectual system of Philo of Alexandria who adopted the data of the western philosophical thought to interpret the biblical subjects and wisdom²⁵. For my investigation his writings “On the Creation”, “On Abraham”, and “On the Life of Moses” are of special interest.

In his interpretation of Genesis, concerning the history of the world, Philo tells about the catastrophes stating the following: “[...] there are ten thousand other matters also introduced which refer to peace and war, or fertility and barrenness, or hunger and plenty, or to the terrible destructions which have taken place on the earth by the agency of fire and water (διὰ πυρός καὶ ὕδατος)” [Philo, Abr., I, 1]²⁶. Two kinds of catastrophes are obvious in the text of the author – global and local. The first is displayed by the Deluge, the second by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra. In both cases, the catastrophes are explained to have been initiated through physical, social and moral corruption²⁷.

Proceeding from the Platonic concept, Philo traces strict parallels between the universe and social commonality of men: “God, being minded to unite in intimate and loving fellowship the beginning and end of his created things, made heaven the beginning and man the end, the one the most perfect of imperishable objects of sense, the other the noblest of things earthborn and perishable, being, in very truth, a miniature heaven (βραχὸν οὐρανῶν)” [Philo, Op., XXVII,82]²⁸. Further on, the author formulates the “heaven–earth” relationship more exactly: “[...] in accordance with a certain natural sympathy, the things of earth depending on the things of heaven [...]” [Philo, Op., XL,117]²⁹.

By the words of Philo, the like ideal situation existed under Moses’ guidance. By means of his laws, the patriarch established an uncial balance between the Jewish society and Natural Law – the right order and hierarchy of the universe. The mosaic laws were introduced: “[...] under the idea that the law corresponds to the world and world to the law, being, by so doing, a citizen of the world, arranges his actions with reference to the intention of nature, in harmony with which the whole universal world is regulated” [Philo, Op., I, 3]³⁰. In other words, despite the laws of other societies, the mosaic laws were not conventional, and the cosmic perspective provided them with potency to remain “[...] firm and lasting from the day on which they were first promulgated to the present one, and there may well be a hope that they will remain to all future time, as being immortal one, as long

25 Sterling G. E., 1993, 97–99.

26 Besides Plato, this concept has been elaborated by the Stoics in detail. See White M. J., 2003, 128–130.

27 Runia D. T., 1986, 80–84.

28 Like Plato, Philo entails this assumption from the concept of isomorphism of human being and cosmos. See Reydam-Schils G., 2008, 169–196, 181–182.

29 In this all-incising sympathy, Logos plays the role of the divine mediator. See in detail Winston D., 2010, 241–244.

30 Najman H., 1999, 57–65; Wilson W. T., 2005, 8–10.

as the sun and the moon, and whole heaven and the whole world shall endure” [Philo, Mos., III, 14]. And the said concerns: “[...] not only the Jews, but also almost all other nations, and especially those who make the greatest account of virtue, have dedicated themselves to embrace and honor them” [Philo, Mos., II, 4, 17]³¹.

Moses represents ruler’s ideal image to be imitated by all righteous kings: “It becomes a king to command what ought to be done, and prohibition of what ought not to be done, belongs especially to the law, so that the king is at once a living law (νόμος ἐμψυχος), and the law is a just king” [Philo, Mos., II, 1, 4]³². Through the Mosaic laws, the kings receive the divine mandate of authority³³. And according to Philo, this is the main condition of social peace and prosperity.

The opposite pole is connected with social corruption which begins from the decline of morality and justice³⁴. The situation usually derives from the unlimited abundance and luxury. The best example for it is Sodom, the country of fertile soil, well watered, abundant of every kind of fruits. But at the same time, it is “[...] full of innumerable iniquities, and especially of gluttony and debauchery, and all the great and numerous pleasures of other kinds which have been built up by men as a fortress” [Philo, Abr., XXVI, 133]. In a word, men live under somatic and affective impulses forgetting about the high values and ideals. This originates disorder and anarchy, egoism and strife paving the way for tyranny in its various forms³⁵. The tyrant “[...] by his own nature is hostile, is, in the case of cities, a man, but in the case of body and soul, and all transactions having reference to either, he is a mind resembling the true beasts, besieging the governments and authority” [Philo, Agr., XI, 46].

In the course of time the tyrannical desire (ἐρως) envelopes both the individuals and societies being aimed at “[...] the excessive indulgence of the body, and some superfluity of external things” [Philo, Post., XXXIV, 117]³⁶. And the omnipotent God like: “[...] a father is anxious for the life of his children, and a workman aims at the duration of his works, and employs every device imaginable to ward off everything that is pernicious or injurious, and is desirous by every means in his power to provide everything which is useful or profitable for them” [Philo, Op., II, 10]³⁷.

There are two ways to prevent the destruction. One of them demands the restoration of the social and moral harmony by means of education³⁸. Through the observable motion of stars God gives signs to men: “[...] what is about to happen, the productiveness or unproductiveness of the crops, the birth or loss of their cattle, fine weather or cloudy weather, calm and violent storms of winds, floods

31 Horsley R. A., 1978, 37–40.

32 Runia D. T., 1988, 53–56. The concept of the living law was very popular in the Hellenistic political philosophy. See Goodenough E. R., 1928, 63–65.

33 In spiritual scope, they incorporate the virtues of the heavenly man. See Wedderburn A. J. M., 1973, 304–313.

34 The social corruption begins from the corruption of the private souls. See Zeller D., 1995, 21–23.

35 Runia D. T., 2000, 368–369.

36 Svebakken H., 2012, 71–78.

37 Runia D. T., 1988, 57–63.

38 Carson D. A., 1981, 150–158.

in the rivers or droughts, a tranquil state of the sea and heavy waves [...]” [Philo, Op., XIX,58]. And the role of the elite is to understand and interpret these signs. For this purpose the elite must possess, on the one hand, wisdom: “[...] the knowledge of all divine things and of the respective causes of them” [Philo, Congr., XIV, 79]. On the other hand, it must possess philosophy which is *the path of reason and the life in accordance with nature* [Philo, Migr., XXIII, 128]. The divine and human values, in their turn, engender the four basic moral virtues, the guiding principles both of righteous men and societies: wisdom, self-control, courage, and justice³⁹.

The other way is instrumental when the decay reaches its heights. The God’s interference becomes inevitable to save the mankind or its portion. He acts through heaven and earth: “[...] both earth and heaven, which are the first principles of the universe, bore their share in the punishment of these wicked men, for they had rooted their wickedness in the earth, and extended it up to the sky, raising it to that vast height” [Philo, Abr., II, 50]. The first visible result of that, according to the author, is the breach of the regular consequence of the year seasons: “[...] unusual changes in the seasons of the year when either summer is cold like winter, or winter warm, or when spring assumes the temperature of autumn or autumn that of spring” [Philo, Op., XIX,58]⁴⁰.

This fragment should be considered in the contrast to the first generation of men who, by the words of Plato, lived under god’s guidance having no political constitution: “[...] they had an abundance of fruits from trees and other plants, which grew not through cultivation but because the earth sent them up of its accord [...] *for the blend of the seasons was without painful extremes*” [Plato, Polit., 272a]⁴¹. As to the social corruption, it is, on the contrary, combined with natural disasters: “[...] when plagues beset us for years on end and bad weather is frequent and prolonged” [Plato, Leg., 709a].

As it has been noted above, these changes entail flood and fire, war and social strife which are thought to be: “[...]divinely sent attacks because of their (men’s) new and strange practices or wrongs and all the impieties they used to commit through their great efforts to demolish the Law of Nature (νόμος τῆς φύσεως)” [Philo, Spec., II,170]. The God’s punishment takes the shape of scarcity of crops and fruits, bodily diseases and wars, destruction of cities and enslavement of citizens⁴². They are used to improve men, cities, countries, and nations who: “[...] shall see no one left of those who destroyed their grandeur and beauty, but shall behold the market-places all free from their tumults, and wars, and acts of iniquity, and full of tranquility, and peace, and justice” [Philo, De praem., XXVII,157]. In short, the Creator’s plan is to give a new start to his creations saving their achievements and destroying failures and corruptions. This makes the significance

39 Runia D. T., 1997, 9–16.

40 More precisely, God acts through cosmic Logos which in its turn acts through the heaven and earth. McIver R. K., 1988, 268–274.

41 Vidal-Naquet P., 1978, 132–141.

42 The adequate reward of the Lord is thought to be the main principle of the cosmic and social balance. See Mendelson. A., 1997, 107–110.

of the catastrophes in both local and global senses⁴³.

b. Early Christian intellectuals

Philo exercised undeniable influence on the early Christian thought. Scholars trace his ideas especially in the Gospels of John, Mark, Mathew, and the Letters of Paul.⁴⁴ The essential discussion of the problem exposes the concept of cosmic catastrophes worked out by the early Christian intellectuals.

In this regard, the well-known fragment of the Gospel of Mark is frequently cited. Concerning the destruction of the old world order for the forthcoming Christian era, it reads the following: “[...] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” [Mk, 13,24–26; Cf. Mt, 24, 29; Lk.,21, 25–27]. Other texts of New Testament repeat the fragment with more or less exactness [Heb., 1, 10–12; Pet., 3, 5–13; Rev., 20, 11, 21,1 etc.]⁴⁵.

The scholars believe these texts to be based on the *linguistic stereotype* worked out in the prophetic texts of The Old Testament⁴⁶. And first of all, they exemplify the oracle of Isaiah on the destruction of Babylon: “See, the day of Lord is coming [...]. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and moon will not give its light, I will punish the world for its evil” [Is., 13, 9–11].

This and the like texts contain retrospective references to the Genesis on the global and local destructions of the world order⁴⁷. The global destruction happened by the will of the Lord who saw the wickedness of man and decided: “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them” [Ge.,6, 7]⁴⁸. Therefore He brought about the great Flood to give a new start to the world through Noah and his generations⁴⁹. As to the local destruction, Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrate a good example of that: “Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah – from the Lord out of the heaven. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities – and also the vegetation in the land” [Ge., 19, 24–25]. Only the righteous Lot and his daughters escaped.

Both forms of destructions, let it be emphasized again, are instrumental for the Lord in improving the world order and the mankind. At the same time, they make up the two aspects of *the bifocal vision* of the prophetic narrative: “With their near sight, they (the prophets) foresaw an imminent historical event. With their long sight, they saw the final end. They imposed one image on the other to produce *a synthetic picture*”⁵⁰. In other words, the eternal and historical dimensions

43 Long A. A., 2008, 127–130.

44 Morgan R., 1998, 114–128, 115–119.

45 Adams Ed., 2007, 5–7.

46 Caird G. B., 1980, 253.

47 Wright N. T., 2001, 166–168.

48 Wilson R. R., 1998, 215–217.

49 Wright N. T., 1992, 299–300.

50 Caird G. B., op. cit., 254; Wright N. T., 2001, 184–185.

of time are interwoven. Due to that, the dualistic cosmology is excluded because God is eternal, whereas his creations (the heaven and earth) undergo corruption and death: “Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end” [Ps., 102, 26–27]. This makes up the essence of *the creational monotheism*⁵¹.

However, before striking the world, the Lord will take steps to change the extreme situation of decay and wickedness: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse” [Mal., 4, 5–6].

The same idea is traceable in the expectations of the Jesus’ days: “Elijah comes and will restore all things” [Mt., 17, 11]. And the righteous men will be the witnesses of the birth of the new heaven and earth: “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” [Mt., 24, 30–31]⁵². The Lord is beneficent to men: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which He prepared in advance for us to do” [Ephes., 2, 10]. The heavenly Jerusalem must be the real incorporation of the world improvement and salvation: “[...] the Jerusalem that is above, is free, and she is our mother” [Galat., 4, 26]⁵³.

The apogee of world’s recurrence is believed to be the Doomsday. This concept adopted from the Zoroastrian eschatology is designed to define the beginning of the new great cosmic Age⁵⁴. The Lord is the only Lawgiver and Judge: “He will sit and judge all the nations on every side” [Joel, 3, 12], “He will judge the world in righteousness” [Ps., 9, 8], “He will judge the living and the dead” [2Ti., 4, 1].

The biblical experience has entailed numerous interpretations both of pagan and Christian intellectuals. Among them, the Cappadocian fathers Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian are distinguished for their holistic assumption of the cosmic Age⁵⁵. They exerted undeniable influence on the Armenian Christian tradition as well⁵⁶. According to it, the cosmic Age is marked with the common cyclic movement from the first Day of Creation to the last Day of Judgment [Basil, Hex., 2, 8, 35]⁵⁷. It demonstrates the common origin, rhythm and purpose of the cosmos uniting all the heavenly and earthly, human and biological, astronomical and mineral aspects of life⁵⁸. Two existential transfigurations are noteworthy in the cosmic movement displayed by the two covenants of the Old and New Testaments, Mosaic and Christian. They complement each other uniting history and cosmos in a

51 Wright N. T., 1999, 9–14.

52 Wright N. T., 1999, 19–21.

53 Frankfurter D., 1996, 129–131.

54 Dhalla M. N., 1938, 108–113; Zaehner R.C., The 1961, 315–321.

55 Otis B., 1958, 98–104.

56 Thomson R. W., 2012, XXI–XXIII.

57 Baghos M., 2010, 88–91.

58 Castache D., 2010, 27–29.

general movement [Gr. Naz., Quint. Theol., Ser., 25, 136]⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, the Cappadocian intellectuals have passed over the two principal problems of the cosmology, raising various (sometimes polar) interpretations: *a.* whether the Lord will bring back the world to its exact starting point or he will restore it on different physical and moral basis; *b.* who will enjoy the Lord's mercy – the righteous men only, or the wicked men also have a chance to find it⁶⁰.

3. Eon Concept in the Epic *Sasna Tsrer*

It seems more expedient to begin the illustration of the Armenian aspect of the present investigation from the epic *Sasna Tsrer* (Daredevils of Sasoun). As a heroic tale, it was composed in the Middle Ages – in the period of the Arab domination in Armenia, VII–IX cc. However, it contains many details and narrative blocks dating back to the remote antiquity. I mean even the age of Indo–European entity⁶¹.

The observations have demonstrated that the narrative of the Epic forms a cyclic movement the beginning and ending points of which are marked with chaos. In the first case, it is the Salt Sea, in the final case, the barren earth unable to bear the weight of the heroes⁶². In other words, the rhythm “from chaos to chaos” is dominant in *Sasna Tsrer* as well.

The starting chaos is depicted on the occasion of marriage of the young Armenian princess Tsovinar to the Caliph of Bagdad. She takes permission for visiting the lovely places of her homeland and after a long wandering comes to the Salt Sea tired and thirsty. This makes up the real beginning of the narrative. By God's order, the barren chaos gives up and a milk fountain bursts out from a sea rock. The princess enters the sea, comes up to the rock and drinks the water to conceive. Later, she gives birth to the first generation of the Sasoun heroes (saviors) – Sanasar and Baghdasar.

This subject shows obvious parallels with the Zoroastrian tradition, according to which, the corrupted world will be saved by the three saviors of the seed of Zoroaster preserved in the lake Kayansah: “As regards these three sons of Zartosht such as Ushedar, Ushedarmah, and Soshyant, one says, “Before Zartosht wedded, they had consigned the seed of Zartosht for preservation, in the sea Kayansah, to the glory of the waters, that is to the Yazad Anahit”. [...] It will so happen that a virgin will go to the water of Kayansah in order to wash her head; the seed will mingle with her body, and she will be pregnant. They will one-by-one be born thus in their own cycle” [Bundahishn, XXXIII, 36–38; cf. Yasht, XIX, 92; Yasna, XLVIII, 11–12]⁶³.

As to the last form of chaos, according to the Epic, it comes into being in the days of the Meher the Junior. In consequence of social corruption, a cosmic decay starts: the earth losing its strength crumbles under the last hero. He sinks in it deeper and deeper. Despaired, he turns to his dead parents, David and Khandut,

⁵⁹ Baghos M., 2010, 85–86; Cf. Chadwick H., 1966, 122–123.

⁶⁰ Otis B., 1958, 112–113.

⁶¹ Petrosyan A., 2002, 5–48.

⁶² Степанян А. А., 1991, 52.

⁶³ Textual Sources, 1984, 90–91. Cf. De Yong A., 1997, 327–330; Hartz P. R., 1999, 97–99.

who advise him:

“Save in Raven’s Rock. Got o Raven’s Rock,
That’s the door to knock. Wait till Judgment Day,
The end of this world.
It will be destroyed, and a new world will be built
To support the feet of your horse”⁶⁴.

Between the two poles of chaos, the epic narrative moves in strict accordance with a *socio-logical concept* which shows undeniable parallels with that of Plato⁶⁵. I mean the above exposed concept of social decay from mountain summits to valleys. Indeed, the Armenian Epic also represents three stages of social life⁶⁶.

The First Stage is embodied by Sasoun, a highland region of Armenia inhabited by hunters and flock shepherds. Their society is depicted with the utopic colors: the communal interests prevail absolutely upon the private interests. The Sasounians make up exogamic agnatic groups (families, clans) and believe that they are brothers and sisters. They do not appreciate property and fortune, but assess highly such social values as liberty, justice and equality. They live in primitive life conditions and possess what makes the ultimate necessity. Their inter-social relations are regulated by ancestral legal habits and moral norms (*mos maiorum*). The hero-rulers practice the authority of family father (despot) for whom the biggest duty and honor is to care about his subjects. They are true shepherd-benefactors, and the people trust them entirely – Sanasar, Meher the Elder, David, Meher the Junior. In decision making activity, they proceed from the advices of the Council of elders and keep ear to the Will of the people (Assembly)⁶⁷.

The only exception from this primary unanimity makes Parav (Old Woman) who lives farming her millet field. She is depicted as a marginal person: in youth, she was the mistress of Meher Elder and infringed the sacred order of the Sasounian exogamy. Her lame daughter is an illegitimate child.

The Second Stage is displayed by the agriculture societies. They inhabit on hill slopes and in plains tilling the soil with ploughs yoked with oxen. As a rule, they cultivate grains – wheat, barley, and millet. They are skilled in agronomy. According to the epic axiology, they are smart, industrious and moderate. At the same time, however, they are bestowed with some negative characters as well – ruse, intricacy, and egoism. The farmers are acquainted with silver, gold and market principles of exchange. Their inter-social relations are based on rational principles and strict laws. They live under monarchs who have already set up their court, administration, and military forces. The epic narrative demonstrates the said on the examples of Khlat, Kaputkogh, Baghesh (Bitliss) and other kingdoms⁶⁸.

The Epic traces antagonism between the hunters and shepherds and the farmers. From this point of view, one of its fragments is very distinctive. It is preserved merely in some versions of the narrative and represents the following scene: the

64 Surmelian L., 1964, 245.

65 Степанян А. А., 1991, 49–51.

66 About the civilization background of this division see Demirdjian Z. S. A., 2010, 13–17.

67 Степанян А. А., 1991, 44–45.

68 Степанян А. А., 1991, 45–46.

hero David, making his way from Sasoun to the village Dashtu Padrial, watches some farmers making furrows with plough. He does not understand the meaning of the work and asks them to tell about that. Hearing their explanation and yoking his horse and (even) himself to the plough, he tills the field in a short time. However, he does not believe that such *unserious work* is able to feed men. And on departure, he takes out his miraculous sword, strikes and breaks the plough.

The Third Stage displays a society which is ultimately opposite to that of Sasoun. It is represented by the Arabs and their king Msra Melik, the irreconcilable enemies of the Armenians. The Epic depicts them predominantly as the citizens of the capital of Mser (Bagdad) who spend their time in idleness and luxury. They do not like hard working and yielding material goods, but often wage wars against the neighboring countries looting their fields and herds, villages and towns. Msra Melik puts the subject nations under yoke making them to pay heavy tributes. The society of the Arabs is corrupted by silver and gold; gluttony, low affections and selfishness are their main guides. As a result, their inter-social relations are based on injustice, transgression and cruelty. And the focus of all these (and the like) negative qualities is thought to be Msra Melik who reigns as tyrant. His affective will is a law for his court and empire. His aim is to become the most powerful and wealthy ruler of the world⁶⁹.

According to the Epic, the corruption of the Arab society is able to expand and seize the other countries and societies. The overwhelming decline will not pass over Armenia as well. This prediction, as it has been demonstrated above, comes true in the days of the last epic hero Meher the Junior when the cosmos and society lose their constructive forces. It is believed to be the end of the given cosmic eon paving the way for the other one based on entirely different principles: "A grain of wheat will be as big as the berry of sweet-briar, and a grain of barley will grow to the size of a hazel-nut". This transmission will take place in accordance with the will of the Lord or Fate. Secluded in the Raven's Rock the last hero is merely a passive observer⁷⁰.

4. Eon Concept by Moses Khorenatsi

The author sees one of the cardinal ends of his *History of Armenia* in linking the local (Armenian) history with the global history⁷¹. For this purpose, he uses first of all the biblical narrative of the world creation as it is depicted in *The book of Genesis*. The focus is on the story of human generation proceeding from Adam and the first transgression entailing the expulsion from the Garden and from God [Khor., I,4,16]. The list of the patriarchs ensues from Adam to Lamech when the evil gradually began to dominate over the mankind.

a. Cataclysmic Algorithm of History

And the Lord decided "[...] to stop the impiety and evil by annihilation of the

⁶⁹ Степанян А. А., 1991, 46–47.

⁷⁰ Степанян А. А., 1988, 164.

⁷¹ Սարգսյան Գ. Խ., 1991, 72–73.

infamous men of the second age”. The evil was washed away by the Flood. The pious Noah and his family were the mere men to be spared to give a new start to the mankind.

This biblical story Moses uses to interweave the Armenian history with the universal Christian historical tradition. For this purpose, the author demonstrates his version of the list of Noha’s descendants – Sem, Ham, and Yapheth. He believes the Armenians to be generated by Yapheth and in support of this idea, he outlines his genealogy: “Yapheth begat Gamer, Gamer begat T’iras, T’iras begat Torgom, Torgom begat Hayk, Hayk begat Aramaneak, Aramaneak begat Aramayis, Aramayis begat Amasya, Amasya begat Gegham, Gegham begat Harmay, Harmay begat Aram, Aram begat Ara the Handsome” [Khor., I,5,27–37]⁷². In short, according to this assumption, the formation of the Armenian nation took place after the great catastrophe and it belonged to the fourth generation of the mankind.

The global catastrophe is mirrored to the end of Moses’ historical narrative in the form of a local cataclysm. It makes up the essence of the *‘Lament over the Removal of the Armenian Throne from the Arsacid family and of the Archbishopric from the Family of St. Gregory’* and states the following: “The winds bring snowstorms, burning heat, and pestilence, the clouds bring thunder and hail; the rains are unseasonable and useless; the air is very cold and causes frost, the rising of the waters is useless and their receding intolerable. The earth is barren of fruit and living creatures do not increase, but there are earthquakes and shakings” [Khor., III,68,40]⁷³. Taking after Philo, the author links these negative changes with the break of the sequence of the year seasons: “Spring has become dry, summer very rainy, autumn like winter, and winter has become very icy, tempestuous and extended” [Ibid.]⁷⁴. But the profound cause all of them, like in the first case, is thought to be the social corruption resulted from the Lord’s decision to abandon the Armenians⁷⁵.

Between the two poles of catastrophe, Moses composes history of the Armenia from the earliest times to the 5th century. His narrative makes up a plot having a beginning, a mid-point and an end. Together they encompass the content of history as a *living thing* with its somatic, psychic and reasoning principles⁷⁶. Their harmonic combination is believed to engender the *deeds of valor and wisdom* of outstanding historical personalities which in their turn set up the linear perspective of the past, present and (visible) future⁷⁷.

Essentially, the *deeds of valor* make up a particular pole of the Moses’ narrative

72 The crucial figure in this list is Hayk – the founder of Armenia in real historical space and time. Cf. **Petrosyan A.**, 2009, 155–163. It must be noted that in early Medieval Armenia, a steady concept circulated taking Torgom as the ethnarch of the Armenians and naming the country the *House of Torgom* (տոռն Թորգոմայ). On the ancient roots of this concept see **Ս.Տ.Երեմյան, Ի. Մ. Դյակոնով**, 1971, 195–196.

73 The cataclysmic perception made up a whole layer in the Armenian worldview system. Moreover, “une poétique de la catastrophe” is traceable in it. See in detail **Beledian K.**, 1995, 127–197.

74 **Ստեփանյան Ա.**, 2006, 250–251.

75 **Beledian K.**, 1995, 138–140.

76 **Ankersmit F. R.**, 1983, 82–89.

77 **Stepanyan A. A.**, 2013, 5–7.

opposed to those of catastrophic deficiencies. It means that every significant event and personality is to be considered in the light of three opposite poles to maintain their profound historical and epistemological content⁷⁸. In other words, the *History of the Armenians* demands intellectual activity of the reader to uncover its subtextual layers, the layers which are usually invisible for a *profane reader*.

In order to demonstrate the said, it is necessary to take into consideration the following: in his Lament, Moses catalogues the main traits of the corruption of the Armenian society. For composing this catalogue, Moses proceeds from the ideas (and phrases) of the great prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel⁷⁹. He compiles them in a strict logical consequence comprising all the estates of the society from kings to peasants.

At the same time, the author also uses the experience of the Greek philosophy to bring the biblical ideas into *intellectual motion*. I mean the Aristotelian theory of tripartite structure of every moral quality: its two extremes (ἑλλειψις καὶ ὑπερβολή) and the mean (τὸ μέσον) [cf. Aristot., EN, 1180b,10–35]⁸⁰. As a rule, the extremes are concentrated in the Lament, whereas the means are to be looked for in narrative blocks of the *History* depicting nature conditions, human beings, families, state constitutions, etc.

To the chaotic nature conditions of the *Lament*, the text of the *History* opposes the temperance of climate of Great Armenia (բարեխառնութիւն = εὐκρασία). Concerning Ayrarat valley Moses states: “At the foot of the mountains gushed forth many limpid streams, which came together to form gentle rivers. At the borders by the base of the mountains and edges of the plain in their youthful course they flow like strolling maidens” [Khor., I, 12, 11]. The Assyrian queen Semiramis was charmed: “Seeing the beauty of the land, the purity of the air, the limpidity of the flowing streams, and murmuring of the smooth rivers” [Khor. I, 16, 3]. However, the temperance can also be a result of creative actions of man. King Vagharshak demonstrates one of the examples of that: “He returned northward to the foot of Parkhar in Tayk to the wet and foggy regions of forests and moss. To this land he gave a prettier form, reducing the mountainous and tropical terrain to a temperate and delightful climate for his royal resort” [Khor., II, 6, 2]. However, the experience of Artash’s the Last looks more impressive: “But it is said that in the time of Artash’s there was no land unworked in Armenia, neither of mountain nor plain, on account of prosperity of the country” [Khor., II, 56, 5]. This was the result of high technologies of the time introduced in Armenia by the efforts of the king⁸¹.

As to the social components of the catastrophe, they are grouped in three anti-estates – the clergy (priesthood), the administrative elite (warrior-rulers), and the laity (producers). In this regard, let me remind that their representatives are depicted by Moses as the bearers of deficiency and excess of the same quality.

78 They make up the syntax of historical happening open for interpretation. Cf. **White H.**, 1978, 170–173.

79 Մարգարյան Գ. Խ., 2006, 138.

80 **Salkver S. G.**, 1990, 78–79, 116–117.

81 Աղոնց Ն., 2009, 445–455.

The first anti-estate manifests the *anti-intellect* embodied in teachers (վարդապետք), monks (կրանաւորք), bishops (վիճակաւորք), and students (աշակերտք). They are: “lovers of honor rather than lovers of God”, “lovers of commerce and buffoonery”, “lazy to study and eager to teach”. But the lowest degree of the corruption is obvious in teachers who: “[...] have become wolves (գայլք եղեալ), tearing their own flocks” [Khor., III, 68,30–33]⁸².

In contrast to these images, in the text of the *History*, Moses depicts numerous portraits of the Armenian clericals who incorporate the intellectual mean: Gregory the Illuminator, Ners's the Great, Sahak Partev. The estimation of St. Gregory seems more typical: “From the eastern regions of our land he arose as a true dawn, a spiritual ray of the divine sun, an escape from the profound evil of idolatry, the source of spiritual prosperity [...]” [Khor., II, 91,19].

The second anti-order represents the *anti-spirit* incorporated in solders (գաւրականք), princes (իշխանք), judges (դատաւորք), and kings (թագաւորք). They are: “wicked, false boasters, hating weapons, cowards, and lovers of ease”, “rebellious companions of thieves”, “inhuman, false, and deceitful”. But the real cause of this corruption is recognized in the kings: “who are cruel and evil-doers, imposing heavy and onerous burdens and giving intolerable commands” [Khor., III, 68,42]⁸³.

On the contrary, in the text of the *History*, there are numerous portraits of the kings representing the spiritual mean: Tigran the First, Vagharshak Arsacid, Artash's the Last, Tiridat the Great and the others. Tigran the First: “He was just and equal in every judgment, and he weighed all the circumstances of each case impartially. He did not envy the noble nor did he despise the humble, but over all alike he spread the mantle of his care” [Khor., I,24,13–14]. Tiridat the Great: “He chided and urged the greatest princes, and at the same time all the mass of the common people, to become true Christians so that the deeds of all might bear witness to the faith” [Khor., II, 92,6]⁸⁴.

The third anti-estate manifests the anti-somatic principle comprising the laity (ժողովրդականք). Their description is short but very exact: “The laity are arrogant, insubordinate, blusters, loafers, toppers, pernicious, and they flee their patrimonies” [Khor., III, 68,34]. Like the other anti-estates, they have lost the emotions of love and shame⁸⁵.

As to the harmony of the laity, Moses depicts it more detailed in the context of innovations of Vav gharshak Arsacid: “He ordered that the townspeople be more highly esteemed and honored than the peasants and the peasants should respect the townspeople like princes. But the townspeople were not to vaunt themselves too much over the peasants but to live on brotherly terms [...]” [Khor.,II,8,41].

In this regard, the following observation seems important: unlike the Epic,

82 Stepanyan A., 2009, 185–186.

83 Stepanyan A., 2009, 186–187.

84 Their activity gives rise to the new concept of the *Armenian Homeland* based on the new rational and spiritual technologies of the time. See Zekiyan B. L., 2000, 202.

85 Stepanyan A., 2009, 187–188.

tracing strict (vertical) antagonism between the sub-classes of the producers, Moses takes after a new social concept establishing (though hierarchical but) symmetric relationship among them: “[...] for the sake of harmony and life without rancor – which are the causes of prosperity and peace and similar [blessings]” [ibid.]. This makes the ideal end of the social partnership of individuals, families, and estates in accordance with God’s will and prescripts.

b. Recovery

All the abovesaid gives reason for formulating the *History of the Armenians* as a narrative of internal dialogue the opposite poles of which (negative or positive events, actors and values) are designed to be balanced. In the *reverse perspective* of an intellectual reader, this balance is as much real as his (immediate or mediate) acquaintance with the Aristotelian theory of excesses and harmonic mean. In other words, it seems quite possible to pass over the social corruption through the intellectual experience of the past and present generations⁸⁶.

In this light, it seems worth recalling that historical epistemology recognizes the following levels of elaboration of *historical material*: documentation, explanation, understanding and representation in writing and reading. The highest level is gained when the representation gives way to the reconstruction of history which is thought to be “its only instrument for seeking truth”⁸⁷. In the person of outstanding ancestors, the self-reflection, self-estimation, and self-correction of the society find their completion. Together they make up the perspective of historical memory to be written down in facts, terms, and concepts⁸⁸.

The scholars are unanimous that the text of Herodotus is addressed to the body of all citizens, whereas the addressees of Thucydides are the statesmen and intellectuals. The second approach was dominant in the Hellenistic Age, when the historical writings were usually composed at the royal courts being designed to meet the interests of the elite circles. They were interested in both theoretical and (especially) practical aspects of history because their target was the improving of deficiencies of the given society⁸⁹.

From this point of discussion, another side of Moses’ theory is traceable. It concerns the place of history (and the historian) in social axiology. Throughout the *History*, the author keeps this problem at the focus of his attention demonstrating the essence of the intellectual effort aimed at the transformation of the past into history⁹⁰. Following the tradition going back to Plato and Philo, he ascribes a great importance to the historiography and believes it to indicate the level of civilization of every social and ethnic entity: “[...] when we read their account we become informed about the course of world, and we learn about the state of civilization when we peruse such wise discourses and narratives – those

86 Cf. Jonker L., 2009, 197–218.

87 Ricoeur P., 2004, 376–381.

88 They give rise to the narrative plot. Ricoeur P., 1980, 174–175.

89 Hamiltom P., 1996, 9–10.

90 From this point of view, H. White’s definition of historian’s work seems more acceptable: to set up “[...] a verbal structure in the form of a prose discourse that classifies past structures and processes in order to explain what they were representing them as models” White H., 1978, 3.

of the Chaldeans, Assyrians and Helens” [Khor., I, 3,3]⁹¹.

The ideas of Moses on the purposes and skills of historical narrative make up a theme for a special investigation. As to now, it seems quite sufficient to underline some basic approaches of the author. And the first approach concerns the parallelism of *historical memory* and *historical time*⁹². According to Moses, they are interwoven and the absence of one entails the absence of the other. In the text of the *History*, such absence comprises the period from the king Vah’ to Vagharshak Arsacid: “From this point until the reign of Vagharshak in Armenia I have nothing very accurate to tell you, for there was confusion caused by factions and men rivaled each other for the control of our country” [Khor., I,31,15].

In terms of modern scholarship, Moses takes after the narrative realism holding the past as a landscape which needs to be translated into *the language of historiography*⁹³. And the essence of this translation is to replace the plastic images of the memory by the logical terms, structures and concepts of narrative⁹⁴. Moses concerns these two levels proceeding from the ideal case when the deeds of valor, wisdom and good administration of the eminent historical actors (գործք արութեան, իմաստութեան և բարեկարգութեան) engender harmonic texts: “[...] in truth those kings are worthy of praise who in written accounts fixed and ordered the annals and wise acts and inscribed each one’s valor in narratives and histories [...]” [Khor., I,3, 2]⁹⁵.

However, the narrative idealism is also present in the text of Moses. According to this approach, the written texts are active in constructing the perspective of history. In other words, the deductive influence of the text on the image of the past is one of the main features of the historiography. To accomplish this function, the historical texts are to be based on exact facts and strict logical proofs. Only in this case, it is possible to harmonize the memory of the past deeds (զյիշատակս բանից = μνήμη τῶν πραγμάτων) which in its turn paves the way to the legitimization of the historical reconstruction⁹⁶.

Among the important dimensions of this legitimization are the faithfulness of the memory (յիշողութիւն) and strict continuousness of the narrative (շարախատութիւն, շարագրութիւն): “[...] to write the history of our nation in long and useful work, to deal accurately with the kings and the princely clans and families; who descended from whom, what each of one of them did, which of the various tribes are indigenous and native and which are of foreign origin but naturalized, to set down in writing each one’s deeds and times from the time of confusion at the building of the tower up to the present [...]” [Khor., I,3,10]⁹⁷. “But I shall

91 Typologically this approach could be juxtaposed with the *within-time-ness* which represents the past interpreted and addressed in the *now*. See **Ricoeur P.**, 1980, 174.

92 Despite modernity, the ancient experience came from the equation of memory and history. See in detail **Nora P.**, 1989, 8–9.

93 **Ankersmit F. R.**, op. cit., 76; **Pitcher L.**, 2009, 97.

94 **Le Goff J.**, 1981, 61–63.

95 In common sense, the past was perceived as a sum of perfect or completed actions deserving repetition. See **Le Goff J.**, op. cit., 7–10.

96 **Cassinari F.**, 2010, 37–46.

97 B. L. Zekiyani defines Moses’ understanding of the work of historian as the following: “L’historiographie

begin to demonstrate you our [history] – whence and how [it developed]” [Khor., I,7,8]. In other words, the uninterrupted duration of the memory and narrative makes up the stability of the historical time⁹⁸.

The third important dimension of the legitimation is the order. According to Moses, a true historian is occupied with setting order (զկարգն կանոնելով) in the essence and duration of the past [Khor., I, 22]. This demands the historical narrative to be set down in strict accordance with the estheticism of content and form: “This is an important chapter, full of reliable history and worthy of the most polished and detailed exposal (և արժանի ողորկագունից և յոլովից)” [Khor., II,7,1]⁹⁹.

To understand this assumption by Moses, one must bear in mind that the ancient Greek axiology traces isomorphism between *justice, order, beauty and truth* (δικαῖον, τάξις, καλόν, καὶ ἀλήθεια)¹⁰⁰. And the truth is the most important marker of this isomorphism both in narrative and life: “[...] our account must be elegant and lucid, like Platonic works, far from falsehood and full of what opposes falsehood” [Khor., I,32,].

As regarding a true historian, he must work with *beautiful and moderate desire* (գեղեցիկ և չափաւոր մոլութեամբ) [Khor., I,1,5]. This makes quite possible the juxtaposition of his person with those of the eminent historical actors: kings and reformers, princes and priests. Following this assumption, Moses traces collaboration of two outstanding figures in the crucial periods of the Armenian history. Vagharshak Arsacid and the historian Mar Abas Catina demonstrate the best example of that¹⁰¹. As it has been noted above, the king came to Armenia after a long period of confusion and saw his main task in establishing peace and order. For this purpose, he made his mind to discover: “[...] who may have been those who ruled over the land of Armenia before me and whence the principalities that now exist here arose. For the orders of rank here are quite uncertain, as are the cults for the temples. It is not clear which is the first of the lords of this country and which is the last, nor is anything else regulated, but all is confused and uncivilized” [Khor., I,9,4–5].

For this purpose, the king found “a certain Syrian, Mar Abas Catina, a diligent man versed in Chaldean and Greek” who examined the royal archives and compiled History of the Armenian Nation: “The personable and valiant Vagharshak, skilled archer, eloquent, and intelligent, received it and estimating it as the foremost of his treasures placed it in the palace, in safekeeping, with great care; and part of it he ordered to be inscribed on a stele” [Khor., I,9,13]¹⁰².

This partnership has its symmetric analogue in the end of the *History* being

est donc essentiellement une mnémographie”, **Zekiyan B. L.**, 1987, 477.

98 **Zekiyan B. L.**, 1987, 479.

99 Cf. **Halliwell S.**, 2002, 44–50.

100 **Price A. W.**, 1997, 381–384; **Cooper J. M.**, 1999, 82–83, 110–111.

101 **Պլտեան Գ.**, 1992, 116–119.

102 In other words, the king hoped to promulgate the important facts and ideas of the Armenian history making them the elements of social memory in sacral and rational senses. Cf. **J. D. Bolter**, 1991, 43–46.

represented by the hazarapet (head of the administration) of Great Armenia Sahak Bagratid and the historian Moses Khorenatsi. They lived in the time of the final corruption of the Armenian society described in the *Lament* and were anxious in restoring the former glory of the country using the glorious images and ideas of the past¹⁰³. The prince sponsored Moses in composing his work, and their *dialogue* passes through all the *History* being marked sometimes with full consensus and peaceful conversation, sometimes with disagreement and (even) irritation. However, they both understood the significance of history for social stability linking it with the continuity of *the Armenian historical memory and time* from the earliest ages up to the present.

In Moses' estimation, this task was unprecedented and its initiator deserved to be praised highly: "For if on account of our reason, as it is said, we are the image of God, and furthermore if the virtue of a rational being lies in intellection and you have an assiduous desire for these matters, then by keeping alive and aflame the spark of your intellect by such noble discernment, you ornament reason, whereby you remain the image. Thus you may be said to make reason's archetype rejoice, being moved and stirred to this goal by a noble yet moderated passion" [Khor., I,1,5].

These words, certainly, contain as well some features of Moses' self-estimation intending to set forth the panorama of the past with his artistic skills and methods. For him, the historical reflection is an effective way for regaining the life in accordance with the Nature and God's will. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the author saw the cause of the global corruption of his time in the fact that: "Reverence for God has been forgotten (սննացեալ) and expectation is for hell" [Khor., III, 68,43].

In epistemological scope, the problem concerns the (social and individual) memory and knowledge, on the one hand, and oblivion and ignorance, on the other hand. The concept, obviously, goes back to Socrates' theory tracing the main resource of public order and harmony in knowledge¹⁰⁴. Moses comes back to this assumption through Plato and (more probably) through Philo of Alexandria.

5. Epilogue

One of the basic concepts of ancient history views its beginning and final point in the two poles of cosmic catastrophe. The concept has already existed in the mythological traditions being further elaborated in various philosophical systems. The platonic system, which is thought to be the most adequate expression of that, connects the cosmic and social catastrophes in a single historical event. Their mutual influence is depicted in a series of rational (causative) transactions – social, political, moral, religious, individual, etc. But unlike the mythological tradition, Plato does not find the corruption as the unavoidable end of history. In some cases, he manifests the *conditional understanding of history* when the set of memory, knowledge and volition of outstanding personalities is (really or hypo-

103 Պլտեան Գ., 1992, 121.

104 Hadot P., 1995, 266–269; J. Mclelland S., 1996, 23–27.

thetically) capable to change its course¹⁰⁵.

Independently, the great biblical prophets also came to the understanding of the importance of human senses, ideas and volition for the sanity of the society and cosmos. However, they viewed these dimensions in the scope of the holy prescripts of justice and moral duty and depicted the possibility of overpassing the catastrophe as a comeback to the mercy of the omnipotent Lord. The idea was very attractive for the early Christian intellectuals since they held the human being as *God's image*. As to Philo, he saw his purpose in completing this comeback course with the data of the Greek philosophical anthropology. He proposed a system of education aimed at the formation of the elite able to pave the way from everyday affections and pleasures to the divine moral values.

Moses Khorenatsi has adopted these assumptions keeping at the same time the Armenian mythological experience in the focus of his consideration. He denies archetype of the last epic hero, Meher the Junior, who is waiting in his seclusion for the world to change. He considers the Armenian past in the light of active social volition based on the knowledge of the essence and significance of history. He believes also that catastrophes are possible to pass over by using the experience of the former generations generalized in historical concepts. And he estimates his *History of the Armenians* as a self-sufficient system focused on the elaboration of positive social values and structures. This purpose demands an intellectual eye (reader) ready to elaborate the golden mean of the mind and behavior from the extremes of the text. This approach underlines the adherence of Moses to the intellectual movement engendered by St. Mashtots (յունաբան դպրոց) whose credo was encoded in the first sentence of Bible translated into Armenian: "For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight" [Prov., I, 2].

¹⁰⁵ There was a well-known maxim in the Hellenistic time attesting: "[...] men have no more ready corrective of conduct than knowledge of the past" [Polyb., I, 1, 3].

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ՏԻԵՂԵՐԱԿԱՆ ԵՎ ԸՆԿԵՐԱՅԻՆ ՇՐՋԱՊՏՈՒՅՏԻ ԳԱՂԱՓԱՐԸ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՄՏԱՎՈՐ ԱՎԱՆԴՈՒՅԹՈՒՄ («Սասնա ծռեր», Մովսես Խորենացի)

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Տիեզերական և ընկերային շրջապտույտի գաղափարն առկա է Արևելքի և Արևմուտքի ժողովուրդների առասպելափառական ավանդույթներում: Իր հետագա զարգացմամբ այն ծնունդ է տվել իմաստասիրական տարաբնույթ տեսությունների:

Արևմտյան մտքի ծիրում անգնահատելի է Պղատոնի դերակատարությունը: Նրա *Տիմեոս* և *Օրենքներ* տրամախոսությունները համարվում են դիտարկվող գաղափարի լավագույն իմաստասիրական մշակումները: Հոդվածում դրանք լուսաբանվում են արդի գիտական մոտեցումների համաձիգում՝ ուրվագծելով հետևյալ պատկերը: Տիեզերքն ստեղծվել է Արարչի կամոք՝ չորս նախատարրերի ներդաշնակ համադրությամբ: Այն պարառում է գոյակարգի բոլոր մակարդակները՝ սկսած աստղերից մինչև մարդը: Սակայն ժամանակ առ ժամանակ տիեզերքը ենթարկվում է համընդհանուր կարգախեղման, սկսում է գերակայել նախատարրերից մեկը՝ հաճախ հուրը կամ ջուրը: Կարգախեղումն ունի նաև իր ընկերային նախապատճառները՝ մարդկային համակեցության ծիրում սկիզբ առնող անարդարությունն ու ընչաքաղցությունը, եսասիրությունն ու ապօրինությունը: Արարումից մինչև կարգախեղումն ընկած ժամանակը մեկ տիեզերատարի է՝ էոն: *Օրենքներում* Պղատոնն ստեղծել է էոնի մասին իմաստասիրական մի առասպելույթ, որտեղ հատկանշվում են ընկերային կյանքի կերպափոխությունները՝ սկսած լեռնագագաթներում բնակվող որսորդների և հովիվների համակեցական ուտոպիայից մինչև ծովահայաց քաղաքների անկումն ու վերասերումը:

Համանման պատկերացումներ առկա են աստվածաշնչյան (Հին և Նոր կտակարաններ) իմաստության ծիրում: Սակայն ամենակար Արարչի դերակատարությունն այստեղ առավել շեշտված է: Համաձայն մարգարեների՝ Նա համընդհանուր կամ տեղական կարգախեղումներով նպատակ ունի պահ-

պանել մարդկության սերուցքը և ապահովել նրա մտահոգևոր զարգացումը մինչ այն աստիճան, երբ այն կհասնի իր կոչմանը՝ դառնալով *պայակերն Աստծոյ*: Նման ընկալումը քրիստոնեությունը դարձրեց իր վախճանաբանության հիմնագաղափարը՝ կառուցված ամկա նյութական աշխարհի քանդման և նոր աշխարհի հիմնադրման հավատքի վրա: Այնտեղ մուտք կունենան ուղղամիտ և ուղղակեցաղ անձինք միայն: Փիլոն Աղեքսանդրացին համադրեց աստվածաշնչյան և պղատոնական ավանդույթները՝ ճանապարհ հարթելով ապագա *խնասրասիրական քրիստոնեության* համար, որի աղդեցությունը հույժ զգալի է վաղ միջնադարի հայոց աշխարհատեսության վրա:

Տիեզերական էոնի գաղափարը հայոց միջավայրում ստորև քննվում է նախ և առաջ ըստ *Սասնա ծռերի*, որի բովանդակությունը դիտարկվում է *քառսից-քառս* պատումային ալգորիթմի ծիրում: Քառսի առաջին բևեռը Ադի ծովն է, որի ափերին դեգերում է հերոսների նախամայր ծովիկնարը, երկրորդը՝ Աշխարհը, որն այլևս չի դիմանում վերջին հերոսի՝ Միեր Կրտսերի, ծանրության ներքո: Դրանց միջև ծավալվում է ընկերային համակեցության պատմությունն ու կառույցը: Պատկերն ընդհանուր գծերով զուգահեռ է պղատոնական պատկերին. լեռնագագաթին Սասնա որսորդների և հովիվների ընկերային ուտոպիան է, լեռնալանջերին հողագործների համակեցությունը: Ինչ վերաբերվում է քաղաքին, ապա այն պատկերում է ընկերային քառսի միջավայրը՝ ներկայացված նախ և առաջ ըստ Մարի օրինակի, որը բարոյական անկումի և բռնատիրության միջավայր է: Ի տարբերություն Պղատոնի, ասքի վերջին հերոսը կրավորական է. փակվել է Ագռավի քարում և սպասում է, որ աշխարհը փոխվի:

Այլ է պատկերը Մովսես Խորենացու համակարգում: Նրա պատումը նույնպես ծավալվում է *քառսից-քառս* ալգորիթմով՝ համաաշխարհային Ջրիեղեղից մինչև իր դարաշրջանի կարգախեղումը՝ նկարագրված *Ողբում*: Ջրիեղեղի և դրանով պայմանավորված մարդկության վերընծյուղման աստվածաշնչյան պատումը Պատմահայրն օգտագործում է հայոց (տեղական) պատմությունը համաաշխարհային պատմությանը ներհյուսելու նպատակով. նահապետ Հայկը սերում է Նոյի Հաբեթ որդուց:

Ինչ վերաբերվում է վերջին քառսին, ապա դրա նպատակն է ուրվագծել հայոց համակեցական նոր սկզբի հեռանկարը: Ասվածի հնարավորությունը կախված է *Պայրմության* ընթերցողի մտավոր հորիզոնից: *Ողբի* ծիրում պատկերված բնության և պետության, մարդկանց և հանրախմբերի հակադրականերին (տվյալ որակի պակասույթը կամ հավելույթը) *Պայրմության* տեքստում հակադրված է դրանց իդեալական միջինը: Արիստոտելյան տեսությամբ համաբերված այս մոտեցումը Խորենացու պատումը դարձնում է ինքնաբավ համակարգ, որի համաձիրում ընթանում է տեքստի ինքնանորացում՝ ըստ կառուցիկ ընկերային և բարոյական արժեքների: Համապատասխան գործողությունական կամքի ամկայությամբ դրանքի զորու են բարեփոխել համակեցական միջավայրը: Հուսկ բացահայտվում է պատմագրության բուն իմաստը՝ ներուժ ներարկելու հանրույթին՝ հաղթահարելու քառսիկ կարգախեղումները: Հենց այս ըմբռնման համաձիրում էլ պետք է փնտրել սեփական առաքելության խորենացիական գիտակցությունը:

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ИДЕЯ КОСМИЧЕСКОГО И СОЦИАЛЬНОГО КРУГОВОРОТА В АРМЯНСКОЙ ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЙ ТРАДИЦИИ (Эпос “Сасна црер”, Мовсес Хоренаци)

РЕЗЮМЕ

Идея космического и социального круговорота зародилась в мифопоэтических традициях Востока и Запада. В своем дальнейшем развитии она привела к образованию философских теорий и воззрений.

В рамках западного интеллектуального опыта весьма значительна роль Платона. В его трактатах “Тимей” и “Законы” рассматриваемая идея получила наиболее всестороннюю философскую трактовку. Согласно последней, космос сотворен по воле Творца путем гармоничного сочетания четырех первоэлементов; он охватывает все уровни бытия, начиная от звезд и планет, кончая человеком. Однако космос время от времени подвергается катастрофе по той причине, что в нем начинает преобладать один из первоэлементов – чаще всего, огонь или вода. Но катастрофа имеет также социальные предпосылки – несправедливость и корыстолюбие, эгоизм и беззаконие. Время от космотворчества до катастрофы составляет один вселенский эон. В “Законах” Платон создал философский миф об одном эоне, в рамках которого описываются метаморфозы социальной жизни – от утопии нагорных пастырей до упадка и хаоса приморских городов. Аналогичные воззрения наблюдаются и в текстах Старого и Нового Заветов. В них творческая воля и активность Творца более актуальна. По словам великих пророков, посредством всеобщих и локальных катастроф, Он стремится спасти лучшую часть человечества и призван обеспечивать ее развитие до тех пор, пока она не станет Его образом и подобием. Эта теория и легла в основу христианской эсхатологии, требующей создания нового мира на обломках старого. Филон Александрийский объединил платоновскую и библейскую традиции, открыв путь для

философского христианства, влияние которого весьма ощутимо на армянское мировоззрение раннего средневековья.

Идея зона актуальна и в армянском эпосе “Сасна Црер”, сюжет которого также построен по нарративному алгоритму *от хаоса к хаосу*. Первый полюс представляет Солёное море, на берегах которого бродит мучимая жаждой праматерь сасунских героев Цовинар. Что касается второго полюса, то он воплощен в мире, который уже потерял свою структурность, как в физическом, так и в моральном плане. Между данными полюсами проходит линия эпической наррации, социология которой во многом параллельна социологии Платона: на горных вершинах расположена утопическая община сасунских охотников и скотоводов, на склонах гор – общины земледельцев, на равнинах – города, где жизнь отмечена несправедливостью и моральным упадком. Характерным примером городов представлен Мсыр – стольный город злейших врагов армян. Однако эпос существенно отличается от платоновской и библейской традиций: его последний герой, Мгер Младший – пассивный объект социальности, укрывающийся в Аграви Каре в ожидании дня, когда мир изменится.

Качественно иную картину представляет “История Армении” Мовсеса Хоренаци. Ее наррация также построена по формуле *от хаоса к хаосу* – от всемирного Потопа до всеобщего упадка, описанного в *Плаче*. Библейский сюжет о Потопе автор использует желая вписать армянскую (локальную) историю в канву всемирной истории: этнарх армян Хайк потомок Яфета, сына Ноя.

Что же касается второго полюса хаоса, то его описание имеет целью очертить перспективу нового начала армянского идентитета. Его возможность во многом зависит от интеллектуальных способностей читателя *Истории*. Упадку природы и государства, индивидов и социальных групп *Плача* в тексте *Истории* противопоставлены их идеальные образы (середины). И читателю предстоит труд с их помощью преодолевать хаос мысленно. А это, в свою очередь, означает, что при наличии духовной элиты и креативной социальной воли можно вернуть благосостояние общества. В свете сказанного раскрывается тот глубинный смысл, который Хоренаци приписывает истории – помочь современникам и потомкам избегать социальных катастроф с помощью знания. В этом автор видел и свою творческую миссию.

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