



Maxim Vasiljević*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Belgrade

St. Maximus the Confessor's Contribution to the Problem of Transcending the Createdness

Abstract: The topic of true being represents the fundamental aspect of theology. Theology is not primarily concerned with the question of whether God (as a True Being) exists or not; its subject matter is rather *how* (in what manner or mode) He exists. In order for the created “being” to receive the salvific, Trinitarian *mode* of existence, freed from corruption and death, it is important for this being to have a corresponding relationship with Him, to actually participate in God. In the following section, we shall review the “contingency” concept (of the conditional and uncertain status) of human existence, and following that, we shall attempt to investigate the endeavor toward freedom from necessity, which is implied by the fact of having been created. The essential questions that should be asked here are the following: Is man as we know and experience him “man”? What does “redemption” mean according to the understanding of St. Maximus, that is, what is man redeemed from? What are the *assumptions* (the measures, boundaries or laws) that pertain to man’s participation in the realization of his “existence”, based on the existence model of the Triune God? How can man’s ability and/or weakness in his quest for a personal communion with God within the boundaries of historical “events” be defined? For this purpose, we shall not examine the content of participation, but rather the *ability* of the participant–recipient. A discussion of these questions is crucial to the understanding of the anthropology of Saint Maximus the Confessor; it should be noted that on this occasion we will omit the discussion of his Christology and Ecclesiology.

Key words: St. Maximus the Confessor, being, participation, communion, cause, ability, weakness.

God moves in such a way that He instills an inner relationship of eros and love in those who are able to receive it. He moves naturally attracting the desire of those who are turned toward Him.

Maximus the Confessor

Introductory Notes

The content of theology, with its subject matter, is very complex. This is mainly due to its link to the mystery of *true* being or the *mode* of God’s

* maxim.bishop@gmail.com

being, and, therefore, man's and the Church's as well. The topic of true being represents the fundamental aspect of theology. Theology is not primarily concerned with the question of whether God (as a True Being) exists or not; its subject matter is rather *how* (in what manner or mode) He exists (*1 John 3:2*). All other essential questions are contingent on this crucial question, like, for example: is God personally communicative or not; is He in communication with the world or not. These are the most central questions, which exceed a limited academic significance; their answers have a direct impact on mankind, on the world, and on life.

It is well recognized that our knowledge about the mode of God's existence is based on the biblical and patristic Trinitarian theology (*lex credendi*) and that participation in the liturgical experience of the Trinitarian God through Christ (*lex orandi*) offers a foretaste of what it means *in truth* to exist. In order for the created "being" to receive the salvific, Trinitarian *mode* of existence, freed from corruption and death, it is important for this being to have a corresponding relationship with Him, to actually participate in God. It should be noted that the prevailing patristic view of man was, in fact, based on the idea of "participation" in God.¹ Man is not created as an isolated individual or an autarchic being²; his own dynamic and complex nature is *true* only if he personally participates in God, in His hypostatic life (but not in His Divine Essence). In this state of communion there was not discrepancy between nature and person. This *relationship* alone, as we shall see later, gives meaning to man's "natural" movement, which his own creation attracts. The terms "natural", "personal", and "grace" call for a dynamic, live, and *hypostatic* relationship (σύμβασις³) between God and man, who are completely different in their "natures", but even so "communicate" through a hypostatic relationship in the act of communion which is identical with *love*. In St Maximus thought, nature and person are two crucial and mutually conditioned aspects of every being, where φύσις, denoting unity, is defined not in itself but in relation to the hypostasis, as the specific *mode* of existence or particularity.

Of course, all of this is valid only when rational creatures move in harmony with the will of God. But what happens — as it has already happened — when

¹ This has been clearly observed and highlighted by John Meyendorff in the book *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, SVSP 1975.

² Man is "true", then, when one's corrupt existence leads to God. Maximus is very clear about this: "Creatures, on the other hand, all exist through participation and grace". *Περὶ ἀγάπης*, III, 28; PG 90:1025b; also III, 27; PG 90:1025a. — "The person who has come to know the weakness of human nature has gained experience of Divine grace". *Περὶ ἀγάπης* II, 39; PG 90:997ab. Conversely, in ancient Greek thought "the autarchy is always implicitly understood ontologically. Later, Plato's philosophy developed this further explicitly, so that all subsequent philosophical schools assumed an ontologization of the notion of autarchy", Kramer, 2004, p. 104.

³ Maximus the Confessor, *Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91:25AB.

an “absurd aspiration toward non-being” (ἡ πρὸς τὸ μὴ ὄν παράλογος φορά⁴) takes the place of man’s “natural” development? St Maximus does not turn a blind eye to the terrible condition in which the human nature finds itself in its *postlapsarian* state. The created being, already “contingent” and conditional, becomes almost completely “darkened” in his essential movements: man subjugates his own nature to the necessity of a whirlpool of movements. The recognition of human weakness in firstly, transcending creation, and secondly, its fallen nature is the fundamental prerequisite of Maximus’ anthropology.

In the following section, we shall review the “contingency” concept (of the conditional and uncertain status) of human existence, and following that, we shall attempt to investigate the endeavor toward freedom from necessity, which is implied by the fact of having been created. The essential questions that should be asked here are the following: Is man as we know and experience him “man”? What does “redemption” mean according to the understanding of St. Maximus, that is, what is man redeemed from? What are the *assumptions* (the measures, boundaries or laws) that pertain to man’s participation in the realization of his “existence”, based on the existence model of the Triune God? How can man’s ability and/or weakness in his quest for a personal communion with God within the boundaries of historical “events” be defined? For this purpose, we shall not examine the content of participation, but rather the *ability* of the participant–recipient. A discussion of these questions is crucial to the understanding of the anthropology of Saint Maximus the Confessor⁵; it should be noted that on this occasion we will omit the discussion of his Christology and Ecclesiology.

I. Contingency as a Distinction of Creation

1. If we call to mind the main accomplishment of Christian theology, in which *truth* and *communion* are shown to be mutually identical in the being of the Triune God, we will come to the understanding that communion cannot be understood as something *added* onto “being.” Its essential characteristic lies in the fact that being consists of communion. Only in this case can truth and communion be regarded as identical.⁶

2. However, what happens when truth is applied to human existence? This, in fact, represents the greatest problem in theology. For our state *after the fall* (which is marked by corruption and evil) is characterized by the fact that, in

⁴ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1085a. According to Maximus’ theology, there is a changing, reverberating, and nihilistic tendency intrinsic to the very essence of created beings. Cf. Ματσοῦκα, 1980, p. 52.

⁵ It is worth consulting L. Thunberg’s study of Maximus’ anthropology, *Microcosm and Mediator*, Lund, 1965, and his more recent edition of 1995.

⁶ In his study “Truth and Communion” (Zizioulas, 1997, pp. 67–122) John Zizioulas showed this to be undeniably reasonable and convincing.

our approach to truth, “being” is constituted *before* communion. Ontology after the fall—its separateness, individualism and fragmentation—has such a heavy impact on anthropology that all “created” methodology or pedagogy is inadequate. Nature in its actual (fallen) state is the only kind of nature that is accessible to the experience of man after his denial of God, because of sin and death. In his *Ambigua* 7, St. Maximus says the following: “He then, who has rejected his Beginning — moves unnaturally (absurdly) toward nonbeing; and since he existed in God because of the highest logos (of God), who is in him and who is the cause of his creation, and thus had been a part of God, it is rightfully said of him that he has fallen from above because he was not moving toward his Beginning and Cause, according to whom, in whom, and because of whom he was created. Having missed the attainment of his unchanging and forever same Cause through freely aspiring toward that, which is inferior, he is (now) in a changing, false, and a dreadful nightmare of both soul and body. Similarly, it is possible to speak literally about the falling away (from God) because it was possible (for man) through his soul’s potential to center himself on God, but instead *he freely exchanged a better and true existence for an inferior non-being.*”⁷ It is not necessary to note that this privation of true existence is actually the state of a “fallen” person. In a fallen person, truth is not shown as the result of an event of *participation* (ontology), something which man takes part in, but rather as the possession of an individual thinking apparatus (gnoseology) which he uses as he likes.⁸ Need one say, as Zizioulas suggests, that in such a situation truth cannot reveal itself in its ontological fullness? Of course, not. The only solution which can overcome the problem of the created being, and which the Church Fathers have indeed offered, is the adoption of the category of *participation*, which can link the created being to the uncreated Communion. The adoption of this supposition will give us a clearer indication of the *anthropological* possibilities for this communion of life, which was the ultimate goal in the creation of the world. The term “participation” will thus become the fundamental, ontological category, tantamount to the term *communion*. Therefore, in its final analysis, salvation through truth depends essentially on truth viewed as identical to communion, by means of the dynamics of personal *participation*.

3. The consequences of such a position with regard to our topic are distinctive. The first consequence of this subtle differentiation is concerned with the tragic weakness of creation, and the second one with the diseases following the fall. The well known positions of the earlier Fathers on this topic, especially Gregory the Theologian, have influenced, or to be more exact, coincided with what St. Maximus was searching after. For the Church Fathers experienced

⁷ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1084–85ab. (Our underlining).

⁸ Cf. Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity”, *Communion and Otherness*, New York: T&T Clark, 2006, p. 231.

the turmoil and tragedies of existence themselves, and so, they understood through experience that the reality or the truth of created beings cannot be confirmed in themselves.⁹ “The saints, through many sufferings, free the nature that is in them from the condemnation of death on account of sin.”¹⁰ This position led Maximus the Confessor¹¹ to the conclusion that from everything that has come into being—and it has come without freedom (ἀναγκαίως καὶ μὴ βουλόμενοι) being subjected to the condemnation of death¹²—no one represents his own τέλος (οὐδὲν δὲ τῶν γενητῶν ἑαυτοῦ τέλος ἐστίν), since he is not the cause of himself (ἐπειδὴ οὔτε αὐταίτιον). Humanity on its own (the created human existence) cannot claim a true *personal* ontology without a point of reference that is outside of this world. The dilemma lies in the fact that on his own man cannot confer to himself immortality and eternal life since *immortality* is not necessarily a result of the natural attributes of the created being.¹³

4. This subtle distinction is certainly ascribed to the biblical concept of the world, which discriminates between God and creation, and which has been so clearly defined by Maximus.¹⁴ Let us examine it briefly. First of all, creation can exist only by means of participation in the life of God, that is, under the condition that creation is permanently united with Him, *voluntarily* and *freely*, as the “horizon” and “terminal” of every movement¹⁵, because of which cor-

⁹ Another approach, which stems from *Humanism*, according to which man is the measure of everything, and therefore, of man himself, is equally unsatisfactory. The longing (φορὰ) of man to transcend himself and the world testifies to the fact that man is not the “measure” of himself, which is the reason of his constant longing, one way or the other, for self-transcendence. Therefore deification (θέωσις) and not self-destruction is the desired attainment of fullness. Of course, the elementary problems remain unsolved. For it turns out that man’s natural ecstatic movements “wither like a lily”. We say again that the problem lies in the fact that man is unable to provide for himself immortality and an eternal life. If the nourishment of the features of man’s nature were sufficient to transcend death, then Christ’s Incarnation and Resurrection would not have been necessary. Cf. the arguments of Athanasius the Great in his work, *Περὶ ἐνανθρωπίσεως* 7; PG 25:96 and so forth.

¹⁰ *Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 61, PG 91, 637a.

¹¹ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1072c.

¹² *Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 61, PG 91, 636abc.

¹³ During the times of St. Irenaeus of Lyon emphasis was made on the fact that there is no way for us to attain incorruption and immortality other than through the union with Incorruption and Immortality (“*Ἐλεγχος* Γ, 19, 1), which is attainable only in Christ. After all, the words “you have put on Christ” in Baptism have the following meaning: to clothe oneself with the garment of incorruption, which is the opposite of the “leather garment”.

¹⁴ St. Maximus emphasizes this subtle difference, and says the following: “Perfection and dispassion belong only to God and He is the objective of everything as the fulfillment, immobile, and dispassionate. However, it is necessary to move toward the aim that has no beginning for those who are created, so that the energy of their movement and their longing will cease in this with this perfect aim, but not so as to become something else by nature, for nothing of that which has come into being and has been created will change (alter)”. (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1073b).

¹⁵ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1217c.

ruption and death are overcome. Let us emphasize the words “voluntarily and freely” because of the following fact. Namely, if creation truly exists for the sole reason of participation in the true existence—in God, it follows that God and creation are somehow ontologically connected (cf. συγγένεια). However, Patristic theology would never accept this idea. Going a step further, one should say that according to St. Maximus the goal of the existence of created beings (τέλος γὰρ τῆς τῶν κινουμένων κινήσεως)¹⁶ is precisely to dwell *voluntarily* and *freely* always in the “eternal well being”, which is solely God’s existence. Thus the purpose is not in just some basic being, τὸ εἶναι, or life, but in the fullness of being, εὖ ἀεὶ εἶναι, that is, in a *life in abundance* (cf. John 10:10). This is possible only because the Giver of being is also the Bestower of well-being.¹⁷ On the other side, human choice always takes place within the structure (being, well-being, and eternal being) and is always an answer to the call to θέωσις present within God’s creative purpose.

5. How is the “icon of God” in man to be understood from this perspective? The “image of God” in man is not on a par with rationality, as is often thought, that is, like some kind of exclusive “reasoning” or a rational ability, or like something “autonomous” or autarchic in man. The image of God is more likely rationality defined as the manner of the manifestation of man’s freedom and “self-determination”¹⁸, a catholic (and, therefore, “rational” and “existential”) relation of love; hence, the participation and communion with God, with other people, and with the material nature. Therefore, man’s “being”, when authentic, is identical to communion as participation, and his rationality “lives out the truth” in the shaping of his being simply as an exercise of his freedom¹⁹: “our thinking is grounded in our willing, just as our willing and deciding is grounded in our thinking”.²⁰

6. However, as we shall see further on, the only way to understand this is through the ecstatic movement of created things; a movement whose cause is God, Who sets ἔφεσις man in motion toward Ἐφετός, a movement which

¹⁶ Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ., PG 91:1073a.

¹⁷ Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ. 60; PG 90:24A. Here Maximus reiterates the idea of St. Gregory and cites biblical passages from 1 Moses 2:17; 5; 12:9; Psalms 16 and 15; Phil. 3:11–12; Heb. 4:10; 11:39; Matt. 11:28.

¹⁸ See Πρὸς Μαρίνον, PG 91:24A. The following passage by J. Farrell (1988, p. 100), which reads, “... man, being by nature a rational creature ... is capable of freely choosing”, is helpful toward the understanding of rationality as freedom. The reference to St. John of Damascus is also useful here (Ἐκθ. Ὁρθ. πίστ. 27; PG 94:960 and so forth).

¹⁹ Man’s inability consists precisely in the domination of nature over his person. But man differs from every animal because he has the possibility to take a look at his existence (nature) “from a distance”, to ask questions about his corporeality, to distance himself from the needs and desires of his body, as a subject to be vis-à-vis his existence. In other words, he is able to control his own functions, which compose his biological hypostasis. This ability (as the distinction of the “icon”) pertains to the *manner* in which he is a man and not to his nature.

²⁰ Θέλοντες λογιζόμεθα καὶ λογιζόμενοι θέλοντες βουλόμεθα (*Disp. with Pyrrhus*, PG 91, 293b).

expresses His love²¹, and which is the destination of the movement: “And the ever-moving rest is the permanent and unceasing delight in the Desired; and the permanent and unceasing delight is the participation in the supranatural Divine realities” (μέθεξις δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θείων).²² Maximus emphasizes the fundamental view of biblical-patristic anthropology, that is, the perception of man as being *dependent* rather than independent on existence, and whose being is realized in an incorrupt manner only, then, when he lives in communion with the uncreated God.²³

II. The idea of “strength in weakness”

1. An emphasis has already been placed on the fact that with the creation of man “in the image”—precisely because man is a free and unique person—“characters”, “images of God” have already been introduced in him; these signify the concrete, implanted powers (ἐμφύτους δυνάμεις²⁴), possibilities and aspirations (νεῦσις²⁵) for a true human existence and life. Man possesses within himself a dynamic, αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις²⁶, or ἔκστασις toward God or the “*logos of nature*” (λόγος or λόγοι φύσεως), precisely because he was created as “self-determinative and creative by nature”²⁷; that is, in the image of God. This existential human uniqueness obviously points to two things: a) his metaphysical “origin” and b) his aim: “God Who in wisdom has created all of nature (φύσιν ὑποστήσας), and firstly mysteriously implanted into each rational substance the power—the knowledge of Him, has also given to us humble human beings...a yearning and love for Him within our nature (κατὰ φύσιν τὸν εἰς αὐτὸν πόθον καὶ ἔρωτα), having naturally united this yearning with

²¹ Maximus the Confessor cites St. Gregory the Theologian (from his 14th Homily) with good reason: “...and in him rests every longing (πᾶσα ἔφρσις), and he longs for nothing outside this, neither can he long for anything; for every true movement (πρὸς ὃ τείνει πᾶσα σπουδαίου κίνησις) hastens toward him, and ceases when he reaches him, and then he will find rest in every contemplation”, *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1076a.

²² *Πρὸς Θαλάσ.*, 60; PG 90:608d.

²³ In order to express this idea, various authors take advantage of different terminologies, such as biblical ones, or those pertaining to Origen or Neoplatonism; and yet common sense exists in the case of the essential openness of man, a concept which is not subject to the opposite categories of “nature” and “grace”.

²⁴ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1197d.

²⁵ ἴνα ἢ εἰκὼν ἀνέλθῃ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, οὗ νῦν ἔχει τὴν ἔφρσις. Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος* 28, 17; SCh 250, 134; PG 36:48c. See the interpretation of this section in St. Maximus’, *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1077b.

²⁶ This movement should not be understood as the Aristotelian entelechy. Later on in his writings St. Maximus reveals a whole field of man’s movement toward God by means of the idea of θέλησις (θέλημα), ἐνέργεια, αὐτεξουσίας κινήσεως, φυσικοῦ θελήματος while the idea of γνώμη or γνωμικοῦ θελήματος appears only as a consequence of the fall. The differentiation between the natural will and the gnostic will represents one of the most significant contributions of the holy Confessor in highlighting anthropology and Christology.

²⁷ Αὐτεξούσιος καὶ ἐνεργῶν κατὰ φύσιν. *Πρὸς Μαρίνον*, PG 91:157 and *Ἐπιστ* 7, PG 91:436ab.

the logos and power, so that he could herewith easily recognize ways of fulfilling those yearnings (γινῶναι τοὺς τρόπους τῆς τοῦ πόθου πληρώσεως), and so that he would not by mistake miss that for which acquisition he is struggling. Moving, therefore, in accordance with this yearning toward the very truth (κινούμενοι τὸν πόθον περὶ τε τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτῆς) and according to the manifestation of wisdom and (the God given) governance in all (creatures), we ascend upwards, through these beings induced by the desire to search for and reach *Him* (ἐκείνου τυχεῖν), because of Whom we received this yearning in the first place.²⁸ Ecstasy leads to the communion with others.

2. What we need to point out now is the connection between this aspiration (ἔφρασις) or ability—given with the “image of God”—and the *historical time and space*, by means of which we arrive at the tragic existence of man. It is a tragic existence because within the historical time-space framework, the ability of theosis (ἔφρασις or ὄρεξις τῆς θεώσεως) is offered to man in the form of a passion/suffering (a permanent struggle against the demonic powers), and this requires a participation in the *experience of the Cross*²⁹, which is the manner by which life is realized in historical events (γίγνεσθαι) as tragical. Suffering is inherent to the created and fallen nature, and so, St. Maximus the Confessor maintains that creation requires the Cross.³⁰ For presently, time and space have acquired negative dimensions; they have developed into barriers, which separate the created existence from God. Now in order for man’s existence to be able to overcome the limits of created things, it cannot, nor is it necessary to, break away from time and space, which after all are the component parts of human existence. This fact draws attention to the element of *history* in a radical way, and shows that the topic of participation differs radically from (Neo) Platonism, which does not concede that we approach God within a historical framework of events — γίγνεσθαι.³¹

²⁸ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91, 1361ab.

²⁹ Cf. *Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας*, I, 66–67, PG 90:1108b; also, *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1112b. The experience of the Cross testifies to that in different ways, and so does the whole experience of the tragedy of existence, which man experiences so strongly. For Maximus, the expectation of the Resurrection is actually the expectation of transcending death. Man’s path, therefore, is regarded as identical to carrying the Cross and to the foretaste of the Resurrection. The experience of the Cross is realized within the framework of history, whereas the Resurrection is experienced as a foretaste in history, but transcends history. Death, which represents falsehood, is the physiological state of the created thing. The reason for this lies in the creation from non-being, which carries along a penetration of nothingness into being. Because of the fall of man, the union of the world with the Son/Logos is by way of the Cross, but it does not stop at the Cross. Cf. *Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας*, I, 54–55, PG 90:1104bc.

³⁰ Τὰ φαινόμενα πάντα δεῖται σταυροῦ. *Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας*, I, 67, PG 90:1108b.

³¹ Conversely, according to the Fathers it is precisely through history (διὰ τῆς ἀνομαλίας τῶν ὀρωμένων) that we are given a taste of true life. The Fathers state that a conflict with the natural mode of existence, which as we have seen earlier, leads inevitably to death. When, for example, Maximus (*Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας*, I, 54, PG 90:1104b) speaks about true life it is evident that he is not thinking about some other life (e.g. “spiritual” in a Platonic sense).

3. Meanwhile, man, who is endowed with the ability to relate and to participate, desires (consciously or unconsciously) his “being” (τὸ εἶναι) to be a permanent and continuous possibility (εὖ ἀεὶ εἶναι) and not just a phenomenal presence. He desires to actively experience the participation in *life without death*, in a true existence that is incorrupt, in a life, which does not go hand in hand with the “natural” course of existence. What are the limiting factors, which prevent man’s “existence” from participating in a perfect loving communion? For one, that he is a created thing, and secondly, man’s fall. Let us take a look at the second factor. According to Maximus, the crucial factor alongside the fall is the perversion of the possibility of communion, since the ecstatic movement of man, having become limited to created things, does not allow for the entire creation or nature to be ecstatic towards something *outside* itself, that is, toward the Creator. Everything man does (his every movement) is ecstatic, however, the present diseased ecstatic condition does not lead out of the whirlpool of death. Maximus considers that the current disposition of the human spirit, the irrational yearning of the soul, nature’s direction toward itself, and man’s going astray, is a direct result of this.³² Hence, the fall did not destroy the nature of things, but rather impaired its communion with God;³³ the fall caused differences (διαφορὰ) to become separations (διαίρεσις) and persons to become individuals. (“Division”, an critical notion in Maximus’s thought, designates fragmentation and separation.) Similarly, now *theosis* refers not to the deification of the natural being, but rather to the transformation of the “pathogenic” *mode* of its being (a transformation which entails not more or less than a “new birth”), offering divine participation.³⁴ In a word, creation on its own can no longer commune with God because of its natural limitations as well as its own fall, which generates opposition to God.

4. In spite of this, the human existential longing for the fulfillment of him who is “in the image” has not entirely disappeared, but has set off in a direction “against nature”, which has led its “being” to a metaphysical fragmentation, to the abyss of apostasy. And as we have seen, man has become the epicenter of

He is thinking of a life, which does not die; a life that does not tolerate falsehood, an “idol”, a “delusion” of a so-called life, which leads to death (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1088bc and 1112ab). Therefore, true life is a life, which is not false because death does not overpower it.

³² *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1353c: Κινεῖται γὰρ νῦν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἢ περὶ φαντασίας ἀλόγου παθῶν ἐξ ἀπάτης διὰ φιληδονίαν, ἢ περὶ λόγου τεχνῶν ἐκ περιστάσεως διὰ τὴν χρείαν, ἢ περὶ φυσικοῦς λόγου ἐκ τοῦ νόμου τῆς φύσεως διὰ μάθησιν, ὧν οὐδὲν κατ’ ἀρχὴν εἰκότως ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἴλεκε τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ὑπεράνω πάντων γενόμενον. Οὕτω γὰρ ἔπρεπε εἶναι τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, μηδενὶ τὸ σύνολον περισπώμενον τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτόν, ἢ περὶ αὐτόν, ἢ κατ’ αὐτόν, καὶ πρὸς τελείωσιν ἑνὸς μόνου προσδεόμενον, τῆς πρὸς τὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτόν, φημὶ δὲ τὸν Θεόν, καθ’ ὅλην τὴν ἀγαπητικὴν δύναμιν ἀσχέτου κινήσεως.

³³ This concerns the known distinction between the *mode of existence* and the *law of nature* (cf. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1341d), which serve as the fundamentals of Maximus’ thought (along with the distinction between the natural and the gnostic will). See further below.

³⁴ See Dalmais, 1985, p. xiii.

a complete tragedy. St. Maximus describes this state, which we have already mentioned, very persuasively: by sinning man does not succeed, but misses the target, and, "...moves towards non-being in an absurd way...Having missed the realization—which is unchangeable and always originating from the same cause—by means of a voluntary longing toward that which is worse, he now finds himself in a changeable, erroneous, and horrible nightmare of body and soul."³⁵ Created existence finds itself in the way of the cross precisely because of the impossibility to be in communion with the True Being. Not only has the nature of created things become diseased but also the very ecstasy of nature has become diseased.

5. In spite of the fact that man had begun to exercise his freedom by abusing and perverting his existential *ἔφεσις* (an ecstatic movement toward the existential fullness of "being"), it was not possible to completely bring this to a halt. After the fall, created nature became an impassable existential limitation of man's hypostasis; because of this the path of salvation unfolds itself as a tragic experience of the *passions* (πάθος). This way we achieve a clearer picture: the person's ecstasy implies a form of "movement", but for created beings this is realized in the form of πάθος. In God, Whose Being is not under the threat of corruption or death, ecstasy as movement is passionless, free from suffering, ἀπαθής.³⁶ In God's nature this movement exhausts itself in God Himself. Man's personal ecstasy cannot be ἀπαθής within himself, but only in God. Two things are worth mentioning here: a) motion and time of created nature is a proclamation of a world that is in a constant change (ἐν ἀλλοιώσει)³⁷, and b) the essence/existence of created nature is *metatropy*, that is, change and corruption.³⁸ In comparison to corruption, the holy Confessor considers πάθος as the essence of created nature. Thus, suffering (παθητικότης) is a part of created beings³⁹; however, the person does not want to accept this by means of ecstasy.

³⁵ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1084–85ab. As one can see from the above passage of St. Maximus, sin or failure (ἀποτυχία) is "ἐκούσια ροπή", that is, a responsible act and not something indifferent or apathetic. It is primarily an alienation from God, from other people and from oneself (*Σχόλια*, PG 4:144–145ab), and causes the "darkening" (not the eradication) of the Divine image in man.

³⁶ Cf. J. Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity", p. 223. The dispassion (ἀπάθεια) of God's, which does not tolerate any influence, is not in any opposition with His ecstatic and creative love both in and outside of space and time. God is a hypostatic Self-existence that consists of the absolute and non-predetermined Being (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1073b).

³⁷ Τὴν μὲν γὰρ κίνησιν μᾶλλον εἶναι φασι τῶν ὑπὸ γένεσιν καὶ φθοράν, ὡς ἐπιδεχομένων τοῖς περὶ αὐτὰ θεωρουμένοις τὸ μᾶλλον καὶ τὸ ἥττον. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀποριῶν.*, PG 91:1217b.

³⁸ Διόπερ ἐν μὲν τῷ κόσμῳ ὑπάρχουσα χρονικῶς ἡ φύσις, ἀλλοιωτικὴν ἔχει τὴν κίνησιν (*Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 65; PG 90:760a).

³⁹ ...Καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀπλῶς λεγομένη οὐσία οὐ μόνον ἢ τῶν ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ κατὰ γένεσιν κινεῖται καὶ φθοράν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἢ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων καὶ κεκίνηται καὶ κινεῖται τῷ κατὰ διαστολὴν καὶ συστολὴν λόγῳ τε καὶ τρόπῳ... ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος ἔχουσα δαίκνυται, τὸν τῆς ἀπειρίας' οὐδ' ὄλως ἐπιδέξασθαι δυναμένη λόγον (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1177c). Cf. footnote 2 at the beginning of our study.

Nevertheless, being in a fallen state, he is not completely lost. So, what takes place here?

6. After the fall man found himself in a state, which could be called “strength in weakness” (δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12:9).⁴⁰ But what does this antinomic formulation mean; how can this opposition be in agreement with each other? The inability (weakness, infirmity) became part of man as decay followed by disease became a *natural* reality, which man perceives as something alien, that is, as a “natural”, fateful, and impersonal power circulating in his entire “being”. The reason for this is because once death, entered into existence⁴¹ and became a natural reality through its natural *probability*, it also fragmented the human nature, so that a person no longer bears within himself a nature in all its entirety, in all its catholicity. We all carry within ourselves a seed of death (and sin) and this is why we are infirm⁴², incapable of an ecstatic unification of the human nature by means of a voluntary self-determination. However, since sin (ἁμαρτία) did not damage the “logos” (of nature) but rather the *mode of its existence* (remember: the fall does not exist on the level of the logos-law but on the mode⁴³), the ability (δύναμις) of man (in his inability) is in the freedom of the person to step out (ἐξ-ίσταται) of the autarchy of individual pleasure, out of the naturalistic impasse.⁴⁴ Freedom consists in the liberty from “absurd aspirations toward non-existence” (which is subject to the necessity of movement) and in the acquisition — in love — of a self-determined, personal and voluntary (γνωμική) realization of movements that are in harmony with the “logos of nature” (which is the will God).⁴⁵ Thus, the way out of futility or the ability in inability (δύναμις ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ) is disclosed in the fact that in spite of man’s state of disease, created man is not unable to fulfill his purpose set by

⁴⁰ Cf. *Περὶ ἀγάπης* II, 39; PG 90:997ab. See also *Λόγος ἀσκητικός*, 26; PG 90:932B. For the interpretation of the Pauline section, see *Λόγος ἀσκητικός*, “Power in weakness: Exegesis of 2 Cor. 12, 1–13”, “Verteidigung und Begründung des Apostolischen Amtes” (2 Kor 10–13), ed. E. Lohse (Rom: Abtei St. Paul 1992), 65–86.

⁴¹ The Wisdom of Solomon emphasizes that God did not create death (1:13–15 and 2:23–24).

⁴² Repentance does not abolish (erase) the sinfulness of man. However, as we can observe from history, the final and true healing (θεραπεία) as an absolute eradication of disease, corruption, and mortality is impossible and unattainable for human nature; this applies also to the human freedom of each and every man after the fall (therefore, also to the Old and New Testament saints). This also applies to the passage through biological birth, corruption and death. Not a single human existence is free of the inherited corruption.

⁴³ According to St. Maximus the Confessor the λόγος φύσεως does not change (nor is there any need for change), but rather its τῆς υπάρξεως (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.* 42. PG 91:1340bc; 1341c). This occurs precisely in Christology. Therefore, the tragedy of the fall lies in the factual “mode of existence” of man, which opposes the “logos of nature”.

⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Gregory the Theologian recognizes God’s pedagogy (*Λόγος* 14, 7; PG 35:865bc) in the existential drama of the association of weakness (body) and dignity (image of God). Cf. Maximus’ interpretation: *Περὶ διαφ. ἀποριῶν*, PG 91:1069a–1101c.

⁴⁵ “Ἐκαστον... ἢ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα καὶ τὸν λόγον, ἢ παρὰ τὸ θέλημα καὶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ προαιρετική κίνησις... παρασκεύασε (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1085c).

God Himself; that is, he does not have to remain ontologically within the field of created things only, but he can also “participate in God”.

Where is this “power” (δύναμις) of man’s ability to participate? We shall attempt to construe it from the review of the following study.

III St Maximus’ concept of movement (κίνησις): Ecstasy and Love

1. As we have already seen, the transcendence of changeability and corruption — inborn into human nature — represented an *invitation* to the first man; it was offered to man as a “logos” (λόγος), as the final designation, the realization of which was left to the freedom of the person. Whether nature will be able to transcend mortality, fragmentation and death depends, therefore, on this free and personal choice. But the question is: “who is sufficient for these things”, as we recall yet another expression of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 2:16).

2. Patristic literature very clearly illustrates how not only the movement of God toward man, but also the movement (ecstasy, aspiration toward God) of man toward God was present in the original communion of God with man — however long this may have lasted. This movement was a dynamic and active answer to the *invitation* of God’s love, of the energy of God the Logos.⁴⁶ Man’s origin and aim, like all created nature, is found outside himself. Since the *cause* of his existence is in God, his *movement*, therefore, which exists ontologically in the created rational being⁴⁷ should be directed toward God. Of course, the initial movement of creation toward God is not explained by reasons (which we shall later discuss) via some kind of theleology (entelechy) or progressiveness, but rather as an *expropriation*⁴⁸, which frees nature and hypostazes it into something “above” itself, that is, into a new mode of existence. In the original state of communion (paradise), this God-man synergy of grace and freedom regulated the stages of communion between God and man.⁴⁹ In his fallen state it is natural for man to be conscious of and to experience the privation, alienation, and “decentralization”. According to the experience of every man after the fall, the consciousness of this privation is possible only because of that which was there before it — participation — that is, a foretaste

⁴⁶ Because of this, individual Fathers compare man with an ejected arrow, which is permanently aimed at Christ. Cf. Γιέφτις, 1985, p. 398.

⁴⁷ P. Tillich (1961, p. 4) emphasizes the idea of ecstasy; however W. Pannenberg considers his concept as inadequate (see Pannenberg, 1975, 41ff and 51ff). In our opinion a personal existence is not based upon the ecstasy of one’s own “nature” for this would lead to the necessity of existence. After all, God Himself does not exist because His nature is ecstatic, but because of the Hypostasis of the Father. From the anthropological point of view, there can be existence only by means of a free personal realization of nature.

⁴⁸ This is an expression used by Garrigues specifically within the context of Maximus’ teachings. See Garrigues, 1970, pp. 351–360.

⁴⁹ See *Περί διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1345. Cf. Μπούλοβιτς, 1983, p. 327.

of that which makes us feel the privation. From this point of view, the manner in which Maximus interprets privation (στέρησις) is of great interest.⁵⁰

3. There may not be a formal answer for what “drives” man to yearn for God, however, it is clear that it is the case of a deeply implanted desire (πόθος) for a true life which is foreign to corruption and death; the yearning itself is as if it were a composite part of the *conditio humana*. As the quoted section already shows,⁵¹ according to our Father the Confessor, the conviction dominates that all strivings and aspirations of man (the following are their expressions: ἔφρσις, φορά, ἀνικανοποίητος ροπή, τάσις πρὸς τὴν ὑπέρβασιν, ἐκστατικὴ κίνησις), express man’s longing for the personal created being to attain a free, loving communion and relation with his Cause — a communion and relation of which he now possesses only a foretaste. The longing and expectation also confirm the awareness of the fall.⁵² Human nature itself possesses an exploratory and investigative Divine power, which is essentially implanted by the Creator at (its) very entry into being.⁵³ Yet nature itself is not sufficient to transcend the given of existence. Namely, it is clear that Maximus also defines the will as movement, in the Aristotelian spirit as a “*natural force that moves toward its own end*”. However, as we shall soon see, contrary to the aforementioned ancient philosopher’s idea, this natural movement is inseparable from the ideas of love and will.⁵⁴

4. Here we arrive at a crucial stage. The attentive reader of the following passage will also come to an understanding of the aim of aspirations: it consists in the “practice” of the active *hypostatic* — not natural — participation in the possibilities of an existence free of limitations in space and time, which are redeemed from fragmentation. This is a question — and this is the essential distinction of Maximus’ theology — about something, which does not simply concern the past, but the future; it is the expectation of the fullness craved for.⁵⁵ The Church Fathers are in agreement here; for them “man” is unimaginable without the aspiration to transcend the given reality. This aspiration is the inevitable and integral element of the notion of “man”. The realization of man in this world is not exhausted in (world or social) events. Instead his τέλος (his

⁵⁰ “Mindlessness, lack of intellectual control and impetuosity in intelligent beings are privations of intelligence, intellect and circumspection. But a privation is posterior to the possession of something. There was a time, then, when they (the demons) possessed intelligence, intellect and devout circumspection” (Περὶ ἀγάπης III, 5; PG 90:1017).

⁵¹ Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ., PG 91, 1361ab.

⁵² From there οἱ πρὸς σωτηρίαν τετραμμένην τὴν ἔφρσιν ἔχοντες. Πρὸς Θαλάσ. 39, PG 90:393a

⁵³ Καταβεβλημένας αὐτῆ παρὰ τοῦ κτίσαντος, κατ’ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰς τὸ εἶναι πάροδο. Πρὸς Θαλάσ. 59; PG 90:604b.

⁵⁴ Cf. 1st and 23rd aporia (Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.).

⁵⁵ This is the reason why Maximus speaks about the *future* and not the past union: – τὴν ἔσομένην, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὴν γεγεννημένην καὶ παραφθαρεῖσαν (Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ. PG 91:1076a). In the second case, it would simply be a Platonic memory (ἀνάμνησις).

essential aim) appears to reach *beyond* the very “events”; as if he were yearning for the unattainable fulfillment, for a forever ongoing permanent life. This is why this aspiration forms a movement, which does not make a circle (it does not reach its end or aim), that is, an uninterrupted change (μεταβολή) that abolishes permanence and “lives the time” as corruption. As Janaras notes, this represents a *stepping out* (ἔκ-στασις), which changes existence and which is measured as *time*.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, on the other hand, ecstasy is the only way in which man can obtain incorruption and immortality. Inherent to man’s existence is a *natural* aspiration (νεῦσις, ἔφεις, ὀρμή), so that man can step outside himself, however, not in the sense of relinquishing his natural state. Man is capable, only as a *hypostasis* (person) of embracing the Other, that is, God, mankind, and the entire creation; this is the quintessence of theology. According to St. Maximus, this is the ability of opening his nature by means of a personal-hypostatic manner toward the Eschaton as the key to history.⁵⁷ This antinomy and tension of a complete and uncircled being is proof that the human being is one form of a paradox. Namely, he is not yet what he is to become; according to Maximus⁵⁸, he is true only as a whole human being, which he is in the *future* encounter with his Archetype, but not as he is now.

5. Consequently, it becomes clear that it is not possible to answer the question about *ecstasy* without referring to *freedom*, which Maximus quite distinctly observes. This makes his contribution exceptional to ontological anthropology. In order to unite with God whose image he represents, man must freely come out of himself (cf. ἐγγώρησις γνωμική), transcend the created boundaries and in this way accept the uncreated presence.⁵⁹ The distinction between the natural and the “gnomic” will is worth bringing to remembrance here. The will is precisely the expression of the essence of life (natural θέλησις) and of its movement toward the attainment of fullness. Whereas without the natural will, it is not possible for movement to exist.⁶⁰ However, only the free, “gnomic” realization of this movement by the person can lead to an ecstatic love as the fulfillment of God’s will.⁶¹ One can also clearly observe that according to Maximus, the will is shown as the freedom of that which is natural from

⁵⁶ The holy Confessor considers passions (πάθος, weakness) toward corruption as the essence of created nature. See: *Περὶ διαφ. ἀποριῶν*, PG 91:1217b; *Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 65, PG 90:760a; *Περὶ διαφ. ἀποριῶν*, PG 91:1177c. Cf. also Gregory of Nyssa, *Κατηχητικός* 6, PG 45, 2b and Yannaras, 1986; see chapter concerning time.

⁵⁷ How the eschaton is the key of history, see *Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας*, I, 66; PG 90:1108ab.

⁵⁸ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1085c.

⁵⁹ This is Maximus’ concept of “ecstasy”: Τῇ ἐκστάσει τῶν φυσικῶς ἐπ’ αὐτῆς καὶ ὄντων καὶ νοουμένων, διὰ τὴν ἐκνικήσασαν αὐτὴν χάριν τοῦ Πνεύματος (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1076bc).

⁶⁰ See *Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91:196a.

⁶¹ Maximus describes γνώμη as “ποιὰ θέλησις, by which one adheres by habit to a good or to what is reckoned as such” (*Disp. Pyr.* PG 91, 308c) and uses an analogy (*Opusc.* 3 48a): the capacity to speak belongs to nature (natural will); how one speaks (τὸ πῶς λαλεῖν) belongs to hypostasis (gnomic will). Yet, for him the gnomic will is an act made possible by the natural will

the “given” of its nature, as the transcendence of the “created transcendence” itself. By *not* equalizing *gnome* with the person (but with a quality added to person when the movement of nature is by its constitution alterable having had an origin), Maximus was able to explain why in the case of Christ γνώμη is not present. This singular inventiveness of the Confessor truly required a rare discernment.

6. The λόγοι τῶν ὄντων are the most basic proof of the ecstatic character of human existence and its openness toward the Uncreated, as St. Maximus defined them. The concept of λόγος represents yet another exceptional contribution of his to theology. His understanding of the creation of the world and the link to the θελήματα or to God’s logos’ has already been emphasized. Now, we need to connect it all with anthropology. Some of the basic aspects of this problem are worth noting, in order to better understand the notions of movement and ecstasy.⁶²

According to St. Maximus, every being’s existence is linked to the logos that is within himself and that enables him to “participate” in God; this general participation, however, in no way imperils the Divine transcendency.⁶³ The Divine “moves” in rational beings and moves them by means of their logos’. The created being has no existence if separated from one’s logos; he is a non-being. Hence, in accordance with Maximus, the creation of beings entices the idea of their “movement”. It is the logos of every being that defines its “purpose” or “aim” in harmony with that “existence”.⁶⁴ Yet even though the logos’ might resemble a kind of genetic-chemical “information” inherent to the human system, they are not simply “given ontological facts” but are more likely to be existential *achievements* as the result of the free choice of rational beings.⁶⁵ With a similar viewpoint in mind, Balthasar observes the following: “Nature is a sketch, a logos, a field or system of movement”.⁶⁶ This is a paraphrase of Maximus:

⁶² Here we receive a prolific contribution from the mentioned study of J. Meyendorff, (Meyendorff, 1975), although we do not share the same point of view with regard to the understanding of the capability of nature. Namely, as can be seen further below, the created being has the possibility for survival thanks to the voluntary struggle of the person, and not to a “natural” necessity. For the Church Fathers testify to the fact that the nature of creatures leads to their won disappearance, precisely because their origin is from *ex nihilo*. The point here because of the fact of having been created from non-being, created beings depend on freedom, a freedom as a personal otherness. Every other possibility excludes the factors of the person, of freedom and of otherness.

⁶³ God is participated in, yet He remains unparticipative (cf. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1081b).

⁶⁴ In other words, the logos’ do not just simply “exist”, but they become “incarnate”. Cf. Λουδοβίκος, 1992.

⁶⁵ Cf *Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 60; PG 90:621a. Therefore, for Maxims, and before him for the Bible (Col. 1:12-20), the ultimate reason (λόγος) of all beings is realized in the incarnate Logos of God, Christ, who is the center of every existent reality: λόγος of the Father, λόγος of creation, λόγος of human existence.

⁶⁶ Von Balthasar, 1947, p. 98.

εἶπερ πάσης φύσεως ὄρος ὁ τῆς οὐσιώδους αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας καθέστηκε λόγος.⁶⁷ Meyendorff maintains that one of the firm principles of Maximus' thought is expressed in the following triad: γένεσις, κίνησις, στάσις, which represents a parallel to the triad: ἀρχή, μεσότης, τέλος (as well as the triad: ἀρχή, μεσότης, τέλος). This constitutes the natural law (λόγος φύσεως) of created beings⁶⁸. However, for Maximus, λόγος is not reduced to nature but is extended to the level of person. It would be useful to demonstrate how significant this understanding of person as the essential manifestation of nature is, as well as its importance to the Christology of St. Maximus. Because, the λόγοι of nature are worthless, if not non-existent, unless they are integrated, "embodied" in the Person of the Logos, i.e. unless nature is assumed by the Hypostasis.

7. However, as already pointed out, the concept of "natural law", which can be understood through the notion of the law of dynamics of nature, does not mean that the Fathers, along with Maximus, perceive man as an independent being. Each movement and each ecstasy that leaves us "behind" is not the one, which brings about the event of communion. For even a natural movement requires the *participation* in God; it must be in accordance with the *logos/law of nature*, that is, with the will or desires of God.⁶⁹ And the logos' of beings possess an in-born *referentiality*, which leads them to the singular Logos of creation.⁷⁰ The freedom of created beings searches for God Himself in Whom the final end (ἄκρον τέλος) and the *ultimate meaning* of one's "being" is found. Why does movement pertain to man's nature/substance and not to God's as well? It is precisely because the beginning/principle or the cause of the human beings' existence as created beings is outside themselves. God alone is *beyond* every movement and change. Maximus elucidates this view when he asserts that movement is characteristic of everything that has come into existence (τῶν γὰρ γενομένων ἢ κίνησις⁷¹). Participation originates from the very idea of the logos, which is understood as the realization of the Divine Logos-Christ.⁷² "God moves in such a way that He instills an inner relationship (σχέσιν ἐνδιάθετον) of eros and love in those who are able to receive it. He moves naturally attracting the desire of those who are turned toward Him."⁷³

⁶⁷ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1057b.

⁶⁸ Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο καθέστηκεν ἢ κατὰ φύσιν τῶν ὄντων ἐκάστου δύναμις ἢ φύσεως πρὸς ἐνεργεῖαν ἀπαράβατος κίνησις. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1237b.

⁶⁹ *Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά*, PG 91:193a.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1312b.

⁷¹ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1072b. Therefore, movement is implicit in created beings.

⁷² This way, as Meyendorff observes, we reach the next diagram, which expresses the relation of God and creation: 'Ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων καὶ μεσότης καὶ τέλος ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός, ὡς ἐνεργῶν, ἀλλ' οὐ πάσχων... Ἀρχὴ γὰρ ἐστὶν ὡς δημιουργός καὶ μεσότης, ὡς προνοητής καὶ τέλος, ὡς περιγραφή. *Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ οἰκονομίας* I, 10; PG 90:1085d–1088a. Cf. Rom. 11:36.

⁷³ Κινεῖται μὲν ὡς σχέσιν ἐμποιοῦν ἐνδιάθετον ἔρωτος καὶ ἀγάπης τοῖς τούτων δεκτικοῖς, κινεῖ δέ ὡς ἑλκτικόν φύσει τῆς τῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ κινουμένων ἐφέσεως. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1260c.

Significantly enough, it is only the Son, and no other Person of the Trinity, that encompasses the λόγοι τῶν ὄντων.

The reference to Christology should follow chronologically after every anthropological possibility has been investigated. However, we are deliberately neglecting a methodological consistency by ignoring a methodological focus, in favor of introducing already in this section the most important component of this analysis on the notion of participation and communion. This way we hope that the reader will be aware of the way in which the Holy Fathers approach the problems of mankind, the world, and history. Christ is the Logos of creation, and one finds Him in all the logos' (λόγοι) of created beings⁷⁴, not simply in a cosmological but in a Christological sense: He hypostasizes in His own Person the human nature in its state aggrieved by sin and mortality. The Incarnation, as an act of the will and love, reveals the true meaning of the idea of the logos.⁷⁵ Keeping this in mind, it is easier to understand that Christ-Logos is the “principle” and “aim” of all things, which respects fully the integrity and dynamism of human nature. Namely, it is He Who sets history in motion not only from within its own events, but is the One Who also sets existence in motion from within a multitude of created things, in the direction of true being, which is true life and true participation. Hence, along with Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection, truth lives simultaneously in the heart of history, in the very foundation of creation, and at the end of history.⁷⁶

8. We will continue to follow St. Maximus' thoughts and bring to light some additional information that is important to our topic. According to him, the created rational “being” requires *participation* in all the phases of his movement, although the movement of created beings always remains specific to them. Such is their nature: man does not oppose Divine grace, but *necessitates* it.⁷⁷ And the answer to man's existence makes him ecstatic. This is the reason why God “communicated” (κοινοποίησεν) four of His characteristics to man when he created him: existence (εἶναι), eternity, goodness, and wisdom.⁷⁸ This passage of Maximus begins with the principle which represents the leitmotif of

⁷⁴ Cf. Dalmais, 1952, pp. 244–249.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.* 23, PG 91:1260c.

⁷⁶ This is the key conclusion of Zizioulas' above mentioned study, “Truth and Communion”.

⁷⁷ St. Maximus shows and explains in a brilliant way very significant things in all that has been said so far; vital things we should not forget when speaking about communion and participation. Since the created being desires the Uncreated, he inevitably aspires in his ecstasy toward Him, for He is his desire. St. Maximus continues with the following: “And again, if he is moving toward him, he tries to accelerate this movement and will not stop until he is united with the being he loves and until he is encircled by him, voluntarily, through his own desire, so that in this manner he will be saved, and, is encircled by salvation so that he will become like the one who encircles him. Yet, not to learn on his own, that is, through his own will about that toward which he strives and which encircles him, but rather to become known and encircled and embraced by him who encompasses him” (*Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.*, PG 91:1073d).

⁷⁸ *Περὶ ἀγάπης* III, 25; PG 90:1024bc.

our study, namely: all rational beings exist thanks to their participation in the Divine features, and who by themselves can never become an integral part of created nature, but only μεθεκτώς,⁷⁹ that is, by means of a personal relation and communion (Θεῶ σαναπτόμενος, καὶ αὐτῷ ἐγγχρονίζων... πάντα σχεδὸν τὰ θεῖα ἰδιώματα ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιφέρει⁸⁰). Following this, St Maximus develops the idea of the image and likeness, which the patristic Tradition upheld before him,⁸¹ and which he perfectly embeds in the combination of the creation-motion. In light of this assertion it is evident that a) God not only guarantees existence to beings, but He sets the *aim* which they should fulfill, and b) in the case of man, this aim requires and means a *free* movement (in ascetic terminology: struggle) toward God. God grants him the genuine development of his eschatological “being”, which is always consistent with the “law of nature” (λόγος τῆς φύσεως) or the will of God. In both cases the notion of grace is excluded from the concepts of *habitus* or entelechy of created things.⁸²

9. The solution, which St. Maximus offers, therefore, is an Evangelical one. Namely, the destiny of man should be in harmony with God’s ἴδια θελήματα. This should be understood as a reverberation of the Lord’s prayer (Christ suggests this to us as a prayer *par excellence*: *Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2*), which expresses the disposition of a Christian, that is, his preference of God’s gentle will (εὐδοκία) over his own “gnomic” will. The fulfillment (ἄσκησις) of the will of God by the Christian (cf. *Matt. 12:50*) is not unconnected from the participation in God. It does not possess a legal-ethical characteristic, but rather an ontological one, as existentially conform to the “program” of the Holy Trinity about the world,⁸³ and the participation in it. The crucial argument of this

⁷⁹ *Περὶ διαφ. ἀπορ.* 9; PG 91:1097c.

⁸⁰ *Περὶ ἀγάπης* II, 52; PG 90:1002b.

⁸¹ See Thunberg, 1965, pp. 120–140.

⁸² The question about the *natural* movement toward deification is quite problematic. The view of J. Meyendorff (1969, pp. 203–24), according to which man’s own nature can transcend itself since he is created in the image of the transcendent God, and can, therefore, be in communion with its Prototype, proves to be incorrect. St. Maximus is very clear here: “Πάσχομεν ὡς ὑπὲρ φύσιν οὐσαν κατὰ χάριν, ἀλλ’ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν θέωσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν φύσει δεκτικὴν τῆς θεώσεως δύναμιν” (*Πρὸς Θαλάσ.* 22, 5; PG 90:324). A. Radosavljević offers a prolific contribution to the discussion in his “*Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας*”, p. 200. The solution offered in this study (i.e. “Strength and Weakness”) is the openness of the created being toward the uncreated Presence. For personal existence is not established on the ecstasy of one’s “nature”; this would lead to the necessity of existence. After all, God Himself exists because of God His Father and not because His nature is ecstatic. From the anthropological perspective, existence can happen only through the free and personal realization of nature. The transcendence or ecstasy of this can occur only thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit, Who “fulfills” the being and comes to indwell “οὐσιωδῶς”. However, even if this transcendence is realized, man cannot commune with the Divine nature Itself, which is altogether another topic.

⁸³ We repeat that this plan or program is identical to the gentle desires of God and should not be put on par with Platonic ideas; the latter are independent of God and in some way pre-determine Him. See Thunberg, 1965, pp. 120–140.

entire topic is that man becomes *permanent* to the measure by which he participates in the common event or context of an *uncreated* relation and communion (which leads us to ecclesiology). The only possible life that is lasting is attainable through personal communion and relation alone. This personal characteristic of the movement of rational beings is in fact the willing-desiring answer to God’s invitation. Without the person, divine or human, nature cannot exist in all its manifestations. The significance of freedom and collaboration is best illustrated in the following passages by St. Maximus: “The grace of the Most Holy Spirit does not affect wisdom in the Saints without the intellect which is also affected by the same; neither does cognition without the power of the intelligence; neither faith without the intelligible and rational information of both future things and things unknown to all for now; nor any other of the gifts without the ability and power to receive each gift.” The Holy Confessor finishes the following way: “Nor will man, in accordance with his natural power, attain any one of these enumerated gifts without the Divine power that grants them.”⁸⁴

Nevertheless, what we have asserted so far, has not answered the question about the *manner* of movement, which according to Maximus should be in imitation of the movement of God’s will.⁸⁵ Although this answer requires a special study, on this occasion we will cite a passage from Maximus from his 59th answer to Thalassius: “For he who is being saved must not only truly mortify sin by means of his free will, but must mortify his very will to sin; and must not only resurrect his free will through virtue, but (resurrect) the very virtue through his free will, so that the free will, completely dead to sin is severed from the completely deadened sin, without any feeling for it; and that a complete live free will feels the complete live virtue in an inseparable union (with it).”⁸⁶

Conclusions

1. The essential conclusions of our topic are drawn from a biblical-hellenistic synthesis, presented by St. Maximus. A formidable judgment of the realism of his theological endeavor can be formed through the following aspects: 1) the differentiation between the *hypostasis* and the *essence*, that is, “the mode of existence” and “the law of nature”; 2) the reality of the material world and the human body; 3) the ecstatic and hypostatic character of human existence, which culminates in communion; 4) the question of *time* and *space*. These are the existential and historical aspects *par excellence*, which evaluate the reality of man’s participation in the aforementioned factors and these provide the material for a definition of man’s “being”. If *participation* represents the correct relation-communion between man and God, between other human

⁸⁴ Πρὸς Θαλάσ. 59; PG 90:605b.

⁸⁵ Ἔργα θεολογικὰ καὶ πολεμικά, PG 91:25c.

⁸⁶ Πρὸς Θαλάσ. 60; PG 90:612b.

beings and the world, then *non-participation* (non-relation) represents an impairment of this three dimensional relation. For we have seen that this relation is a prerequisite of human existence. Consequently, the factor of movement-ecstasy is unavoidable in the study of the identity of man, particularly in view of the aspect of his attempt to overcome himself and to communicate with something, which is outside of this world.

2. Through his implicit refurbishment of cosmology and anthropology with Christology, Maximus frees the notion of *participation* (μετοχή) from the Platonic “idealism” and also from the implicit need of the Aristotelian “entelechy”. Thus he concludes that participation is not deprived of corporeality in a Platonic sense nor is it altered into a movement inherent to a being or to “nature” itself (cf. the non-patristic idea of the *Heilsgeschichte* and also the rejection of medieval “natura pura”, and a “natural” deification). *Participation* pertains to subjects of created existence for three reasons: 1) all beings have been brought into existence and movement as the realization of God’s loving will; 2) the creature finds his fulfillment in the future of history (God’s love aims at the final communion of creation with the living God the Father); 3) the personification of this loving will (ἴδια θελήματα) of the Father is revealed in the Incarnate Christ, so that participation in Him and through Him will represent, in accordance with Maximus’ antinomic expression, the “ever-moving rest” and the “ever-remaining movement”.⁸⁷ In this eschatological state, men have one will with God, but this one will will be exercised in different personal modes just because personal difference will also survive. This will “hypostasise” the one human nature according to the τρόπος “chosen” by γνώμη and προαίρεσις in this life by each person.

3. All this comes forth quite inconspicuously from the teachings of Maximus the Confessor. Reflections on the reasons, which contribute to the facts of “strength in weakness”, are of great significance in the understanding of the paradox of existence. What Maximus speaks about with regard to the manner of transcending death and about the hypostatic and true “eternal being” (ἀεὶ εἶναι) “in Christ” will be the subject of another study. In anticipation of this, we conclude this text with his words of love, of the kind of love which is as strong as death, so powerful that it can offer an ontology that provides the being with an absolute: “For the most perfect act of love and the culmination of its action through a mutual exchange is to bring to remembrance those personal characteristics which love unites and mutually confirms ... which (finally) makes man a God”.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See also his *Ad Thalassium* 59: “Repletion of desire is the ever-moving rest around the desirable of the ones who desire (ἐφέσεως δὲ πλήρωσις ἐστὶν ἡ περὶ τὸ ἐφετὸν τῶν ἐφιμεμένων ἀεικίνητος στάσις) / ever-moving rest is the continuous and never-ending enjoyment of the desirable (ἀεικίνητος δὲ στάσις ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ ἐφετοῦ διηνεκῆς τε καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἀπόλαυσις)”. (*Ad Thalassium* 59, PG 90, 608d).

⁸⁸ “Ἐργον γὰρ τῆς ἀγάπης τελειότατον, καὶ τῆς κατ’ αὐτὴν ἐνεργείας πέρας, δι’ ἀντιδόσεως σχε-

References:

- von Balthasar, H.U. (1947). *Liturgie cosmique: Maxime le Confesseur*. Paris: Aubier.
- Dalmais, I.H. (1952). La théorie des logoi des creatures chez St. Maxime la Confessor. *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 244–249.
- Dalmais, I.H. (1985). Preface. In G.C. Berthold (Ed.). *Maximus Confessor: Selected writings*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Farrell, J.P. (1989). *Free choice in St. Maximus the confessor*. South Canan [sic]: St. Tikhons Seminary Press.
- Garrigues, J.M. (1970). Le Christ dans la théologie byzantine. Reflexions sur un ouvrage du J. Meyendorff. *Istina*, 3, 351–360.
- Giannaras, C. & Borrély, A. (1986). *Philosophie sans rupture*. Genève: Labor et fides.
- Γιέφτιτς, Α. (1985). Χριστός — Αρχή και Τέλος. Αθήνα.
- Kramer, H. (2004). Osnovna postavka pojma slobode u anticı. *Beseda*, 6.
- Λουδοβίκος, Ν. (1992). *Η εὐχαριστιακὴ ὄντολογία*. Athens: Δόμος.
- Ματσούκα, Ν. (1980). *Κόσμος, ἄνθρωπος, κοινωνία κατὰ τὸν Μάξιμο Ὁμολογητή*. Αθήνα.
- Meyendorff, J. (1969). *Le Christ dans la théologie byzantine*. Paris: Cerf.
- Meyendorff, J. (1975). *Christ in Eastern Christian thought*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press.
- Μπούλοβιτς, Ε. (1983). *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Τριάδι διακρίσεως τῆς θείας οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργείας κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Μᾶρκον Ἐφέσου τὸν Εὐγενικόν, Θεσσαλονίκη*.
- Pannenberg, W. (1975). *Der Geist des Lebens. Glaube und Wirklichkeit*.
- Ραντοσάβλιεβιτς, Α. (1975). *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητήν*. Αθήνα.
- Thunberg, L. (1965). *Microcosm and mediator: The theological anthropology of St. Maximus the Confessor*. Lund: Gleerup.
- Tillich, P. (1961). *Systematic theology*. III. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Yannaras, C. (1986). *Philosophie sans rupture*. Labor et Fides.
- Zizioulas, J.D. (1997). *Being as communion: Studies in personhood and the church*. Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.
- Zizioulas, J.D. (2006). *Communion Otherness Further studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: T&T Klark.

Максим Васиљевић

Универзитет у Београду, Православни богословски факултет, Београд

Допринос Светог Максима Исповедника проблематици превазилажења створености

Тематика истине *дића* представља темељни аспект теологије, која се не бави питањем да ли Бог (као истинито *диће*) постоји или не постоји, већ се више занима за то *како* (на који начин) он постоји. Да *ди* створено „*диће*“ примило спасење, односно тројични начин постојања који је ослобођен од пропадљивости и смрти, важно је да има одговарајућу везу са Богом, да заиста партиципира у њему. У тексту који следи, разматрамо појам „контингенције“ (стање условљености и неизвесности) људског постојања, и следствено томе, покушавамо да истражимо човеков напор да се ослободи од нужности, која је узрокована чињеницом створености. Кључна питања која овде постављамо су: Да ли је човек, онако како га ми знамо и какав нам је искуствено доступан, заиста „човек“? Шта значи „искупљење“ према схватању Светог Максима, тј, од чега се човек издвља? Шта су *ἰρρηϊσῆσται* (мере, границе или закони) које се одnose на учешће човека у остварењу сопствене „егзистенције“ утемељене на егзистенцијалном моделу троједног Бога? Како дефинисати човекову способност и/или слабост у његовој потрази за личном заједницом са Богом, унутар граница историјских „догађаја“? У ту сврху, не испитујемо сам садржај партиципације, већ, првенствено, способност учесника–реципијента (човека). Разматрање ових питања је кључно за разумевање антропологије Светог Максима Исповедника. У овом раду изостављамо расправу по питању његове христологије и еклисиологије.

Key words: Св. Максим Исповедник, *диће*, створеност, способност, слабост.

Датум пријема чланка: 4. 12. 2012.

Датум прихватања чланка за објављивање: 15. 12. 2012.