It is valuable to analyze Shota Rustaveli’s multi-faceted poem *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* as a philosophical work. The first steps in this direction were made by Shalva Nutsubidze and, later, the poem’s philosophical content was discussed by other Georgian scholars, including Victor Nozadze, Shalva Khidasheli, Revaz Tvaradze, Nodar Natadze, and Elguja Khintibidze.

The main issue to be dealt with when we analyze *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* as a philosophical poem is to specify its outlook onto the world. Opinions on this issue differ. Scholars have stressed variously its context within Neoplatonic thought as well as within the Christian context of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*.\(^1\) Shalva Nutsubidze (1888–1969) and Shalva Khidasheli (1910–1994) made special contributions to the study of the poem’s association with Areopagitic thinking.

Nutsubidze dedicated several works to detailed studies of the influence of Areopagitic ideas on Georgian culture in general and on *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* in particular. Two of these works, in which he stressed the varied influence of Areopagitic thought on Georgian culture, should be singled out: *Rustaveli and the Oriental Renaissance* (published in Russian in Tbilisi in 1947, and representing a development of the ideas formulated in his earlier work, *The Oriental Renaissance and a Critique of Eurocentrism*, which was issued in Tbilisi, 1941, also in Russian) and *Rustaveli’s Creative Heritage* (Tbilisi, 1959, in Russian).\(^2\)

The interrelation between good and evil in Neoplatonic thought, in Areopagitic doctrine, and in Georgian philosophical ideas of the 11–12th centuries is one of the main issues Nutsubidze discusses. In all three cases, evil has no essence, it is non-substantive. This idea entered Rustaveli’s

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\(^1\) According to the Nutsubidze-Honigmann theory, the author of the Areopagite’s works is the Georgian ecclesiastic figure Peter the Iberian (411–491), Bishop of Maiouma in Palestine.

\(^2\) For Georgian translations of these works see შ. ნუცუბიძე, შრომები [Sh. Nutsubidze, *šromebi (Works)*], vol. 4 (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1976) and vol. 7 (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1980). Quotations are from these editions.
poem from the *Corpus Areopagiticum*. According to Nutsubidze, the connection between the Georgian Renaissance and Areopagitic doctrine is evident from the following well-known strophe in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*:

1478 Dionysius\(^3\) the sage has revealed the following wisdom to us:

“God is the giver of good and not the creator of evil. Evil is short-lived and transient while good endures forever. He, the Supreme and perfect, makes His Perfect self more Perfect.”\(^4\)

1500 “ამ საქმესა დაფარულსა ბრძენი დივნოს გააცხადებს:

ღმერთი კეთილს მოავლინებს მით ბოროტსა არ დაჰბადებს,

ზული წამ-ერთ შეამოკლებს, კარგსა ხან-გრძლად გააკვლადებს,

თავსა მისსა უკეთესსა უზადო-ჰყოფს, არ აზადებს.”\(^5\)

1478 «Мудрый Дивнос открывает дела скрытого исток:

Лишь добро являет миру, а не зло рождает бог,

Злу отводит он мгновенье, а добру—пространный срок,

Ввысь подъяв его истоки, где сверхблагости порог.»\(^6\)

According to Nutsubidze, in these four lines Rustaveli offered us everything the Georgian Renaissance acquired from Areopagitic writings through Petritsi’s works.\(^7\)

At the same time, Nutsubidze draws our attention to the fact that the author of the Areopagitic works is called Dionysius by Petritsi, Dioniso by Chakhrukhadze, and by the Georgian form of this name, Divnos, by

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\(^3\) “Divnos” in the original (M. M).

\(^4\) The English translation of the passages is by Venera Urushadze; see Shota Rustaveli, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*, tr. V. Urushadze (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1979), 198.

\(^5\) შოთა რუსთაველი, ვეფხისტყაოსანი, ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა... n. nat'ajem (*The Knight in the Panther’s Skin*. Text prepared by... N. Natadze)] (Tbilisi: Ganat'loba, 1986), 471.


\(^7\) ნუცუბიძე, შრომები, vol. 4, 179 = Ш. Нуцубидзе, *Rustaveli i vostočnyj Renessans* [Sh. Nutsubidze, *Rustaveli i vostočnyj Renessans* (Rustaveli and the Oriental Renaissance)] (Tbilisi: Zarja Vostoka, 1947), 134. Ioan Petritsi was a Georgian philosopher of the 11th–12th centuries who translated into Georgian and commented on *The Elements of Theology* by Proclus.