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A NEW LOOK AT THE ARIUS' PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Abstract: The author could not disagree with Rowan Williams famous research "Arius, Heresy and Tradition" that the possible sources of the Arian heresy lay mostly in Neo-Platonic philosophy, especially in the attempt to harmonize Aristotle with the Platonic tradition. However he adds to his arguments another one that he did not mention, namely, the adoption of a specific hierarchical interpretation of the categories of Aristotle and the refusal to apply them to God. He also does not agree with him that to Arius the strictly philosophical issues are of small concern.

Keywords: Patristic literature, Late Antiquity, Christian interpretation of Aristotle, Neo-Platonism and Christianity

It is well known that most of the historical research studies on 4th century Christian theology were done in the 19th and in the first half of the 20th centuries. However, even until the end of the 20th century scholars have enjoyed the publication of remarkable works dealing with fundamental theological problems of the Ancient Church. In the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the majority of the studies promoted the view that the earlier Triadological debates are a reflection of the quarrel between the two main philosophical schools – Platonism and Aristotelism. Most of the studies assume that the famous heretic Arius takes the side of Aristotle while the Fathers of the Church follow Plato. The most serious research study which puts Arius within the Aristotelian tradition is a text by J. de Ghellinck.¹ He accepts as a presupposition of his work that Arius is a staunch follower of Aristotle. In the Orthodox academic milieu Fr. George Florovsky somewhat uncritically adopts this position.² But at the end of the 20th century another opinion was raised by

1 Joseph de Ghellinck, "Quelques appreciations de la dialectique et d'Aristote durant les conflits trinitaires du IV^e siècle". *RHE* 36 (1930), p. 5-42. The same position we see in Adolf Harnack's *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. II (4. Aufl., Tübingen, 1909) and T.E. Pollard's *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (SNTS Monograph Series 13, Cambridge 1970) and "The Origins of Arianism". *Journal of Theological Studies*. N.s. 9 (1958), p. 103-111; "Logos and Son in Origen, Arius and Athanasius". *Studia Patristica* 2 (1957), 282-287.

2 George Florovsky, *Collected Works, Volume 7: Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (Buchervertriebsanstalt: Vaduz, Europa, 1987). On Bulgarian academic soil his point is uncritically accepted by Totyu Koev, *The Dogmatic Formula of the First Fourth Ecumenical Council* (Sofia: Synod Publishers, 1968) (in Bulgarian). Much more moderate but again in the same direction are the thoughts of a famous Orthodox theologian George Martzelos: Γ. Μαρτζέλου, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον. Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστοριοδογματικὴν διερεύνησιν τῆς περὶ οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργειῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ διδασκαλίας τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* (Θεσσαλονίκη, 21993, p. 33). Cf. Γ. Μαρτζέλου, «Ἡ ἔννοια τῆς θεότητος καὶ ἡ ἔννοια τῆς δημιουργίας κατὰ τοὺς Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Δυὸ σημεῖα συγκρούσεως τῆς πατερικῆς σκέψεως μὲ τὴν ἀρχαία ἐλληνικὴ φιλοσοφία». In: Γ. Μαρτζέλου, *Ὁρθόδοξο*

Rowan Williams in his basic work *Arius, Heresy and Tradition*.³ The key points in his work were developed in an earlier text.⁴ Williams' work is currently widely regarded as the best study on Arius' theology. He identifies five ways where the Alexandrian presbyter Arius could be considered as following contemporary Neo-Platonism. First, Arius, under the influence of Porphyry's *Isagoge*, critiqued one of Bishop Alexander's phrases in relation to the Son – τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας ἴδιος, as reducing the Son to an impersonal property or attribute of the Father and introducing in this way the heresy of Sabellianism. Second, if the Father and the Son participate in some preexisting divine substance (οὐσία), it would be divisible, i.e. it would destroy the divine simplicity and in this way the Son would be a μέρος ὁμοούσιον of the Father. Third, if the Father and the Son are equal by honor, it would lead to existence of two ingenerate beings, of two beginnings. Fourth, R. Williams also treats in a numerological way the use of the word δυνάς in Arius, as applied to the Son as "a second God", finding some parallels with the numerological treatises of Anatolius and Iamblichus. Fifth, he finds Neo-Platonic roots (*Ennead V* of Plotinus) in the idea that the Son does not know His own substance so that it is impossible for Him to have some knowledge of the substance of the Father. In both texts Rowan Williams considers Arius as an adequate thinker who does not initiate the dispute but keeps a principal philosophical attitude towards his inadequate bishop. After his words, "it would be a mistake to accuse him [Arius] of distorting theology to serve the ends of philosophical tidiness. On the contrary: the strictly philosophical issues are of small concern to Arius and his understanding of the completely undetermined character of God's will allows him to bypass the issue of how it is conceivable that plurality should come out of unity".⁵

In his article "Was Arius a Neo-Platonist?"⁶ Christopher Stead argues against such an interpretation. Without rejecting the whole idea about the Neo-Platonic influences on the Christian thinkers of the 4th century, he proposes a simpler explanation of the five points sketched by R. Williams. However, as we shall see, there is a very important point of dependence in Arian theology on the Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle that seems to have been missed in the above discussion.

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Without separating the debates of 4th century from the discussions of the late 3rd century we can point out that in 318 Arius, being already an old man started preaching that the Son of God is created and therefore there was a time when He did not exist. He is therefore not unbegotten (οὐκ ἀγέν[ν]ητος). But the basic characteristic of God is that He is not begotten (ἀγέν[ν]ητος).⁷ In two of his letter, to Eusebius of Nicomedia and to Alexander of Alexandria, Arius explains that while God is without beginning and is not begotten, the Son has a beginning of His existence (ἀρχὴν ἔχει ὁ Υἱὸς ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ἀναρχὸς ἔστιν).⁸

δόγμα καὶ θεολογικὸς προβληματισμός. Μελετήματα δογματικῆς θεολογίας Β' (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 2000, p. 56 sq.).

3 R. Williams, *Arius, Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987); "The Logic of Arianism". *JThSt* 34 (1983), p. 56-81.

4 R. Williams, "The Logic of Arianism". *JThSt* 34 (1983), p. 56-81.

5 R. Williams, *Arius, Heresy and Tradition*, p. 230.

6 Chr. Stead, "Was Arius a Neo-Platonist?" *SP* 32 (2001), p. 39-51.

7 See E. Boularand, "Les débuts d'Arius". *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 65 (1964), p. 187; Pollard, T. E., "The Origins of Arianism". *JThSt* n.s. 9 (1958), p. 103-104.

8 Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses*, 69, 6: *Epistola Arian ad Eusebium* (PG 42, 212B).

In the letter to his bishop Alexander he puts the emphasis on the unity of God and avoids very carefully calling God 'Father'. When he speaks about the begetting of the Son, he relates it not to the Father but to God.⁹ The only time when he calls God 'Father' he quotes the words of Bishop Alexander.¹⁰ In his later works including the poem *Thaleia*¹¹ and the *Letter of Arius and Euzonius to Constantine*¹² 'Father' is used not in triadological but in a cosmological context – as a Father-creator of everything.

At the beginning of his letter to the bishop Alexander Arius uses, in his own words, some materialistic concepts to describe the relation between the Father and the Son. In this context he refused the term ὁμοούσιος as a possible expression of the relation between the Father and the Son. The letter was signed jointly by a group of five presbyters, sixth deacons and five bishops. They refused to use statements according to which the Son is an emanation (προβολήν), as in the system of Valentinus, or a "coessential part", as in Manichean thought. They also refused to agree with Sabellius that one and the same is Son and Father (υἱοπάτορα), as well as refused the statement of Hierax that the Son is light from the Light. At the end of the paragraph they accept a preexistent Word, who is before the material world and who came into existence after His begetting as Son of God.

It is important to realize that, in order to understand the problem of Arius with the term τὸ ὁμοούσιον, we need to examine the term οὐσία in its philosophical context. First, this term was systematically used by Aristotle in the fifth chapter of his *Categories*.¹³ Aristotle accepts two kinds of οὐσία – primary one and secondary.

The primary substances (οὐσίαι) are most properly called substances (μάλιστα οὐσίαι λέγονται)¹⁴ and in the most strict way are substances (αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι... κυριώτατα οὐσίαι),¹⁵ "in virtue of the fact that they are the entities which underlie everything else, and that everything else is either predicated of them or present in them" (διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα κατὰ τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι ἢ ἐν ταύταις εἶναι)¹⁶. They are indivisible, so that they are just one single being.¹⁷

9 See *ibid. Epistola Arii ad Alexandrum* (PG 42, 213-216). The same letter is preserved in the works of St. Athanasius – *Epistola de synodis* (PG 26, 708D-712A).

10 See *ibid. Epistola Arii ad Eusebium* (PG 42, 209-213).

11 The fragments of Θάλεια see in St. Athanasius, *De synodis*, 15 (PG 26, 705C-708C); cf. G. Bardy, "La Thalie d'Arius". *Revue de philologie, de littérature et d'histoire* 53 (1927), 211-233.

12 Preserved in Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I, 26 (PG 67, 149B-152A), as well as in Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* II, 27 (PG 67, 1012A-1013A).

13 See *Categoriae*, V, 2a 11-4b 19. Aristotle, *Selected Works in 6 vols. Vol. I, The Organon, Part I*, Translated with Introduction and Notes by Ivan Christov, "Zachary Stoyanov", Sofia 2008, (bilingual Greek and Bulgarian edition).

14 *Ibid.* 2c 15-17.

15 *Ibid.* 2c 37-38.

16 See *Categoriae*, V, 2c 15-19; 2c 37-3a 4: ἔτι αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα κατὰ τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι ἢ ἐν ταύταις εἶναι διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα οὐσίαι λέγονται· ὡς δέ γε αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ἔχουσιν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ εἶδος πρὸς τὸ γένος ἔχει... ἔτι αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι κυριώτατα οὐσίαι λέγονται· ὡς δέ γε αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ἔχουσιν, οὕτω τὰ εἶδη καὶ τὰ γένη τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν πρὸς τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα ἔχει· κατὰ τούτων γὰρ πάντα τὰ λοιπὰ κατηγορεῖται.

17 *Ibid.*, 3b 10-12: Πᾶσα δὲ οὐσία δοκεῖ τόδε τι σημαίνειν. ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν πρώτων οὐσιῶν ἀναμφισβήτητον καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν ὅτι τόδε τι σημαίνει· ἄτομον γὰρ καὶ ἐν ἀριθμῷ τὸ δηλούμεόν ἐστιν.

In regard to the secondary substances (οὐσίαι), they reside in all the beings in which they are shared. For instance the concepts of man, horse, animal and so on are secondary substances. They can be predicated in relation to single beings who participate respectively in the kind of man, horse, animal and so on. On the contrary, a specific man as an individual is a primary substance because there is not any other reality which is identical with him as such. In such a way we discover the secondary substances in the primary ones and, in this sense, they are not substances in a strict way. The result is that the secondary substances are constituted by many primary substances and they are complex (σύνθετοι).

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle examines in great detail the theory about the substance but there, as well as in the other of Aristotle's works, he does not discuss very clearly the reality of a divine substance as such.¹⁸ For that reason, on one hand, the Peripatetic tradition had to interpret the difference between the primary substances (οὐσίαι πρῶται or οὐσίαι μερικάι, or κατὰ μέρος οὐσίαι) and the secondary substances (οὐσίαι δευτέραι or οὐσίαι καθόλου). On the other hand, the Neo-Platonic interpretation had to put them in the context of the speculation about the divinity.¹⁹

At the end of the 3rd century the Neo-Platonist Porphyry of Tyrus published *An Introduction and Commentary (Isagoge)* of Aristotle's *Categories*. In respect to the substances (οὐσίαι) Porphyry clearly distinguishes the content of the individual substance by giving a priority to the γένος-εἶδος structure.²⁰ In the work *Isagoge* (VII, 21-23) the primary substances are always individual and isolated. They are the real substances. He calls them particular substances (οὐσίαι μερικάι).²¹ The secondary ones are communicable and in some way open to individuals, so that they are divisible.

The term ὁμοούσιος is introduced in the philosophic tradition by Plotinus in his *Enneads*. Following Plotinus the neo-platonic writers as Porphyry and Iamblichus interpret the Aristotelian primary substances as individual and closed realities which can not be ὁμοούσιοι. It turned out that nobody can be ὁμοούσιος to his similar in his own individuality. That is why the adjective ὁμοούσιος can be perceived only for beings who share one and the same secondary substance. Their accidents (συμβεβηκότα) mark their individuality and can be different but, nevertheless, they share their coessential part (μέρος ὁμοούσιον). In this respect it is important to point out the Neo-Platonic interpretation of the substances in Iamblichus' book *On the Mysteries*. Iamblichus says that transcendental realities can not be part of complex substances like in the world of sense perception. He observes that in the empirical world different elements combine themselves in a whole complex reality which he calls ὁμοούσιον (he uses also the words ὁμοειδές and ὁμοφνές). The transcendent, he says, is unchangeable and could not be mixed. Therefore it could not have parts and components. In the hierarchy of the substances the lower substance can participate in the supreme one only indirectly.²²

18 See *Metaphysica*, VII, VIII, IX, XII, 1-5, 1028a 10-1041b 34; 1042a 1-1045b 26; 1045b 27-1025a 13; 1069a 18-1071b 2. And concretely *Ibid.*, VI, 1, 1025b 1-1026a 34 и XII, 6, 1071b 3-1072a 19, he encounters the unchangeable and invisible divine substance but without deepening in the subject.

19 A. Tuilier, "Le sens du terme ὁμοούσιος dans le vocabulaire théologique d'Arius et de l'École a' Antioche". *SP* 3 (1961), p. 424.

20 Ivan Christov, "The terms οὐσία and ὑπόστασις in 38 Letter of St. Basil the Great". *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, Heft IV, LIK Verlag, Sofia-Munich 1997, p. 32. (in Bulgarian)

21 *Porphyrii Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* (CAG IV,1, p. 88-100).

22 *De mysteriis*, III, 21 [150.9], Transl. with Introd. and Notes by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon,

Following this logic it seems that for the Neo-Platonists God could be just a primary substance because, if He is a secondary one and if the Son is a coessential part (μέρος ομοούσιον) of the Father, this kind of complexity would make God changeable and would lead to the existence of another, initial third substance.

We should not forget another very important element of the Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle. The Neo-Platonic commentators of Aristotle like Ammonius,²³ Olympiodorus²⁴ and Simplicius²⁵ make a clear distinction between the first four categories of Aristotle (οὐσία, τὸ ποιόν, τὸ ποσόν, πρὸς τι) and the other six categories (ποιεῖν, πάσχειν, ποῦ, ποτέ, κείσθαι, ἔχειν) by pointing out that the second group of categories is formed by means of combinations of the categories in the first group which are primary. In this way they put them in a hierarchical system which is typical of Neo-Platonism and which seems to create an artificial “harmony” between Aristotle and Plato. Such attempt to put the categories of Aristotle into a Neo-Platonic hierarchy leads to the conclusion that not all the categories could be applied to transcendent realities.²⁶ Hence in Neo-Platonism it is impossible to use any of the Aristotelian categories in the case of the Divine.

In between we have to point out that the Peripatetic logic and teaching about the substances was used by the six bishops who condemned Paul of Samosata in 268/9 in Antioch. They accepted οὐσία as an individual reality in order to expose the Sabellian teaching of Paul and to unmask his understanding of ομοούσιον. The key point here is that the peripatetic speculation in this period of time was subject to a very active reinterpretation by the promoters of the emerging Neo-Platonism which probably made Aristotelian thought come to Arius through a Neo-Platonic mediator.

In this perspective it seems that Arius followed the conciliar experience of the six bishops from the council of Antioch and attributed to each of the persons of the Trinity and individual οὐσία.²⁷ Maybe he believed that τὸ ομοούσιον makes the divine substance a secondary one, i.e. a composite and changeable substance inside of the reality that is subject to sense perception. Arius refuses to accept one single substance for the three persons of the Holy Trinity because, in the logic of Aristotle, it would not be anymore a real substance, but rather a secondary one. Within a Neo-Platonic perspective this would imply a complex substance that could be observed in the world of the sense perception alone; it would be also another substance, different from the Father and the Son but composed by them both. Obviously he rebukes his bishop Alexander who preaches that the Son is a coessential part of the Father²⁸ because μέρος ομοούσιον is the exact phrase we find in the text of the letter

Jackson P. Hershbell, 2003, p. 170-172.

23 *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarius* (CAG IV, 5, p. 92,6-17).

24 *In Categorias commentarium* (CAG XII, 1, p. 54,4-26).

25 *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium* (CAG VIII, p. 295,4-296,1).

26 See V. Todorova&Chr. Todorov, “About the Other six categories. A problem of logic in the Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle”. *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, Heft XV, LIK Verlag, Sofia-Munich 2009, p. 7-32. (in Bulgarian)

27 According to St. Epiphanius, the bishops who excommunicated Paul of Smosata in 268/9 in Antioch, were ascribing individual or primary substance to the Son (*Adv. haer.*, 78, 12. PG 42, 428A-C); he points out that they understood οὐσία as ὑπόστασις and refused the existence of only one single divine substance (οὐσία) on its own. This reference implies a theological reflection in which the logic of Aristotle plays a very important role and which the Alexandrian presbyter Arius seems to have faithfully followed.

28 Probably the same objection raised the six bishops who excommunicated in 268/9 Paul of Samosata because he merges the Persons of the Trinity. Later St. Basil says that opponents of Paul apprehended the

of Arius to Alexander.²⁹

What we could presume is that for Arius the Father and the Son are individual indivisible substances which in Aristotle and in Porphyry are primary substances. But within the context of an unquestionable monotheism this leads to nonsense since it implies the existence of two deities.³⁰ Therefore Arius rejects such teaching and emphasizes that it destroys the divine monarchy (μοναρχία). If both the Father and the Son existed together as two components in relation to each other they, according to Arius, would be two divine principles. The reason for that is that, according to the Aristotelian logic, the Father and the Son must be two principles in order to be correlative (ἀντιστρέφοντα).³¹ This is exactly the reason why Arius said that God is before the Son Who did not exist before being born (οὐκ ἦν πρὶν γένηται).³² In his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia Arius is absolutely direct in his statement that the Son is “established”, “born” and “created” and that He did not exist before being created by the will of God out of nothing but not out of God’s substance.³³ Hence Arius presumes that God has to be regarded as God in Himself before the existence of the Son and before the Revelation of God as Father.³⁴ In the quoted letter to Alexander we find the following passage: “God, the first cause, is absolutely one, without beginning. The Son, born by the Father out of time, is created and shaped before the ages and He did not exist before being born. But already born out of the time, before all other things, He has his existence from the Father. He is not eternal, neither coeternal with the Father, neither is unbegotten together with Him (συναγέννητος): He does not have being together with the Father, as some people say, as being in relation, introducing in this way two uncreated principles (οὐδὲ ἅμα τῷ Πατρὶ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, ὥς τινες λέγουσι τὰ πρὸς τι, δύο ἀγεννήτους ἀρχὰς εἰσηγούμενοι). But as a monad and universal principle God is beyond everything”.³⁵

We see that the Son has His beginning and there was a pre-time period when He did not exist. According to Arius He is just a creature (κτίσμα, ποίημα) similar to all other creatures.³⁶

It should be pointed out that in this text there is a very important allusion to the philosophical terminology and spirit of the time. According to this letter as well as according to a statement of Theodoretus in the middle of the 5th century, Arius considered the three divine persons as irrelative individual (primary) substances.³⁷ The fact that Arius mentions the substances in their relation is not occasional. In the late 3rd and early 4th

ὁμοούσιον would not introduce partition in the divine substance (οὐσία) (*Epistula LII*. PG 32, 393A). According A. Tuilier this testimony is evidence that the bishops who judged Paul based their arguments on Aristotle’s logic (*Op. cit.*, p. 424-425).

29 Interestingly enough in this letter the phrase μέρος ὁμοούσιον is ascribed to the Manicheans: Athanasius, *Epistola de synodis*, 16 (PG 26, 709A); Epiphanius, *Adv. haer.*, 69, 7 (PG 42, 213B).

30 See Athanasius, *Oratio I adversus Arianos*, 14 (PG 26, 40C-41D).

31 *Categoriae*, VII,6b 28 sq.

32 Athanasius, *Epistola de sententia Dionysii*, 4 (PG 25, 485A).

33 Epiphanius, *Adv. haer.* 69, 6: *Epistola Ariani ad Eusebium* (PG 42, 209-212).

34 Cf. Alexandrus, *Op. cit.* (PG 18, 573AC).

35 Athanasius, *Epistola de synodis* 16 (PG 26, 709BC). Epiphanius also quotes the same text: *Adv. Haer.*, 69, 8. PG 42, 216A). He refers this text almost word by word except the συναγέννητος instead συναγέννητος.

36 See Athanasius, *Oratio I adversus Arianos*, 6 (PG 26, 24A); *Ibid.* col 21AB: θελήσας [ὁ Θεός] ἡμᾶς δημιουργῆσαι, τότε δὲ πεποίηκεν ἓνα τινὰ καὶ ὠνόμασεν αὐτὸν Λόγον καὶ Σοφίαν καὶ Υἱόν.

37 See Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Eranistes, Dial. I* (PG 83, 113A); cf. Athanasius, *Epistola de synodis*, 16. (PG 26, 709BC); Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses*, 69 (PG 42, 216A).

century Church the Aristotelian category “relation” (the technical term is πρὸς τι) has had probably become a conventional way of expressing the simultaneous existence of the Father and Son.³⁸ At the beginning of the triadological debates some Christian thinkers most probably have had already resorted to Aristotle’s help in using this category to explain how the Father and the Son existed simultaneously (they are given together, ἅμα τῷ Πατρὶ τὸ εἶναι ἔχει, ὥς τινες λέγουσιν) and eternally.³⁹

Obviously Arius as criticized the Church use of the Aristotle’s category of “relation” as it is explained in chapter 7th of the *Categories* and applied to transcendent realities.⁴⁰ Most probably the basic text in Aristotle that was used as a basis was: “It is obvious that the sides in one relation are given by nature together” (δοκεῖ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τι ἅμα τῇ φύσει εἶναι).⁴¹ Actually, for Aristotle this category is not very important because for him the relative existence of two realities is not an absolutely universal principle; he sees some obstacles in applying it in some particular cases.⁴² In his later works it simply disappears from the number of the categories. But in the Neo-Platonic interpretation of the categories, as it was already mentioned, the category of “relation” appears to be very important because it is in the group of the four primary categories in the specific hierarchic order used by the Neo-Platonic interpreters of Aristotle. As it was already mentioned, for the Neo-Platonists the combinations of these four categories shape the six secondary ones. But according to Neo-Platonism all of them together are absolutely inapplicable to transcendent realities. Obviously Arius, following the same logic, accepted that the correlativity of two objects in relation could be applicable only within the context of the reality of sense perception and does not apply out of it. As we have already seen, a similar situation was found in the case of the term ὁμοούσιον. Following the same logic in their theological speculation the defenders of Arius in 357 on the Council of Sirmium gave up using the category οὐσία, considering it as inapplicable to God.

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In conclusion we could not disagree with Rowan Williams that the possible sources of the Arian heresy lay mostly in Neo-Platonic philosophy, especially in the attempt to harmonize Aristotle with the Platonic tradition. We could add to his arguments another one that he did not mention, namely, the adoption of a specific hierarchical interpretation of the categories of Aristotle and the refusal to apply them to God.

However, it would be hard to agree with him that to Arius “the strictly philosophical issues are of small concern”.⁴³ There are very few of original texts of Arius currently available. Even R. Williams agrees that we can not reconstruct his philosophical education because of the lack of his writings.⁴⁴ The prominent common perception that he was trained in dialectics has a later origin: it comes from the church historians Socrates, *Church History* (I, 5) and Sozomenus, *Church history* (I, 15). It would be therefore impossible to make firm conclusions. But what we see from Arius’ texts and from the

38 See R. Arnou, „Arius et la doctrine des relations trinitaires”. *Greg* 14 (1933), p. 269.

39 See Athanasius, *Epistola de synodis*, 16 (PG 26, 709C).

40 Cf. Aristoteles, *Categoriae*, VII, 6a 36 sq.

41 Ibid. VII, 7b, 15 sq.

42 Ibid. VII, 7b, 20-30 et sq.

43 R. Williams, *Arius, Heresy and Tradition*, p. 30.

44 Ibid. p. 31.

references to his texts made by others is that Arius is not a systematic in his philosophical Neo-Platonism (at least we have not enough evidences); but he was engaged to defend principle positions of the philosophical convention of his time without being innovative enough as a philosopher. As a Christian thinker he is inclined to neglect some of the unquestionable elements of the *Christian tradition* in order to preserve some of the fundamental logical principles in the Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle. This approach was reconsidered very successfully by the Cappadocian Fathers who, after realizing the slippery character of the Nicene terms ὁμοούσιος and ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς from the symbol, succeeded in using the philosophical (mainly Neo-Platonic) presuppositions of their time to express the mystical experience of the Ecclesiastical tradition in transmitting the Gospel. They, in a creative and innovative way, transformed the semantic meaning of some of the conventional philosophical terms to provide an authentic articulation of the apostolic faith. They succeeded in promoting the use of ὑπόστασις in the case of primary substances and left the word οὐσία to be used in the case of common substances alone. They made this by emphasizing the communicative character of the internal life of the Holy Trinity as a περιχώρησις of the three divine ὑποστάσεις, in which the divine οὐσία exists, and out of which there is no divine substance as such. In the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers the identification of the divine οὐσία with the relations among the ὑποστάσεις allows them to think philosophically about the eternal relations in the divine substance and life. By putting on the foreground the ὑποστάσεις of the Trinity they preserved, even within the terminological context of contemporary philosophy, the oneness of the divine substance by thinking of the Father as of the only source of the whole divinity and as a beginning of the divine μοναρχία. Their main contribution as Christian thinkers could be found in the overcoming of the deadlock of the prolonged Post-Nicene quarrel in the middle of the 4th century when the defenders of Arius used to find his understanding of the Trinity as the only logically and philosophically adequate one.

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