The World as Sacrament
The Eucharistic Ontology of Maximos Confessor

Daniel Heide

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Abstract

This dissertation elucidates the sacramental eucharistic ontology of Maximos Confessor. I approach this endeavour by means of a philosophical historical methodology, arguing that Maximos' sacramental ontology is in continuity with that of the pagan Neoplatonists. This continuity is evident in Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*), a Christian doctrine of emanation which, like the corresponding doctrines of Plotinus and Proclus, affirms the continuity between God and the world derived *from* God. In contrast to the pagans, Maximos' Christian emanationism does not involve a declension of mediating hypostases, but occurs *im*mediately via the eternal *erga*, the uncreated energies of God. I argue that this is not pantheism, but rather pan*en*theism – the world as imbued with the uncreated grace of God. Against the charge of necessity directed against this teaching by Christian polemicists, I argue that, for Maximos, the unceasing creativity of God is in fact true freedom. That this timeless activity nonetheless unfolds in time marks a crucial difference between Maximos and the pagan Neoplatonists, for whom the world is eternal. Maximos, I argue, holds to a uniquely Christian doctrine of voluntary and temporal emanation; that is, creation as divine self-impartation. What makes this sacramental ontology eucharistic is the Logos as Christian formal principle. The world is not merely grounded in God, but rooted in the Logos whose cosmic incarnation as the many *logoi* of creation constitutes the world in all its particularity. In sum, all things are created *from* God *according to* the Logos *through whom all things were made.* This eucharistic ontology finds its completion in the *anaphoric* return of the cosmos back into God as origin and end, mediated by the human as hierarch. This is the cosmic liturgy of Maximos Confessor, the onto-dialectic of procession and return whereby God offers the gift of His own supra-essential Being *for the life of the world* – a gift freely offered back by the creature in gratitude (*eucharistia*) culminating in deification.

Résumé

Cette thèse aborde l'ontologie sacramentelle eucharistique de Maxime le Confesseur. J'entreprends ceci par le biais d'une méthodologie philosophique historique, en soutenant que l'ontologie sacramentelle de Maxime est le prolongement de celle des néoplatoniciens païens. Chez Maxime, cette continuité se manifeste par l'idée de la création *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ), une doctrine uniquement chrétienne de l'émanation qui, tout comme les doctrines homologues de Plotin et Proclus, affirme la continuité entre Dieu et le monde dérivé de Dieu. Contrairement aux païens, l'émanationisme chrétien de Maxime n'implique pas une déclinaison des hypostases médiatrices, mais se produit immédiatement via l'*erga* éternelle, voire, les énergies incréées de Dieu. Je soutiens qu'il ne s'agit pas de panthéisme, mais de pan*en*théisme – le monde imprégné de la grâce incréée de Dieu. Contre l'accusation de nécessité, je soutiens que la créativité incessante de Dieu est en fait la vraie liberté. Que cette activité intemporelle se déroule néanmoins dans le temps représente une différence clée entre Maxime et les néoplatoniciens païens, pour qui le monde est éternel. Maxime, je soutiens, s'en tient à une doctrine uniquement chrétienne de l'émanation volontaire et temporelle ; c'est-à-dire la création en tant qu'auto-communication divine. Ce qui rend eucharistique cette ontologie sacramentelle, c'est le *Logos* compris en tant que principe formel chrétien. Le monde n'est pas simplement fondé sur Dieu, mais enraciné dans le *Logos* par lequel toutes choses ont été faites. En somme, toutes choses sont créées à partir de Dieu selon le *Logos*. Cette ontologie eucharistique trouve son achèvement dans le retour anaphorique du cosmos en Dieu comme origine et fin, médiatisé par l'humain en tant que hiérarque. C'est la liturgie cosmique de Maxime le Confesseur, l'onto-dialectique de la procession et du retour par laquelle Dieu offre le don de son propre Être supra-essentiel *pour la vie du monde* – un don volontairement reorienté vers Dieu par ses créatures en action de grâce (*eucharistia*) culminant dans la déification.

Dedication

To my wife Kali, without whose unwavering support I could not have brought this dissertation to completion. And to the newly-born Amelia, whose much anticipated arrival graced the conclusion of my labours.

Δόξα Πατρί
καί Υἱῷ
καί Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι
καί νῦν καί ἀεί
καί εἰς τούς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.
Ἀμήν.

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Abbreviations

Maximos
Amb. – The Ambigua
Thal. – To Thalassios
Myst. – Ecclesiastic Mystagogy
Or. Dom – Oration on the Lord's Prayer
QD – Questions and Doubts
CTh – Centuries on Theology
CL – Centuries on Love
Var. – Various Texts

Dionysius
DN – Divine Names
EH – Ecclesiastical Hierarchy
CH – Celestial Hierarchy
MT – Mystical Theology

Gregory of Nyssa
ContraEun – Contra Eunomius
DeHom – De Hominis Opificio
Vita – De Vita Moysis

Origen
DePrinc – De Principiis
CommJohn – Commentary on John
In Ezech. Hom. – Homilies on Ezekiel
ContraCels – Contra Celsum

Plotinus
Enn. – Enneads

Proclus
ElTh. – Elements of Theology
De Aet. – De Aeternitate
On Parm. – On Parmenides

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
And from Thy presence
Whither shall I flee?

Psalm 138:6 (LXX)

Introduction

The World as Sacrament

I. Preliminary Remarks

At the heart of any sacramental vision of reality lies the affirmation of a certain continuity between God and world – a continuity which Latin medieval scholastics expressed in terms of the *analogia entis*[1], but which can more generally be referred to as the ontology of participation (*μέθεξις*). Both terms attempt to articulate the continuity between God and world, between Being and beings in such a way that the latter is understood to be contingent upon the former as the source of its existence. As such, the world is both intrinsically related to God while yet being crucially other than God – a relationship, after all, is inconceivable in the absence of otherness. This otherness is implicit in the idea of analogy; insofar as the world *is*, it is analogous to God who, as the transcendent Ground of Being, alone truly *Is* (*ὁ ὤν*).[2] However, insofar as the world is wholly contingent upon God as the source of its being; insofar as it possesses a merely qualified and finite existence; insofar as it is in a perpetual process of becoming the world is radically *dis*-analogous to God. Its being-by-participation, in other words, is merely a distant echo, a pale reflection of divine 'unparticipated' Being. And yet the infinite difference that, according to this view, exists between God and world, in no way negates the fact that the world bears a real resemblance to God, that it is *by its very existence* a radiant disclosure of the divine Being, a revelation of transcendent Beauty; in short, a *theophany*.

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[1] This term properly speaking belongs to the Latin scholastic tradition centred upon Thomas Aquinas and implies a complex Aristotelian context which is wholly absent from the Greek, Byzantine *milieu* with which we are concerned here. My use of the term 'analogy' – to the extent that I use it – simply refers to the notion that, kataphatically speaking, God alone truly *IS*, while creatures possess a derivative existence. For a concise discussion of *analogia entis* in relation to Dionysius, see Perl, *Methexis*., 81-90.

[2] Ex 3:14. This, of course, is to speak kataphatically. We must always keep in mind the apophatic perspective foundational for Maximos (following Dionysius) that God is ultimately beyond being.

The notion of theophany, of creation as a kind of divine revelation finds expression in Maximos' bold, repeated assertion that the world is not merely created from nothing (*ex nihilo*), but from God (*ex deo/ ἐκ Θεοῦ*) according to (*κατά*) the Logos. Here we encounter yet another way of talking about the God/world relation. If analogy and participation approach the problem from the perspective of the creature, of the reversion of beings upon their Source, creation from God approaches it from the perspective of the Cause, of the procession of the many *from* the One. Maximos combines the idea of ontological procession with that of cosmic incarnation, the self-multiplication of the One Logos as the many *logoi* immanent in creation. As the self-impartation of God who offers Himself, in and through the Logos, in the act of creation, the world is not radically sundered from God. Instead, the world is ontologically grounded in God as its *archē*, as the sole Source of its contingent being. It is this understanding of creation as divine self-impartation, of the world as pure *gift*, that lies at the heart of Maximos' sacramental – indeed *eucharistic* – ontology. The world, though importantly other than God, draws its being from God in a kind of existential communion rooted in the creative kenosis of the Logos. As such, it possesses, by its very existence, an implicitly, or potentially deific character.[3] According to Maximos, the world was created for deification, for the express purpose of unconfused union, of perichoretic communion with God. The world as gift provides the matter for an all-embracing sacrament.

In brief, I argue that Maximos teaches a doctrine of creation *ex deo* whereby the world proceeds from (*ek*) God, according to (*kata*) the Logos as Christian formal principle. Creation is not derived from the divine essence, however, but from the uncreated energies of God.

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[3] That is, the world possesses a certain 'predilection' for deification as expressed in the traditional Patristic distinction between 'image' and 'likeness.' I hesitate to say 'natural capacity' in that Maximos is clear that deification, though the ultimate good of creation, is ultimately beyond nature and a result of grace. I discuss this in Chapter Six.

Consequently, Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* does not result in pantheism, the identity of God and world, but rather, pan*en*theism, a unity-in-distinction whereby the world is imbued with the uncreated grace of God. As such, the world is inherently sacred – or rather, sacramental. I further argue that Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* represents a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ who enters into the world as the many *logoi* of creation.

II. Sacramentality and Desacralization

In what sense is the world a 'sacrament'? In what sense is Maximos' ontology 'eucharistic'? How does this relate to the modern problem of '*de*sacralization'? Sacramentality, as construed by Maximos, is closely tied to the notion of divine immanence – of God as present to the world and the world as existing in God. As such, the world may be regarded as intrinsically meaningful, as possessing objective value beyond human utility. Above all, sacramentality means that the world serves as a means of communion with God, that this is in fact its true purpose. The sacramental character of the world thus includes the human subject, and has direct bearing upon the purpose of human life (Chapter Six). According to Maximos, the human was created for deification – not merely for itself but for the whole of creation. As created in the image of God, the human is a cosmic priest, a mediator called to unite heaven and earth and to offer the totality to its Creator in gratitude (*eucharistia*). From this point of view, the world is not only sacramental, but *eucharistic*. That is to say, the radical dependence of the world upon God as the sole Source of its being implies an attitude of adoration and thanksgiving. Everything, each precious moment of existence is *gift* – a free self-bestowal from God, freely received and offered back *Thine own of*

Thine own[4] in gratitude by the human individual. The 20th century liturgical theologian

Alexander Schmemann captures Maximos' sacramental vision perfectly when he states that "the

world was created as the 'matter,' the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was

created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament."[5] For Schmemann, the sacramental life of the

Church is itself grounded in, bears witness to, and brings to fruition the intrinsic sacramentality

of the cosmos.[6] It is only because the world is already *by the very fact of its existence* potentially

deiform that it can become actually so in the *eschaton*.

Sacramentality as divine immanence, however, is only half the equation. The other half is

of course divine transcendence, without which immanence deteriorates into crude pantheism. As

Dionysius succinctly puts it: "God is all things in all things and nothing in any."[7] The vision of

the world as sacrament thus rests upon the fundamental antinomy that the world both *is,* and *is*

not, God (or, if one prefers, divine). As Eric Perl never tires of iterating, it is precisely because

God is no thing, that He is able to be all things.[8] That is to say, because God is not *a* being (not

even a 'Supreme' Being understood as the first and highest in a series) but the very *Ground* of

being, God is simultaneously everything and nothing, at once transcendent *and* immanent. In

fact, God's transcendence is the very measure of His immanence and vice versa; to the extent

that He is transcendent, to precisely that extent He is immanent. Another way of putting this is in

terms of divine infinity. Given the infinity of God, there is nowhere where He is not – for what

could possibly limit Him? At the same time, the infinity of God means that He cannot be

contained by anything. Thus, God's immanence in the world is not in tension with His

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[4] From the Holy Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
[5] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*., 15.
[6] See the articles by Schmemann "Worship in a Secular Age" and "Sacrament and Symbol" appended to *For the Life of the World.*
[7] *DN*.7.3, 872A 15.
[8] See Perl, *Theophany*. Perl, *Methexis*., *passim*.

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transcendence, but a perfect reflection of it. As the very Ground of being (or, to speak apophatically, the 'Groundless Ground') God is *in* all things as their constitutive *archē* and, precisely as such, is not any particular being. Those theologians who insist too strongly upon a radical chasm between God and world inadvertently limit God while depriving the world of its sacred meaning.

This latter point raises the modern problem of *de*sacralization, a view of the cosmos as devoid of divine presence, as somehow existing in and for itself alone, as subject to human mastery and as existing solely as an object of utility. Sacramentality as I intend it in relation to Maximos may be negatively defined as precisely the opposite of this view. The world is not dead, meaningless matter, but imbued with vital, spiritual significance; it is not self-sufficient but wholly contingent upon God; it is not primarily an object of human utility, but a means of spiritual communion. It hardly needs mentioning that the desacralized view – what is sometimes referred to as 'disenchantment' – predominates in our modern milieu, while the sacramental vision has been largely relegated to the past.[9] I say largely but not exclusively – nor, I might add, definitively.[10] In light of the pressing existential, ethical, and ecological concerns of our secular age, the notion of sacramentality is finding renewed relevance in contemporary theological circles, both East and West. An example of this in the East, is the recently published volume, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, edited by John Chryssavgis and Bruce Foltz. Here, numerous articles by

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[9] Max Weber's classic work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is still highly relevant here.
[10] Eugene McCarraher makes a compelling case for the *mis*-enchantment of the world in his book, McCarraher, *The Enchantments of Mammon*.

prominent Orthodox scholars explore the themes of sacramentality and desacralization in relation to the contemporary environmental crisis.[11]

A prominent representative of the Western retrieval of sacramentality is the movement known as Radical Orthodoxy. This movement, comprised of scholars such as John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, are motivated to seek a solution to what they regard as the desacralization of the world resulting from the supplanting of the Thomist *analogia entis* and the Platonic ontology of participation, by the Scotist univocity of being.[12] The Reformed theologian Hans Boersma follows a similar trajectory, identifying Scotist univocity and Ockhamist nominalism as the 'two blades' of a pair of scissors cutting the 'tapestry' of sacramental ontology.[13] According to Boersma, the disintegration of the 'Platonist-Christian synthesis' contributed to the decline of sacramentality culminating in our modern desacralized world. Important as these contemporary Western retrievals are, a thorough appraisal of them lies outside our immediate concern. Strictly speaking, notions such as univocity, nominalism, and even the *analogia entis* are largely alien to the Greek Patristic tradition, and thus have a limited bearing on the thought of Maximos. They *are* relevant, however, insofar as many of us – regardless of tradition – arguably inhabit the desacralized world diagnosed by these thinkers. The present dissertation is thus sympathetic to – and to a certain extent parallels – the sacramental concerns of these theologians, yet without (at this particular instance) being in direct conversation with them.[14]

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[11] See esp. Chryssavgis, "An New Heaven and a New Earth: Orthodox Christian Insights from Theology, Spirituality, and the Sacraments" (153-162) and "'The Sweetness of Heaven Overflows Onto the Earth': Orthodox Christianity and Environmental Thought" (1-6); George Theokritoff, "The Cosmology of the Eucharist" (132-135); Metropolitan John Zizioulas, "Proprietors or Priests of Creation?" (164-172), in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*.

[12] For an excellent introduction, see Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*.

[13] See Boersma, "Cutting the Tapestry: The Scissors of Modernity" in Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*. 68-83.

[14] The foundation for such a dialogue has already been established. See, Pabst and Schneider, *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy*.

That being said, it seems to me that certain strands of contemporary Orthodox theology are themselves imbued with a certain crypto-Scotism and a tendency towards voluntarism which points problematically (if unintentionally) to a desacralizing dualism.[15] Thus, while the 'Platonist-Christian synthesis' was never rejected by the East (though the ancient tension between Athens and Jerusalem is not absent); and while the Orthodox tradition decisively rejected the nominalist turn in favour of sacramental realism;[16] it does seem to me that a certain devaluing, suspicion, or simply neglect regarding this (Neo)Platonic legacy is discernible within the contours of contemporary Orthodoxy.[17] If it is the case, as Milbank, Pickstock, Boersma, and others maintain (and I am in full agreement here), that the ontology of participation represents the rational framework *par excellence* for Christian sacramentality,[18] then a positive reassessment of Neoplatonism's relation to Orthodox theology is of utmost importance. It is for this reason that my account of Maximos' sacramental ontology takes the form of an in-depth exploration of his reception and transformation of Neoplatonic philosophy – exemplified primarily, for our purposes, by Plotinus and Proclus.

III. Metaphors of Mystery: Some Key Terms

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[15] I am thinking particularly about Florovsky's famous essay "Creation and Creaturehood" in Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*.

[16] So John Meyendorff in Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas.*, 237-240.

[17] It would seem that the Neopatristic reaction against the alleged pantheism of Sophiology provides an important subtext here. See Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance.*, 132-158. See Lossky's remarks, Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church.*, 46. Florovsky is an interesting case in that he famously championed the Hellenic character of Orthodox Christianity (*contra* von Harnack), yet does not seem to have fully embraced its philosophical implications. See note 15.

[18] This is not to claim that Christian sacramentality somehow *depends* upon pagan philosophical presuppositions. My claim, rather, is that among the various philosophical options available to us (the Russian Sophiologists experimented with German Idealism, for example), Neoplatonism still provides the most lucid and compatible conceptual apparatus for articulating the sacramental truths of divine revelation in rational terms. This is scarcely surprising given that Christianity and Neoplatonism share a common cultural milieu.

Having broadly discussed the notion of sacramentality in relation to desacralization, I want to unpack some of the key terms that I draw upon to express this. These are: emanation, creation *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ), creation as divine self-impartation, and creation-as-incarnation. All of these terms are diverse ways of talking about a singular intuition: the sacramentality of the world as somehow imbued with divinity; as simultaneously one with, and yet crucially other than, God; as filled with sacred significance and power, and yet wholly contingent upon the divine as the sole Source of that significance and power. Of these four terms, Maximos alludes to emanation and creation-as-incarnation – the latter implicit in his Logos-theology – while explicitly employing creation as divine self-impartation (ἑαυτὸν μεταδοῦναι) and, with great frequency, creation *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ).

All of these terms are inevitably metaphorical insofar as they try to convey the mystery of the derivation of all things from God, a mystery that ultimately eludes rational articulation. This is especially true for emanation, a term which, on account of its naturalistic imagery, is largely misunderstood. In general, emanation is simply the counterpart to participation – the latter viewing the causal process from the perspective of the effect, the former from that of the cause. Both terms are encapsulated in the Neoplatonic idea of procession and return. The metaphor of emanation tries to convey how God, or the One, as the perfect, infinite, undiminished Ground of being, effortlessly creates the world of finite beings as a kind of outpouring of His own primordial goodness. As such, emanationism represents a kind of ontological monism in opposition to dualism. Instead of a demiurgic model whereby the deity enforms pre-existent matter, the One God stands alone as the sole principle of reality.

Another way to express this is in terms of creation *ex deo* (ἐξ ἑνὸς, ἐκ Θεοῦ), or creation as divine self-impartation (ἑαυτὸν μεταδοῦναι). These are Maximos' preferred terms for

emanation by which he expresses the derivation of all things from God as the solitary Ground of being. An understandable objection at this point might be that the doctrine of creation from God is in tension with the traditional Christian doctrine of creation from nothing. I argue to the contrary (Chapter Four). Rightly understood, creation *ex deo* is not in tension with creation *ex nihilo*; rather, the two represent complementary perspectives upon a single reality. Maximos, I contend, holds the position that the world is simultaneously created *from* God *from* nothing.[19] This is not as paradoxical as it sounds – for creation *ex nihilo* is, in its origins, the negation of dualism, of the doctrine of creation from pre-existent matter,[20] and hence the affirmation that God alone is the supreme *archē* of existence. A tension between *ex nihilo* and *ex deo* suggests a subtle reification of the *nihil* as a quasi-something. This tension dissolves when one recognizes that creation *ex nihilo* is precisely the negation of any kind of subtle something, of a secondary principle existing alongside the One Trihypostatic God.

Like the pagan Neoplatonists, Maximos rejects ontological dualism in favour of a monarchic metaphysics, an ontology of the One. That being said, Maximos' mono-theistic understanding of creation as divine self-impartation diverges importantly from the pagan model. Whereas a key feature of Plotinus' and Proclus' cosmology is the eternity of the world as a beginningless and endless production, Maximos unequivocally asserts the Christian doctrine of creation in time. The world has a temporal beginning (however inexplicable this may be), and will come to an end (Chapter Four). This temporal aspect, coupled with a heightened emphasis upon divine volition, leads Maximos to a uniquely Christian understanding of creation as *voluntary and temporal emanation*, a qualified notion of creation *ex deo* which, I maintain,

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[19] Note the absence of the copula – God and nothing are not two things.
[20] So Athanasius. See, Athanasius and Behr, *On the Incarnation*., 2-3.

overcomes the problems of pantheism (Chapter Two) and necessity (Chapter Three) which some critics ascribe to pagan emanationism.

The present dissertation places a strong emphasis upon this 'top down' perspective of creation as emanation, or creation as divine self-impartation, rather than the 'bottom up' perspective of participation. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, a good deal has been written about participation in relation to Maximos in recent decades in response to Polycarp Sherwood's call to arms over fifty years ago.[21] Much less has been said about emanation. This is likely due to the common misconceptions – not to mention suspicions – surrounding emanationism and creation *ex deo*. Indeed, emanationism plays a central (negative) role in the cherished polemic between 'free' and 'necessary' creation – the latter identified with pagan philosophy and the former with Christianity. I do my best to dismantle, or 'problematize' this issue in Chapter Three. Given that this topic is both underrepresented in the scholarly literature and generally misunderstood it seems to me worth pursuing.

Yet there is a further reason. Emanationism or creation as divine self-impartation provides a powerful example, not merely of sacramental ontology but, when situated within Maximos' Christological context, a specifically *eucharistic* ontology. That is to say, creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation presents us with a compelling vision of the world as *gift* – the gift of God's own infinite Being, offered in the form of uncreated grace in and through the Logos as principle of differentiation, to finite beings. This is reciprocated by the participating creature who offers back the gift of being in the form of well-being (i.e. virtue & contemplation), culminating in the grace of eternal well-being, the deifying ascent to the Kingdom. I touch upon

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[21] "A study on 'participation' [in Maximos] would serve to clarify what is, perhaps, the acutest problem in Byzantine theology: the relation of the finite to the infinite, of the created to the uncreated." Sherwood, "Survey of Recent Work on St. Maximus the Confessor.", 435. Perl's *Methexis* is a response to this call, and more recently Tollefsen's *Activity and Participation.*

the return of all things into God, and the human's sacerdotal role as cosmic priest and mediator of creation, in my final chapter (Chapter Six).

This brings us to our final term, creation-as-incarnation. Thus far, I have spoken primarily in terms of sacramentality while making occasional references to 'eucharistic' ontology. Insofar as the Eucharist, in ecclesial terms, *is* a sacrament (*μυστήριον*) – indeed the supreme sacrament – the latter term includes the former. These terms when used in relation to Maximos are inseparable and can only be conceptually distinguished. Nonetheless, insofar as the term 'eucharistic' indicates a more narrow, uniquely Christian understanding of sacramental ontology, one not merely grounded in God or the One, but specifically rooted in Christ the transcendent/immanent Logos, it represents something beyond the sacramentality Maximos shares with his pagan – and some extent even his Christian – predecessors. In Maximos, sacramental ontology becomes eucharistic ontology. This is due to the thoroughly Christocentric character of his ontology, the fact that the Logos plays a central role in the creation and deification of the world.[22] The Logos, I argue, serves as a uniquely Christian formal principle who enters into the world as the many *logoi* constitutive of beings (Chapter Five). Hence, creation-as-incarnation. All things are created *from* (*ἐκ*) God *according to* (*κατά*) the Logos, *through whom all things were made*.[23] The whole of creation is, in a very real sense, the body of Christ; it is a cosmic *ecclesia* in *potentia*, a potentiality the human as hierarch is called to actualize in cooperation with grace.

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[22] On the 'Christocentric' nature of Maximos' ontology, see Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*.; on the Logos and creation, see Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor." For a recent dissenting view see Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*.
[23] Jn 1:3; Col 1:16.

One term which may strike the reader as conspicuous for its absence is *analogia entis*. As I noted earlier, this term has a limited bearing upon the thought of Maximos. Indeed, the Latin, scholastic context of the *analogia entis* centred upon Thomas Aquinas lies wholly outside the Greek, Byzantine milieu with which we are concerned here. Thus, while both Aquinas and Maximos share a kind of Neoplatonized Aristotelianism (though this is more characteristic of the former than the latter), the problems with which they are grappling, and especially the manner in which they grapple with them, differ substantially. To give an example: for Aquinas, the notion of analogy is in part an attempt to articulate the relation between Being and beings that avoids saying they are either univocal or equivocal, the solution being that they are *analogical*. That is to say, creatures are neither identical with God nor wholly other than God. The relation is one of proportionality. Just as health is to the healthy person, so being may be predicated of both God and creatures insofar as the former is Cause of the latter, while the latter participate in the being of the former in a measured way (i.e. analogously).[24]

Like Thomas, Maximos uses the term analogy (ἀνάλογος) to articulate the measured or proportionate (ἀνάλογος) character of finite beings' participation in the infinite Being of God. The context, however, is entirely different. Maximos is not trying to chart a middle course between univocity and equivocity. For him, *analogia* is inseparable from the Logos as principle of differentiation, as Christian formal principle. All things are created *from* (ἐκ) God *according to* (κατά) the Logos. It is the Logos who finitizes, as it were, the infinite energies of God such that creatures receive a measured – that is, *ana-logous* – share in the inexhaustible gift of Being. The counterpart to creation *from* God according to the Logos is the creature's analogous participation *in* God as the solitary Ground of being. Analogy thus points to the finitude of

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[24] *S.T.* I.13.5-10. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy*.92-121; Betz, *Introduction* Pryzwara, *Analogia Entis*., 1-115.

beings who, though created from God, are definitively other than God as wholly qualified, relative and delimited creatures. Whatever parallels exist between Maximos' and Aquinas' respective doctrines of analogy, the context remains markedly different: Aquinas approaches analogy from an Aristotelian perspective, while Maximos does so from a Johannine, Origenist, Middle-Platonist perspective. Analogy, for Maximos, is not primarily tied to logic, but to the Logos – it is an expression of his Logos-theology.

In sum, while analogy does play an important role in Maximos' sacramental eucharistic ontology, it is not as central for Maximos as it is for Aquinas. Its significance lies primarily in relation to the Logos as principle of differentiation. In this sense, analogy acts as the formal counterpart to emanation, to creation *ex deo*. All things are created *from* God *according to* the Logos. Creation as divine self-impartation and creation-as-incarnation coincide as the *energeic*, formal, final, and efficient causes of creation (Chapter Five).

IV: Methodology and Aim

The sacramental, eucharistic ontology broadly outlined above did not arise *sui generis* in the inspired mind of Maximos Confessor. It has a history. In addition to its Scriptural and Patristic origins, it has roots in the venerable tradition of Neoplatonic philosophy as exemplified (for our purposes) by Plotinus and Proclus.[25] As we shall see, the pagan Plotinus too speaks of being as gift, of creation (or at any rate, emanation) as divine self-impartation. Perl refers to the "universal sacramentalism of the Neoplatonic cosmology" insofar as "the cosmos exists only because and insofar as it manifests the presence of the Other."[26] The One, as Plotinus repeatedly states, is

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[25] There are, of course, many other important figures not least Iamblicus, Damascius, and Syrianus. For a more detailed account, see the classic work by Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*.
[26] Perl, *Methexis*., 55.

immanent in all things as their Ground even as it radically transcends all things. In this, he is followed by Proclus and that greatest of all Christian Neoplatonists, Dionysius, who transforms and transmits this sacramental legacy to Maximos. While it is only with Christianity that one can speak specifically in terms of *eucharistic* ontology, the seeds of this sacramental outlook, its basic concepts and conceits, are already present in the metaphysical speculations of the Hellenistic philosophers.

In light of this fact, my methodology is inevitably a philosophical historical one. That being said, my aim here is not to 'reduce' Maximos' sacramental ontology to that of Plotinus or Proclus (or Dionysius for that matter) but rather, by means of historical, philosophical investigation to come to a clearer understanding of its logical presuppositions. In adopting this methodology I in no way make the assumption lamented by Mark Edwards that, "a Christian never thinks but only inhales the thoughts of others".[27] Nor do I count myself among those who, as Lossky would have it, "ransack the thought of the Fathers for traces of 'Platonism' and 'Aristotelianism'".[28] The point is not to 'reduce' a particular Christian thinker to his pagan predecessors so as to divest him of his uniquely Christian understanding of reality. I eschew all such sinister motives and facile assumptions. Instead, I maintain that a careful investigation of the philosophical milieu in which any thinker is situated – be they pagan or Christian – is not only legitimate, but indispensable. Indeed, to interpret Maximos in light of Aristotle, Plotinus, and Proclus (in addition to Philo, Origen, Dionysius and the Cappadocians) is no more reductionistic than to interpret Plotinus and Proclus in light of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics! To

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[27] Edwards, *Origen Against Plato*., 54.
[28] Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 46.

do so is simply to apply an historical methodology to the study of philosophy – a methodology first used to great effect by Aristotle.

By resisting this historical methodology we not only deprive ourselves of valuable resources for understanding the Fathers, we in fact do them a great disservice. Part of the genius of Maximos lies in his ability to discern and adapt the truth wherever he happens to find it – be it a pagan philosopher such as Proclus or a heterodox theologian such as Origen. In Maximos, all the riches of pagan and Christian thought – both orthodox and heterodox[29] – come together in an unparalleled synthesis of what can only be regarded as a genuinely Christian – indeed *Christological* – philosophy. Here the practical wisdom of Evagrius, the Logos-theology of Origen (modified and corrected), the mystagogy of Dionysius, and the Christology of Chalcedon join with the Platonic doctrine of participation, the Aristotelian understanding of nature, and the Neoplatonic causality of *proödos* and *epistrophē* to articulate a profoundly Christian vision of cosmic sacramentality. In what follows, therefore, my aim is neither to 'reduce' Maximos to his pagan sources, nor to exaggerate his uniqueness as a Christian thinker. Instead, my aim is simply to employ an historical philosophical methodology to the extent that this is useful for elucidating the Confessor's thought, at times emphasising continuity at other times stressing discontinuity and departure.

This historical philosophical methodology, it must be emphasised, is inseparable from the theme of sacramental ontology. I share Boersma's view that sacramental ontology is founded upon the presuppositions of Greek philosophy.[30] This is not to say that the *intuition* of sacramentality, of sacred Presence in the world, is dependent upon human reason; Scripture is

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[29] Crucially modified and subjected to rigorous critique.

[30] For Boersma's discussion of what he refers to as the 'Platonist-Christian synthesis', see Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*., 19-67.

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filled with numinous encounters that are no less sacramental for being pre-philosophical (or supra-philosophical). Nor can one deny that there exist profound philosophical articulations of sacramentality, or sacredness, in traditions outside the European milieu such as in Hinduism and Buddhism. My contention is simply that in terms of Christian sacramentality – both cosmic and ecclesial – the ontology of participation provides the rational articulation *par excellence*. This may seem like a bold claim.[31] Yet, one need only consider the desacralizing consequences of the nominalist turn to see how fundamental the ancient ontology of participation is for sacramental realism.[32] Again, this is not to suggest that the Christian tradition *depends* upon pagan philosophy for its sacramental grounding – the true Ground of sacramentality is the Trihypostatic God and the Incarnate Christ. Nonetheless, *if* as rational beings we choose to articulate the God/world relation in rational terms, then *how* we do so becomes of paramount importance. Hellenic philosophy, as Maximos clearly recognizes, provides the basic conceptual tools which, when modified and transformed in light of Revelation, makes it possible to *think* the sacramentality of the world in a meaningful and efficacious way.

All of which is to say that my methodology and my aim coincide. My methodology involves a careful examination of Maximos' reception and transformation of Hellenic philosophy; my aim is a retrieval of Maximos' sacramental ontology. Insofar as the latter finds its rational articulation in the former, methodology and aim coincide. This dissertation can thus be read on two, interrelated levels. On the one hand, it can be read as an exploration of Maximos' philosophical sources – predominantly (though not exclusively) Neoplatonism. On this level, it responds to Maximos Constas' call to bring the "modern explosion of interest in

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[31] For Christian Hellenism as a kind of *philosophia perennis*, see Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*.201-219.
[32] So Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*; also Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*.

Maximos the Confessor" into systematic dialogue with the "modern revival of interest in Neoplatonism."[33] On the other hand, this philosophical exploration unfolds within the overarching theme of sacramentality, of which it is simply the rational articulation. On this level, it can be read as a retrieval of Maximos' sacramental eucharistic ontology. This latter aim, sometimes explicit but often implicit, represents the underlying *telos* of my dissertation, the final cause which informs and draws to completion the abstract matter of rational investigation.

V: Previous Scholarship

While studies of Maximos Confessor in relation to philosophy along with works devoted to his sacramental ontology exist, none to my knowledge deal with these topics in a unified way. On the philosophical side, Stephen Gersh's *From Iamblicus to Eriugena* (1978) remains an indispensable resource for understanding the historical development of Christian Neoplatonism including that of Maximos Confessor. Though filled with valuable insights regarding the Confessor's role in the Christian appropriation of Neoplatonism, this work does not offer a comprehensive treatment of Maximos *per se*. Instead, the latter appears alongside other prominent figures such as Dionysius and Eriugena at key points in the philosophical historical narrative. Eric Perl's unpublished dissertation, *Methexis: Creation, incarnation, deification in Saint Maximos Confessor* (1991), does offer such a comprehensive treatment. Perl's masterful exposition of the role of participation in Maximos is instrumental for any subsequent treatment of the Confessor's relation to Neoplatonism. My own dissertation is indebted to this work, even as I try to expand upon and offer certain correctives to it. In general, I find Perl's lucid analysis

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[33] Constas, "Maximos the Confessor, Dionysios the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism."2-3.

comes at the cost of a philosophical reductionism that fails to sufficiently account for difference and development.

Another important work is Jordan Daniel Wood's recent dissertation, *That Creation is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor* (2018). Wood's contention that Maximos' Neochalcedonian Christology exceeds the paradigm of participatory ontology serves as a valuable corrective to Perl's single-mindedly Neoplatonic approach. While I hesitate to fully endorse Wood's uncompromisingly Christological reading of Maximos' ontology, I accept his basic contention that Maximos cannot always be interpreted in a straightforwardly Neoplatonic manner – even when he is using the philosophical terminology of Plotinus and Proclus. In Maximos, the logic of Neoplatonism is interwoven with the logic of Christology resulting in subtle but crucial transformations, to which the commentator must be attentive. Thus, while I am indebted to Wood's work – particularly his notion of creation as incarnation – my own understanding of the centrality of the Logos within Maximos' ontology differs substantially. Whereas Wood regards cosmic incarnation – construed in terms of Neochalcedonian 'Christo-logic' – as encompassing the whole of Maximos' ontology, I understand the Logos more narrowly as Christian formal principle.

In this regard, my own position is in fact closer to that of Torstein Tollefsen's idea of 'Christocentric cosmology', a view which acknowledges the centrality of the Logos, yet without enthroning it as the exclusive principle of Maximos' ontology. In addition to his Christological speculations, Tollefsen's seminal work, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximos the Confessor* (2008), provides another useful resource for a philosophical understanding of Maximos. While Tollefsen's discussion of Maximos' Logos-theology within a philosophical context is insightful, I take issue with his tendency to downplay the more radical aspects of

Maximos' thought. With Perl and Wood, I take seriously Maximos' references to creation *ex deo* and creation as incarnation as more than 'mere' metaphors, as Tollefsen would have it.[34] Finally, Tollefsen never develops the sacramental implications of his "Christocentric" cosmology in terms of eucharistic ontology. In fact, none of the above mentioned works deal in any sustained way with the sacramental implications of Maximos' Christological and Neoplatonic inspired ontology.[35]

In terms of sacramentality, Hans Urs von Balthasar's magisterial and groundbreaking work, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximos the Confessor* (1946), immediately comes to mind. Despite the compelling title of this work, which popularized the notion of 'cosmic liturgy' in relation to Maximos, it does not in fact deal specifically with ontology or cosmic sacramentality. Instead, it offers a broad and penetrating overview of the synthetic, Christological character of the Confessor's thought. Von Balthasar's basic intuition regarding the centrality of Neochalcedonian Christology for Maximos' ontology and cosmology is one which continues to be broadly endorsed by present day commentators,[36] myself included. As such, this work is foundational and remains an importance resource for Maximian studies. My own dissertation is, in part, an attempt to concretize von Balthasar's general notion of cosmic liturgy[37] in terms of a specific philosophical and theological ontology.

Nikolaos Loudovikos' stimulating work, *A Eucharistic Ontology* (2010), would seem to have some bearing upon my own similarly titled dissertation. Unfortunately, though Loudovikos

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[34] See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*., 72.
[35] This includes Perl who, though he makes a number of meaningful allusions to sacramentality, is ultimately focused upon reclaiming Maximos as "a thoroughgoing eastern Christian Neoplatonist." See Perl, *Methexis*.315.
[36] A recent notable exception being Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*.
[37] Willemein Otten remarks that "pressed to formulate what it is that von Balthasar means by liturgy" the latter term serves almost "as a kind of stand-in for cosmic symphony." "Cosmos and Liturgy", in Crouse et al., *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought*. 5.

makes the crucial link between ontology and sacramentality in Maximos, he limits his discussion to the ontological character of the *ecclesial* Eucharist alone. As such, he eschews the fundamentally sacramental character of the world *as a whole.* Strictly speaking, Loudovikos' work is one of liturgical theology, rather than sacramental ontology in the philosophical sense of this term. The same may be said for Loudovikos' teacher John Zizioulas' popular work, *Being as Communion* (1997), which is primarily a work of ecclesiology.

None of the above mentioned commentators make any sustained effort to interpret Maximos' eucharistic ontology in light of his philosophical sources. There is, as it were, a certain disconnect in the scholarship between Maximos' philosophical metaphysical speculations in the *Ambigua*, and his sacramental liturgical musings in the *Mystagogy*. My dissertation aims to bridge this gap. This is not to say that I set out to deliberately compare or reconcile these specific texts; rather, I try to bridge the gap by demonstrating the fundamentally sacramental eucharistic character of Maximos' ontology which underscores the unity of life and liturgy. The Eucharist, after all, is arguably nothing less than a concentrated ritualized expression of the ultimate truth of reality.

VI: Concluding Remarks

I began by remarking that at the heart of any sacramental vision of reality lies the affirmation of a certain continuity between God and world – a continuity which Latin medieval scholastics expressed in terms of the *analogia entis*, but which can more generally be referred to as the ontology of participation. Both terms, I suggested, attempt to articulate the continuity between God and world, between Being and beings in such a way that the latter is understood to be contingent upon the former as the source of its existence. As such, the world is both intrinsically

related to God while yet being crucially other than God. Maximos, I maintained, articulates a similar intuition through his doctrine of creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation. All things are created from God from nothing according to the Logos. This doctrine points not merely to the sacramentality of the world as imbued with divinity but, in addition, to the eucharistic character of the cosmos as *gift* – the gift of God's own infinite Being, offered in the form of uncreated grace in and through the Logos, to finite beings. I maintained that it is precisely the Christocentric character of Maximos' ontology, the fact that the Logos plays a central role in the creation and deification of the world, that transforms Maximos' sacramental ontology into a specifically eucharistic ontology, an ontology grounded in God and rooted in the Logos. I ended by asserting the role of the human as mediator and priest of creation. It is the free cooperation of the human in the anagogical return of all things to God that actualizes the eucharistic potential of the world and makes of it a 'cosmic liturgy'. By way of conclusion, I offer the following overview of the chapters of my dissertation.

Chapter One: *Creation as Divine Self-Impartation*

In my first chapter I establish the sacramental ground of Maximos' ontology in terms of being as gift; that is, creation as divine self-impartation. I take seriously Maximos' statement that the world is created not only from nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος), but from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ). On the basis of philosophical-historical evidence drawn from Maximos' pagan and Christian predecessors, I argue that Maximos' use of the preposition ἐκ, as well as his employment of classic emanationist metaphors, demonstrates a basic continuity between the constitutive procession of Neoplatonist ontology and Maximos' own doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation. As such, it becomes impossible to dismiss Maximos' many references to creation ἐκ Θεοῦ as merely metaphorical or

as simply a general way of talking about God's creation of the world. Instead, creation ἐκ Θεοῦ in conjunction with the various metaphors of emanation point unequivocally to Maximos' sacramental ontology, to the implicitly or potentially deific character of the cosmos as imbued with divine energy.

In addition, I argue that Maximos' assimilation of Neoplatonic causality to Logos-theology signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the Monadic Ground of being. A such, Maximos brings Dionysius' assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism to its ultimate conclusion in Christ. It is not merely the One Trihypostatic God who serves as the ultimate, solitary Ground of Being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in creation. This chapter thus comprises two movements: the first involves the progression from the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism, while the second moves from monotheism to the monarchic Logos.

Maximos' sacramental ontology predicated upon the notion of creation *ex deo*, however, raises two major problems: the twin spectres of necessity and pantheism. If the world emanates, as it were, from God does this implicate God in necessity – as though creation somehow happens 'automatically' without recourse to the divine will? In addition, does the derivation of the world from God culminate in pantheism? If the world is grounded in God, how is it other than God? What prevents the two from collapsing into each other? How can the world be created *from* God without being *homoousios* with Him? I address these two problems in the immediately succeeding chapters beginning, in Chapter Two, with the problem of pantheism, or unqualified monism.

Chapter Two: A Transformation of Mediation

 The second chapter of my dissertation addresses the problem of pantheism. I argue that creation *ex deo* does not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the uncreated works, or energies of God, the being-making processions by which God constitutes the world. By means of this distinction, Maximos at once affirms the continuity between God and world that lies at the heart of his sacramental ontology, while at the same time insisting upon the element of discontinuity which prevents the two from collapsing into pantheistic confusion.

 Thus, having argued for a basic continuity between Neoplatonic emanation and Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* (a continuity that persists in the new Christological focus), in Chapter One, I devote Chapter Two to exploring a major modification to this view, one which Maximos inherits from the Cappadocians and Dionysius and which he develops further. Whereas the pagan Neoplatonists conceive of being emanating from the One by means of successive subordinate hypostases, the Christians understand it as flowing directly from the Godhead via the 'uncreated energies'. While it would be anachronistic to claim that Maximos possesses a fully articulated doctrine of uncreated energies in the Palamist sense, I argue that – like his theological predecessors – he ascribes to a basic distinction between God's *ousia* and God's *dynamis/energeia*. Maximos expresses this most clearly in terms of the eternal works (ἔργα) by means of which beings participate the 'imparticipable' God. In this way, Maximos follows Dionysius' rejection of pagan intermediaries. For him, all things are derived immediately from the One God – not, however, from the divine *ousia* but from 'the things around it', the uncreated grace and eternal works of God.

 As such, I argue that creation *ex deo* does not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the uncreated works, or energies of God, the being-making processions by which God

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constitutes the world. Insofar as these processions *are* God, the world is indeed created *from* God – for, in the absence of subordinate principles all creative energies must be predicated of God alone. And yet, insofar as these energies are distinct from the essence, the world is not created from God – not, at any rate, in any kind of unqualified 'essential' sense. This, then, marks a crucial difference between pagan and Christian emanationism: the former understands emanation as proceeding by means of successive subordinate hypostases, while the latter understands it as flowing directly from the Godhead via the 'uncreated energies'.

In light of this transformation, I argue that Maximos' uniquely Christian doctrine of creation-as-emanation overcomes the problem, not only of pantheism, but of subordinationism, and polytheism. By distinguishing between, so to speak, God *in se* and God *ad extra*, Maximos at once affirms the continuity between God and world that lies at the heart of his sacramental ontology, while at the same time insisting upon the element of discontinuity which prevents the two from collapsing into pantheistic confusion. Though the world is derived *from* God as the sole *archē* of reality, it is not thereby identical with God. Paradoxically, the essence/energies distinction renders the God/world relation at once more immediate and more clearly differentiated. Broadly speaking, this chapter emphasises Maximos' reliance upon the 'proto-Palamite' essence/energies model derived from the Cappadocians and Dionysius. This model is both in continuity with Neoplatonic ontology, while offering a uniquely Christian corrective to it.[38]

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[38] The basic continuity stems from the continued adherence to the ontology of participation; the corrective comes from the rejection of hypostatic mediation in favour of an *energeic* model.

Chapter Three: On Freedom and Necessity: Beyond the Polemics

Having dealt with the problem of pantheism in the preceding chapter, my third chapter addresses the perennial problem of freedom and necessity in relation to God. Granted the important correctives Maximos and his Christian predecessors apply to the pagan doctrine of emanation as outlined above, the question as to whether Maximos' doctrine of creation as *energeic* emanation undermines the freedom of God is one that must be addressed. This is especially so in light of the tendency among theologians to oppose the 'necessity' of Neoplatonic emanation to the 'freedom' of Christian creation. The aim of this chapter is to challenge this dichotomy. I do so by arguing, on the one hand, for the presence of freedom and volition in the emanationism of Plotinus while, on the other hand, exploring the role of necessity in the creationism of Maximos. I conclude by asserting that, all things being equal, one does find in Maximos (and Christian thinkers generally) a heightened sense of divine volition and relationality beyond that of the pagan Neoplatonists.

The basic contention of this chapter is that Maximos adheres to a doctrine of creation as *voluntary emanation* that explodes the cherished trope of free versus necessary creation. God not only voluntarily imparts Himself to beings in keeping with His unwavering goodness but, as Logos, wills to enter directly into creation as its immanent governing principle – Wisdom incarnate. As such, God freely subjects Himself to the necessity of creation, finitizing Himself in His overflowing generosity and love for the world. Insofar as He does this solely that the world might be resolved back into Him and become God, this points once again to the eucharistic character of Maximos' cosmology. The self-abasement of creation *ex deo* involves God's free gift of His own infinite Being to finite beings, a gift which the latter is called to offer back in gratitude (*eucharistia*), through the practice of virtue & contemplation. In sum, Maximos'

sacramental eucharistic ontology transcends the dichotomy between freedom and necessity insofar as God is the Ground of both freedom and necessity. There is freedom in necessity and necessity in freedom.

Chapter Four: Creation ex Nihilo*: from Eternal to Temporal*

Having dealt with the twin spectres of pantheism and necessity, having arrived at an understanding of creation *ex deo* as voluntary and *energeic* emanation, of creation as simultaneously grounded in God and yet other than God, I complete my discussion of Maximos' broadly sacramental ontology with a final modification which further distances his thought from that of his pagan predecessors: the idea of the world's temporal creation. This, I argue, is where the real opposition between pagan emanation and Christian creation lies. For Plotinus, following the logic of Aristotle, the world is eternal and in a sense *must* be so in accordance with the timeless actuality of the One. For Maximos, drawing upon Philoponus' arguments against the eternity of the world, the radical contingency of the world points to its temporal beginning. Utilizing the notion of time, Maximos establishes a much stronger distinction between the One and the many than one finds in thinkers such as Plotinus and Proclus. This temporal element deepens the emergent distinction between the essence and the 'energies' such that the world created *from* God is in no way identical *with* God. I argue that Maximos combines voluntary emanation with temporal creation so as to arrive at a new vision of creation as *voluntary and temporal emanation* – that is, creation as divine self-impartation.

Maximos' insistence upon the world's creation in time is inseparable from his doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. To be created from nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) means precisely to be brought into existence when (ποτὲ) previously one was not (οὐκ ἦν). I argue that Maximos' doctrine of

creation *ex nihilo* can be understood on three distinct yet interrelated levels: 1) creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings); 2) creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality (creation from *not yet* being); 3) creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation (creation *not from eternity*). All three levels work together to unequivocally affirm the otherness of the world from God, yet without undermining the continuity between them crucial to sacramental ontology. The latter two levels in particular open up an ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and the world created from God. If in the previous chapters I emphasize the sameness between God and the world created *from God* (ἐκ Θεοῦ) from nothing, in this chapter I emphasize the otherness of the world as created from God *from nothing* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).

Chapter Five: Eucharistic Ontology: The Logos as Christian Formal Principle

The introduction of a temporal dimension into the God/world relation, along with the rejection of mediating hypostases discussed in Chapter Two, culminates in a profoundly altered ontology. The world is simultaneously more intimately related to God, from whom it proceeds *im*mediately by way of the uncreated energies, and more radically distinguished – for, despite its derivation from God, it is neither consubstantial nor coeternal with God. The world, as Maximos states, is created from God from nothing. Yet, like every philosophical 'solution', this one leads to a new problem; namely, the loss of a clearly defined formal principle. To say that the energies mediate between the One and many is, from a philosophical perspective, insufficient insofar as this does not address the problem of particularity. Granted that beings are broadly determined by their participation in the energies of Being, Life, Wisdom, Goodness, and so on, what accounts for the *particularity* of beings in terms of genera, species, and individuals? How do God's being-making

processions constitute particulars? The classic Platonic answer is of course the Ideas; Nous as a One-many, as a *cosmos noetos*, embraces the totality of eternal intelligible archetypes which then shuffle down, as it were, into the world of sensible particulars. Things below are constituted as images of things above.

The Christian rejection of mediating hypostases does away with this scheme. As Gersh and others have pointed out, this means that the Christian One – the Trihypostatic Monad – acquires the content of both One and Nous. God is at once transcendent simplicity *and* the source of multiplicity. How can this be? Maximos, I argue in this chapter, resolves this *aporia* with a striking retrieval of Origen's Logos-theology whereby the One Logos becomes incarnate in the world as the many *logoi* of creation. As predeterminations and divine wills, the *logoi* are not fully formed Ideas, or noetic entities – as they are for the pagan Neoplatonists – but rather the divine intentionality for creation unified in God and multiple in the world. Rather than a succession of subordinate hypostases mediating the Ideas from Nous to Nature, the One Hypostatic Logos *im*mediately constitutes reality by becoming incarnate as the many *logoi* of creation – what Wood calls creation as incarnation. In this way, Maximos establishes the Logos as Christian formal principle.

In sum, the transformation of mediation culminating in a more immediate relation between God and world via the uncreated energies, requires a correspondingly immediate formal principle. I argue that Maximos finds this in the idea of the cosmic incarnation of the One Logos as many *logoi*. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus formal incarnation*: the Logos enters directly into His own creation as its immanent governing principle. This signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in

and through the Logos who, *broken but not divided*, multiplies Himself as the many *logoi* of creation.[39]

Chapter Six: Ascent to the Kingdom

Whereas the preceding chapters deal with Maximos' sacramental eucharistic ontology primarily in terms of his doctrine of creation, I devote my final chapter to the consummation of creation in deification. To speak only about the procession of the world from God while ignoring its corresponding reversion, or *con*version, would result in an incomplete account of Maximos' ontology. The sole aim of creation, after all, is deification. In this chapter, then, I sketch out the barest outlines of this return of the cosmos back into God thereby bringing my dissertation to completion. If the preceding chapters have dealt with the divine will for things to *be*, that is, the *logos* of being, this chapter will explore what it means for God also to will goodness and eternity for His creation, that is the *logoi* of well-being and eternal-being.

In this concluding chapter, I emphasise the role of the human as cosmic priest and mediator of creation who, through the practice of virtue & contemplation, resolves the multiplicity of the world back into its original and eschatological oneness in Christ. In this way, the gift of being is offered back to the Giver, *thine own of thine own*, culminating in well-being and eternal well-being. By referring the multiplicity of creation back to the One, the human as cosmic hierarch mediates the Kingdom that is to come. In the eschatological return of all things to God the eucharistic character of Maximos' ontology is fully revealed – *broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed* – God diversifies Himself in creation without division so

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[39] In the Divine Liturgy when the priest divides up the Holy Bread prior to putting it in the chalice he says: "broken but not divided, ever eaten but never consumed." In the Eucharist the Logos becomes many so that the many communicants may become one.

that the diversity of creation might become unified without confusion. I argue that, just as the world is created from God according to the Logos, so it is deified and perfected through participation in God according to the *logoi*. As with creation, deification involves participation in the energies, not the essence, of God. All things proceed *from* God whence they derive their being, and return *to* God from whom they receive their eternal well-being. This is the cosmic liturgy, the onto-dialectic of procession and return.

Chapter One

Creation as Divine Self-Impartation

I. Introduction

The task of this chapter is to trace the doctrine of creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation from Plotinus to Maximos by way of Proclus and Dionysius. This doctrine, as I noted in the introduction, tends to be regarded with a certain negativity among theologians and is sometimes polemically contrasted with the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.[40] To my knowledge only Perl has had the audacity to point out the presence of this doctrine in Maximos Confessor.[41] More recently, Tollefsen has challenged this position insisting that the language of *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ) must be interpreted metaphorically – a qualification that Maximos himself never makes. With Perl, and against Tollefsen, I argue for a literal, *non*metaphorical reading of Maximos' frequent assertions that the world is created from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ).[42] There seems to me no clear reason why the preposition ἐκ ought to mean one thing in Plotinus and something radically different in Maximos whose ontology, though importantly and crucially modified by its Christian context, is in logical continuity with that of his pagan predecessors.

This onto-logical continuity is evident in Maximos' understanding of the One, of God as Trihypostatic Monad, as the necessary Ground of being constitutive of all things. All things *are*

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[40] I deal with this topic in Chapter Four: *Creation* Ex Nihilo*: from Eternal to Temporal*.

[41] See Perl, *Methexis*., 118.

[42] See Perl., 127; Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*., 72. According to the latter, the language of *ek theou* in Maximos "clearly shows *the metaphorical character* of this way of speaking, since to come *from* God means to be created by Him…" (emphasis added). To assume that it is metaphorical seems to me quite arbitrary.

only insofar as they are *one*; that is, insofar as they partake of the unity bestowed upon them from their Cause. I argue that the Neoplatonic intuition concerning the fundamental Unity at the heart of reality is concordant with the monotheistic understanding of God as the solitary Ground of being. All creatures are derived from the One God, revealing and making manifest their source by the integrity of their being. The 'metaphysics of monarchy' of Plotinus and Proclus is consistent with the 'metaphysics of monotheism' of Dionysius and Maximos. As such, I argue that creation ἐκ Θεοῦ, in conjunction with the various metaphors of emanation employed by pagans and Christians alike, points unequivocally to Maximos' sacramental ontology, to the theophanic character of the cosmos as derived from, and thus grounded in, God.

In addition, I argue that by conjoining this Neoplatonic-inspired ontology to Logos-theology Maximos signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the monarchic Ground of being. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos, *thine own of thine own*.[43] In this way, Maximos brings Dionysius' assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism to its ultimate conclusion in Christ. It is not merely the One Trihypostatic God who serves as the ultimate, solitary Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in creation. Creation ἐκ Θεοῦ means creation *from* God *according to* (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made*.[44] As such, all things are imbued with the uncreated grace[45] of God, by whose Wisdom they are constituted. Nothing is profane. Everything

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[43] From the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

[44] See the Nicene Creed: δι᾽ οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Also Jn1:3; Col 1:16. Maximos tends to use the preposition κατά rather than the Scriptural δία. In at least one place, however, Maximos employs δία in speaking of the relation of beings to the Logos/*logoi*, see *Amb*.7.22. The meanings of κατά 'according to' and δία 'through' are similar in meaning, though not quite synonymous. The former emphasizes the paradigmatic character of the Logos, while the latter His instrumental character as the agent of creation.

[45] See Chapter Two: A Transformation of Mediation, where I develop the notion of creation *ex deo*, not as creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the uncreated grace, or energies of God.

is sacred – or rather, sacramental.[46] This chapter comprises two movements: the first involves the progression from the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism, while the second moves from monotheism to the monarchic Logos.

II. From Monarchy to Monotheism

For both pagans and Christians creation *ex deo* means that the whole of reality is derived from the One, or God, Who alone is underivative, uncreated, and 'unparticipated'. All things *are* only insofar as they partake of the unity bestowed upon them from their Cause. This ontological and theological position involves the uncompromising rejection of any trace of dualism – be it the ontological dualism of Plato's *Timaeus* where the demiurge works upon pre-existent matter, or the ethical-cosmological dualism of the so-called Gnostics. To insist that all things are created from God means there is no other principle, no rival source whence beings could be derived.[47] Hence, a 'metaphysics of monarchy'[48] – the absolute sovereignty of the One God over the whole of existence. From this point of view, it is possible to see the concordance of the Neoplatonic One with Christian monotheism. In spite of their differences, both hold firmly to a single, supreme *archē* of reality – be it the transcendent One of Plotinus, or the Trihypostatic Monad of Maximos.

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[46] See Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*., esp. 18; 131-133.

[47] In this sense, creation *ex deo* is a positive way of expressing what is negatively expressed in terms of creation *ex nihilo* – though, as I argue in Chapter Four, these expressions are not equivalent in every respect. I differ from Eriugena on this point who (in)famously argues in his *Periphyseon* that creation *ex nihilo* means creation from God as the supraessential *Nihil*. Wolfson makes a similar argument in relation to Gregory of Nyssa, see Wolfson, "The Identification of Ex Nihilo with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa.", 53-60. In my opinion, this equivalence overlooks the crucial element of otherness that *ex nihilo* establishes between God and the world created from God.

[48] In the very literal sense of *monad-as-archē*. I prefer the term 'monarchy' to the more familiar term 'monism'. The latter carries with it a host of misleading connotations and does not properly convey the sense that, while God is indeed 'all in all', He is equally 'nothing in any'. 'Henarchy' is perhaps the most literal rendering; however, I like the connotation of ontological sovereignty conveyed by 'monarchy'.

This monarchic ontology is expressed in a variety of ways. One involves the prepositional language of *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ, ἐξ ἑνὸς, ἀπὸ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ) employed by Plotinus and Maximos alike. Another is by recourse to what Gersh aptly terms the *metaphor of emanation*.[49]According to Gersh, "the metaphor of emanation is a prominent feature of Neoplatonic thought and describes the way in which spiritual principles – for pagan writers the One, the henads, etc., for Christians God and his divine attributes – exercise causality."[50] It is important to note that Gersh refers to emanation as 'metaphor', since the inevitably naturalistic examples pertaining to emanation (light, water, scent, heat, cold) can be misleading when taken too literally. This is at least partially the reason behind the persistent view that equates emanationism with necessity.[51] At any rate, the metaphor of emanation according to Gersh is one way in which pagan and Christian philosophers convey how God exercises causality. The basic idea is that God, or the One, as the perfect, infinite, undiminished Ground of being, effortlessly creates the world of finite beings as a kind of outpouring of His own primordial goodness. Plotinus, for example, argues that all things are productive and that the One as eternally perfect produces everlastingly, while Maximos insists that God is an eternally active creator.[52] The metaphor of emanation conveys the notion of a single, supreme, transcendent Source of being; an intrinsically productive font (πηγὴ) overflowing with wisdom and power, which stands alone as the ultimate *archē* of the cosmos. This, it seems, is precisely what Maximos expresses by means of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ.

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[49] One cannot emphasise the *metaphorical* character of emanation strongly enough. Failure to do so leads to all manner of misunderstandings and false dichotomies. See Rist, *Plotinus*., 71.

[50] Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 17.

[51] I address the vexed problem of freedom and necessity in relation to God in Chapter Three: On Freedom and Necessity: Beyond the Polemics.

[52] See *Enn*.V.1.6, 40; *Amb*.7, 1081B.

In addition *to ex deo* and metaphors of emanation, the metaphysics of

monarchy/monotheism is conveyed by the terminology of procession (πρόοδος) and gift, or self-

impartation (δίδωμι, μεταδίδωμι). All of these terms are used interchangeably by both pagans

and Christians in order to give expression to the monarchy of God, to the constitutive power of

the One as the irreducible Ground of being. I begin my exploration of the metaphysics of

monarchy with Plotinus and Proclus and conclude with the metaphysics of monotheism of

Dionysius and Maximos. For all four thinkers, the One-God represents the underlying Unity that

makes the diversity of the world possible. Maximos' doctrine of creation as divine self-

impartation is thus in continuity with the Neoplatonist ontology of the derivation of the many

from the One. As such, Maximos' language of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ must be taken literally as

pointing to the fundamental sacramentality of the world derived from, grounded in, and

thoroughly imbued with the uncreated grace of God, the Trihypostatic Monad.

Plotinus & Proclus

Beginning on the linguistic level, the language of emanation and *ex deo* is ubiquitous in the

writings of both Plotinus and Proclus. I shall note only a few among countless examples. Firstly,

while Plotinus occasionally speaks of the many coming "from the One" (ἐξ ἑνὸς)[53] or "from the

Good" (ἀπὸ ἀγαθοῦ),[54] he overwhelming prefers (perhaps revealing his apophatic tendency)

more oblique references such as "from that [Good]" (ἐξ ἐκείνου)[55] or "from Him [the One]" (ἐξ

αὐτοῦ).[56] Proclus, for his part, overwhelming prefers the preposition ἀπό to indicate the

derivation of all things from the One: "from the One Itself (ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοενός) every manifold

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[53] *Enn*.VI.7.15, 20.
[54] *Enn*.VI.7.20, 24.
[55] *Enn*.VI.7.15, 15; also VI.8.18, 20; VI.9.9, 27; V.2.2, 26; V.4.1, 1; *passim.*
[56] *Enn*.VI.8.16, 35; V.1.6, 30, 7,23; V.2.1, 6; also VI.8.18, 40; VI.9.9, 3; V.V.10, 15 (ἀπ' αὐτοῦ); *passim.*

proceeds";[57] "the Good is that from which (ἀφ᾽ οὗ) all things depend";[58] "all that is

unparticipated produces out of itself (ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ) the participated".[59] In terms of emanation,

Plotinus stresses the fecundity of the Cause when he states that "the One, perfect because it seeks

nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows (ὑπερερρύη) as it were, and its

superabundance (ὑπερπλῆρες) makes something other than itself".[60] He describes Nous, the

second hypostasis, as "flowing out" (προχυθεῖσα) from the One "as if from a spring (πηγῆς)";[61]

or as being "poured out" (ἐκχυθὲν) from its Cause (ἐξ ἐκείνου)."[62] Proclus, for his part, shows an

overwhelming preference for metaphors of illumination to convey the transcendence/immanence

of the One: thus, "that which is present to all alike, that it may illuminate (ἐλλάμπη) all, is not in

any one, but is prior to them all";[63] a cause is immanent in its effects "by a fecund outpouring of

its irradiations (ταῖς τῶν ἐλλάμψεων γονίμοις προόδοις)".[64]

The language of procession does not figure prominently in Plotinus. It is rather with

Proclus that the well-known Neoplatonic triad of *monē-proödos-epistrophē* becomes of central

importance. Thus: "all that exists proceeds (πρόεισιν) from a single cause";[65] "every order has a

beginning in a monad and proceeds (πρόεισιν) to a manifold";[66] "all that proceeds (προϊὸν) from

any principle reverts in respect of its being upon that from which it proceeds (πρόεισιν).[67] While

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[57] *ElTh.,* Prop. 5.
[58] *ElTh.*, Prop. 12.
[59] *ElTh.*, Prop. 23; see also, Props. 18, 27, 113.
[60] *Enn.*V.2.1, 9.
[61] *Enn.*III.8.10, 5; he further develops the metaphor speaking of the emanation of being as flowing (ῥεῖν, ῥεύματα) like a stream or river (5-10).
[62] *Enn.*VI.8.18, 20. See also III.2.2, 18; V.1.6, 8; VI.7.22, 8; VI.9.5, 36; VI.9.9, 3; *et al.*
[63] *ElTh.*, Prop. 23.
[64] *ElTh.*, Prop. 98. See also Props. 70, 71, 143, 11 (ἐκ ῥίζης πρόεισιν), 131 (ὑπερπλήρους), 152 (ὑπερπλήρη, ἀπορρέουσα), *passim*.
[65] *ElTh.*, Prop. 11.
[66] *ElTh.*, Prop. 21.
[67] *ElTh.,* Prop. 31. See also, Props. 25, 27, 30, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 71, 98, 112, 150, 152, *passim*.

the language of being as gift, or self-bestowal, is evident in Plotinus who speaks of the self-impartations (μεταδίδοντα ἑαυτων) of the One[68] it is, once again, more prominent in Proclus. To give only a few examples, Proclus states that, whatever "bestows (δίδωσι) by mere existence…makes the bestowal (μετάδοσιν) from its own essence (τῆς ἑαυτοῦ οὐσίας)";[69] that causes are immanent in their effects "by unstinted self-bestowal (ταῖς ἑαυτῶν ἀφθόνοις μεταδόσεσιν)";[70] and that the "providential character of the gods is the bestowal of good things (τῶν ἀγαθῶν μεταδιδόναι)" upon their recipients.[71]

All of these terms and expressions, as we noted with Gersh, express the way in which the One-God exercises causality as the sole *archē* of existence, what I am calling the metaphysics of monarchy. Plotinus and Proclus express the derivation of the many from the One by way of prepositions: all things are *from* the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς), or *from* the Good (ἀπὸ ἀγαθοῦ). In terms of emanation, Plotinus stresses the fecundity of the One though metaphors of overflow, while the Proclus prefers the language of illumination to convey the transcendence/immanence of the Cause in relation to its effects. The Procline language of procession and self-impartation further expresses the way in which the One constitutes the multiplicity of the world by a kind of self-differentiation or self-giving, the providential bestowal of being from its own supraessential subsistence. Yet how are we to understand this mysterious derivation of the world from God, the production of the many from the One – what Plotinus rightly calls a "marvel" (θαῦμα)?[72] Is there some way to get behind these metaphors? One way to render this intuition more amenable to reason is through a consideration of the term 'One' itself. For both Plotinus and Proclus the One

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[68] *Enn.*V.4.1, 30.
[69] *ElTh.*, Prop. 18.
[70] *ElTh.*, Prop. 98.
[71] *ElTh.*, Prop. 120. See also Props. 23, 71, 97, 122, 131, 152, *passim.*
[72] *Enn.*VI.9.5, 30; V.5.8, 25 (3 times!).

seems to bear a kind of double signification: on the one hand, it indicates the irreducible and

ineffable simplicity that lies at the heart of reality, the uncompromising rejection of ontological

dualism; on the other hand it signifies the fundamental constitutive principle of existence,

without which nothing could be.

In terms of the first, according to the reasoning of Plotinus and his successors every

duality is reducible to a fundamental unity.[73] For example, the simple fact that two things *are*

means that they share the common predicate of being. Being, then, would represent the prior

unity and ontological principle of both. Yet, for the Neoplatonists Being itself implies a subtle

duality. For according to the ancient Parmenidean principle that "the same is for thinking as for

being" – a principle which lies at the very heart of Neoplatonism[74] – all thought pertains to being

while being is precisely that which is there *for* thought. Ontology and epistemology are

inseparable.[75] It is for this reason that the Aristotelian Nous as self-thinking thought, as the unity

of thought and being, precludes it from being the ultimate principle of reality.[76] Beyond this must

lie that which is common to *both* thought and being, that which is constitutive of both but which

is itself unconstituted and irreducible – in this case, unity itself.[77] For the Neoplatonists, this

principle of unity is identified with the Platonic Good beyond being and the Platonic-

Parmenidean One.[78] The One/Good stands as the ultimate, irreducible simplicity, the nondual

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[73] See *Enn*.V.4.1, for example.

[74] τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι, frag. B3. See Perl, *Thinking Being.*, 11-17; 105-149. Plotinus, *Enn*.V.9.5.1-10.

[75] To put it another way, to think is always to think *something* – for to think nothing literally means *not* to think. Conversely, to *be* means to be an object of thought – for a being is something that is defined, a particular *this*, as opposed to *that*. It is precisely because God or the One is not a finite being that He cannot be thought.

[76] See *Enn*.V.3; V.4. Also Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy.*, 236-238.

[77] Logically speaking, if one wishes to arrive at ultimate reality one must follow a process of reduction such that one eventually arrives at that which is entirely simple, unified, nondual and indivisible. See *Enn*.V.4.1, 5.

[78] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop. 13. Also Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy.*, 237-238.

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Ground of being and ultimate Source of the whole of reality. Apophatically speaking, nothing more can be said of the One – indeed what has been said is already too much. As the transcendent Ground of being, the 'Groundless Ground' as it were, the One *qua* One can be neither thought nor uttered such that the ultimate Truth of reality lies beyond rational comprehension. The term 'One', as Plotinus reminds us, serves merely as a signifier indicating the ineffable.[79]

This first way of talking about the One, then, culminates in apophaticism and thus circles back to the very metaphors we are trying to escape. We can only affirm that there must be a unitary Ground of being whence all things are derived, without being able to say anything *about* that Ground. As some of the Fathers put it, we can say *that* God is, but not *what* He is.

That being said, there is a slightly more kataphatic way in which both Plotinus and Proclus speak of this most apophatic of subjects; namely, the second signification concerning the One as the Unity constitutive of all things. Plotinus states: "It is by the One (τῷ ἑνί) that all beings are beings, both those which are primarily beings and those which are in any sense said to be among beings. For what could anything be if it was not one (μὴ ἓν)?"[80] Oneness is constitutive of being. Whether one speaks of *an* army, *a* chorus, *a* flock of animals; *a* house, *a* ship; the organic bodies of plants and animals; the health of the body or the integrity of the soul – it is unity that constitutes all of them as actual entities while its absence equals their disintegration.[81] As Proclus formulates it in the very first proposition of *The Elements of Theology*: "Every manifold in some way participates unity." Multiplicity itself, as the above examples illustrate, is dependent upon the One – in the absence of which it would dissolve into

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[79] *Enn*.VI.9.5, 33; V.4.1.10. The Buddhist tradition similarly describes concepts as a finger pointing at the moon. One must be careful not to confuse the former for the latter.
[80] *Enn*.VI.9.1, 1. Proclus articulates this idea in *ElTh.*, Props. 1-6.
[81] *Enn*.VI.9.1, 5-20.

an abyss of infinite divisibility. Thus, the One is at once the radical simplicity at the heart of reality, and at the same time the ultimate principle of unity constitutive of all things great and small. The One, as Perl aptly puts it, is the "enabling condition for beings."[82] In the words of Plotinus, it is "the power of all things (*Δύναμις τῶν πάντων*)."[83]

This, then, is one way in which we can approach the notion that all things are derived *from* the One (*ἐξ ἑνὸς*), or *from* the Good (*ἀπὸ ἀγαθοῦ*).[84] All things, insofar as they *are*, partake of the character of oneness and goodness – for oneness defines, delimits, constitutes beings and renders them integral, intelligible and hence *good*. We should not, however, be misled into thinking that the One is some sort of primal 'Unit' which literally bestows numerical unity on things, or that it is some sort of purely abstract logical principle. The One is simply 'not-two'; it is indivisible, irreducible simplicity and thus unconditional perfection and the Source of all perfection – for to be perfect is to be complete, whole, integral, *one*.[85] We might say that 'One' is the loftiest name for God that Plotinus can conceive of, and that when he employs this kind of logical sounding language he is still speaking metaphorically – thus defying our attempts to finally get beyond figurative language.

In fact, it is virtually impossible to talk about the One – or the relation between the One and the many – *without* recourse to images and metaphors. One of Plotinus' favorite images is that of the circle:

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[82] Perl, *Thinking Being*., 124, 126, *passim.*

[83] *Enn*.III.8.10.1; also V.I.7.10; V.3.15.33; V.4.1.36; V.4.2.39; VI.7.32.31. See also Trouillard, *Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne*., 93: « Rien n'a de pouvoir que par la puissance omniprésente de l'unité unifiante. »

[84] As Proclus explains, the One and the Good are identical in that unity is the ultimate good of every being while goodness is inherently unifying (Prop. 13). One might consider the positive connotations of the English word 'integrity'.

[85] Plotinus hints at this when he says that if we take the *one* of a plant, the *one* of an animal, the *one* of a soul or the *one* of the universe "we are taking in each case what is most powerful (*δυνατώτατον*) and really valuable (*τίμιον*) in it" *Enn*.III.8.10, 25.

Just as a circle, therefore, which touches the centre all round in a circle, would be agreed to have its power from the centre (τοῦ κέντρου) and to have in a way (οἷον) the centre's form, in that the radii in the circle coming together to one centre make their terminal point at the centre like (οἷον) that to which they are carried and from which (ἀφ᾽ οὗ) they, so to speak, grow out though the centre is greater…and the terminal points are like the centre but only a dim image (ἴχνη) of that which has power to produce them…and what that centre is like is revealed through the lines; it is as if it was spread out without having been spread out – it is like this that we must apprehend that Intellect-Being, coming to be from that Good (ἐξ ἐκείνου) and as if poured out (ἐκχυθὲν) and spread out and hanging out from it.[86]

This image powerfully illustrates how the One produces the many while remaining One even as the many *qua* many are constituted by, and thus reflect, oneness. Each of the radii is a one proceeding from the One, while the circumference of the circle produced by the totality of the individual radii is itself a unified one. The unconditional integrity of the Source is reflected – however dimly – in that which proceeds *from* the Source, the productive power of all things. As Plotinus struggles to explain, it is as though the One "was spread out without having been spread out." In other words, the One both remains transcendent in its simplicity (the centre) and at the same time becomes immanent as the constitutive power of all things (the circle). Everything is *from* the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς), depends utterly upon the One as the sole source of its being and, though separated by a great ontological distance, manifests something of the character of the One.

One of Plotinus' most dynamic images is that of the One as an unoriginated spring (πηγῆς) whence (ἐκ) all life flows (ῥεῖν, ῥεύματα) in diverse streams and rivers, or as the root (ῥίζη) of a great plant which, though it is the source of life for the trunk and branches, nonetheless remains in itself one and simple and non-dispersed: "for the origin (ἀρχή) is not divided up into the All, for if it were divided up it would destroy the All too; and the All could

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[86] *Enn*.VI.8.18, 1-30.

not any more come into being if the origin did not remain by itself, different from it."[87] If the One were dispersed in the many, the many would lose their unifying ground and dissolve into infinite divisibility. Hence, the great paradox – that greatest of marvels ($\theta\alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$) – that in order for the One to become many it must remain One; and in order for the many to be many they too must remain rooted in the One even as they proceed *from* ($\dot{\varepsilon}\kappa$) it.[88]

This paradox leads us to the heart of sacramental ontology: the transcendence/immanence of the One as permeating and enforming all things. Here, one cannot do better than to quote Perl: "As 'the power of all things,' the enabling condition by which beings are beings, the One is infinitely and absolutely at once transcendent to and immanent in all things. It is transcendent in that it is not any being, not any member of the totality of things that are, and immanent in that wherever there is any being, there is the One, as the 'power' or condition by which it is a being. *Far from contradicting each other, transcendence and immanence are mutually implicative and indeed identical*."[89] As Plotinus puts it: "It is really a wonder ($\theta\alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$) how he is present without having come, and how, though he is nowhere, there is nowhere where he is not."[90] As the transcendent Ground of being, the One is omnipresent and thus simultaneously everywhere and nowhere – everywhere in that it is, kataphatically speaking, the 'Being' of beings; nowhere in that it is not any particular being, not confined or defined by any place or position.[91] As Proclus puts it: "that which is in one is not in the others; while that which is present to all alike, that it may illuminate ($\dot{\varepsilon}\lambda\lambda\dot{\alpha}\mu\pi\eta$) all, is not in any one, but is prior to them all."[92] Plotinus encapsulates

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[87] *Enn*.III.8.10, 15.
[88] *Enn*.III.8.10, 15; See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Props. 1-6 for a detailed working out of this idea.
[89] Perl, *Thinking Being*., 129 (emphasis added).
[90] *Enn*.V.5.8, 25.
[91] See Perl, *Theophany*., 10-14.
[92] *El.Th.*, Prop. 23. See also Prop. 98.

this in terms that every reader of Dionysius will recognise: "The One is all things and not a single one of them (*Tὸ ἓν πάντα καὶ οὐδὲ ἕν*)."[93]

The transcendence/immanence of the One is another way of expressing the way in which all things are *from*, have their root in, a single transcendent principle. It is, says Plotinus, precisely "because there is nothing in it that all things come from it (*ἐξ αὐτοῦ*)"; "the One is not being (*οὐκ ὄν*) but the generator of being"; "the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows (*ὑπερερρύη*) as it were, and its superabundance makes something other (*ἄλλο*) than itself."[94] The One is nothing because it is prior to all things, and precisely for this reason is able to produce, to *become* all things. The various metaphors of emanation emphasise both the continuity between the One and its products, as well as the derivative character of the latter: the sun and its rays, spring and divergent streams, root and branches all express distinction without separation, continuity without identity. Ultimately, there can only be one, irreducibly simple *archē* at the heart of reality whence all things come, and to which they return as their definitive Good. This *archē* is not any 'thing' but the very 'thingness' of things; the 'Groundless Ground'; the supraessential, solitary Truth of the whole of reality encompassing all things yet not encompassed by any.

This brief discussion concerning the metaphysics of monarchy as the uncompromising rejection of ontological dualism; of the One as irreducible simplicity and the principle of unity constitutive of all things; as simultaneously transcendent and immanent; and as the solitary Ground whence all things derive their being, points to the fundamentally sacramental character of the cosmos. All that the world is, it has *from* the One (*ἐξ ἑνὸς*). As such, the cosmos is imbued

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[93] *Enn*.V.2.1, 1; see also, V.1.7, 20; V.2.2, 25; VI.7.32, 15; VI.9.3, 40; *passim.*
[94] *Enn*.V.2.1, 5-10.

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with the power of divinity, with the constitutive energy of God as centre and circumference. This

is *not* to say that the world is somehow identical to God. The metaphysics of monarchy is not

monism. Instead, it is a kind of 'qualified nondualism'[95] which affirms the simultaneous identity

and difference between the One as Ground and the world as grounded. To put it in Platonic

terms, what the One *is* by nature, the world *has* by participation. This sacramental ontology,

according to which all things are derived from God (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*) and thus reflect or reveal God, is

embraced by Dionysius whose theophanic vision marks the transition from the metaphysics of

monarchy to that of monotheism.

Dionysius

 Beginning once again on the philological level, we see that Dionysius shares much in common

with both Plotinus and Proclus. In terms of prepositions, Dionysius is in fact linguistically closer

to Plotinus in his use of the preposition *ἐξ/ἐκ* – a disproportionate number of which are found in

DN. 4. To share just a few representative examples: Dionysius states that the Good "is that from

which (*ἐξ οὗ*) all things come and are, as produced from an absolutely perfect cause (*ἐξ*

αἰτίας)",[96] and that "all being comes from the Beautiful and the Good (*ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ*

ἀγαθοῦ)." Invoking the authority of his supposed teacher, Paul, Dionysius declares that "all

things are *from Him ('Εξ αὐτοῦ) and through Him and in Him and to Him*,[97] as the Holy

Scriptures say."[98] Finally, Dionysius offers us the likely source for Maximos when he states

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[95] *Vishishtadvaita*, a Vedantic term that affirms the continuity between God and world while opposing the unqualified monism of Advaita philosophy. For a comparative study of Hindu and Orthodox Christian philosophy, see Frost, *The Human Icon.*, esp. 83-86.

[96]*DN.*4, 700B. Translations of Dionysius are my own in consultation with Luibheid's English and the generally more reliable French of De Andia.

[97] See Rm 11:36: *ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα.*

[98] *DN.*4, 705D, 20; 708A, 28. Sc. also, 712D, 15; 713D, 5; 721D, 15 (*ἐξ ἑνὸς*); *DN.*5, 820D, 5; 821D, 1; 825A, 10; 825B. 15; *DN.*7, 869B, 55; *DN.*9, 916D, 15; *DN.*10, 936D, 5.

(twice) that beauty-itself and goodness-itself, and whatever other providential outpourings one can speak of "proceed (προϊούσας) from the imparticipable God (ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου) by an inexhaustible effusion (ἀφθόνῳ χύσει)."[99] Apart from the emergence of the key term ἐκ θεοῦ, it is important to note the inseparability of this prepositional language from that of procession, participation, and emanation. Especially striking is Dionysius' use of Scripture to lend support to his emanationist language. We have here a beautiful instance of concordance such that both Paul and Plotinus agree upon the derivation of all things from God.

In terms of metaphors of emanation, Dionysius shows an affinity with both Plotinus and Proclus making abundant use of the language of 'flow' or 'effusion' (χύσις);[100] of 'overflow' and 'overfulness (ὑπερβολὴν; ὑπερπλῆρες);[101] and various images of light and illumination (ἀκτῖνα; φωτοδοσία; ἐπιλάμπων).[102] Following Plotinus and invoking Paul, Dionysius proclaims that the all-powerful God "grants (δεδωρημένον) to all beings the power to be and to be what they are by an ungrudging effusion (ἀφθόνῳ χύσει) according to the excess (περιουσίαν) of his superabundant power (ὑπερβαλλούσης δυνάμεως)";[103] in Procline fashion he states that the transcendent Cause of all "immaculately shines (ἐπιλάμπων) being upon all according to one supra-unified Cause."[104] While some might argue that Dionysius' light imagery should be understood in epistemic terms as intellectual or spiritual illumination this, in keeping with the Parmenidean principle,[105] is never without its ontological aspect. To be illuminated is to be

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[99] *DN*.11, 956B, 40, 45.
[100] *DN*.2, 649C, 18; *DN*. 8, 893D, 30; *DN*.9, 909C, 10; *DN*.11, 956B, 42, 46; *passim.*
[101] *DN*.2, 644A; *DN*.2 649C, 18, 24; *DN*.4, 708B, 40; *DN*.4, 712D, 12; *DN*.5, 825A, 12; *passim.* See Eph 1:19; 2:7. The term 'ὑπερβάλλον' is used twice by Paul to refer to the superabundance grace and power of God.
[102] *DN*.1, 588C, 12; 589A, 20; *DN*.3, 680C; *DN*.4, 693B, 12; 697C; *DN*.5, 824B, 39, 43; *passim.*
[103] *DN*.8, 893D. See Eph 1:19.
[104] *DN*.5, 824B, 40.
[105] I.e. that "the same is for thinking as for being." See notes 74, 75 above.

ontologically elevated.[106] Simply to *be,* to exist, is already to be illumined with the bare light of being. The divine irradiations, as Dionysius tells us, impart Being, Life, Wisdom, and all the other providential gifts of the supraessential Godhead, the sole Source and Ground of all.[107]

Like his pagan predecessors, Dionysius makes ample use of the language of procession and divine self-impartation. He speaks of "the good and seemly procession (πρόοδος) of the divine Oneness (ἑνώσεως) beyond oneness", and of the impartations (μεταδόσεις) and gifts (δωρεαὶ) by which the Good Cause constitutes all things from Itself.[108] While the language of being as gift is also present among the pagans, it takes on a special significance in the liturgically inspired writings of Dionysius. The whole of creation is gift, the self-impartation of God *thine own of thine own.*[109]

I shall focus on a single, magnificent passage in which Dionysius employs these terms interchangeably – along with all those we have discussed – to describe the self-differentiation of the One-God constitutive of being:

> But in order to define clearly beforehand that which concerns all [the divine names], what we call divine differentiation (διάκρισιν θείαν) refers, as we said, to the good and seemly processions (προόδους) of the Thearchy. For giving itself (Δωρουμένη) to all beings and overflowing (ὑπερχέουσα) with the totality of goods upon the participants the Thearchy is distinguished while remaining unified, expanding while remaining singular, and multiplied without departing from the One (ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς). And since God *Who Is* (ὤν ἐστιν)[110] in a supraessential manner gives (δωρεῖται) existence to beings and brings forth all the essences, this One-Being (τὸ ἓν ὄν) is multiplied by bringing forth from Himself (ἐξ αὑτοῦ) the many while remaining One (ἑνὸς) and undiminished in His expansion. Remaining unified according to procession (πρόοδον), and whole in His differentiation on account of His supraessential separation from all beings, in a unified manner He leads

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[106] Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* is an excellent example of this.
[107] See *DN*.2, 644A, 648D.
[108] See *DN*. 2, 644A.
[109] Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom.
[110] See Exodus 3:14.

forth all things by the ceaseless flow (χύσει) of his undiminished self-impartations (αὐτοῦ μεταδόσεων).[111]

In these two passages we find all our terms represented: the prepositional language of *ex deo*; the emanationist metaphors of effusion and overflow; the philosophical terminology of procession and participation; as well as the language of gift and divine self-impartation. By means of this multiplication of terms, Dionysius gives powerful expression to the transcendence/immanence of God who, as he elsewhere proclaims, is "all things in all things and nothing in any (πάντα τὰ ὄντα καὶ οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων)."[112] Even more than Plotinus – in a way that is reminiscent of Trinitarian theology – Dionysius emphasises (indeed celebrates!) the paradoxical unity-in-multiplicity at the heart of reality. The One in its irrepressible self-multiplication remains transcendently simple, bestowing its gifts upon all without diminution, while the many remain unified in their ecstatic procession from the One, as products of the divine differentiation (διάκρισιν θείαν). Dionysius delights in the divine munificence which brings forth all beings from itself in undiminished self-impartation. In his insistence upon the unchanging integrity of the One overflowing (ὑπερχέουσα) in its self-multiplication, Dionysius brings to mind the Plotinian image of the spring and its divergent streams, or the sun and its rays – an image of which Dionysius is equally fond.[113]

If we strip away the repetition of Dionysius' ecstatic utterances we discover the deep continuity that he shares with Plotinus and Proclus: the divine differentiation whereby the irreducible simplicity of the One constitutes the world of multiplicity from its own supraessential Being; the Good's paradoxical procession into the world whereby it is multiplied without being

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[111] *DN*.2, 649C.
[112] *DN*.1, 696C, 25; see *DN*.13, 977D.
[113] See *DN*.4, 693B, 700B-C: consider Dionysius' pun, "Thus it is the 'sun' for it makes all things a 'sum'" (Διὸ καὶ ἥλιος, ὅτι πάντα ἀολλῆ ποιεῖ).

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multiplied; creation as gift or self-impartation; the overflowing superabundance and fecundity of the primal Ground of being; the simultaneous transcendence/immanence of God who, precisely on account of His separation from all things, is able to bring forth all things. All of this can be reduced to a single idea – the sacramental character of the world as *gift,* as suffused with divine energy, as created ἐκ Θεοῦ.

What is more, Dionysius shares the same understanding of creation *ex deo* in terms of the constitutive power of the One, which he calls the "most enduring" (καρτερώτατον) of all the divine names.[114] The name 'One' indicates how God "is all things 'unitarily' (ἑνιαίως) according to the transcendence of one unity (μιᾶς ἑνότητος) and that He is the Cause of all without departing from the One (τοῦ ἑνὸς)."[115] Once again, transcendence coincides with immanence; it is precisely because God is transcendently One (i.e. not any one *thing*) that He is able to be all things in a unitary manner. Conversely, all things *are*, only insofar as they are *one*: "Nothing among beings exists without participation in the One (ἀμέτεχον τοῦ ἑνὸς),"[116] says Dionysius. Echoing Plotinus, Dionysius goes on to say that just as every number participates in the monad – for we speak of *one* dyad, *one* dozen, *one* half, or *one* third – "so everything, and every part of everything participates in the One, and by the One's existence (τῷ εἶναι) all things are."[117] As with Plotinus, the divine name 'One' reveals God as the solitary Ground of being, constitutive of all things.

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[114] *DN*.13, 977B, 1.
[115] *DN*.13, 977C, 1.
[116] *DN*.13, 977C, 20.
[117] *Ibid*. I follow De Andia's French here: « par le fait que l'Un soit, tous *les étants sont*. » Luibheid has "By being the One, it is all things", which is also plausible (and certainly philosophically correct). However, the Greek neuter plural typically takes a singular verb. Within the context, positing "all things" as the subject makes more sense. See Plotinus, *Enn*.VI.9.1, 1. Proclus, *ElTh.*, Props. 1-6.

Like Proclus, Dionysius argues that multiplicity itself depends upon unity: "Without the One there is no multiplicity."[118] In the absence of oneness diversity dissolves into an abyss of infinite divisibility.[119] Thus, every manifold is one in its totality, all individuals are one in species, all species one in genus, all processions one in terms of their Source.[120] It is for this reason that Dionysius concludes that the One is "the underlying element (τὸ ἕν στοιχειωτικόν) of all things."[121] In other words, God as One is the fundamental "enabling condition" for being, the *sine qua non* of existence, the One who constitutes reality through the excess of His superabundant power (ὑπερβαλλούσης δυνάμεως).[122] Dionysius reveals his debt to Parmenides when he says that the One "defines (ὁρίζον) all things and makes them to be."[123] All things *are*, only insofar as they are one, particular, definite *thing*. God is hymned as One because He is the definition, the limit, the circumscription of all things on account of which they exist both individually and collectively.[124] All things, says Dionysius, "are pre-contained in God in a transcendent unity and exist "by Him (ὑφ᾽ ἧς), *from Him* (ἐξ ἧς), through Him (δι᾽ ἧς), in Him (ἐν ᾗ) and for Him (εἰς ἥν)."[125] All things, in other words, are created *from* the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς), or *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) as the sole *archē* and *telos*, the Ground and Perfection of being.

It is important to note, as we did with Plotinus and Proclus, that Dionysius does not on this account think of God as some sort of logical unit or abstract principle, a mere projection of logic onto the plane of metaphysics as Dodds once claimed.[126] Rather, as with Plotinus the divine

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[118] *DN*.13 980A.
[119] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop. 1.
[120] *DN*.13 980A-B.
[121] *DN*.13, 980B. de Andia points to the language of στοιχειωτικόν in Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 1091a29, and Damascius, *De Princ*. 85. See de Andia, *Les Noms Divins,* 175 note 6.
[122] *DN*.8, 893D.
[123] *DN*.13, 980C.
[124] See *DN*.5, 821A where Dionysius illustrates this with the Plotinian image of the circle.
[125] *DN*.13 980C, emphasis added; see Col 1, 16-17.
[126] See Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., xxv.

name 'One' is simply a conceptual indicator of that which is beyond concept. As Dionysius puts it, "The inscrutable One is out of the reach of every rational process."[127] Nonetheless, it is possible (always keeping in mind the symbolic character of *all* language with respect to God) to make an inference from the unity of visible things to the invisible Source of all unity. This is facilitated, above all, by scriptural revelation which (according to Dionysius) describes the Thearchy as Monad (μονάδα) and Henad (ἑνάδα) on account of its supranatural simplicity, its indivisible unity, and its unifying power.[128]

Scripture also describes God as Trinity (τριάδα). Here Dionysius departs definitively from his pagan predecessors. The One is not a mere singularity but, on account of its transcendent fecundity (ὑπερουσίου γονιμότητος), is hymned as a Trihypostatic One, or Triadic Henad (τριαδικὴν ἑνάδα).[129] This marks the transition from a purely philosophical metaphysics of monarchy to a Christian metaphysics of monotheism: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God. By means of this Trihypostatic distinction, Scripture reveals to us something of the ineffable richness and relationality of the Thearchy, of the secret inner life of the transcendent One – without, however, in any way disclosing the mystery of how God can be simultaneously Three and One. Dionysius, for his part, emphasises the fundamental unity of the Thearchy insofar as all three Persons share a single supraessential subsistence (ὑπερούσιος ὕπαρξις), a supra-divine divinity (ὑπέρθεος θεότης), and a common goodness beyond goodness (ὑπεράγαθος ἀγαθότης).[130] Ultimately, it is the Father as the sole Source (*Μόνη δέ πηγὴ*) of the Son and the Spirit that preserves the monarchy of the Godhead.[131]

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[127] *DN*.1, 588B.
[128] *DN*.1, 589D. Dionysius may have in mind passages such as Deut. 6:4; Jn 17:3; Jn 10:30; 1 Tim 2:5.
[129] *DN*.1, 593B.
[130] *DN*.2, 641A.
[131] *DN*.2, 641D. This understanding of the Father as the monarchic principle of the Godhead remains foundational for Orthodox Trinitarian speculation to the present day.

In sum, I have tried to show how Dionysius subscribes to the very same ontology and logic as Plotinus and Proclus. Not only does he employ similar terminology and metaphors to express the derivation of the world from God, he also understands it in terms of the One God as the constitutive Ground of being. At the same time, Dionysius unites reason with revelation transforming the solitary One into a Triadic Henad. The Neoplatonic metaphysics of monarchy culminates in the Christian metaphysics of monotheism. Trinity-in-Unity, God is the 'Groundless Ground', the sole *archē* of existence, the productive power of all things. With Dionysius we encounter a striking synthesis of Neoplatonic sacramental ontology and Scriptural revelation. The world is seen as the self-revelation of the God *who made darkness His hiding place*.[132] All things are created from God (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*); all things are a showing forth of the invisible deity, a gift of God's own supraessential Being. All creation is revelation – theophany (*θεοφάνια*).[133]

Maximos the Confessor

With this brief historical philosophical survey of the doctrine of creation as self-impartation, we come to the writings of St Maximos. As we shall see, the very same language of *ex deo*, procession, self-impartation, effluence, overflow, and irradiation that we have traced from Plotinus to Dionysius are ubiquitously present in the Confessor's own work. Moreover, the very same ontology informs the latter's thinking that we have observed in our preceding survey. As with Dionysius, Maximos' Trinitarian conception of God does not affect his allegiance to the metaphysics of monarchy – or rather, monotheism. Like his pagan and Christian forebears, Maximos posits the (Trihypostatic) One as the irreducible simplicity constitutive of being. All

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[132] Psalm 18:11.
[133] See *DN*.1, 589A, 18; 597C, 20.

things *are* only insofar as they partake of the unity of their Source. As such Maximos' language of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ is not merely a metaphorical way of talking about the creation of the world by (ὑπό) God, but points specifically to the derivation of all things *from* (ἐκ) God as the sovereign principle of reality. Creation ἐκ Θεοῦ in conjunction with the various metaphors of emanation points unequivocally to Maximos' sacramental ontology, to the implicitly or potentially deific character of the world as *gift*, of creation as divine self-impartation.

Beginning once again with the use of prepositions, we find that Maximos follows Plotinus and Dionysius (and St Paul) in his preference for ἐξ/ἐκ. In the *Mystagogy*, Maximos states that the entire universe was "brought forth from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) with respect to (κατά) its creation", and that the diversity of beings were fashioned and created "from the One God (τοῦ ἑνὸς Θεοῦ)."[134] In *Questions and Doubts*, Maximos makes reference to composite things which "have being after God (μετὰ Θεὸν) and from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ)."[135] In *Amb*. 41, we find another reference to all beings "after God" (μετὰ Θεὸν) who, by virtue of (διὰ) having been created, "possess their being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ)."[136] In *Amb*. 7 Maximos invokes the same Pauline passage as Dionysius stating with respect to the Logos as God (Θεὸν Λόγον) that "*all things were created from Him (ἐξ αὐτοῦ), through Him, and return unto Him*";[137] that "a logos preceded the creation of everything that has received (λαβόντων) its being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ)"; that "it is from Him (ἐξ οὗ) that all things came to be"; and that "by virtue of the fact that all things have their being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ), they participate in God."[138] Finally, in *Amb*. 10 Maximos says

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[134] *Myst*. 2, 225 [CCSG 16]; 1, 190 [CCSG 13]. Also, *Myst*. 5, 335 [CCSG 22] for the derivation of things from God as Good.
[135] See *QD*. 104, 98.
[136] *Amb*.41, 1312B, 10. To Maximos' phrase, "in virtue of having been created" the translator adds "by Him". This little emendation softens Maximos' bold assertion regarding the derivation of created beings from God (full stop).
[137] *Amb*.7, 1080A; see *Amb*.15, 1217D.
[138] *Amb*.7, 1080B-C.

that though God is beyond being, being is nonetheless derived from Him (ἐξ αὐτοῦ); that (again) all beings after God (μετὰ Θεὸν) are from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ); and, finally, that "every substance (οὐσία), and all matter (ὕλη), and all forms (εἶδος) are from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ)."[139] The fact that this lengthy list of citations is far from exhaustive reveals how pervasive the language of *ex deo* is in Maximos' writings. As such, it cannot simply be ignored or casually brushed aside as a metaphorical way of speaking about creation *by* God in a purely instrumental sense.

That Maximos uses this prepositional language to describe the derivation of all things from God is further suggested by his use of the same metaphors of emanation and self-impartation employed by Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius. Thus, seeking to understand Gregory Nazianzus' own reference to the overflow (χεθῆναι) of the Good, Maximos states that "by virtue of an 'ever-giving effusion' (ἀπειρόδωρον χύσιν) of goodness, He brought forth beings out of nothing and endowed them with existence," and that He "willed to impart Himself (ἑαυτὸν...μεταδοῦναι) without defilement to them in a manner proportionate to all and to each."[140] Drawing on Dionysius, he speaks of the immanence of God by "the excess of His munificent effusion (ἀγαθόδωρον χύσιν)"[141], and of how "the one God (ἕνα Θεὸν) is multiplied in the impartations (μεταδόσει) of good things."[142] Maximos invokes the language of 'overflow' when he states (again quoting Dionysius) that God "through the beauty, goodness, and overflow (ὑπερβολὴν) of His intense love for all things, goes out of Himself in His providences (προνοίαις) for all beings."[143] Finally, echoing Plotinus and Dionysius, Maximos declares that God brings all

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[139] *Amb*.10, 1184B.
[140] *Amb*.35, 1289A.
[141] Note the language of gift here in ἀγαθόδωρον as well as in the previous term ἀπειρόδωρον.
[142] *Amb*.35, 1289B. See *DN*.2, 649B-649D.
[143] *Amb*.71, 1413B. For the overflowing richness (ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος) of God's grace, see Eph 2:7.

beings into existence "through the surpassing (ὑπερβάλλουσαν) power of His goodness."[144] In terms of light metaphors Maximos shows his indebtedness to Dionysius when he compares God's providence to "an intelligible sun (νοητὸς ἥλιος) whose power holds the universe together" and which "graciously consents to emit its rays (ἀκτῖνας)",[145] while elsewhere he states that the Logos of God "being active everywhere, shines forth its own light (φῶς ἐπιλάμπει) like the sun."[146]

As with Dionysius, some of these light metaphors are ontological while others have more to do with spiritual illumination. Yet, to reiterate, the ontological and the epistemological – not to mention the ethical and the aesthetic – are inextricably bound together such that one cannot isolate one from the other. God is at once the sole Source of Being, Life, Wisdom, Goodness, and Beauty. Precisely the same logic applies to one's reception of knowledge as to one's participation in being and virtue and whatever other providential gifts the divine wishes to bestow upon its worthy recipients. In terms of the language of overflow and self-impartation, Maximos emphasises, like his pagan and Christian predecessors, the boundless fecundity and power of God as unstinting generosity and irrepressible creativity.[147] To say that God wills to impart Himself to beings, and moreover that the One God is multiplied in His impartations, is yet another way of talking about creation ἐκ Θεοῦ, of the derivation of all beings *from* God. As with Dionysius, the language of being as gift acquires a heightened sacramental significance in the

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[144] *Var.* 7, 8. See *DN*.8, 893D. Maximos also invokes the Plotinian image of an "ever-flowing spring (πηγῇ ἀειβλύστῳ) at *Amb*.10, 1205D.
[145] *Amb*.46, 1357B.
[146] *QD*. 190.
[147] See *Amb*.35, 1289A.

liturgically inspired thought of Maximos.[148] As the self-impartation of God, the whole of

creation is gift – freely offered and freely returned in gratitude (*eucharistia*).

Finally, Maximos employs the Neoplatonic terminology of procession (πρόοδος) when he

states that "the 'decad' is Jesus, the Lord and God of all, who, without going outside

(ανεκφοιτήτως) Himself in His processions (προόδοις) from the Monad, returns

(ἀποκαθιστάμενος) to Himself in a manner befitting the Monad."[149] Elsewhere he says

concerning the Logos that, "according to the creative and sustaining procession (πρόοδον) of the

One (τοῦ ἑνὸς) to individual beings (τὰ ὄντα), which is befitting of divine goodness, the One is

many. According to the revertive (ἐπιστρεπτικήν), inductive, and providential return (ἀναφοράν)

of the many to the One…the many are One."[150] All things proceed *from* the Christ-Monad as the

Source of their being, even as they return *to* Him as their unificatory goal. What is perhaps most

striking about Maximos' use of procession and reversion is his conjoining of this Neoplatonic

causal terminology to Christology. It is specifically Christ the Logos and God who is identified

as the solitary Ground of being constitutive of all things. This synthesis of ontology and

Christology, of causal procession and cosmic incarnation central to Maximos' sacramental

vision, is not without its tensions and difficulties. I defer this topic to the concluding section of

this chapter concerning the final movement from monotheism to the monarchic Logos. First, we

need to unpack Maximos' language of ἐκ Θεοῦ with its attendant metaphors in order to see how,

like Dionysius, he assimilates the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism.

In essence, Maximos takes over Dionysius' Trinitarian transformation of the Neoplatonic

One, which Maximos refers to as the " Holy Trihypostatic Monad" (ἡ ἁγία τρισυπόστατος

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[148] Maximos' *Mystagogy*, which he presents as a commentary or supplement to Dionysius' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, remains an important source of liturgical theology to the present day.
[149] *Amb*.67, 1400C.
[150] *Amb*.7, 1081C.

μονὰς).[151] God is One (ἕνα), a monad according to essence (μονάδα οὐσίας) and a triad according to hypostasis (τριάδα ὑποστάσεων); He is "a monad in triad and a triad in monad." The Trihypostatic character of God in no way undermines the fact that He is One in the simplicity (ἁπλῷ) of His essence and in His perfect self-identity (ἑαυτῇ ταὐτην), possessing both a oneness (ἕνωσιν) without composition and a distinction (διάκρισιν) without division.[152] Like Dionysius, Maximos understands the Triune God in terms of simplicity and plenitude: "For we believe in a monarchy (μοναρχίαν) that is neither begrudging of its bounty (οὐκ ἀφιλότιμον), in the sense of being restricted to a single person, nor disorderly, in the sense of being poured out *ad infinitum*, but which is constituted by a Trinity that is equal in honour by nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[153] The Trihypostatic Monad represents a One endowed with richness and relationality, a Monarchy whose perichoretic communion of Persons is founded upon the irreducible simplicity of its supra-essential Being.

Like Plotinus, Proclus, and Dionysius, Maximos understands the irreducible simplicity of God as constitutive of reality. This is perhaps most evident in Maximos' frequent references to God as Monad. In at least two instances, Maximos speaks of the God/world relation in terms of Monad and dyad – the former indicating the divine simplicity, the latter the composite nature of created beings.[154] All beings are dyadic insofar as they are composed of individual units, or monads – form and matter, substance and accidents. They are also finite insofar as each being is defined, or delimited, by every other being. To be a 'this' is not to be a 'that'; to be 'here' is not to be 'there'.[155] To be finite means to exist in relation to other beings and thus to be de-fined by

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[151] *Thal.* Q.55, 210. See also *Myst.* 23, 840-855 [CCSG 52] *Amb.*67, 1401A.
[152] *Myst.* 23, 840-850 [CCSG 52].
[153] *Amb.*1, 1036B.
[154] See *Amb.*67, 1400C-D; *Amb.*10, 41, 1185A-1188C.
[155] *Amb.*67, 1400C: "For there exists absolutely no created thing which strictly speaking is 'simple' (ἁπλοῦν), since it is not simply 'this' or 'that,' but possesses a constitutive and determinative difference, which is considered with it,

the other. It also means, as we have seen repeatedly, to be delimited as a particular *one*. Maximos articulates this when he insists that "the beginning (ἀρχὴ) of every dyad is the monad," and that the Monad "is the cause (αἰτία) of every number and of all things numbered and numerable."[156] Every dyad, every composite entity, consists both *of* a multiplicity of monads and exists *as* a unified monad, i.e. an integral individual. Maximos further expresses this in terms of motion: things are constituted by the mathematical movement of addition (the multiplicity of monads) as well as division (the resolution of this multiplicity into a single unit). For Maximos, this onto-arithmetical motion means that beings are not self-subsistent (ἄναρχον) but contingent upon an originary, determining principle: "for that which is moved is not a beginning (οὐκ ἀρχή) but *from a beginning* (ἐξ ἀρχῆς)."[157] This is Maximos' rather complicated way of expressing the constitutive character of the divine Monad as the sole *archē* of dyadic beings. The world is not a self-subsistent entity but derived from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) as the unitary Ground of being.

In order to illustrate this Maximos borrows Plotinus' image of the circle, an image he most likely derives from Dionysius.[158] Christ, Maximos declares:

> In His infinite wisdom encloses all things in Himself according to the one (μίαν), simple (ἀπλῆν) power of goodness, just as a center defines the lines that originate from it (ἐξημμένων αὐτοῦ). According to the one, simple, and single cause and power, He does not permit the principles (ἀρχὰς) of the things that are to depart from their boundaries, but He limits their extents with a circle. And He leads the distinctions of the things that are and that are becoming by Him (ὑπ' αὐτοῦ) to Himself, in order that the things created and fashioned from the One God (τοῦ ἑνὸς Θεοῦ) might not be altogether alien to and enemies of one another.[159]

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as in an underlying substance, constituting it as a particular thing, and clearly distinguishing it from every other thing."
[156] *Amb*.10, 41, 1185B-C.
[157] *Amb*.10, 41, 1185C.
[158] See *DN*.5, 821A.
[159] *Myst*. 190 [CCSG 13]; translation slightly modified.

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Similar to Plotinus, Maximos describes the procession of the multiplicity of beings from a single, unified Source, a primal One that defines the ones that radiate out from it, both determining them as beings and limiting the scope of their expansion. What Maximos expressed mathematically as the ontological motion of multiplication and division, is construed here in terms of centre and circumference. Both singly and collectively creation is constituted by oneness – that is, created and fashioned from the One God (τοῦ ἑνὸς Θεοῦ). As a unified multiplicity (the circle), the dyadic world bears witness to its monadic Ground (the centre). The world, as Maximos suggests, is an image of God – a cosmic *ecclesia*.[160]

By describing creation from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ), or creation from the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς), in this abstract, arithmetical and geometrical way Maximos is speaking no less figuratively than Plotinus. In speaking of God as Monad, Maximos cautions, "we do not thereby signify the blessed Godhead itself, in its own existence, which is infinitely unapproachable and absolutely inaccessible to every principle, mode, intellect, and to all language and every name." Apophatically speaking, nothing at all can properly be predicated of God who, as the Ground of being, is beyond thought and being. And yet, insofar as reason (as we saw with Plotinus and Proclus) leads us to posit some sort of irreducible simplicity at the heart of reality, it is possible – indeed necessary – to speak kataphatically in terms that convey this mystical simplicity. Thus, while the term 'Monad', as Maximos insists, is not in any way representative of the divine and blessed *ousia* itself, it is nonetheless "indicative of its utter simplicity (ἁπλότητος), which is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) every quantity, quality, and relation." Like his pagan and Christian predecessors, Maximos understands God as the irreducible simplicity constitutive of all things –

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[160] See *Myst.* 1, 200 [CCSG 14]; 2, 210 [CCSG 15].

a simplicity and fecundity which he conceptualizes in uniquely Christian terms as a Trihypostatic Monad.

With Maximos, we encounter the full assimilation of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of monarchy to the Christian Trinitarian metaphysics of monotheism. As Trihypostatic Monad, God is both the irreducible simplicity constitutive of all things and the sole sovereign principle of reality. "In no way," Maximos insists,

> can anyone who wishes to live piously in the truth say that a dyad is a multitude without beginning (ἄναρχον) or the beginning (ἀρχὴν) of some thing in general. For it will be evident to him, by virtue of his intellectual contemplation and comprehension, *that there is only One God* (Εἷς Θεὸς), who is beyond all infinity, and who cannot be known in any way whatsoever by any beings, except through faith.[161]

Since the dyad (creation, composite being, matter) stands in need of determination, it is neither self-subsistent nor a source of subsistence for anything else, and hence not a rival principle alongside the Monad. Creation ἐκ Θεοῦ means that there is no other rival principle or source of being apart from the One God, no pre-existent *hyle* that could serve as a coeternal principle of creation. Instead, everything – form, matter, substance, being – says Maximos, is created from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ).[162] As Trihypostatic Monad, God is the sole Source of being, the solitary Ground of existence from whom, through whom, and towards whom are all things.[163] This, once again, points to the fundamentally sacramental character of the world which, though it is crucially – albeit inexplicably[164] – other than God, derives all that it is and has *from* God. As such, the

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[161] *Amb*.10, 41, 1188B. Emphasis added.
[162] *Amb*.10, 39, 1184B.
[163] See *Amb*.15, 1217D.
[164] See *Amb*.41, 1305A where Maximos makes the enigmatic remark that "they call 'division' the ignorance (ἄγνοιαν) of what it is that distinguishes creation from God."

cosmos is imbued with the power of divinity, with the constitutive energy of God as both centre

and circumference, as the *archē kai telos* of beings.[165]

III. From Monotheism to Monarchic Logos

If Maximos follows Dionysius in the latter's assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to

monotheism, he arguably surpasses him in making the Logos the focal point of this monadic

ontology.[166] For Maximos, it is not merely the Trinitarian Godhead that serves as the unitary

Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in

creation. This signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic

ontology rooted in Christ as the monarchic Ground of being. The whole of creation is gift – the

self-impartation of God in and through the Logos, *thine own of thine own*. In this way, Maximos

brings Dionysius' assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism to its ultimate

conclusion in Christ. Creation ἐκ Θεοῦ means creation *from* God *according to* (κατά) the Logos

through whom all things were made.

While I deal with Maximos' Logos-theology in detail in Chapter Five, it is necessary to

address this topic here specifically in relation to the idea of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ; namely, Maximos'

application of the Neoplatonic terminology of procession (πρόοδος) and return (ἐπιστροφή) to

Christ as Logos. For this, I return to the same two passages which I introduced earlier illustrative

of Maximos' use of the ontological language of procession.[167] In the process, I will try to resolve

some of the tensions that emerge from this synthesis of ontology and Christology, of causal

proödos and cosmic *ensomatosis*.

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[165] See Revelations 22:13.
[166] Maximos in fact partially derives his Logos-theology from Dionysius; see *DN*.5, 824D.
[167] See above, 55.

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That Maximos makes the Logos the focal point of his metaphysics of monotheism is implicit in his identification of Christ as simultaneously Monad and 'decad':

> But the 'decad' (δεκὰς) is Jesus, the Lord and God of all, who, without going outside (ανεκφοιτήτως) Himself in His processions (προόδοις) from the Monad, returns (ἀποκαθιστάμενος) to Himself in a manner befitting the Monad. For the decad is also a monad, since it is the definition (ὅρος) of things defined, the ambit of things in motion, and the limit (πέρας) of all arithmetical sums.[168]

Here we find the classic Procline triad of remaining, procession, and reversion identified with Christ as the One. As Monad, Christ *remains undiminished* (ανεκφοιτήτως= μόνη)[169] in His procession as decad (i.e. as immanent in creation) even as He is restored or *reverts* (ἀποκαθιστάμενος= ἐπιστροφή) back to Himself (i.e. as transcendent). Maximos gives us what appears to be a pithy expression of the fundamental logic of Neoplatonic causality here. All things proceed, i.e. derive their manifold existences from the One, while the One remains transcendently, undiminishedly unitary as Cause – for, as we have seen, if the One became divided up in its procession into multiplicity it would cease to be the necessary unified Ground of being, and everything would dissolve into infinite divisibility. The restoration of the decad as Monad – or the return of the Monad to itself – indicates the circumscription of all things by the One, like the circumference of a circle.[170] All things *are* only insofar as they are *one*; that is, insofar as they return, are referred back, to their unitary Ground.

It is not only the Trihypostatic Monad, then, but specifically Christ Himself who is the unitary Ground of being constitutive of all things. As Monad, Christ is the irreducible simplicity that lies at the very heart of reality; as decad, He is the oneness of all individual ones as well as

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[168] *Amb*.67, 1400C.
[169] For *μόνη* as the undiminished remaining of the Cause in its procession to its effects, see Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 51-52, 35.
[170] See *Myst*. 1, 190-195 [CCSG 14].

the overarching unity that circumscribes and draws the cosmos together as an integral whole.

Maximos' description of Christ as simultaneously Monad and decad reminds one of Plotinus'

description of the One as "spread out without having been spread out."[171] The decad, Maximos

seems to say, is simply an expanded Monad[172] such that Christ remains transcendently simple

even as He is multiplied as the constitutive differences of beings. In other words, what we find

here is yet another expression of the One as the necessary Ground of being, the *sine qua non* of

existence, now identified with Christ as the second Person of the Trihypostatic Monad.

In our second passage, Maximos explicitly identifies the Logos as the monarchic Ground

of being. Putting aside his apophaticism, he states:

> When, I say, we set this way of thinking aside, the One Logos (ὁ εἷς Λόγος) is many
> *logoi* (πολλοὶ λόγοι) and the many are One. According to the creative and sustaining
> procession (πρόοδον) of the One (τοῦ ἑνὸς) to individual beings (τὰ ὄντα), which is
> befitting of divine goodness, the One is many. According to the revertive (ἐπιστρεπτικήν),
> inductive, and providential return (ἀναφοράν) of the many (τῶν πολλῶν) to the One – as
> if to an all-powerful point of origin (ἀρχὴν παντοκπατορικὴν), or to the center of a circle
> precontaining the beginnings (ἀρχὰς) of the radii originating from it (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) – insofar
> as the One gathers everything together (συναγωγός), the many are One (εἷς οἱ πολλοί).[173]

The first thing to note here is the explicit use of Neoplatonic terminology – both πρόοδον and

ἐπιστρεπτικήν. In addition, we find the prepositional language of *ex deo* (τοῦ ἑνὸς; ἐξ αὐτοῦ) and,

again, the image of the circle ubiquitous from Plotinus to Dionysius. We also encounter two

unmistakeable liturgical references: συναγωγός and ἀναφοράν.[174] Maximos identifies the

reversion of the many to the One *by* the One as a *synaxis*, as the liturgical movement of drawing

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[171]*Enn*.VI.8.18, 1-30. See above, 10-11.

[172] At *Thal.* Q. 55.8 Maximos suggests this when he states that "the myriad is the monad in motion, and the myriad when motionless is the monad." Here the myriad as unit of ten thousand takes the place of the decad. See Constas, 361 note 24.

[173] *Amb*.7, 1081C.

[174] Both Dionysius and Maximos refer to the liturgical eucharistic gathering as a *synaxis*. See *EH*.3, 424B; *Myst*. Ch.8; Ch.23; Ch.24. The Holy Anaphora is the prayer of offering and thanksgiving prior to communion. See Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

the many together into communal identity – a movement which is at the same time an *anaphora,* a return of the many to the One, an offering back of the gift of being to its Source.[175] All of this points once again to Maximos' assimilation of the monarchic metaphysics of his Neoplatonic predecessors. What is novel here is Maximos' identification of this ontology specifically with the Logos and his construal of it in distinctly liturgical terms. This conjoining of Neoplatonic causality to Logos-theology signals the emergence of true sacramentality, of eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the monarchic Ground of being.

And yet, at precisely this point of concordance where all the classic emanationist language is present in a mutually affirmative way transfigured in Christ we encounter a serious difficulty. This difficulty stems from the fact that it is seemingly not simply the *world* that proceeds from God but Christ *Himself.* Jesus, Maximus says, is simultaneously Monad and decad – Monad insofar as He remains unmoved in His transcendent simplicity, decad insofar as He enters into the world as both its constitutive differences and its overarching unity. That it is not merely the world that proceeds, but the Logos, is suggested in the second passage when Maximos invokes the Logos/*logoi* distinction but then says simply that the One proceeds to individual beings (τὰ ὄντα). The identification of procession with the Logos is at once undeniable and ambiguous. On the one hand, Maximos seems to be saying that the One Logos proceeds as the many *logoi*; on the other hand, he states without qualification that the One proceeds to (or into [εἰς]) individual *beings* (τὰ ὄντα). The first suggests the constitutive procession of the Logos as the many *logoi* of creation, the second points to the emanation, or derivation, of creation from God.

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[175] This is the subject of Chapter Six.

While the use of procession to indicate the derivation of individual beings from God (ἐκ

Θεοῦ) is consistent with the ontological view that I have been emphasizing up to this point, it is

problematic from the cosmological, or Christological perspective of the procession of the *logoi*

from the Logos.[176] The reason for this is that the relation between the One Logos and the many

logoi is emphatically *not a causal one* – the One Logos simply *is* the many *logoi* and vice versa.

As Proclus explains, procession represents the necessary element of otherness which

distinguishes an effect from its cause, while reversion indicates the overcoming of that otherness

in the effect's conformity to its origin as end.[177] In terms of the Logos/*logoi*, there is no

substantive element of otherness. The Logos simply *is* the *logoi* in their unified aspect while the

logoi are the Logos in its manifold aspect. Maximos' use of *proödos* and *epistrophē* in this

respect is not so much causal, then, as perspectival; the Logos is One from the perspective of His

transcendence and many from the perspective of His immanence. In other words, the

'procession' of the One Logos as the many *logoi* is not ontological but, as Wood persuasively

argues, Christological.[178] That is, procession in this case refers to the creative incarnation

whereby the One Logos becomes immanent in the world as its manifold constitutive *logoi*,[179]

while reversion points to the recapitulation of the world created *according to* (κατὰ) the *logoi* in

its anticipated eschatological reunification in Christ.

In speaking of procession here, therefore, we should not take Maximos to mean some sort

of mediated declension of Platonic Ideas, such that the One Logos gradually 'shuffles down', as

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[176] Perl avoids this problem by interpreting the *logoi* as "modes of participation". This may be true for Dionysius whose Logos-theology is not yet fully developed, but problematic when applied to Maximos' much more robust understanding of the Logos/*logoi*. Perl's solution risks reducing the *logoi* to mere "modes" rather than real ontological and theological principles. See Perl, *Methexis*., 161; 162-165.

[177] See *ElTh.*, Props. 30, 31, 35.

[178] See the thesis by Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor."

[179] See Wood, "That Creation is Incarnation," *passim*.

it were, to become the many derivative *logoi* immanent in creation.[180] The Maximian *logoi* are

not lower reflections of the Forms as they are for Plotinus and Proclus;[181] rather, the many *logoi*

simply *are* the One Logos immanent in the world in a direct, *unmediated* instantiation.[182] In

other words, Maximos understands procession as a kind of cosmic incarnation,[183] as the

embodiment of the One Logos *as* the many *logoi* constitutive of beings.[184] All of this will be

spelt out in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and can only really be understood after we have

dealt with the profound transformation of mediation that occurs with the Christian rejection of

subordinate mediating hypostases (the subject of next chapter). For now, I want simply to draw

attention to the fact that, as Wood rightly points out, Maximos' use of procession in relation to

the *logoi* is not as straightforwardly Neoplatonic as Perl's reading of it suggests.[185] Nor, I might

add, is it entirely *un*-Neoplatonic. Instead, what we encounter is the conjoining of two distinct

logics: the 'onto-logic' of the procession of beings from God conjoined with the 'Christo-

logic'[186] of the embodiment of the Logos as *logoi*.

This fact introduces a wrinkle into the fabric of our argument which explains creation

from God in terms of the One as the constitutive Ground of being. All thing *are*, I have

consistently argued, insofar as they are *one*; that is, insofar as they derive their oneness from the

One God, the Trihypostatic Monad, in whom they participate. This is onto-logic in a nutshell.

Yet Maximos' use of procession in terms of the Logos/*logoi*, we have seen, does not quite

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[180] See Wood, "Creation Is Incarnation.", 88.
[181] For Plotinus, see Rist, *Plotinus*.Rist, 84-102. For Proclus, see Dodd's remarks in Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 215.
[182] For Maximos' transformation of Neoplatonic ontology see Chapter Two; for his Logos-theology as a solution to problems emerging from this transformation, see Chapter Five.
[183] I endorse here Wood's thesis *That Creation is Incarnation*.
[184] A rough Neoplatonic equivalent would be as if the One/Nous were to become directly immanent in the cosmos while remaining transcendent.
[185] See Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor.", 115-125.
[186] The term is Wood's.

conform to this logic. The many *logoi* are neither the effects of the One Logos (in which case they would be creatures), nor do they participate in Him. Maximos' construal of the relation of the One and the many in terms of the Logos/*logoi*, while clearly dealing with the same problem of transcendence/immanence, is not one of emanation but of incarnation – that is, Christo-logic.[187] And yet, the incarnation of the Logos as *logoi is* constitutive of individual beings – for, as Maximos explains, there is a *logos* for every particular being that exists *according to* (κατά) which it receives its being.[188] For every *logos* there corresponds a particular being, a creature whose existence is derived from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) in whom it participates.[189] Thus, while Maximos' understanding of the One God as constitutive of individual beings remains intact, he articulates this in a novel way. It is not simply a straightforward procession of beings from God, but a procession mediated by the Logos *through whom all things were made*.[190]

The wrinkle, in other words, stems from Maximos' introduction of the Logos as formal principle, as the principle of differentiation according to which (κατά) the One God constitutes individual beings. This formal principle – to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five – is already suggested by Dionysius who, however, does not develop it.[191] Maximos does – though he needs to reach back behind Dionysius to retrieve the neglected Logos-theology of Philo, Clement, and Origen. That there are two distinct logics at work here is evident from the fact that Maximos never says beings are derived *from* the Logos, or that they participate in the *logoi*.[192]

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[187] While I agree with Perl that Maximos' Logos-theology points to the problem of the One and the many, his conclusion that "the entire ontology of participation is contained in Maximus' theory of the logoi" is in need of qualification. See Perl, *Methexis*., 147.

[188] See *Amb*.7, 1080A-B; 1081A-B; *passim*.

[189] See *Amb*.7, 1080B-C; 1081D; 1084A; *passim*.

[190] Tollefsen's understanding of the *logoi* as principles *according to which* things are created is apropos here. See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*., 91, 95-96.

[191] See *DN*.5.8-9, 824C-825B.

[192] One apparent exception would seem to be when, having identified Christ as Virtue, Maximos says that anyone who "participates in virtue, unquestionably participates in God (Θεοῦ μετέχει), who is the substance of the virtues."

Instead, he consistently maintains that beings are created *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) *according to* the Logos/*logoi* (κατά λόγον). This, then, offers a solution to the above-mentioned ambiguity whereby procession seems to apply both to the *logoi* and to individual beings: the constitutive procession whereby the One Logos becomes the many *logoi* immanent in creation is simultaneously the creative procession whereby God imparts Himself to creatures, granting them a measured (ἀναλόγως)[193] share in the grace of His own supraessential Being. As such, there is a subtle yet crucial distinction in Maximos between the immanent *logoi* and the manifold beings created *according to* the *logoi*.[194] The former represent the eternal intentions of God (θεῖα θελήματα) according to which the world is created while the latter are finite creatures determined by these divine intentions, or volitions.

This solution helps to explain why Maximos applies the causal terminology of procession simultaneously to the *logoi* and to individual beings. The former 'proceed', i.e. become incarnate, in creation as the constitutive principles of beings, while the latter proceed from God as the Source of their existence. Despite the conceptual distinction between them, this represents a single, simultaneous procession: all beings are created *from* (ἐκ) God *according to* (κατὰ) the Logos *through whom all things were made*.[195] The emanationist metaphysics of monarchy is conjoined to the incarnational ontology of the monarchic Logos. As such, Maximos brings Dionysius' assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism to its ultimate conclusion in Christ. It is not merely the One Trihypostatic God who serves as the ultimate,

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Amb.7, 1081D. Note, however, that even here it is participation in *God*, not the Logos. Yung Wen makes much of this passage, arguing that beings *do* participate the *logoi* (which he further conflates with the energies). See Wen, "Maximus the Confessor and the Problem of Participation.", 3-16. The solution, it seems to me, is that beings indeed participate the Logos *qua God*, but not *qua* Logos. For a discussion of Yung Wen's position see below 229-233.

[193] See *Amb*.7, 1080B-C. This is Maximos' version of the 'analogy of being.' God shares His infinite Being with the world in a finite, measured, 'analogous' way, i.e. as determined by the Logos/*logoi*.

[194] Both Perl and Wood tend to conflate the two in opposing ways. Perl equates the procession of the logoi with that of beings, while Wood understands procession exclusively in terms of the *logoi*.

[195] Jn 1:3; Col 1:16.

solitary Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in creation. Causal *proödos* joins with cosmic *ensomatosis.* This signals the emergence of true sacramentality, of a eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the monarchic Ground of being.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to trace the doctrine of creation *ex deo*, or creation as divine self-impartation from Plotinus to Maximos by way of Proclus and Dionysius. With Perl, and against Tollefsen, I argued for a literal, *non*metaphorical reading of Maximos' frequent assertions that the world is created from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ). I began my argument by drawing attention to the terminological continuity shared by pagan and Christian Neoplatonists alike – be it the prepositional language of ἐκ Θεοῦ, the various metaphors of emanation, or the ubiquitous image of the circle. I went on to argue that this terminological continuity stemmed from a shared ontology grounded in the One God as irreducible simplicity constitutive of beings. All things *are* only insofar as they are *one*; that is, insofar as they partake of the unity bestowed upon them from their Cause. This Neoplatonic intuition concerning the fundamental Unity at the heart of reality was seen to be concordant with the monotheistic understanding of God as the solitary Ground of being. All creatures are derived from the One God, revealing and making manifest their source by the integrity of their being. Drawing on Dionysius, I showed how Maximos assimilated the 'metaphysics of monarchy' of Plotinus and Proclus to his own Christian 'metaphysics of monotheism' centred upon God as Trihypostatic Monad and sovereign principle of reality. As such, I argued that Maximos' language of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ, in conjunction with the

various metaphors of emanation, pointed unequivocally to Maximos' sacramental ontology – to the theophanic character of the cosmos as derived from, and grounded in, God.

In addition, I argued that by conjoining this Neoplatonic-inspired ontology to Logos-theology Maximos signaled the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the monarchic Ground of being. In this way, Maximos brought Dionysius' assimilation of the metaphysics of monarchy to monotheism to its ultimate conclusion in Christ. It is not merely the One Trihypostatic God who serves as the ultimate, solitary Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in creation. Ontology and Christology coincide. Creation as divine self-impartation means creation *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) *according to* (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made.* As such, the whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos, *thine own of thine own.*

Maximos' theophanic vision of the world as derived from God according to the Logos, however, inevitably conjures up the twin spectres of necessity and pantheism. If the world emanates from God does this implicate God in necessity – as though creation somehow happens 'automatically' without recourse to the divine will? In addition, does the derivation of the world from God lead to pantheism? If the world is grounded in God, how is it other than God? What prevents the two from collapsing into each other? How can the world be created *from* God without being *homoousios* with Him? I defer the problem of divine necessity to Chapter Three. The problem of pantheism I address in the immediately following chapter. It is only once we have dealt with the urgent problem of identity and difference with respect to the God/world relation that we can address the more subtle difficulty of divine freedom and necessity.

Chapter Two

A Transformation of Mediation

I. Introduction

In speaking about creation as divine self-impartation in the preceding chapter, I emphasised the

way in which all things are grounded in the One as the ultimate *archē* of existence. Each of our

thinkers – from Plotinus to Maximos – affirmed the necessity of a unifying principle of reality

without which multiplicity itself could not exist. Everything depends upon oneness – for to *be*, is

to be *one*. Creation *ex deo*, I argued, expresses the notion of God as the irreducible simplicity at

the heart of reality constitutive of being. In sketching out this 'metaphysics of monarchy'

culminating in the 'monarchic Logos', however, I glossed over a number of philosophical and

theological problems – one being the problem of monism or pantheism, another that of free

versus necessary creation. I shall deal with the first in the present chapter and the second in the

immediately following chapter (Chapter Three). In this chapter, I argue that creation *ex deo* does

not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the uncreated works, or energies of God, the

being-making processions by which God constitutes the world. By means of this distinction,

Maximos at once affirms the continuity between God and world that lies at the heart of his

sacramental ontology, while at the same time insisting upon the element of discontinuity which

prevents the two from collapsing into pantheistic confusion.

Thus, having argued for a basic continuity between Neoplatonic emanation and

Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* in Chapter One, I devote the present chapter to exploring a

major modification to this view, one which Maximos inherits from the Cappadocians and

Dionysius and which he develops further. In brief, whereas the pagan Neoplatonists conceive of

being emanating from the One by means of successive subordinate hypostases, the Christians understand it as flowing directly from the Godhead via the 'uncreated energies'. While it would be anachronistic to claim that Maximos possesses a fully articulated doctrine of uncreated energies in the Palamist sense, I argue that – like his theological predecessors – he ascribes to a basic distinction between God's *ousia* and God's *dynamis/energeia*. Maximos expresses this most clearly in terms of the eternal works (ἔργα) by means of which beings participate the 'imparticipable' God. In this way, Maximos follows Dionysius' rejection of pagan intermediaries. For him, all things are derived immediately from the One God – not, however, from the divine *ousia* but from 'the things around it', the uncreated grace and eternal works of God. I argue that this transformation of mediation leads, paradoxically, to both a heightened immediacy between God and creation, and to the emergence of a stronger distinction between them.

Let us restate the problem: Insofar as all things are derived from God or the One as the solitary Ground of existence the problem of monism, or pantheism, seems unavoidable.[196] If all things are created from God in what sense can they be affirmed to be genuinely other than God? How to account for this otherness? In philosophical terms, this is none other than the age old problem of the One and the many. Syrianus, the teacher of Proclus, writes: "That it is a deep problem how all things have been produced from a Unity which has no duality nor trace of plurality nor otherness within itself is shown by Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblicus, and all the more speculative writers who have examined the matter."[197] How, if the supreme *archē* of existence is truly simple, is it possible for it to be the source of complexity? How, in other words, can

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[196] See Svetlana Mesyats, "Iamblicus' Exegesis of Parmenides' Hypotheses and His Doctrine of Divine Henads" in Afonasin, Dillon, and Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism*., 151.
[197] Syrianus, *In Metaph*.46. 22-5. Cited in Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 137.

sameness produce otherness? How can the One God produce the multiplicity of creation from

Himself without becoming implicated in it? This, as we noted Plotinus voice on multiple

occasions, is truly a "marvel" ($\theta\alpha\tilde{\nu}\mu\alpha$).[198]

For the pagan Neoplatonists, somewhat ironically, the problem is not one of monism, but

of dualism. I say ironically because Neoplatonic emanationism is often uncritically assumed to

be pantheistic, as implying an insufficient distinction between God and world. The truth however

is precisely the opposite. The One is so radically transcendent that it seems impossible that it

could have any positive relation to the many at all.[199] For the pagan Neoplatonists, the problem

in fact centres upon the need to *bridge* the infinite chasm between the ineffable and

imparticipable One and all that comes after the One. It is precisely in order to overcome this

ontological chasm that thinkers such as Plotinus, Iamblicus, and Proclus construct ever more

elaborate hierarchies of mediating terms attempting to bridge the unbridgeable gap between the

One and the many. The problem of pantheism, one might say, emerges more in terms of the

solution than the original problem. That is to say, it is precisely because of the great difficulties

posed in trying to overcome the duality of the One and the many that the Neoplatonists attempt

to construct a seamless continuity of gradually declining terms connecting God and nature. If

Neoplatonism is accused of monism it is a testament to the persuasiveness of their solution to the

problem of dualism.

The philosophical problem of the One and the many when transposed into a theological

key becomes for Christian thinkers the problem of the relation between God and world. How is

the world at once derived from God and yet genuinely other than God? It is worth asking in this

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[198] Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.9.5, 30; V.5.8, 25. For an in depth treatment of this problem see Perl, *Methexis*., 29-55.
[199] See, for example, *Enn*.VI.8.8, 15: "But we must say that he is altogether unrelated to anything; for he is what he is before them; for we take away the 'is', and also any kind of relations to the real beings." So much for the supposed 'necessity' of the One in relation to its products.

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regard, to what extent ancient Christian thinkers such as the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and Maximos are genuinely grappling with the problem of pantheism. Indeed, as we shall see in the case of Dionysius the latter is much more concerned with overcoming the pagan proliferation of principles – i.e. *polytheism* – than he is with pantheism. The Cappadocians, for their part, were busy battling subordinationism embodied in the Neo-Arianism of Eunomius. Generally speaking, one could say that the most pressing concerns for Maximos and his predecessors centres upon Trinitarian theology and Christology, rather than the philosophical problems of pantheism or dualism. There is, then, perhaps something anachronistic about framing our discussion in terms of the arguably contemporary preoccupation with pantheism.

Nonetheless, given that the accusation of pantheism is almost certain to arise in any discussion of creation *ex deo* in our contemporary milieu it cannot simply be swept aside on the grounds that it is anachronistic. Moreover, though the emphasis of Christian thinkers tends to be more on the soteriological (if this is not too restrictive a term) concern with the God/world relation than on the ontological concern of reconciling the One and the many, the latter is in fact implicit in the former. In essence, however one wants to put it, pagans and Christians alike are concerned with the fundamental problem of transcendence/immanence. The fact that the Cappadocians construe this in terms of the incommunicability/communicability of the God *who made darkness His hiding place*[200] makes little difference for the purposes of our present discussion. Moreover, with Dionysius and Maximos the philosophical problem of unity and multiplicity is reintroduced and assimilated to the Christian concern regarding the God/world relation.

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[200] Ps 18:11.

Another way of stating the aim of this chapter is to say that I try, with the help of Maximos, to work out a solution to the perennial problem of how God can be simultaneously transcendent/immanent, unknowable/knowable, imparticipable/participable without either pole being compromised. In other words, how is one to construe the antinomy of identity and difference at the heart of the God/world relation in a way that avoids both the Charybdis of monism (pantheism) and the Scylla of dualism (gnosticism)? The Neoplatonic approach, concerned with attempting to bridge the chasm between the One and the many, involves the proliferation of mediating terms. The Christian approach, beginning with the Cappadocians and Dionysius and culminating with Maximos rejects this pagan approach in favour of a more 'immediate' model of mediation. Simply put, whereas the pagan Neoplatonists conceive of being emanating from the Source by means of successive subordinate hypostases, the Christians understand it in proto-Palamite fashion as flowing directly from the Godhead by way of dynamic or *energeic* communications.

To repeat, I argue that this transformation of mediation leads, paradoxically, to both a heightened immediacy between God and creation, and to the emergence of a stronger distinction between them. In terms of the Maximian doctrine of creation *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ), or creation as divine self-impartation, I argue that this introduces a crucial qualification: creation from God is *not* creation from the divine *ousia* but from the uncreated works (ἔργα), energies, or grace of God. Though grounded in God, the world is not *homoousios* with God – though it is, or rather is called to be, *hom*oi*ousios* with Him. In this way, Maximos navigates between the twin shoals of monism and dualism. The world is gift – the self-impartation of divine grace. The sacramentality of the world means that it is constituted by – indeed *from* – the uncreated energies of God. This

view, to hazard another anachronism, is not pantheism but pan*en*theism.[201] As Dionysius whom

Maximos follows closely proclaims: "God is all things in all things and nothing in any." In

keeping with my historical philosophical methodology, I shall approach the problem of

mediation beginning with a consideration of Plotinus and Proclus followed by the Cappadocians

and Dionysius before concluding with Maximos.

II. Plotinus

As noted above, the Neoplatonic response to the problem of the One and the many involves the

multiplication of mediating terms. For Plotinus, this takes the relatively simple form of the three

hypostases: One, Intellect, and Soul. Plotinus argues that the One (ἕν) "overflows", as it were,

and produces another which is less than itself – the one-many (ἓν πολλὰ) of Intellect. This latter

then repeats the process in producing the unity-in-multiplicity (ἓν καὶ πολλά) of Soul, which in

turn informs the unified multiplicity of nature, the term of the emanative process. In this way, the

simplicity of the One progressively gives birth to the multiplicity of the world by means of

mediating terms, each lesser than its prior until it finally comes to a halt.[202] The basic logic

remains that of the innate productivity of perfection: "The One is always perfect and therefore

produces everlastingly; and its product is less than itself."[203] Why is the product less than the

producer? For the simple logical fact that if it were equal it would be indistinguishable from its

prior and nothing would actually be generated.[204] In order for the One to generate reality, a bare

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[201] See Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology*., 215. Also Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia, the Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology*., 72.
[202] See *Enn*.V.2.1, 1-20; *Enn*.V.I.8, 25.
[203] *Enn*.V.1.6, 40.
[204] The only other option would be that the effect is distinguished by its *superiority* to its cause which is logically impossible – for whatever added value it has it must have received from its cause. See *Enn*.V.7, 40.

minimum of otherness (ἑτερότητι)[205] is needed. Thus, from the simplicity of the One emerges the subtle duality of Intellect, whence comes the unity-in-multiplicity of Soul, and finally the unified multiplicity of the world. By means of these mediating terms, the simplicity of the One successively expands into, and as, the diversity of the world.

Let us unpack this Plotinian schematic a little bit. I suggested above that the problem for the Neoplatonists is not monism, but dualism. This is evident from Plotinus' frequent assertions concerning the radical transcendence of the One. How, Plotinus asks, "do all things come from the One (ἐξ αὐτοῦ), which is simple and has in it no diverse variety, or any sort of doubleness?"[206] Given the divine simplicity, how is creation *ex deo* even possible? Moreover, the transcendence of the One is such that no relation or dependency can be predicated of it: "But we must say that he is *altogether unrelated to anything*; for he is what he is before them (i.e. beings)."[207] And again: "But a principle is not in need of the things which come after it, and the principle of all things *needs none of them*."[208] Far from being some sort of pantheistic system in which the One is dependent upon its products as is often claimed, the henadic ontology of Plotinus and his successors posits a radically transcendent first principle utterly aloof from the world in its simplicity. And yet, as we discussed in the previous chapter, this solitary *archē* must simultaneously be the Ground of everything, the *sine qua non* of existence. In fact, paradoxically, precisely *because* the One has no relation to anything it is present to everything – for otherness too is a relation in need of negation.[209] Transcendence converts into immanence.

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[205] See *Enn*.V.1.6, 50.
[206] *Enn*.V.2.1, 5. Also, *Enn*.V.1.6.
[207] *Enn*.VI.8.8, 15; emphasis added.
[208] *Enn*.VI.9.6, 35; emphasis added.
[209] See *Enn*.VI.9.8, 35.

Yet how to articulate this great marvel? In addition to the metaphorical language of overflow familiar to us, Plotinus ascribes to what has been called a doctrine of 'double activity (*energeia*)'.[210] The key passage is the following:

> In each and every thing there is an activity which belongs to substance (ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας) and one which goes out from substance (ἐνέργεια ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας); and that which belongs to substance is the active actuality which is (ἐστιν) each particular thing, and the other activity derives from that first one, and must in everything be a consequence of it, different (ἑτέραν) from the thing itself: as in fire there is a heat which is the content of its substance, and another which comes into being from (ἀπ') that primary heat when fire exercises the activity which is native to its substance in abiding (μένειν) unchanged as fire.[211]

In this passage Plotinus posits a kind of twofold *energeia*, an internal *energeia* that does not so much belong to, but rather *is*, the *ousia* of a particular thing, and an external *energeia* that proceeds from the former, at once derivative and distinct from it. The illustration Plotinus uses is that of fire: in essence, fire is simply the activity of heat, of being hot. As such, fire is also innately productive; precisely because fire is the *energeia* of heat – both in the sense of activity and actuality[212] – it naturally shares, or communicates, what it is with all those who are present to it. It is also crucial that it remains (μένειν) unchanged. Fire is not altered by the activity of radiating heat, which is natural to it *qua* fire; to the contrary, this outward activity is the spontaneous expression of the fullness of its inner activity of being-what-it-is.[213] This analogy

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[210] For detailed studies of Plotinus' doctrine of double activity see: Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*.; Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*.; Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism.*; Gerson, *Plotinus*.

[211] *Enn*.V.4.2, 30-35. See also, *Enn*.V.3.7, 20-25, V.3.12, 40.

[212] That is, fire (in the formal Aristotelian sense) is not potentially heat but *fully actualized* heat, hotness itself. The polyvalent term *energeia* points at once to the perfection of being and to the dynamic character of being-as-activity. For the Aristotelian provenance of Plotinus' doctrine of double *energeia* see the above mentioned studies by Emilsson, Tollefsen, Lloyd, and Gerson.

[213] The analogy (like all analogies) is of course flawed. Actual fire *does* undergo alteration insofar as it is in fact dissipated in sharing itself and eventually burns out. Plotinus invites us to consider the One as a kind of inexhaustible, eternal fire which radiates heat without diminution.

illustrates how the essential *energeia* of the One, its innate activity as the Ground of being,

generates beings as its external *energeia*. The character of abiding, or "remaining unchanged" as

Armstrong rightly translates it, points to the transcendent character of the One which remains

wholly unaffected by its immanent manifestation.

Plotinus' doctrine of double activity is simply another way of talking about

'emanationism' and rests upon a fundamental presupposition: the innate productivity of being:

> All things which exist, as long as they remain in being, necessarily produce from their own substances, in dependence on their present power (δυνάμεως), a surrounding reality (ὑπόστασιν) directed to what is outside them, a kind of image (εἰκόνα) of the archetype from which it is produced: fire produces the heat which comes from it; snow does not only keep its cold inside itself…And all things when they come to perfection produce; the One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly; and its product is less (ἔλαττον) than itself.[214]

Though the language of *energeia* is absent here, the doctrine is the same. Being is dynamic. The

internal activity of fire generates the external activity of heat; the internal activity of snow

produces the external activity of cold. If this is true even of ordinary objects, Plotinus argues, it

must be infinitely more true for the One as the ultimate Ground of existence.[215] So how are we to

understand the internal activity of the One? Plotinus tells us that "the One is not being (οὐκ ὄν)

but the generator (γεννητὴς) of being"[216], and that it is "the productive power of all things (ἡ

πάντων δύναμις)."[217] The internal *energeia* of the One simply refers to its intrinsically creative

nature as the *archē* of existence, the irreducible simplicity constitutive of being. Just as it is the

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[214] *Enn*.V.1.6, 30-40.
[215] See *Enn*.V.4.1, 35: "How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged to give of itself or was impotent, when it is the productive power of all things?"
[216] *Enn*.V.2.1, 5.
[217] *Enn*.V.4.1, 35.

nature of fire to radiate heat, so it is the nature of the One to emanate existence. That is simply what the One does, or rather *is*.[218]

An important emphasis in this passage is upon the otherness of the product; the energy *out of* the essence (ἐνέργεια ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) is somehow inferior to the energy *of* the essence (ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας). The product, as we noted above, is always less than its principle. Plotinus' language of image and archetype is significant. Heat is like (ὅμοιον) fire insofar as it is derived from it, yet it is not identical to it.[219] Plotinus repeatedly stresses this point: all that comes from the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς) is in some way akin to the One while being crucially other than the One – like an image to its archetype.[220] The way in which the otherness of the effect manifests itself – and this is crucial for when we consider the Christian doctrine of *energeia* – is in the immediate hypostasization of the activity *ad extra*.[221] That is to say, the external *energeia* of the One is immediately hypostasized as Nous, while the external *energeia* of Nous becomes the third hypostasis of Soul, which in turn generates nature the culmination of the generative process.[222]

In sum, with the help of Plotinus' doctrine of double activity we get a glimpse into how the One as radically transcendent produces all things from itself. Simply by its being what it is, the One effortlessly generates[223] a subsequent reality distinguished from it, as Plotinus enigmatically puts it, "only in otherness."[224] This subsequent reality in its turn produces another subsequent reality and so on. In this way, Plotinus attempts to bridge the gap between the One

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[218] I am, of course, taking the liberty of speaking kataphatically here.
[219] Consider the difference between warming one's hands before a stove and thrusting one's hands directly into the fire! Clearly, there is a meaningful distinction here – even if it is admittedly difficult to discern where precisely to draw it.
[220] *Enn*.V.1.6, 34.
[221] See *Enn*.V.4.2, 35; V.1.6, 34; V.3.12, 20.
[222] See Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*. 26-27; also Lloyd and Oxford University Press., *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism.* 98.
[223] This of course raises the issue of 'necessity' in relation to emanationism. I address this in Chapter Three, below.
[224] *Enn*.V.1.6, 55.

and the many by the multiplication of mediating principles. The doctrine of double activity attempts to articulate the antinomy of identity and difference. On the one hand, there is *energeic* continuity; on the other hand, the hypostasization of the external *energeia* results in otherness.

III. Proclus

The problem of mediation acquires a much fuller development in Proclus, the vast complexity of which can scarcely be touched upon in this brief treatment. In what follows, I want simply to sketch out Proclus' basic approach to mediation in order to provide some context for the subsequent Christian transformation. This transformation begins with Dionysius who telescopes the Procline proliferation of principles into the One God, and concludes with Maximos who (following Dionysius) reworks Proclus' threefold scheme of participation.

In contrast to the simple triadic scheme of Plotinus, Proclus posits at least five hypostases: the One (*τὸ ἕν*) produces Being (*τὸ ὄν*); Being begets Life (*ζωή*); Life produces Intellect (*νοῦς*); and Intellect begets Soul (*ψυχή*).[225] In addition, it seems that Nature (*φύσις*) represents a sixth, and final, hypostasis.[226] Striking here is the separation of Being from Intellect, which together form the Plotinian Nous understood as the unity of thought and being. This is illustrative of Proclus' systematic and highly logical approach to the problem of mediation conceived in terms of universal and particular. After the One (which transcends categorization), Being is the most universal all-inclusive genus, and thus is the first principle to emerge into existence; everything which is, participates in Being. Next is Life which is a specification of Being (i.e. living being); followed by Intellect a specification of Life (i.e. intellectual living

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[225] See Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 232; Proclus, *ElTh*.,Prop.101.
[226] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.21; *On Parm*. VI. 1046.

being); and finally Soul a specification of Intellect (i.e. rational intellectual living being). If Nature is the final hypostasis, one could perhaps take it as a specification of Soul in the Aristotelian sense of an irrational, appetitive principle characteristic of plants and animals.

Following Dodds' schematization, the One (τὸ ἕν) is uncaused and possesses maximal unity while all the subsequent hypostases are caused and possess, respectively: unity & maximal being (τὸ ὄν); unity, being & maximal life (ζωή); unity, being, life & maximal intelligence (νοῦς); unity, being, life, intelligence & maximal discursive reason (ψυχή).[227] With each successive term a new element emerges such that the simplicity of the One progressively unfolds into an ever more specific multiplicity of causal principles. It might appear at first glance that the higher principles (i.e. unconscious inanimate being) are inferior to the lower principles (i.e. living intellective existence). In truth, however, the lower are pre-contained in the higher, and the higher, by way of mediation, are present to the lower.[228] As we have noted repeatedly, being depends first and foremost upon unity – the One. Similarly, there is no life apart from being, and no intellective being that is not alive. Each principle provides the necessary ground for its subsequent and pre-contains it in a more unified (and thus ontologically superior) manner.[229] Being, in other words, is not merely the cause of inanimate existence in the world but, insofar as it is the source of all the subsequent and more specific hypostases, it is the ultimate – albeit mediated – cause of life and intelligence in the world as well. In this way, reality unfolds from the One in stages, progressively revealing the richness of its implicit multiplicity.[230]

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[227] See Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*.232.
[228] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.7: "Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces." Prop.18: "Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively (πρώτως) possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients." See also, Prop.56 & Prop.101.
[229] See *ElTh.*, Prop.61: "Every power is greater if it be undivided, less if it be divided."
[230] By extension, this logic ought equally to apply to the One which, though radically simple, must somehow pre-contain the totality of existence which proceeds from it. This is of course problematic. As Dodds puts it in relation to Plotinus: "The One cannot be, in Plotinian language, δύναμις πάντων (the power of all things) without being also

Whereas Plotinus sought to explain the emergence of multiplicity from unity by way of the doctrine of double activity, Proclus attempts to "bridge the yawning gulf which Plotinus had left between the One and reality"[231] by means of his doctrine of henads. It is impossible (as well as unnecessary) to deal with this complex doctrine in detail. The relevant aspect to which I shall limit myself here is the relation of this doctrine to that of participation. In essence, Proclus recognizes that a mere multiplication of hypostases is insufficient to bridge the gap between the One and the many – for between each hypostasis there are further qualitative gaps which need to be negotiated. How do we get from the One to Being? Or from Being to Life, and so on? Moreover, how do we account for the perennial headache of deriving multiplicity from the One without compromising the One's simplicity?

Proclus' solution involves a further multiplication of entities. Within each hypostasis – including the One – there is a kind of unity-in-multiplicity. Within the One there abides a multiplicity of ones, or henads (ἑνάδες); within Being a multiplicity of beings; within Life a multiplicity of living beings; within Intellect a multiplicity of intellects; and so on down to Soul and Nature.[232] As Dodds puts it: "the doctrine of henads represents an attempt to account for the existence of individuality by importing plurality into the first hypostasis, yet in such a manner as to leave intact the perfect unity of the One."[233] Insofar as the multiplicity of ones in the One are *one*, the simplicity of the One remains intact – "for all the henads are in each other and are united with each other," says Proclus, "and their unity is far greater than the community and sameness among beings."[234] And yet, to the extent that there is some sort of discernible individuation (if

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δυνάμει πάντα (all things in potentiality): but to admit this is to infect the One with at least the seeds of plurality."
Elements, 259.
[231] Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 259.
[232] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.21.
[233] Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 259.
[234] Proclus, *On Parm.* VI, 1048.

only conceptually or virtually) the seeds of actual individuality are already latent in the One in a potential, or causal, manner (κατ᾽ αἰτίαν).[235] On a theological level, this horizontal proliferation of entities also represents the continuation of the Iamblican project of uniting Hellenic philosophy and religion. The Procline hypostases are both philosophical principles and a hierarchical ordering of pagan divinities.[236]

What I want to focus on, however, is Proclus' construal of the internal relations of these 'pleromic' principles in terms of participation. Within each hypostasis there is a threefold division into unparticipated/participated/participating. Each hypostasis, in effect, possesses an 'unparticipated' (ἀμέθεκτος) and a 'participated' (μεθεκτός) aspect, or 'moment' as Dillon renders it.[237] Proclus states: "All that is unparticipated (ἀμέθεκτον) produces out of itself the participated (τὰ μετεχόμενα); and all participated substances (αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις) are linked by upward tension to existences not participated (ἀμεθέκτους ὑπάρξεις)."[238] Each hypostasis possesses its own monadic principle as the transcendent source of its unity. This principle is 'unparticipated' insofar as it is not directly implicated in multiplicity but preserves its simplicity, what Proclus calls a "one prior to the many" (ἓν πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν). Though unparticipated, the monad generates terms capable of being participated; Proclus terms this emergent multiplicity a "one yet not-one" (ἓν ἅμα καὶ οὐχ ἕν). Finally, there are the participating terms, the most manifold aspect, or 'moment', within each hypostasis which are a "not-one yet one" (οὐχ ἓν ἅμα καὶ ἕν).[239]

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[235] See Proclus, *On Parm.* VI, 1049: "we declare our belief that there exists particularity and order even in the henads themselves, along with their unity."
[236] See Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus.*, 259-230; Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides,* xii.
[237] See Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides,* xix, xxii.
[238] Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.23.
[239] See Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.24.

This internal participatory relation extends equally to the external relations between hypostases. Strictly speaking, only the One is absolutely imparticipable, while the monads of subsequent hypostases are only relatively imparticipable. In other words, the 'imparticipable' monad of Being participates the One via the latter's lowest aspect, the participating henads, and so on for each of the hypostases. In this sense, the monadic principle is at once a participant (in relation to its prior) and unparticipated (in relation to its subsequent). The lowest stage of one hypostasis coincides with the highest stage of the next. In this way, Proclus attempts to safeguard the radical simplicity of the One while allowing for a kind of mediated, participatory procession into multiplicity. Similar to Plotinus, the generative activity of the One (what Proclus terms "the given" [τὸ δοθὲν]) is immediately hypostasized as a participated term (αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις). There are, as it were, hypostases within hypostases. This proliferation of mediating terms linked by mutual relations of participation is illustrative of the Procline principle of continuity,[240] such that a seamless bridge is constructed between the One and the many. The extreme realism of Proclus dictates that each link in the chain acquires substantial existence as a divine or quasi-divine principle.

IV. The Cappadocians

From a Christian theological point of view, the pagan solution to the problem of the One and the many is obviously problematic insofar as it is both subordinationist and polytheistic. After Nicaea, there is no longer any question concerning the consubstantiality of the Christian Hypostases. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *homoousios*, one in essence and activity, distinguished only by relation: the Father is unbegotten, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit

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[240] See Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus.*, 216; Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, xvii.

proceeds.[241] With the anathematization of Arius – and later Eunomius – Christianity closes the

door to any kind of descending hierarchy of mediating principles, so fundamental to the pagan

Neoplatonists. Henceforth, the distance between the Creator and His creation will have to be

overcome by other means. For the Cappadocians this involves distinguishing between God's

essence and activities. In a way reminiscent of Plotinus' doctrine of double activity, it is the

activities, or 'energies'[242] *ad extra* that mediate between God and world.

While the Cappadocians are not directly engaged in the ontological problem of the One

and the many, their response to the challenge of Eunomius represents a parallel concern in the

realm of epistemology; namely, the problem of the knowability of the unknowable God. Here,

too, there is a need for mediation. How does the incommunicable Godhead communicate

something of itself without compromising its radical incommunicability?[243] Given that this is the

epistemological pole of the Parmenidean principle concerning the unity of thought and being, it

is not surprising that the Cappadocian solution to this problem is taken up by Dionysius and

Maximos and applied to the realm of ontology. A brief sketch of the Cappadocian understanding

of the relation between God's *ousia* and His *energeia* is thus in order.

To speak in terms of an essence/energies distinction in the Cappadocians inevitably

brings up the issue of Palamism. One might question the legitimacy of applying this distinction –

typically associated with the late Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas – to early Christian

thinkers. Is this not anachronistic? A case of willfully reading Palamas into the earlier tradition?

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[241] See Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 29.16.

[242] It has become conventional in the Orthodox tradition to translate *energeia* as 'energy'. As Tollefsen rightly notes, however, the exclusive use of the term 'energy' risks obscuring the philosophical continuity and historical context of *energeia*. Following Tollefsen, I alternately translate ἐνέργεια as 'energy', 'activity', 'actuality', or simply transliterate it as *energeia*. See Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought.*, 4-5.

[243] This incommunicability of course is due to the fact that God is beyond thought and being. The Cappadocians are dealing with the same Neoplatonic problem of transcendence/immanence albeit within a theological and epistemological context.

To begin with, we are obviously not dealing with the Palamite *doctrine* as it arose within the unique context of the 14th century hesychast controversy. This would indeed be anachronistic. On the other hand, as Bradshaw has demonstrated, a basic distinction between the unapproachable *ousia* of God and His *energeic* processions is clearly present in the Cappadocian Fathers.[244] Tollefsen goes further, arguing that the essence/energies distinction is already discernible in the Neoplatonic understanding of the derivation of lower realities from the higher – the paradigmatic case being the Plotinian doctrine of double activity discussed above. For pagans and Christians alike, the One or God possesses both an internal *energeia* identical with its essence, and an external *energeia* that proceeds from this and is constitutive of another reality.[245] Tollefsen's argument is important for recontextualizing the essence/energies distinction which is too often narrowly construed as an exclusively Palamite doctrine.[246] While Palamas' development of the *ousia/energeia* distinction is certainly unique to him, it should come as no surprise that the roots of this doctrine go back to the Cappadocians, to Plotinus and, ultimately, to Aristotle.[247]

As alluded to above, a nascent essence/activity distinction emerges in the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers – Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa – in

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[244] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*.153-207.

[245] See Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*. Whether, and to what extent, the Cappadocians were familiar with this specific doctrine is difficult to ascertain. That they were well versed in pagan philosophy, however, is generally acknowledged – especially Gregory of Nyssa the most philosophical of the Cappadocians. Tollefsen's point, which I endorse, is simply that the essence/energies distinction needs to be situated within a larger philosophical and theological context. See also Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*.

[246] In fact, Gregory Palamas is dealing with precisely the same perennial problem of transcendence/immanence. What is unique about Palamas is simply that the problem takes the form of how mystical vision is possible within the context of hesychast spirituality.

[247] Unsurprising for at least two reasons: firstly, as any historian of ideas recognizes, radically original thoughts arising in a *sui generis* manner are extremely rare. Secondly, to ascribe originality to an ancient or late Byzantine thinker would itself be the height of anachronism. All ideas have histories; and pre-modern thinkers often go to great lengths to ground their own ideas in the authority of established tradition. For the Aristotelian provenance of the essence/energies distinction, see Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*.

response to the challenge of Eunomius, who boldly asserted the knowability of the divine *ousia*.

For Eunomius, the divine names are indicative of essence such that to know the name of God is

to know the essence of God. Beyond the obvious philosophical problems that arise from defining

– and thus finitizing – God, Eunomius' position leads to the theological problem of

subordinationism. If the appellation 'unbegotten' applies essentially to God the Father, while

'begotten' applies essentially to the Son, then clearly the latter cannot be *homoousios* with the

Father - for 'unbegotten' and 'begotten' are *essentially* two different things. Beyond the details

of Eunomius' doctrine, and the Cappadocians' response to it in the form of a definitive

Trinitarian theology, what interests us here is primarily the emergence of the essence/activity

distinction. In sum, the Cappadocians categorically deny that the divine *ousia* is in any way

knowable, and that the divine names are in any way *essentially* predicable of God. In terms of

'unbegotten', 'begotten', and proceeding, these are simply terms of relation (σχέσεις) pointing to

the fact that the Father is the *archē* of the Son and the Holy Spirit. All other names refer not to

the divine *ousia* but to the *energeiai*, the activities of God *ad extra*. It is by way of these latter

that we receive knowledge of the Unknowable.

Gregory of Nyssa links the divine names with the *energeiai* in his *Contra Eunomium*. In

speaking of the various names ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures – be it Door, Bread, Vine,

Way, Light, Stone, Shepherd, etc. – Gregory argues that these apply not to the divine *ousia*, but

to the *energeiai*.

> Each one of these titles (ὀνομάτων) is not the nature (φύσις) of the Only-Begotten, not his
> deity, not the character of his being. Nevertheless he is so named, and the naming is
> valid; for it is right to consider that there is nothing idle or meaningless among the divine
> words….What we say is this: as the Lord in various ways provides for human life, each
> variety of benefit is identified in turn by one or other such title, the foresight (προνοίας)
> and action (ἐνεργείας) therein observed becoming a particular kind of name (ὀνόματα).[248]

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[248] *ContraEun.* II.298.

Gregory proceeds by denying that the multiplicity of divine names are applicable to the simplicity of the divine essence, while affirming that they are nonetheless valid and meaningful in relation to God. In a sense, Gregory shares the robust realism of Eunomius; if words are to have meaning, if Scripture is not mere idle talk, if theology is to be a legitimate pursuit, then it must be possible to talk about God in some substantial way. Where Eunomius goes astray is in his belief that he can name – and thus know – the divine *ousia* itself. This Gregory emphatically denies, arguing that what we *can* know – and thus name – is the diversity of God's providential activities (ἐνεργείας). "It is clear," he concludes, "that the Divinity is given names with various connotations in accordance with the variety of his activities (τὸ ποικίλον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν)."[249] In this discussion of the divine names we encounter a clear distinction between God's unknowable *ousia* and His knowable *energeiai*, the latter being here identified with divine providence.

The question, of course, is what exactly *are* these *energeiai*? Are they some sort of divine communications *ad extra* – 'energies' in the Palamite sense – or merely 'operations' in a more Thomistic sense?[250] The answer is that they are both. Gregory alludes to this when he says that God reveals Himself to us "both by the miracles which are revealed in the works (ποιοῦντες) done by him, and from the titles (ὀνομάτων) by which the various aspects of divine power (δυνάμεως) are perceived."[251] The reference to miracles suggests a temporal *operatio*, a divine

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[249]*ContraEun.* II.304. See also II.353: "In a similar way, he says, the Lord also is by himself whatever he is in his nature, and when he is simultaneously named in accordance with his various activities (ἐνεργειῶν) he does not possess a single title covering them all, but is accorded the name in accordance with each idea (ἔννοιαν) which arises in us from those activities (ἐνεργείας)."

[250] See Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West.,* 165. Concerning the limitations of the Latin rendering of ἐνέργεια as *operatio* see, 153-154. Regarding the debate between Orthodox and non-Orthodox commentators over the validity of the essence/energies distinction see Yannaras, "The Distinction Between Essence and Energies and Its Importance." Also, Lossky, *The Vision of God.* 11-24.

[251] *ContraEun.* II.102.

intervention within the created order, something which God *does*.[252] On the other hand, the

mention of divine powers – linked to the *energeiai*[253] by their association with the divine names

– suggests something timeless pertaining to God Himself, something which God *is*. This accords

with Gregory's understanding of the *energeiai* as divine attributes. Just as we can describe the

outward characteristics of a person without knowing their inward nature, says Gregory, so "all

the words found in holy scripture to indicate God's glory (δοξολογίαν θείαν) describe *something

of the manifestations around God (τῶν περὶ τὸν θεὸν τι δηλουμένων)*[254]….His being itself (αὐτὴν

τὴν οὐσίαν), however, scripture leaves uninvestigated as beyond the reach of mind, and

inexpressible in word."[255] In this passage, Gregory expands the scope of the divine names from

works, powers, and energies, to include the divine attributes "around God" (περὶ τὸν θεὸν)[256]

which are identified with the divine glory.

This latter identification is corroborated by Gregory Nazianzus who, in a magnificent

passage invoking Moses' ascent on Mt Sinai, identifies God's 'face' with His unknowable *ousia*,

and His 'back parts' with the majesty and glory by which God manifests Himself to creatures:

> What is this that has happened to me, O friends and initiates and fellow lovers of the
> truth? I was running up to lay hold on God, and thus I went up into the mount, and drew
> aside the curtain of the cloud, and entered away from matter and material things, and as
> far as I could I withdrew within myself. And then when I looked up I scarcely saw the
> back parts of God, although I was sheltered by the rock, the Word made flesh for us. And
> when I looked a little closer I saw, *not the first and unmingled nature (φύσιν), known to*

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[252] It is worth noting that the term here is ποιοῦντες. A careful and in-depth philological study would perhaps shed light on whether Gregory employs this term rather than ἐνεργείας in relation to temporal works or whether he uses them interchangeably as synonyms for the divine activity.

[253] For the Neoplatonic assimilation of *dynamis* to *energeia* in relation to first principles, see Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena.,* 25-36.

[254] I have modified the translation slightly to bring out the literal sense of this passage. For other references to the "things around God" see, *ContraEun.* II.89, 582; III.5.59.

[255] *ContraEun.* II. 104-105. Emphasis added.

[256] Gregory of Nyssa frequently refers to the energies as the "things around the divine nature (τὰ περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν)." See *ContraEun.* II.89, 582; III.5.59. For περὶ with accusative as indicative of theological doctrine, see Krivochéine, "Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St Gregory of Nyssa." 88, n.62. Also Bradshaw 167.

itself – to the Trinity, I mean; not that which abides within the first veil and is hidden by the Cherubim, *but only that nature which at last even reaches to us* (εἰς ἡμᾶς φθάνουσα). And that is, so far as I can tell, the majesty, or as holy David calls it, *the glory which is manifested among the creatures*, which it has produced and governs. For these [i.e., majesty and glory] are the back parts of God.[257]

In this passage, we encounter once again a distinction between God *in se* and God *ad extra*. The first, implicitly identified with God's 'face'[258], represents the transcendent "unmingled" *ousia* hidden by the veil of unknowability; the second, which Gregory identifies with the 'back parts' of God represents that aspect of God (His majesty and glory) which, proceeding out of its hiddenness, is immanent in the world and thus knowable. Crucially, *both* of these 'aspects' are identified as God. God's glory – to which there are numerous Scriptural attestations – is not merely some 'operation', something which God *does*, but something which God in some sense *is*.

Perhaps the most well-known statement regarding the essence/energies distinction is to be found in Basil's Epistle 234:

We say that we know the greatness of God, His power, His wisdom, His goodness, His providence over us, and the justness of His judgement, but not His very essence (οὐσία)…But God, he [i.e. Eunomius] says, is simple, and whatever attributes of Him you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence. The absurdities involved in this sophism are innumerable. When all these high attributes have been enumerated, are they all names of one essence? And is there the same mutual force in His awfulness and His loving-kindness, His justice and His creative power, His providence and His foreknowledge, His bestowal of rewards and punishments, His majesty and His providence? In mentioning any of these, do we declare His essence?.... The *energeiai* are various, and the essence simple, but we say that we know our God from His *energeiai*, but do not undertake to approach near His essence. His *energeiai* come down to us, But His essence remains beyond our reach.[259]

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[257] Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.3 (PG 36 29A-B), emphasis added. Cited in Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*., 168.
[258] See Ex 33:19-23.
[259] Basil, *Ep*. 234.1, (PG. 32 872C-873B). Cited in Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*., 166.

As with the two Gregorys, Basil distinguishes between God's unknowable *ousia* and his knowable *energeiai* – the latter, once again, ranging in scope from works, powers, attributes, providence, judgment, and majesty (i.e. glory). Basil echoes Gregory Nazianzus' distinction between God as remaining "beyond our reach" and God as coming "down to us." This latter expression, common to all three thinkers,[260] points to the *energeiai* as divine communications *ad extra*. As divine attributes, the energies really *are* God – albeit not His *ousia*. In all of these cases, a clear distinction is present between God as incommunicable and God as communicable – *both* are God, but according to different modes.

Basil's emphasis upon the absurdity of Eunomius' position reveals the implicit engagement with the philosophical problem of the One and the many. If God is truly simple, how can he insist that the various attributes of God give knowledge of His essence? How can the *ousia* be one, if the essential attributes are many? As irreducible simplicity, how can God be the source of contraries, simultaneously wrathful and loving, the source of both rewards and punishments? In truth, what we are confronted with are the consequences of the Christian suppression of mean terms. In the absence of subordinate principles, God is at once ineffable simplicity, the One beyond thought and being, and at the same time the source of multiplicity. The antinomy of sameness and otherness is located within the Trinitarian Godhead itself.[261] In their struggle with Eunomius, the Cappadocians grapple with how to affirm *both* the divine simplicity *and* the diversity that proceeds from God. On the one hand, there is no place for the divine attributes within the divine *ousia*; on the other hand, there are no subordinate hypostases

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[260] For a similar expression in Gregory of Nyssa, see *Vita*, II.19-20.
[261] See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 138.

to contain them. And yet they must be affirmed – for Scripture and creation bear witness to the diversity of divine *energeiai* as both knowable and nameable.

Not unlike Plotinus, we find in the Cappadocians a distinction between the unknowable *ousia*, the internal *energeia* of God – the hidden activity of being-what-He-is – and the external *energeia*, the manifest activities, energies, and attributes which come down to us. The crucial difference is that for the Christians the activity *ad extra* is not immediately hypostasized as a series of subordinate principles, but remains dynamic and ungraspable. Gregory of Nyssa aptly compares the energies to the warmth and radiance of the sun. This eminently Plotinian image is even more apt within a Christian context. Like the rays of the sun, the energies both *are* God from whom they proceed, and yet are experienced as iridescent realities distinct from their source. Just as the sun cannot be looked upon due to its overwhelming brilliance, so God in Himself exceeds all cognitive capacity. And yet God – like the sun – communicates something of Himself by way of his *energeic* rays of providence and glory. To try to understand this rationally, Gregory gently chides us, is to be like children grasping at sunbeams.[262]

V. Dionysius

If it is with the Cappadocians that we first encounter evidence of a profoundly altered metaphysics, it is nonetheless true that this represents a somewhat oblique engagement with the ontological problem of the One and the many. The Cappadocians, as we have seen, are primarily concerned with the epistemological problem of divine knowledge and its Trinitarian implications. It is with Dionysius that we first encounter a direct engagement with the philosophical problem of mediation. What the Cappadocians accomplished in the realm of

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[262] See *ContraEun.* II.80-81. Also Golitzin, *Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei*., 296.

epistemology is taken up by Dionysius and applied to the realm of ontology, resulting in a

profound transformation of mediation.

Perhaps the most explicit example of this is found in a powerful passage in the *Divine*

Names where Dionysius takes direct aim at the metaphysics of Proclus with its proliferation of

mediating principles:

> I do not say that the Good (τἀγαθόν) is one thing, Being (τὸ ὂν) another, Life (ζωὴν) and
> Wisdom (σοφίαν) yet others, nor that there are multiple causes (αἴτια) and different
> Godheads (θεότητας), superior and inferior, and all producing different effects, but that
> all these good processions (ἀγαθὰς προόδους) and divine names (θεωνυμίας) celebrated
> by us are of the one God (ἑνὸς θεοῦ) and that the first name tells of the universal
> Providence of the one God (παντελοῦς τοῦ ἑνὸς θεοῦ προνοίας), while the other names
> reveal providences more general or specific.[263]

Dionysius explicitly rejects Proclus' mediating terms: there is no descending hierarchy of

hypostases such that the One produces Being, which produces Life, which produces Intellect

(Wisdom), which produces Soul and so on. Nor are there multiple principles or divinities

responsible for specific entities so that Being is the cause of existence, Life is the cause of vital

existence, and Wisdom is the cause of vital intelligent existence. Instead, the entire scheme is

radically leveled and attributed in its entirety to the One God. What were multiple subordinate

divinities in Proclus, are now varying measures of a single universal providence, the manifold

processions of a unitary Good. This change marks a radical new approach to the problem of the

One and the many. Rather than try to resolve the tension through the postulation of

intermediaries Dionysius, following the lead of his Cappadocian teachers, locates the source of

multiplicity (and hence otherness) within the First Principle itself.[264]

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[263] *DN*.5, 816D.
[264] See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*.138.

Perl make the interesting point that this transformation is not merely a response to theological concerns but is in fact the ultimate solution to the philosophical problem of sameness and otherness.[265] For no matter how many intermediaries are posited between the 'imparticipable' One and the many participants the fundamental problem of the One and the many remains. Whence comes that necessary otherness, however subtly it is rendered? How is it possible for simplicity to be the source of diversity? *That* it must be so is clear – for as we have noted repeatedly multiplicity itself depends upon unity, without which it would dissolve into an abyss of infinite divisibility. Yet, *how* it is so remains a mystery. As Perl succinctly puts it, "the world can be understood only as the effect of the One, but the One, it seems, cannot cause the world."[266] In Perl's view, Dionysius to his great credit chooses to face the problem head-on. Instead of multiplying intermediaries which serve merely to obscure, rather than resolve, the antinomy (and which lead inevitably to subordinationism and polytheism), Dionysius fearlessly proclaims that the One God is the sole, *immediate* source of the many. Even more radically than Plotinus, then, Dionysius proclaims that God is "all things in all things, and nothing in any."[267]

Once again, however, the question arises as to the nature of these manifold processions of the One God. For, though Dionysius rejects their status as hypostases, he nonetheless affirms them as the multiple expressions of divine providence. An important clue in the above passage is Dionysius' identification of God's providential processions with the divine names – an identification we first encountered in Gregory of Nyssa. Indeed, the *Divine Names* could itself be understood as a kind of commentary on Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of divine *onomata.* To cite a few further examples, Dionysius says that "all that the sacred hymnologies of the theologians

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[265] See Perl, *Methexis*., 58-60.
[266] Perl.36.
[267] *DN*.7.3, 872A 15.

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(i.e. the scripture writers) say regarding the divine names (θεωνυμίας) refer, in revealing praises, to the beneficent processions (ἀγαθουργοὺς προόδους) of the Thearchy."[268] Like Gregory, Dionysius calls these processions "powers" (δυνάμεις): "whenever we name (ὀνομάσαιμεν) the supraessential Hiddenness God, or Life, or Essence, or Light, or Logos, we indicate nothing other than the essence-making (οὐσιοποιοὺς), life-begetting (ζωογόνους), and wisdom-bestowing (σοφοδώρους) powers (δυνάμεις) which proceed to us (εἰς ἡμᾶς) from Him."[269] Finally, like the Cappadocians, Dionysius identifies the powers and providences of God with the *energeiai* when he speaks of the "providential processions and energies (προνοητικαῖς προόδοις καὶ ἐνεργείας)" whereby God creates, sustains, and encompasses the whole of creation.[270]

All of this indicates that Dionysius subscribes to a similar distinction as the Cappadocians between God's hidden *ousia* and His manifest *energeiai*, though Dionysius formulates it in ontological terms as a distinction between the One God and His multiple manifestations. The reference to the divine *dynameis* coming down "to us" (εἰς ἡμᾶς) echoes the expressions of Gregory Nazianzus and Basil concerning the immanent aspects of God. The inexpressible One is beyond naming, yet reveals Himself to us in the divine names by which Scripture hymns the "beneficent processions" (ἀγαθουργοὺς προόδους), the *energeiai* of God *ad extra*. While Dionysius adopts the Neoplatonic language of procession (πρόοδος), his meaning is fundamentally different from that of Plotinus and Proclus. For him, the *energeic* processions are not lower effects of the supreme Cause, but *the self-disclosure of the Cause itself*.[271] For

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[268] *DN*.1.4, 589D. Note here the neologism '*agatho-ourgos*' with its *energeic* connotations (*erga-energeia*).
[269] *DN*.2.7, 645A-B. Also, *DN*.1.8, 597B; *DN*.2.5, 644A.
[270] *DN*.9.9, 916C. Also, 916D.
[271] See *DN*.4.14, 712C: "He alone is the Good and the Beautiful Himself on account of Himself, *and as a manifestation of Himself through Himself* (καὶ ὥσπερ ἔκφανσιν ὄντα ἑαυτοῦ δι᾽ ἑαυτοῦ)." In a sense, one can also say that everything which proceeds from the Neoplatonic One is a self-disclosure of the One. My point here is that the *causal* understanding of procession is crucially modified by Dionysius. The providential processions are not

Dionysius, as with the Cappadocians, the energies do not immediately coalesce into hypostases but remain iridescent and dynamic – they are the providential *proödoi*, the "being-making" (οὐσιοποιοὺς), "life-begetting" (ζωογόνους), and "wisdom-bestowing" (σοφοδώρους) *dynameis* which constitute the world.[272]

Further evidence of Dionysius' transformation of Neoplatonic mediation may be found in his reworking of Proclus' threefold schematic of unparticipated/participated/participating. In a passage which reiterates his rejection of the pagan proliferation of principles, Dionysius responds to a query as to how the One God can be addressed by multiple names such as Being-Itself, Life-Itself, or Power-Itself. His answer is both expected and enigmatic. None of these names refer to additional deities or demiurges, says Dionysius, but "are derived from beings and *especially the primary beings* (τῶν πρώτως ὄντων)", and analogously attributed to God as the Cause Who transcends beings *including the primary beings* (τὰ πρώτως ὄντα)."[273]

Given his uncompromising rejection of subordinate existences what are we to make of this peculiar reference to "primary beings"? Dionysius promptly gives us the answer: the primary beings refer to the "providential powers (προνοητικὰς δυνάμεις) which come forth from the unparticipated God (ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου)", according to which beings are participants (μετέχοντα) in the gifts of existence, life, and so on.[274] The so-called "primary beings" (or primary realities) are evidently a stand-in for Proclus' participated terms mediating between the unparticipated *archē* and the manifold participants. And yet, given the suppression of mean terms these *onta* are not hypostasized realities but dynamic communications of God *ad extra* –

'effects' of God in the sense of the emergence of something substantially 'other'; but *God Himself* according to another mode. In other words, there is distinction without difference.
[272] See *DN*.2.7, 645A-B.
[273] *DN*.11.6, 953C-D.
[274] *DN*.11.6, 956A.

the "being-making" (*οὐσιοποιοὺς*), "life-begetting" (*ζωογόνους*), and "wisdom-bestowing" (*σοφοδώρους*) *dynameis*.[275] That Dionysius refers to them in ontic terms underscores the realism of the providential powers; though not separate hypostases, they *are* substantial expressions of God, the self-disclosure of the One as many.

The paradoxical character of the powers, processions, or energies of God is further illustrated when Dionysius says of the divine differentiation that, "it is according to these gifts (*δωρεαὶ*) that the things which are imparticipably participated (*τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα*) are hymned through the participations (*τῶν μετεχόντων*) and those who participate (*τῶν μετοχῶν*)."[276] Once again, the deity is named (or "hymned") according to both the primary beings (the participated terms) and the secondary beings (the participants). That the primary beings are themselves "imparticipably participated" represents another revealing oddity. According to the Procline scheme, there is no reason for the middle terms to be described in this way – they are simply participated, while only the first term in the triad is said to be unparticipated. According to Dionysius, however, not only is the transcendent Godhead said to be imparticipable,[277] but even the participated processions are in some sense imparticipable. This points once again to the suppression of mean terms. Insofar as the communications of God *ad extra* simply *are* God, they too are unparticipated; insofar as they represent God in His knowable, immanent aspect they are participated. The paradoxical nature of all of this stems from the rejection of mediating hypostases such that the antinomy of sameness and otherness is confronted head on. God is at once simple and manifold, transcendent and immanent, unknowable and knowable.

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[275] *DN*.2.7, 645A-B. Also, *DN*.1.8, 597B; *DN*.2.5, 644A.
[276] *DN*.2.5, 644A-B.
[277] See *DN*.2.5, 644B; *DN*.11.6, 956A; *DN*.12.4, 972A.

Dionysius' transformation of the Procline doctrine of participation has important implications for his – and subsequently Maximos' – uniquely Christian understanding of creation *ex deo*. Participation, as I noted in the Introduction, is simply another way of talking about the derivation of beings from God.[278] Whereas creation *ex deo* approaches the issue from the perspective of the cause, participation approaches it from the perspective of the effect. Whether one speaks of God constituting the world by means of His providential processions, or the world being constituted by its participation in these same processions one is talking about the same thing – the derivation of the many from the One. In speaking of the 'movements' of the unmoved God (κινήσεις θεοῦ τοῦ ἀκινήτου), Dionysius says that we should understand "the undeviating procession of the energies (πρόοδον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν) and the genesis of all things from Him (ἐξ αὐτοῦ)."[279] The procession of the *energeiai* coincides with the generation of beings. Creation *ex deo*, then, does not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the being-making *dynameis* or *energeic* processions by which God constitutes the world. Insofar as these processions *are* God, the world is indeed created *from* God – for, in the absence of subordinate principles all creative energies must be predicated of God alone. And yet, insofar as these energies are distinct from the essence, the world is not created from God – not, at any rate, in any kind of unqualified *essential* sense.

In conclusion, Dionysius' transformation of mediation does not 'resolve' the ancient antinomy of the One and the many anymore than do the mediating terms of Plotinus and Proclus. To the contrary, it radicalizes it such that beings both *are*, and *are not*, derived directly from God. The problem with the pagan position, from a Christian point of view, is that the

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[278] See Introduction, 1-2.
[279] *DN*.9.9, 916D.

proliferation of intermediaries means that the dividing line between the One and the many is never entirely clear. Indeed, the whole thrust of the 'great chain of being' is precisely to establish this continuity. While both Plotinus and Proclus insist upon a fundamental distinction between the One as uncaused, and all subsequent principles as caused, the seamless bridge constructed between the One and the many – especially as one finds it in the later Neoplatonism of Proclus – renders the distinction between God and world ambiguous. For the pagans this may well be a laudable achievement. From a Christian perspective however, which places a much higher premium upon the *otherness* of God in relation to the world, the pagan emphasis upon *sameness* can seem dangerously pantheistic.[280] Paradoxically, by drawing a distinction between God's unknowable *ousia* and His *energeic* processions, Dionysius renders the world at once more immediately related to God and more clearly distinguished from Him. On one side of the great divide dwells the invisible and unnameable Creator who *made darkness His hiding place*; on the other side is visible contingent creation. What mediates between them are God's own providential processions which traverse the chasm without bridging it – that is, '*energeically'* rather than essentially or ontically.

VI. Maximos

With the completion of our historical survey we come at last to Maximos who is the beneficiary of these developments, and who in turn develops them in his own way. While Maximos is not explicitly engaged in combatting Eunomianism or critiquing Proclus, his understanding of creation and deification, his profound apophaticism, and above all his sacramental ontology is

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[280] Ultimately, both pagans and Christians are struggling to articulate the antinomy of sameness and otherness with respect to the God/world relation. If the pagan emphasis upon sameness tends towards monism, the Christian emphasis upon otherness carries an inherent risk of dualism.

deeply indebted to the transformations wrought by his predecessors. In terms of Maximos'

doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation, the Christian transformation of mediation ensures

that creation from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) is *not* creation from the divine *ousia* but from the uncreated

energies or works (ἔργα) of God. The world is gift – the self-impartation of divine grace. The

sacramentality of the world means that it is constituted by the immanent energies, the uncreated

grace of God from which beings are generated, and in which they participate in a kind of

existential communion.

Before moving on to consider Maximos' engagement with the thought of his Christian

predecessors it is worth returning for a moment to Plotinus. Following Bradshaw and Tollefsen, I

argued above that the essence/energies distinction needs to be situated within its larger

philosophical and historical context. Doing so enables us to see this distinction, not merely as

some 14th century innovation anachronistically imposed upon earlier thinkers, but as part of a

progressive engagement with the perennial problem of mediation. As such, I began my

exploration of the Christian transformation of mediation with the Plotinian doctrine of double

activity. I went on to suggest that something akin to Plotinus' distinction between the activity *of*

the essence and the activity *out of* the essence was discernible in the Cappadocian distinction

between the unknowability of the divine *ousia* and the knowability of the divine *energeiai*. In

Dionysius we encountered a similar distinction expressed in the Procline terminology of

procession and participation. In Maximos we discover elements taken from all of these thinkers –

Plotinus, Proclus, the Cappadocians, and Dionysius.

In terms of the first, Maximos offers tantalizing evidence of Plotinus' doctrine of double

activity. In commenting on Gregory Nazianzus' concession to Eunomius that the Father is an

energeia which actively produces the consubstantiality of the Son, Maximos states:

They say that among beings there exist two general kinds of activities (*Δύο καθόλου τὰς ἐνεργείας*). The first of these enables beings naturally to bring forth from themselves (*προάγουσαν ἐκ τῶν ὄντων*) other beings identical in form and substance and absolutely identical (*ὁμοούσια*) to them….The second kind of activity (*ἑτέραν ἐνέργειάν*) is said to produce (*ἀπεργαστικήν*) things that are external to the essence (*τῶν ἐκτὸς*), as when a person actively engages in something extrinsic and substantially different, and from it produces something foreign to his own substance (*ἕτερόν τι τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας*), having constructed it from some other source of already existing matter.[281]

This passage represents Maximos' solution to a dilemma initially posed by Eunomius to Gregory Nazianzus; namely, whether the name 'Father' indicates the *ousia* or the *energeia* of God. Both are problematic. If 'Father' indicates essence then, as we noted in our discussion of the Cappadocians, the Son cannot be *homoousios* with the Father – for 'Father' and 'Son' indicate two essentially different entities. Yet, if we say that 'Father' indicates activity this implies that the Son is a product of that activity and hence a creature. For this reason Gregory Nazianzus in facts rejects *both* propositions by which Eunomius attempts to ensnare him, stating that 'Father' refers neither to *ousia* nor *energeia*, but rather to relation (*σχέσεως*). Nonetheless, Gregory concedes that, rightly understood, there is a way in which the Father may be identified with *energeia*; namely, as a reality which "will actively have produced that very consubstantiality of the Son."[282] It is this final ambiguous statement of Gregory that Maximos attempts to clarify.

The most important thing to note in this intriguing passage is, of course, Maximos' explicit reference to a doctrine of double activity. Maximos expresses this by way of analogy. Beings possess an *energeia* that is intrinsic to them and which brings forth (*προάγουσαν*) additional beings identical in essence (*ὁμοούσια*), as well as an extrinsic *energeia* by which they

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[281] *Amb*.26, 1268A-B.
[282] Gregory Nazianzus, *Or*. 29.15, in Maximos *Amb*.26.

produce (ἀπεργαστικήν) beings heterogeneous to themselves.[283] The first *energeia* evidently

refers to biological generation, while the second *energeia* pertains to artistic production.

Analogously, Maximos suggests, God too possesses a double activity. The first activity, which

pertains to the divine *ousia*, involves the eternal begetting of the Son as *homoousios* with the

Father; the second activity, which is directed outside the essence, concerns the creation of the

world. By distinguishing between these two *energeiai*, Maximos is able to effectively respond

(or rather, to clarify Gregory's response) to the challenge of Eunomius. Basically, Eunomius fails

to distinguish between the two types of divine activity such that, for him, activity can only mean

outwardly directed creative activity – that is, *poesis*. If the Father is *energeia*, then the Son must

be a creature. Not so, says Maximos. One needs to distinguish between (to put it in Plotinian

terms) the *energeia* of the essence and the *energeia* out of the essence. In terms of the first, the

essential *energeia* of the Father generates consubstantial realities – in the same way that humans

beget humans and oaks beget oak trees. Just as one's offspring is not an artifact, neither is the

eternally begotten Son a creature.

Maximos' first *energeia* offers us a rare glimpse into the intra-Trinitarian life of the deity

– something which the Eastern Fathers typically prefer to honour in apophatic silence.[284]

According to our passage, the essential *energeia* of God consists in the intrinsic fecundity of the

Father Who, as the *archē* of the Trinitarian Godhead, eternally begets the Son and proceeds the

Spirit. In terms of the second, is there a way in which, like Plotinus, the energy of the essence *by*

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[283] Karayiannis notes the important distinction between the first activity which "brings forth" (προάγουσαν) consubstantial realities and the second activity which "produces" (ἀπεργαστικήν) beings. The first indicates the internal relations of the Godhead, the second the external relation of Creator to creation. For a discussion of this passage see Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur*., 192; 189-194.

[284] As Gregory Nazianzus puts it with characteristic dramatic flair: "You explain the ingeneracy of the Father and I will give you a biological account of the Son's begetting and the Spirit's proceeding – and let us go mad the pair of us for prying into God's secrets!" Gregory Nazianzus, *Or*. 31.8.

its very nature also produces the second *energeia*, the energy out of the essence? Insofar as the internal *energeia* of the Father generates the Son as Living Logos and self-subsistent Wisdom, the answer is clearly yes. The One Logos, after all, is the many *logoi,* while the many *logoi* are the eternal 'predeterminations' (προορισμοὺς) and 'divine wills' (θεῖα θελήματα) for creation.[285] It is on the basis of these that Maximos affirms that God "is an eternally active creator (ἀεὶ κατ᾽ ἐνέγειάν ἐστι Δημιουργός)," for "in Him and with Him are all things, even though all things – things present and things to come – were not called into existence simultaneously with their *logoi.*"[286] The whole of creation exists, so to speak, as a potency in God to be actualized at the appropriate time in accordance with the wisdom of the Creator.[287] The internal *energeia* of the generation of the Logos is thus intrinsically connected to the external *energeia* of the production of the world. The two *energeiai* are in a sense two aspects of a single divine reality – God *in se* and God *ad extra.*

While Maximos' distinction between an internal and an external *energeia* bears a striking resemblance to the Plotinian doctrine of double activity, there are important differences. As with Plotinus, the first *energeia*, the activity *of* the essence, is innately generative and is immediately hypostasized "as an activity essentially subsisting and living (ὡς ἐνέργειαν οὐσιωδῶς ὑπεστῶσαν καὶ ζῶσαν)," as Maximos puts it. Unlike Plotinus, however, this subsistent *energeia* is not a subordinate hypostasis, but a consubstantial one – the only-begotten Logos as "Living Word and Power and self-subsisting (αὐθυπόστατον) Wisdom." In a sense, Maximos' first *energeia* combines elements from *both* Plotinus' first and second *energeiai*. The innate fecundity of the

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[285] See *Amb*.7, 1081C, 1085A-B. Also *Amb*.42, 1329C.
[286] *Amb*.7, 1081A-B. See also *CTh*. 1.35.
[287] One is reminded of Plotinus' description of the One as the dynamis of all things. See *Enn*.V.4.1, 35. Also see Dodds comments above n. 230 above.

Father's essential *energeia* (E1) produces another reality (E2)[288] which, however, remains within the essence (*homoousios*) rather than proceeding out of it. The Trihypostatic Monad is not one of simple unity, but of unity-in-distinction. In terms of the second *energeia,* the activity *out of* the essence, Maximos differs from Plotinus in two crucial ways: first, the eternal demiurgic activity does not issue in a correspondingly eternal creation, but a temporal one.[289] Second, the activity *ad extra* produces the world in a direct, unmediated fashion. This modification is, once again, the consequence of the radical transformation of mediation. The chasm between God and world is not bridged ontically by a declension of being, but traversed *energeically* by God's own manifestation *ad extra*.

If Maximos subscribes to something akin to Plotinus' doctrine of double activity, he typically expresses this in terms of the Cappadocian distinction between God's unknowable *ousia* and His knowable *energeiai* or attributes.[290] For example, in his *Chapters on Love*, Maximos says that "the divinity and the divine things (τὰ θεῖα) are in one sense knowable and in another sense unknowable. Knowable concerning the things contemplated around it (περὶ αὐτὸ), unknowable concerning the divinity itself (κατ' αὐτό)."[291] Similarly, Maximos states that "we do not know God from His being (οὐσίας) but from his magnificent work (μεγαλουργίας) and His providence for beings." Through these, he adds, "as through mirrors we perceive his infinite (ἄπειρον) goodness and wisdom and power (δύναμιν)."[292] Both of these passages emphasise the

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[288] To be precise, the innate fecundity of the Father's essential *energeia* generates *two* consubstantial realities – the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[289] How to reconcile God's eternal activity with temporal creation is a problem which Maximos is reluctant to address: "Seek the reason why God created, for this is knowledge. But do not seek how and why he only recently created, for that question does not fall under your mind since while some divine things are comprehended by men others are not." *CL.* 4.5. For Philoponus' solution, see Chapter 4 below, 149-153.

[290] Recall that for Plotinus the activity of the essence simply *is* that essence – the fully actualized activity of a thing's being-what-it-is. To speak in terms of internal and external *energeia* or in terms of unknowable *ousia* and knowable *energeia* is not substantially different. See above, 77.

[291] *CL.* 4.7. translation modified.

[292] *CL.* 1.96.

unknowability of God's essential *energeia*, His intra-Trinitarian life, which ultimately transcends thought and being. Nonetheless, they affirm that we can grasp something of the divine hiddenness by way of its manifestations *ad extra*, the divine things (τὰ θεῖα) around God; namely, His providence, His magnificent work of creation (μεγαλουργίας), and His infinite energies of goodness, wisdom, and power.

Like the Cappadocians, Maximos frequently refers to the external *energeiai* as 'the things around God' (περὶ Θεὸν). In a passage reminiscent of Gregory Nazianzus' mystical ascent,[293] Maximos speaks of how the soul, frustrated in its attempt to perceive the divine Being, nonetheless receives "encouragement from the things around Him (περὶ αὐτὸν) that is, from what concerns His eternity, infinity, and immensity; His goodness, wisdom, and power; and His creating, providing, and judging of beings."[294] Following the Cappadocians, Maximos understands the energies *ad extra* in terms of the goodness, wisdom, power, providence, judgment, and demiurgic works immanent in the world and accessible to spiritual contemplation. In addition, Maximos also includes in the 'things around God' abstract attributes such as eternity, infinity, and immensity. One way to understand these latter attributes is perhaps in terms of the divine glory – the 'back parts' of God according to Gregory Nazianzus. The eternity, infinity, and immensity of God reveal to us something of the grandeur and majesty of the divine *ousia* primordially veiled by the cloud of unknowing.

While it is difficult to think of these latter more abstract attributes as 'energies' in the dynamic sense of the term, that Maximos thinks of them as divine realities – and not merely nominal attributes of God – is evident from a remarkable passage in *Ambiguum* 15. Here,

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[293] See above, 19.
[294] *CL.* 1.100 Translation modified. See 2.27 for an almost identical statement.

Maximos insists that, though God *in se* is not an object of knowledge or predication, He is graspable *ad extra* by means of a simple supranoetic *henosis* reserved for the *eschaton*:

> When the endless, multiform movement of beings around particular objects (περί τι) will come to an end *in the infinity that is around* God (τὴν περὶ Θεὸν ἀπειρίαν), in which all things that are in motion will come to rest. For infinity is around God (περὶ Θεὸν), but it is not God Himself (οὐ Θεός), for He incomparably transcends (ὑπέρκειται) even this.[295]

Maximos' insistence that beings will come to rest in the infinity around God which is not God (Περὶ Θεὸν γάρ, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ Θεός, ἡ ἀπειρία) indicates the robust realism at play here. Infinity is not merely a nominal attribute descriptive of God's Being, but a kind of divine reality which, Maximos assures us, will be experienced in the age to come in a simple supranoetic *henosis*. Union with God does not mean merging with the divine *ousia*, but being united with the divine realities (τὰ θεῖα) 'around God', the eternal *energeiai* or attributes of God.

The realism of the divine attributes as manifestations of God *ad extra* is further illustrated in Maximos' reworking of Proclus' threefold doctrine of participation.[296] Whether Maximos derives this doctrine directly from Proclus, or indirectly through Dionysius, is difficult to say. What is clear is that he has assimilated the latter's transformation of this doctrine, to which he adds further modifications of his own. The key passage is from the *Chapters on Theology*:

> Perhaps, therefore, the works (ἔργα) of God beginning their existence temporally are all participating beings (τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα), such as the different substances of beings, since they have non-being (μή ὄν) prior to their existence. For there was a "when" (ποτε) when participating beings were not. On the other hand, the works (ἔργα) of God not beginning their existence temporally are perhaps participated beings (τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά), of which participating beings (τὰ ὄντα μετέχοντα) participate (μετέχουσι) by grace, such as goodness and anything particular encompassed by the principle of goodness. Put simply, all life, immortality, simplicity, immutability, infinity, and as many things as

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[295] *Amb*.15, 1220C; emphasis added. See also *CL*. 2.27.
[296] See Proclus, *ElTh*. Prop.23, 24.

substantively (οὐσιωδῶς) are contemplated around him (περὶ αὐτὸν), which very things are also works (ἔργα) of God, yet not beginning temporally.[297]

In this passage we find a clear echo of Proclus' threefold scheme of unparticipated-participated-participating.[298] While the emphasis here is on the last two terms, Maximos supplies the first imparticipable term in the immediately following chapter when he says that God "incomprehensively eludes infinitely all beings, both participating and participated (καὶ μετεχόντων καὶ μεθεκτῶν)."[299] In addition to this Procline and Dionysian resonance, we again encounter the Cappadocian notion of the things 'around God'(περὶ αὐτὸν) identified with the manifold expressions of divine goodness and, notably, a list of abstract attributes such as life, immortality, simplicity, immutability and infinity. That these latter are now identified as timeless 'works' (ἔργα) of God which created beings *participate*, further underscores the realism of the divine attributes as manifestations of God *ad extra.* These latter are not merely nominal attributes, but participated *beings* (τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά) *substantively* (οὐσιωδῶς) contemplated 'around God'.[300]

Maximos' introduction of the term 'works' (ἔργα), along with his twofold distinction between the timeless participated works and the temporal participating works is without obvious precedent – either in his own writing or in those of his predecessors. There is, perhaps, some hint of this distinction in the passage we discussed above where Maximos simultaneously speaks of the manifestations of God *ad extra* in terms of the 'magnificent work' (μεγαλουργίας) of creation, and the energies of goodness, wisdom, and power reflected therein. That the work of creation

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[297] *CTh.* 1.48.2022-11-24 5:16:00 PM
[298] See Proclus *ElTh.*, Prop.23. Also Dionysius *DN*.2.5, 644A-B. It seems entirely possible (perhaps even likely) that Maximos as an educated, philosophically astute Byzantine, had direct access to the writings of Proclus.
[299] *CTh.* 1.49; See also *Var.* 1.7.
[300] See Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur.*, 230.

reflects the energies or attributes of God is another (Scriptural) way of talking about participation; that is, of the derivative character of all creaturely goodness, wisdom, and power which owes its existence to the immanent divine activity. The etymological affinity between *erga* and *energeia* is also worth noting. Insofar as the *erga* are identified with the eternal attributes of God they would seem to be Maximos' way of talking about the divine energies using Biblical, rather than philosophical, terms.[301]

An initially mystifying aspect of the above passage is Maximos' description of the eternal *erga* as participated *beings* (τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά). In what sense are they 'beings'? Given the radical transformation of mediation brought about by the Cappadocians and Dionysius it is unacceptable to think of them as some sort of intermediate entities. One might be tempted to think of the *erga* as some kind of *cosmos noetos* – except that there is simply no trace of such a doctrine in Maximos.[302] The closest Maximos comes is his doctrine of the *logoi* which, though they take over much of the work of the Ideas, are never said to be participated.[303] In truth, one should be wary of interpreting *ta onta* in too narrowly a sense as 'beings'. It would be more fitting perhaps to translate the term more broadly as 'realities'. As such, the best option is to understand the participated beings or realities not as concrete entities, but as the eternal attributes and *energeiai* of God – which in fact is exactly how Maximos describes them. The ontic language here once

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[301] See, for example, Ps 110:2, 6, 7 LXX; Ps 45:9 LXX; Ps 63:10 LXX; Rev 15:3.

[302] The *logoi* are not distinct, intelligible entities, or 'Ideas', in the Platonic or Plotinian sense, but the eternal divine volitions, the *theia thelemata*, for creation. See Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*., 115-131; Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 1995., 72-79; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 95.

[303] Maximos says rather that beings participate in God *according to* (κατά) the *logoi*. See *Amb*.7, 1080A-C. Also Perl, *Methexis*., 159; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 95; Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*., 174. Yung Wen, on the other hand, does argue that the *logoi* are participated on the basis that they are equivalent to the energies or attributes of God. This results in a number of confusions, not least his equation of the One Logos as the unparticipated divine *ousia* (!) and the many *logoi* as participated works. To begin with, the Logos is not the divine *ousia*, but the second consubstantial Person of the Trinity. Secondly, the *logoi* are not 'united without confusion' with the Logos in a Christological manner (would this not make them creatures?) but, according to Maximos, simply *are* the Logos and vice versa. See Wen, "Maximus the Confessor and the Problem of Participation."

again points to the realism (without reification!) of the *erga*, the things 'around God' as substantive realities – something which the term οὐσιωδῶς further emphasises.

Maximos' 'participated beings' (τὰ ὄντα μεθεκτά), in fact, bear a striking resemblance to Dionysius' 'primary beings' (τὰ πρώτως ὄντα).[304] Dionysius, as we noted, identifies the *prōtōs onta* with the "providential powers (προνοητικὰς δυνάμεις) which come forth from the unparticipated God (ἐκ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου),"[305] and which are participated by beings. Apart from slight terminological differences, Dionysius' primary beings and Maximos' participated beings are essentially identical. For both thinkers, the primary or participated beings are identified with the providential processions, the manifold expressions of divine goodness, the *dynameis*, *energeiai*, and eternal *erga* of God; in sum, the participable manifestations of the imparticipable Godhead. As Maximos says elsewhere, "God, in whose essence created beings do not participate… wills that those capable of so doing shall participate in Him according to some other mode (κατ' ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον)."[306] The ἄλλον τρόπον here is an oblique reference to the participated beings, the eternal *erga* of God. It is only by means of these *energeic* communications which both *are*, and *are not*,[307] God that creatures are able to participate in the imparticipable deity.

As with Dionysius, Maximos' participated beings are a stand-in for Proclus' participated terms. The Christians, as we have seen, are faced with a dilemma. The pagan proliferation of mean terms is totally unacceptable from both a theological and a philosophical perspective. From a theological point of view, we have the problem of polytheism and subordinationism. From a philosophical point of view, the proliferation of mean terms serves merely to disguise, rather

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[304] *DN*.11.6, 953C-D. See above, 96-97.
[305] *DN*.11.6, 956A. See above, 97.
[306] *Var.* 1.7.
[307] Not God, that is, in terms of the divine *ousia*.

than resolve, the antinomy of the One and the many. Moreover, attempting to bridge the ontological chasm by a seamless declension of being solves the problem of dualism only at the cost of introducing monism (i.e. pantheism). While the Christians reject this solution, they accept the Neoplatonic intuition concerning the transcendence/immanence of God along with the need to mediate between these two poles. A new model of mediation is thus required – one which radically affirms the antinomy while avoiding the pagan proliferation of principles. For Maximos, building upon the Cappadocians and Dionysius, this ultimately takes the form of a kind of *energeic* mediation. The One Trihypostatic God Himself, imparticipable in essence, overcomes the divide by means of His own participated works, the eternal *erga* and divine attributes substantively (*οὐσιωδῶς*) contemplated around Him, the "divine and uncreated grace"[308] by, or *from*, which beings are created.

That Maximos' doctrine of creation from God should be understood as creation from the divine energies rather than the essence is evident from his doctrine of participation. Participation, as we have noted repeatedly, is simply another way of talking about the derivation of beings from God. Whereas emanation, procession, or creation *ἐκ Θεοῦ* approaches the issue from the perspective of the cause, participation (or reversion) approaches it from the perspective of the effect. Whether one speaks of God constituting the world through His demiurgic activities, or the world being constituted by its participation in the eternal works of God one is talking about the same thing – the derivation of the many *from* (*ἐκ*) the One. All the temporal works of God – finite existences, lives, virtues, expressions of holiness, and so forth – are constituted solely by participation in the eternal works of being-itself, life-itself, holiness-itself, and so forth, says

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[308] See *Amb*.10, 1141B, where Maximus makes reference to a "divine and uncreated grace, which exists eternally and is beyond all nature and time."

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Maximos.[309] In other words, the former are derived *from* the latter, the participable

communications of God *ad extra*.[310]

That beings are not derived from the divine *ousia* but from the substantive attributes or

energies of God is further suggested when Maximos says that God "possesses within Himself an

inconceivable, eternal, infinite (ἄπειρον), and incomprehensible permanence (μονιμότητα), *from

which* (ἐξ ἧς), by virtue of an 'ever-giving effusion' of goodness (κατὰ ἀπειρόδωρον χύσιν

ἀγαθότητος), He brought forth beings out of nothing and endowed them with existence."[311] If we

consider this statement in light of our preceding discussion which established the realism of the

divine attributes – notably that of infinity – Maximos would seem to be saying that beings are

created, not from the essence, from the substantive attributes of God (expressed here as the

infinite permanence or steadfastness of God).[312] This sense is strengthened by the immediate

reference to the 'ever-giving effusion' (ἀπειρό-δωρον χύσιν) of goodness. Here the participated

attribute of goodness, an eternal *erga* of God, is rendered in strongly emanationist terms. In other

words, what Maximos earlier expressed in terms of participation, he now renders in terms of

procession.[313] A second passage worth mentioning from *Various Texts* states that the Truth

which 'conquers all' refers to "the sole and unique cause of created beings, the *archē*, the

kingdom, the power and glory (δύναμιν καὶ δόξαν) *from which* (ἐξ ἧς) and through which (δι᾽ ἣν)

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[309] *CTh*. 1.50.

[310] See, *CTh*. 1.50: "For non-being never was prior to virtue, nor to the other things listed [life, immortality, simplicity, etc.], although participating beings in themselves have begun to exist temporally *from them* (αὐτῶν)." Emphasis added.

[311] *Amb*.35, 1289A.

[312] This is, admittedly, an odd sounding claim. However, it becomes less so when rendered in the language of participation. It is perfectly intelligible to speak of beings participating permanence or steadfastness, by means of which they enjoy a measure of these divine attributes for themselves. It is possible, as Tollefsen notes, to think of these abstract attributes more dynamically as 'infinity-bestowing' or 'permanence-endowing' activities of God. See, Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*., 127. For God as a 'being-making' reality see, *CTh*. 1.4.

[313] The interchangeability of participation and procession is made explicit by Dionysius, whom Maximos is referencing here. See *DN*.9.2, 909C-912A.

all things were made and are being made."[314] Here we encounter the familiar *energeic* references

to the divine power and glory from which (ἐξ ἧς), according to Maximos, all things are created.

VII. Conclusion

In sum, like the Cappadocians and Dionysius, Maximos rejects the pagan proliferation of

mediating terms. For him, all things are derived immediately from God – not, however, from the

divine *ousia* but from the *energeiai*, the eternal *erga* and attributes 'around' God. Insofar as these

participated realities *are* God, the world is indeed created *from* God – for, in the absence of

subordinate principles all constitutive energies must be predicated of God alone. And yet, insofar

as these energies are distinct from the essence, the world is not created from God – not, at any

rate, in any kind of unqualified *essential* sense. By drawing a distinction between God's

unknowable *ousia* and His eternal *erga*, Maximos follows his Christian predecessors in

rendering beings at once more intimately related to their Ground and more clearly distinguished

from it. On the one hand, Maximos affirms the continuity between God and world that lies at the

heart of his sacramental ontology; on the other hand, he emphasises the element of discontinuity

which prevents the two from collapsing into pantheistic confusion. Though grounded in God, the

world is not *homoousios* with God – though it *is* called to be *homoiousios* with Him.[315]

This, then, marks the first crucial difference between pagan and Christian emanationism:

the former understands emanation 'ontically' as proceeding by means of successive subordinate

hypostases, while the latter understands it '*energeically*' as flowing directly from the Godhead

via the 'uncreated energies'. If the pagan Neoplatonists avoid the Scylla of dualism only to run

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[314] *Var.* 3.30. translation slightly modified.
[315] As Lossky notes, "If we were able at a given moment to be united to the very essence of God and to participate in it even in the very least degree, we should not at that moment be what we are, we should be God by nature." Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 69-70.

aground on the Charybdis of monism, Maximos attempts to chart a middle course by locating the antinomy within the Trihypostatic Monad itself. The One God Himself is the unmediated source of multiplicity. In this sense, the Christian metaphysics of monotheism radicalizes the pagan metaphysics of monarchy. Creation from the One (ἐξ ἑνὸς) means that the world is derived directly from the One God who is *Himself* simultaneously unparticipated *and* participated – unparticipated in that He infinitely transcends created beings; participated in that He alone is the immanent Ground of beings. According to the first perspective, God and world are two – for the imparticipable *ousia* can have no direct relation to participating beings; according to the second perspective, God and world are one – for the latter is derived solely from the participated *erga* or *energeiai* of God. In this way, Maximos navigates between the twin shoals of monism and dualism. The world is neither identical with God (*homoousios*), nor radically other than Him (*heteroousios*), but *like* Him (*homoiousios*). The world is *gift* – the self-impartation of divine grace.

Creation ἐκ Θεοῦ, or creation as divine self-impartation, then, does not mean that the crucial distinction between Creator and creature is obliterated – for beings never partake of the divine *ousia*, but rather the divine *energeiai*.[316] It means, rather, that all things are imbued with divine energy. It is this that accounts for the sacramentality of the world. All things are constituted by – indeed *from* – the uncreated grace of God. Creation is revelation, a radiant theophany of the invisible Godhead eternally veiled in the primeval darkness of unknowing. This

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[316] As Karayiannis observes: « La participation des êtres créés aux divines énergies incréées n'est pas essentielle mais par 'grâce'. La notion de grâce montre en même temps la différence du créé et de l'incréé, mais aussi le mode de participation. Tandis que les énergies divines at incréées qui sont autour de Dieu sont essentielles, la participation des êtres n'est pas essentielle mais par grâce.» Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur*., 230. On the one hand, the divine energies or eternal works as 'essential attributes' are connected to the divine *ousia*; on the other hand, as participated realities they are distinct from the imparticipable *ousia* and connected to creatures. The result is an *energeic* mediation that cannot be described as either pantheism or gnosticism (i.e. ontological dualism). It can, however, be described as pan*en*theism.

concludes the response to the problem of pantheism. Creation *ex deo* does not imply a doctrine of radical monism, but rather a kind of 'qualified non-dualism' which affirms the simultaneous identity *and* difference between God as Ground and the world as grounded. Having dealt with the problem of identity and difference with respect to the God/world relation, we are now in a position to address the issue of divine freedom and necessity.

Chapter Three

On Freedom and Necessity: Beyond the Polemics

I. Introduction

I noted that Maximos' doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation is subject to at least two major criticisms: one being the charge of monism or pantheism, another that of necessity. If all things are created *from* God as an eternally active Creator, does this not imply that God *must* create? Is God free *not* to create? Or is He, as it were, bound by the necessity of His own nature? Having dealt with the first criticism in terms of the radical transformation of mediation brought about by Maximos and his Christian predecessors, I want now to turn to the second, the problem of a free versus necessary creation.

The basic contention of this chapter is that Maximos adheres to a doctrine of creation as *voluntary emanation* that explodes the cherished trope of free versus necessary creation. God not only voluntarily imparts Himself to beings in keeping with His unwavering goodness but, as Logos, wills to enter directly into creation as its immanent governing principle – Wisdom incarnate. As such, God freely subjects Himself to the necessity of creation, finitizing Himself in His overflowing generosity and love for the world. In sum, the self-abasement of creation *ex deo* involves God's free gift of His own infinite Being to finite beings, a gift which the latter is called to offer back in gratitude (*eucharistia*), through the practice of virtue & contemplation. As such, Maximos' sacramental ontology transcends the dichotomy between freedom and necessity insofar as God is the Ground of both freedom and necessity. There is freedom in necessity and necessity in freedom.

To begin with, the problem of divine necessity is bedeviled by a kind of confusion regarding the true nature of freedom and necessity. The first step in resolving this issue, then, is to untangle this confusion so as to arrive at a clearer understanding of our terms. When this is done, the polemic tends to dissolve of its own accord. My aim in this chapter is not to offer a definitive solution to the philosophical problem of freedom and necessity but to properly 'problematize' it.[317] While my methodological approach in the present chapter remains a historical philosophical one, I make no effort to trace the development of the ideas of freedom and necessity from Plotinus to Maximos by way of Proclus and Dionysius. Instead, I rely on a direct comparison between Plotinus and Maximos as representative of their respective traditions, one pagan the other Christian. In this sense, my methodology departs somewhat from that of the previous chapters. The reason for this methodological deviation is that my aim here is not so much to parse out the philosophical continuities and discontinuities between pagans and Christians, as it is to challenge a cherished dichotomy; namely, an enduring tendency among theologians to oppose the 'necessity' of Neoplatonic emanation to the 'freedom' of Christian creation.[318] Given the persistence of this polemic – especially within theological circles – it seems necessary to address it. As such, I am less concerned with resolving the philosophical problem of freedom and necessity than I am with dissolving the theological polemics that

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[317] That is to say, I seek more to clarify the problem than to definitively solve it. This will undoubtedly lead to further problems which lie beyond the scope of this chapter. See Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*., 5-6.

[318] As Jordan Wood aptly notes: "The hackneyed contrast between voluntary creation and necessary emanation, astonishingly widespread in its acceptance among contemporary Christian thinkers, requires a comprehensive reappraisal." See Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor.", 118, note 123. This chapter assays the beginnings of such a reappraisal. See also Trouillard, *Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne*., 83-89.

surround it. These polemics, in my opinion, are often based on (possibly willful) misunderstandings regarding the true nature of freedom and necessity.

In order to undermine, or problematize, the polemic of a free versus necessary creation I begin by arguing for the presence of freedom and volition in the emanationism of Plotinus. I then move on to explore the role of necessity in the creationism of Maximos. In both cases, I rely upon a threefold schematization of freedom and necessity to effectively dissolve the dichotomy between them. Having leveled the playing field, so to speak, I conclude that, all things being equal, one does find in Maximos (and Christian thinkers generally) a heightened sense of divine volition and relationality well beyond that of the pagan Neoplatonists. This greater emphasis upon the freedom of the divine will, however, has little bearing on whether Maximos' doctrine of creation is 'emanationist' or 'creationist'. Instead, it stems from a Biblically inspired sense of the One God as intimately involved in His creation which, though derived from God, is crucially other than God. Ultimately, it is the creative kenosis of the Logos who freely subjects Himself to the finitude of creation that represents the pinnacle of divine freedom.

II. On Freedoms and Necessities

Before turning to the work of textual analysis, let us define our terms. For this, I have chosen to adopt (in modified form) Brandon Gallaher's schematization of the problem of freedom and necessity which I find helpful for both its clarity and concision.[319] Gallaher identifies two coextensive triads of freedoms and necessities delineated as follows: F[reedom]1, F2, F3, and N[ecessity]1, N2, N3. Each of the three historical conceptions of freedom have their corresponding conceptions of necessity, such that each becomes implicated in the other. As such,

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[319] See Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*., Chapters 2-3, pgs. 12-41.

apart from possibly the first pair (F1-N1) any straightforward opposition between freedom and necessity becomes impossible.

But first, how are we to define freedom? Freedom, one might say, "is to have a free will or the power to act from within oneself (*autexousia*) insofar as one has power over oneself or is self-determining, *causa sui*."[320] For humans, freedom thus defined generally involves some form of rational deliberation, the freedom to choose between several alternatives, whereas for God it applies absolutely in a non-deliberative way. That is to say, in His omniscience God does not need to deliberate between alternatives the way we do with our limited human knowledge; rather, God knows transcendently and freely wills what He knows in a manner superior to reason. This, in fact, as we shall see, is the ultimate freedom.

This general definition of freedom as self-will, or power of self-determination may, following Gallaher, be understood in two senses: F1 – groundless freedom; and F2 – grounded freedom. F1 involves a radical conception of freedom as wholly undetermined by any outer or inner constraints; it is unbridled power, pure, arbitrary self-assertion. F1 is groundless in its total lack of determination as pure willing for the sake of willing, as total omnipotence. An extreme example of F1 may be found in Duns Scotus for whom God is free to will whatever He wants in a way that is radically unnecessary to the point of arbitrariness – the dread God of nominalism.[321] F2, by contrast, involves a conception of freedom as, to some extent, inwardly determined or grounded. F2 is not arbitrary willing for the sake of willing, but the will as inwardly determined by goodness and love. This understanding of freedom-as-good goes back to the Platonic demiurge who freely creates the world out of an ungrudging desire to share its goodness, an idea

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[320] Gallaher., 12.

[321] See, Gallaher.15. For the dread God of nominalism, see Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*., 19-43.

which persists in modified form in all subsequent Platonists, and which is embraced by many of the Fathers, including Maximos. Freedom here is not purely negative, but has a positive ground; as the Good, God is *not* free to will evil but rather freely wills the good that He is for all eternity. Finally, F3 is what Gallaher refers to as "dependent freedom." Dependent freedom represents a kind of kenotic freedom, a free sacrifice of freedom, a willingness to be limited and determined by the other, to freely choose to be unfree. The preeminent example of this is of course the Incarnation, whereby God freely subjects Himself to the limitations of human finitude even unto death. F3 represents God's willingness to be "voluntarily affected by the passion of love for us."[322]

In terms of necessity, if F1 represents radical, groundless, limitless freedom, N1 represents its polar opposite: brute, unbending, necessity imposed from without, and from which there is no escape – radical determinateness. To put it in Aristotelian terms, necessity (ἀνάγκη) "is that because of which a thing cannot be otherwise."[323] For an example of N1 in relation to God we need only return to our Platonic demiurge who, though he aspires to make "everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible"[324] in accordance with his freedom-as-good (F2), is nonetheless confronted by the limitations of pre-existent matter, which hinder him from exercising his freedom to the fullest extent possible. This view of God as subject to external necessity is rejected by the Neoplatonists for whom matter itself is derived from God as the sole *archē* of existence, as well as by the Christians for whom God creates *ex nihilo*. N2, on the other hand, corresponds to F2. Like the latter, it represents a kind of grounded phenomenon, necessity as interior limitation. A superb example of this kind of inner necessity as

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[322] Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*., 21. Gallaher cites Origen, *In Ezech*. Hom. 6.6.3, 92–3 [SC 352, 228–31, ll.28–52].
[323] Aristotle, *Meta.*V.5, 1015a35.
[324] See Plato, *Tim.* 29E-30A.

Gallaher rightly notes is the Plotinian One which, on account of its perfection and innate fecundity, cannot *not* generate the world from all eternity. For the One *not* to produce would be contrary to its own nature as "the productive power of all things."[325] Yet this is not to say, *pace* Gallaher, that the One is also somehow subject thereby to N1 – as though that which is subsequent and wholly contingent upon the One somehow *a fortiori* imposes its necessity upon its own Ground.[326] Instead, N2 is simply the mirror image, the negative expression, of F2. Finally, N3 corresponds to F3. Where the latter may be described as "dependent freedom", the former may be referred to as "free dependence."[327] Just as F3 involves a voluntary subjection of freedom to necessity in love, so N3 involves the voluntary acceptance of limitation as the necessary condition of absolute freedom.[328] In other words, having freely chosen the self-limitation of incarnation in love for the world God, so to speak, becomes subject to His own self-willed necessity.

III. Freedom in Necessity: Plotinus

With this basic schematization in place, I turn to Plotinus. How does the Plotinian One fit within this scheme? Is there any truth to the ancient and enduring accusations of necessity? On the face of it, these accusations appear justified. Consider, for example, *Ennead* II.9, where Plotinus applies the term ἀνάγκη to the One, or the Good, no less than four times in the space of a single passage. Each of the divine hypostases, he insists, "of necessity (ἀνάγκη) must give of its own to something else as well, or the Good will not be Good, or the Intellect, or the Soul this that it

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[325] See Plotinus, *Enn.*V.4.1, 35.
[326] See Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology*., 34-35. Consider Plotinus: "But a principle is not in need of the things which come after it, and the principle of all things needs none of them." *Enn.*VI.9.6, 35.
[327] Gallaher., 36.
[328] See Gallaher., 40-41.

is….of necessity (ἀνάγκη) then, all things must exist forever in ordered dependence upon each another." Continuing the theme of the eternity and imperishability of the world: "But if they are going to assert that it was necessary (ἀναγκαῖον) for it to come into being as a consequence of the existence of higher principles, the necessity (ἀνάγκη) is there *now* as well."[329] The intrepid application of necessity to the One here is arresting. Plotinus is saying *both* that the One, or the Good, must by necessity create "or the Good will not be Good", *and* that the world must by necessity exist (or the Good will not be Good).

It might be tempting, given the explicit evidence, to simply convict Plotinus of subjecting the One to necessity and be done with it. Our threefold schematization, however, allows us to be both more precise and more charitable. The first thing we notice is the presence of the pair F2-N2: the Good *must* create because of its interior self-determination *as* Good. The Good's inner necessity to act consistently with its own nature is, as Plotinus notes elsewhere, the ultimate freedom, "for to be capable of the opposites belongs to *incapacity* to remain with the best."[330] True freedom is the power to freely will the good for all eternity, and this is precisely what the Good does, indeed *is*. In other words, the grounded freedom of F2.[331]

What about the insistence upon the necessary eternal existence of the world? Does this not impose some kind of external compulsion (N1) upon the One? Not according to Plotinus: "[The Good] does not need (δεηθεὶς) the things which have come into being from him, but leaves what has come into being altogether alone, because he needs (ἐδεῖτο) nothing of it, but is the same as he was before he brought it into being."[332] The temporal language here can only be

[329] *Enn*.II.9.3, 5-20.
[330] *Enn*.VI.8.21, 8 (emphasis added).
[331] See Trouillard: « La seule nécessité que font valoir ici les néoplatoniciens est la *nécessité de surabondance* ou de générosité. » Trouillard, *Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne*., 84. Emphasis in original.
[332] *Enn*.V.5.12, 40.

metaphorical, giving expression to the ontological priority of the Good to its products. As the Ground of being, the Good is not bound by necessity[333] to its eternal productions; rather, it is *they* that are bound to *it*. The necessity of the world as the inevitable expression of divine fecundity is simply the consequence of the Good's F2-N2. It is not God, but the *world* that is subject to external necessity (N1). Indeed, the Good *is* this necessity to which all things are subject as their sole Sovereign.[334] In sum, while the Plotinian Good can indeed by described as subject to a kind of interior, self-grounded necessity (N2), this is simply a negative way of talking about its grounded freedom (F2). The fact that the One is positively determined as Good is, once again, not so much a limitation as the ultimate freedom: "for to be capable of the opposites belongs to *incapacity* to remain with the best."[335] The problems begin when, failing to distinguish between the different levels of freedom and necessity, one *a fortiori* ascribes the external necessity (N1) of the world to God who in fact is the very *Ground* of necessity.

And yet, one might protest, what of all those naturalistic images of emanation which describe the world as pouring forth, or overflowing, or radiating out from the One/Good in a way that seems wholly determined and automatic?[336] Is this not clearly inferior to the free and voluntary creation of the God of Christianity? This too, it turns out, is far from self-evident. An analysis of the following passage from *Ennead* V.4.1 serves to illustrate this:

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[333] Note the close etymological connection between ἐδεῖτο (lack, need) and δεῖ (to bind). To lack something is to be unfree. The Good lacks nothing and therefore is radically free.

[334] The Good, as Plotinus tells us, is not subject to external necessity but "is itself the necessity (ἀνάγκης) and law (νόμου) of the others" (VI.8.10, 35).

[335] *Enn*.VI.8.21, 8. As Armstrong notes: the name 'Good' "has the purpose of reminding us that the undetermined unlimited first principle is not a mere negation, but something supremely positive, so positive that it is both the cause of the existence of the whole universe of formed being and the goal to which all things in it aspire." "The One and Intellect," in Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy.,* 238.

[336] Consider Gersh: "Taken at face value, the notion of something diffusing causal potency (i.e. by 'flowing', 'pouring', 'bubbling' and so on) implies an unwilled and automatic process." *Taken at face value* Gersh's estimate is indeed correct; however, his further insistence that "there is no evidence to suggest that the pagan Neoplatonists understood it in any other way" is problematic. Gersh, it would seem, has lost sight of his own metaphorical understanding of emanation. See Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 20. Also Gersh, 17.

Now when anything else comes to perfection we see that it produces, and does not endure to remain by itself, but makes something else. This is true *not only of things which have choice* (προαίρεσιν), but of things which grow and produce *without choosing* (ἄνευ προαιρέσεως) to do so, and even lifeless things impart themselves to others as far as they can: as fire warms, snow cools, and drugs act on something else in a way corresponding to their own nature – all imitating the First Principle as far as they are able by tending to everlastingness and generosity. How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged to give of itself or was impotent, when it is the productive power of all things (ἡ πάντων δύναμις)? How would it then still be the Principle? Something must (δεῖ) certainly come into being from it, if anything is to exist of the others which derive their being from it (ἀπ' αὐτοῦ): that it is from it that they come is absolutely necessary (ἀνάγκη).[337]

To begin with, Plotinus gives voice here to one of his central convictions: that which is perfect is productive – for perfection implies power (δύναμις).[338] This is another way of talking about the fecundity of the One which, so to speak, cannot *not* share its overflowing goodness with the world (F2-N2). It is precisely the *omnipotence* of the One/Good that 'compels' it to create. The principle that perfection is productive applies not merely to the One/Good, but to the whole of existence. *All* things are productive: plants flower, animals procreate, even inanimate objects are productive in their own unconscious manner. Plotinus presents us with a kind of argument from nature: If even such things produce when they come to perfection, how much more so must this not be true of the One which, as eternally perfect, is "the productive power of all things" (ἡ πάντων δύναμις)? The key point here, as Perl perceptively notes, is the *thoroughly analogous character* of this passage. The *metaphor* of emanation, as Gersh aptly names it,[339] "does not assimilate the One to a lifeless or sub-rational object that acts by natural necessity without choice. Rather, *self-impartation by necessity of nature is the lowest mode,* and *production by*

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[337] *Enn*.V.4.1, 25-35 (emphasis added). Sc. also *Enn*.V.1.6 for a parallel discussion.
[338] See *Enn*.V.4.1, 25; V.1.6, 40. Proclus, *ElTh.*, Props. 27, 152.
[339] Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena.*, 17.

choice a higher mode, of imitating the One."[340] The ascending hierarchy of production

culminating in conscious *voluntary* (προαίρεσιν) production as that which most closely

approximates the perfect productivity of the One, implies that there is in fact something akin to

volition in the One.[341] At any rate, blind necessity is merely a distant echo of the unceasing

creativity of God.[342]

In terms of our schematization, we discover once again a rich blend of freedoms and

necessities which requires careful parsing. The One/Good is again characterized by the pair F2-

N2: inwardly determined by its own overwhelming fecundity and power, the Good freely and

spontaneously gives of itself to all things. Nature, on the other hand, represents a mixture of N1-

N2: it is both *outwardly* determined by the Good whence it is derived, and which it is compelled

to imitate; and *inwardly* determined by its own nature (which dictates that it must produce when

it comes to perfection). The strength of the analogy – as well as the source of its confusion – lies

in the common denominator N2. Both the One/Good, and the world derived *from* the One/Good,

share a kind of interior determination as grounded in the fundamental goodness of being. In the

case of the former, this ground is *itself*; in the latter it is derivative. Nonetheless, it is the

common denominator (N2) which drives the analogy: just as nature when it comes to perfection

produces, so the Good which is *Perfection-Itself* produces eternally.[343] It is crucial to note,

however, what is *dis*-analogous. If the Good is characterized as F2-N2, nature can only be

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[340] Perl, *Theophany.Theophany*, 50 (emphasis added).
[341] Indeed, it is not that the One is akin to mindless nature but that nature is akin to the contemplative One! Trouillard once again states it beautifully: «Quant à l'évocation des émanations de nature, elle n'a nullement pour but de modeler l'esprit sur la nature, mais au contraire de révéler l'esprit à lui-même à travers la nature. » Trouillard, *Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne*., 88. See Plotinus, *Enn*.III.8 *On Contemplation*.
[342] See "The One and Intellect", in Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*., 238, 240.
[343] The analogy in fact extends even further: the automatic, irrational character of natural production dimly images the spontaneous (i.e. non-deliberative) and supra-rational freedom of divine production.

characterized as N1-N2. That is to say, nature is doubly determined both from without and from within (N1-N2), while lacking the interior freedom of rationality (F2).[344] Nature, in other words, lacks the freedom pole which alone is able to transform inner necessity into true freedom – as is the case with the One/Good. Once again a confusion of categories leads to misunderstanding. Without parsing the distinct levels of freedoms and necessities and their interrelations, one might be tempted (especially if one is inclined to be unsympathetic) to attribute the blind necessity of nature to the One. Yet this, as any careful reader of Plotinus knows, is manifestly mistaken.

Finally, what, if anything, is the role of volition in Plotinus? It is commonplace to oppose the necessity of Plotinian emanation to the freely willed creation of the Christian God. We have discovered that the One, far from being subject to brute necessity, is in fact the very Ground of necessity and thus radically free.[345] Yet what, specifically, about will? Is there anything resembling volition in the One, so often castigated for its haughty, impersonal character?[346] The answer, of course, is yes – as Plotinus' celebrated treatise *On Free Will*, amply demonstrates. As it turns out, our initial definition of freedom as "having a free will or the power to act from within oneself (*autexousia*)" is precisely that of Plotinus.[347] Plotinus initially terms this "being in our power" (τὸ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν) which he contrasts with necessity (ἀνάγκαις) as external constraint or compulsion. Everything, he says, "is a voluntary act (ἑκούσιον) which we do without being forced to and with knowledge [of what we are doing], and in our power (ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν)."[348] He then

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[344] The human as a rational nature of course represents a special case; yet, even here, the human is doubly determined in that its inwardly grounded freedom is itself determined by its ultimate Ground – the One/Good.
[345] Not radically free, needless to say, in the sense of the Scotist F1; Plotinus would (rightly in my view) regard such an amoral, ungrounded deity as the very antithesis of freedom.
[346] This judgement, as Trouillard notes, stems both from a failure to understand the language of apophaticism, as well as from a confusion of the language of philosophy and that of religion. See, Trouillard, *Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne.*, 85.
[347] Gallaher, *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology.*, 12. See above, 118.
[348] *Enn*.VI.8.1, 30.

identifies this as the power of self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) grounded in Intellect,[349] and tending towards the Good.[350] Ultimately, Plotinus identifies freewill with the Good itself as the very Ground of volition: "For if we were to grant activities to him, and ascribe his activities to what we might call his will (βουλήσει) – for he does not act without willing (ἀβουλῶν) – and his activities are what we might call his substance (οὐσία), his will (βούλησις) and his substance (οὐσία) will be the same thing."[351] The Good is what he wills and wills what he is, and as such is "altogether master (κύριος) of himself."[352] The One/Good, then, far from being some sort of impersonal automaton, is pure, free, munificent, *loving*[353] will – and as eternally actualized volitional activity, the One simultaneously wills himself and all things.

In the unity of being and willing that is the One,[354] freedom and necessity, volition and emanation coincide. As Rist paradoxically notes, "we realize that emanation is necessary because the One *wills* it to be so."[355] The 'necessity' of emanation is none other than N2 as the counterpart of F2. Plotinus strongly emphasises the grounded freedom of the One in this treatise: "For it is for this reason that slavery is ill spoken of, not where one has no power to go to the bad, but where one has no power to go to one's own good." Freewill does not involve the arbitrary freedom to choose between good and evil but the power to freely choose the good

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[349] *Enn.*VI.8.3, 5-20.

[350] See *Enn.*VI.8.4, 5-40: "…and that is enslaved which is not master of its going to the Good…For it is for this reason that slavery is ill spoken of, not where one has no power to go to the bad, but where one has no power to go to one's own good." Freewill does not involve the arbitrary freedom to choose between good and evil but the power to freely choose the good without hindrance.

[351] *Enn.*VI.8.13, 5, 25-55. Needless to say, for the sake of concision I am glossing over many important steps in the argument of this extraordinarily rich treatise, a proper treatment of which lies beyond the scope of this work. For an insightful and concise treatment see Rist, *Plotinus*.Rist, *Plotinus*, "Emanation and Necessity", 66-83.

[352] *Enn.*VI.8.13, 10.

[353] The One, Plotinus declares in striking Trinitarian fashion, "is lovable and love and love of himself" (!) *Enn.*VI.8.15, 1.

[354] Bear in mind that Plotinus is speaking apophatically here. As he puts it, "But now we must depart a little from correct thinking in our discourse for the sake of persuasion." *Enn.*VI.8.13, 5.

[355] Rist, *Plotinus*., 82 (emphasis added). Also: "Necessity is in fact the One's own will which by its very act is its own accomplishment." 83.

without hindrance – a freedom which the One alone truly possesses, or rather *is*, and which all things after the One aspire to. Moreover, as the unity of being and willing the One does not need to deliberate between options, but knows what he wills and wills what he knows spontaneously and without hesitation. Divine freewill, it turns out, is something far subtler and superior to the notion of a deliberative deity fashioned in our own image as finite creatures with divided minds and hearts.[356]

What about Gallaher's third pair of freedom and necessity (F3-N3)? Is there anything of the kenotic self-sacrificing freedom in Plotinus, or the pagan Neoplatonists generally? Insofar as the One is "all things in all things", insofar as emanation marks the procession of the One into the multiplicity and finitude of the world, one could make a case for this ultimate form of freedom. The One freely chooses to submit itself to the limitations of existence in its overflowing generosity and love. Is this equivalent to the Christian notion of the Incarnation (in both its cosmic and historical dimensions) whereby the infinite God enters directly into the finite world even unto death? No. It is arguably only with the advent of Christianity that the ultimate kenotic freedom of the (Trihypostatic) One's voluntary subjection to necessity becomes a reality.

IV. Necessity in Freedom: Maximos

Having dwelt upon the problem of freedom and necessity in Plotinus at some length, and having concluded that the Plotinian One, far from being subject to necessity in the crude sense of that term is in fact the very Ground of freedom and necessity, how does this compare to Maximos' understanding of the freedom and necessity of God who creates all things from Himself from

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[356] See Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*., "The One and Intellect", 240.

nothing?[357] I shall argue that Maximos' view is in fact remarkably close to that of Plotinus despite differences of terminology and emphasis. The main difference, not surprisingly, is found in the kenotic freedom represented by the pair F3-N3. I shall deal with Maximos in the inverse order of my treatment of Plotinus. With Plotinus I began with the spectre of necessity and concluded with the discovery of freewill; with Maximos I shall begin with freedom and conclude with necessity. This will enable us to see how, just as with Plotinus there is freedom within necessity, so with Maximos there is necessity within freedom. Plotinus and Maximos mirror each other in such a way that any facile opposition between 'freedom' and 'necessity' becomes impossible.

To begin with, the language of will is as immediately evident in Maximos as that of necessity in Plotinus: "He who brought all visible and invisible creation into being solely through the momentum of His will (*θελήματος*)," says Maximos, "had in His good counsel determined – before all the ages and even before the very genesis of created beings – an ineffably good will (*ὑπεράγαθον βουλήν*) for His creations."[358] Elsewhere he states that God "in His goodwill (*βουλήσει ἀγαθῇ*)…formed out of nothing (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*) the substance of the visible and invisible worlds";[359] that "God is good and beyond goodness, and always wills (*ἀεὶ βούλεται*) what is good for all"[360]; and that "when He willed it, the Creator gave being to and put forward His eternally pre-existing knowledge of beings."[361] Maximos also asserts that God "willed to impart Himself (*θελῆσαι καὶ ἑαυτὸν...μεταδοῦναι*)"[362] to beings and, most famously and

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[357] See *Amb*.10, 1188C: "But it must be accepted that all things have been created from the eternally existing God (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*) from nothing (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*)." I deal with the *ex nihilo* part of this equation in the next chapter.
[358] *Thal. Q*.22.2.
[359] *Amb*.7, 1080A.
[360] *Amb*.10, 1192B.
[361] *CL*. 4.4, 1048D.
[362] *Amb*.35, 1289A.

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dramatically, that "the Logos of God (who is God) wills always (βούλεται ἀεì) and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."[363] There are many other references to the divine will in the works of Maximos that need not be enumerated here. This, it must be conceded at the outset, is in stark contrast to Plotinus who only devotes a single treatise to the subject.[364]

Yet how are we to understand Maximos' references to the divine will in relation to creation? Must we affirm, with Thunberg, that voluntary creation implies "a great gulf" between God and beings created *ex nihilo*, a gulf which only the creative will can overbridge, such that "the Creator is bound by no necessary obligation"?[365] Perhaps. Though Thunberg arguably overstates his case. What about Tollefsen? Ought we to follow him in contrasting deliberate creation in Maximos with Plotinus for whom generation is merely "an incidental result of the divine activity"?[366] This would seem to ignore the transcendent intentionality which we discovered in our discussion of *Ennead* VI.8.[367] Finally, is it possible to ascribe to Maximos Florovsky's view that God's creation is a radically free act such that "*the world could have not existed*"?[368] All three of the above thinkers in their respective ways give voice to a shared assumption that, in contrast to the philosophers, the Christian understanding of creation – be it Maximos or some other Father – is characterized by radical, deliberative freedom devoid of necessity, a freedom which finds its ultimate expression in creation *ex nihilo*. Without commenting on the accurateness of this view in relation to other thinkers, it is clearly inadequate

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[363] *Amb*.7, 1084D.
[364] Yet this fact provides little basis for polemicizing, tempting though it may be; For Plotinus, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on the transcendence of the One, whereas Maximos is more willing to balance transcendence with immanence. Nonetheless, the difference in emphasis is significant.
[365] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 1995., 51, 64.
[366] Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*., 122, 26.
[367] Tollefsen bases his assertion on a single passage in *Enn*.VI.1.22. However, there is no evidence that Plotinus is even talking about the activity of the One here!
[368] Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*., 45 (emphasis in original). See Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology*., 207-8.

with respect to Maximos. To begin with, Maximos insists that the world is created

simultaneously from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) from nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος),[369] such that the opposition

between 'creation' and 'emanation' immediately collapses. In a way that defies easy

categorization, Maximos maintains that the world is created from God from nothing in

accordance with the divine will. One could call this 'voluntary emanation' – a term that the

allusion to God's willing self-impartation (θελῆσαι καὶ ἑαυτὸν...μεταδοῦναι) above would seem

to support.[370]

      In order to gain some clarity on the issue, let us apply the same threefold schematization

of freedom and necessity to Maximos as we did to Plotinus. Generally speaking (and this is

unequivocally true for Florovsky), our representative theologians tend to ascribe something akin

to the groundless freedom of F1 to God, while denying any possibility of necessity whatsoever

(be it the external necessity of N1, the grounded necessity of N2, the kenotic necessity of N3, or

even the grounded freedom of F2). As with Plotinus, there is a failure to distinguish between the

different levels of freedoms and necessities such that it becomes impossible to arrive at a

properly nuanced understanding of the situation.

      To begin with, there is little evidence in Maximos to support the notion of radical,

groundless freedom (F1) with respect to the divine will. As we saw in the above quotation from

To Thalassios, though Maximos affirms that God brought all beings into existence "solely

through the momentum of His will (θελήματος)", He did so in accordance with His "good

counsel (βουλήν)" "*determined*" (ὑποστήσας) from "*before all the ages (πρὸ πάντων τῶν*

αἰώνων)."[371] In other words, God's voluntary creation is not in any way arbitrary, circumstantial,

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[369] See *Amb*.10, 1188C.
[370] For the idea of creation as voluntary and temporal emanation in relation to Gregory of Nyssa, see Wolfson, "The Identification of Ex Nihilo with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa."
[371] *Thal. Q.* 22.2. Emphasis added.

or ungrounded but, in fact, "determined" – and *eternally* at that.[372] Following Dionysius,

Maximos identifies God's "good counsel" with the *logoi* of beings which, as "good wills (ἀγαθὰ

θελήματα)" represent the formal intentions of God for the whole of creation along with every

particular thing in it.[373] As "predeterminations" (προορισμοὺς) and "divine wills" (θεῖα

θελήματα),[374] the *logoi* are not merely accidental attributes of God; they *are* God – for "the One

Logos is many *logoi* and the many are One."[375] Maximos confirms this when he says that God

knows all things, not from created things, but from *Himself* insofar as "He alone is the natural

knowledge (κατὰ φύσιν γνῶσιν) of beings" as their Cause (αἰτίαν); and, moreover, that "He is

knowledge itself (φύσει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γνῶσιν ἔχων)."[376] God *is* the knowledge of both Himself and

beings, and this knowledge *is* His will. Jordan Wood is thus correct to insist, *contra* Florovsky,

that Maximos' God is in fact *not* free not to create – for God has determined from before all ages

precisely what He has, and will, create as well as when, and how. God in His omniscience and

pro-vidence eternally knows all that He knows, and wills all that He wills, for His being and

knowing and willing are One; or rather, He *is* His being, willing and knowing.[377] In contrast to

Plotinus, then, where we discovered freedom in necessity, here in Maximos we find ourselves

confronted with necessity in freedom. Yet, as with Plotinus, this is *not* to ascribe some sort of

external (N1) necessity to God; instead, it is merely an expression of the grounded freedom (F2)

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[372] See *Amb*.42, 1328C: "Therefore when we behold God fashioning something, we should not think that it was only then that He began to will it, or conceive it, or know it. Such a notion is to be dismissed….and will involve us in thinking that what God from the beginning, before the ages, had failed to conceive, or know, or will, He only now conceived of, and willed, and came to know."

[373]See, *Thal. Q*.13.2.

[374] See *Amb*.7, 1085A-B; Dionysius, *DN*.5.8, 824C.

[375] *Amb*.7, 1081C.

[376]*Thal. Q*.56.7.

[377] Consider: "When the mind perceives in contemplation the [*logoi*] of the things that are, it will end *in God himself*, as the cause and beginning and end of the creation and origin and as the everlasting foundation of the compass of the whole universe." *Myst*. 1, 160 [CCSG 12]. Emphasis added.

whose counterpart is the inner, self-determined, necessity of N2, without which God would not be God.

Maximos (as do all the Fathers) grounds his understanding of divine freedom upon the Platonic identification of God as Good. In the passage from the *Ambigua* considered above, we learned that God's plan for creation is "ineffably good", and that "God is good and beyond goodness, and always wills (ἀεὶ βούλεται) what is good for all."[378] Again following Dionysius, Maximos proclaims that "owing to its goodness (ἀγαθότητι), [the Oneness of God] brought into being the entire order of intelligible beings, and the beauty of the visible ones."[379] As with the One of Plotinus and Proclus, Maximos' Trihypostatic Monad is not devoid of positive content but is identical with the Good. It was from God's goodness and love, Maximos further insists, that the saints learned God's motive for the creation of the world.[380] All of this points, once again, to the very same grounded freedom which we encountered in Plotinus. God's freewill is not arbitrary, but rather the freedom to unchangingly will the best from all eternity.[381] Lest there by any room for doubt, Maximos explicitly affirms with Gregory Nazianzus that "it is impossible (ἀδύνατον) for God to be evil."[382] Surely it is entirely uncontroversial and self-evident to all (barring perhaps the most hardened nominalist) that God's 'inability' to will evil is not a defect! Instead, it is precisely the ultimate expression of freedom championed by Plotinus for whom, "to be capable of the opposites belongs to *incapacity* to remain with the best."[383] Negatively stated,

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[378] *Amb*.10, 1192B.
[379] *Amb*.35, 1289A. See *CTh*.1.11, 1.12, 1.35; *Amb*.42, 1329B.
[380] *Amb*.10, 1205A.
[381] See *CTh*. 1.35: "For God never rests from good things, of which there is no beginning. For just as it is the property (ἴδιον) of light to shine, just so it is the property (ἴδιον) of God to do good." Also *Amb*.42, 1329C: "But if the principles of things exist permanently in God, then the purpose of God, who created all things, must be changeless concerning them."
[382] *Amb*.29.
[383] *Enn*.VI.8.21, 8; emphasis added.

this amounts to what Gallaher terms interior, or *self-determined* necessity (N2). God cannot *not* be Good, for that is what God *is*. And *as* Good, God wills the Good, i.e. *Himself*, for all eternity.[384] As the negation of a negation, N2 is in actuality nothing but the inversion of F2, the ultimate freedom of God grounded in/as Wisdom, Goodness, and Love.

While a great deal more could be said about all of this, this brief discussion suffices to demonstrate the broad similarities that exist between Plotinus' and Maximos' understanding of freedom and necessity in God. Granted, Maximos never says, as does Plotinus, that the perfection of God *necessitates* the eternal production of an eternal world – such is not the tenor of our Christian theologian. Yet, Maximos *does* insist that God is an eternally active Creator in whom the cosmos abides in a transcendent manner, and which *must*, so to speak, come to be in time in accordance with God's foreordained knowledge.[385] If Plotinus speaks the language of (N2) necessity, Maximos prefers the language of (F2) freedom. Yet, both end up saying very much the same thing – for what is implicit in one is explicit in the other. Each, in other words, understands God in terms of F2-N2. As such, Plotinus and Maximos are of one mind in rejecting the notion that God, or the One, possesses the radically indeterminate (F1) freedom to do as He pleases; or rather, He *is* free to do as He pleases – for what external (N1) necessity could possibly hinder He who is the very Ground of necessity from willing His own goodness (F2-N2) from all eternity?[386] Maximos, as much as Plotinus, emphatically rejects any childish notion of divine freedom as deliberative – "as if God had changed His mind and created something

[384] See *Amb*.7, 1081B: "For God is *an eternally active creator* (ἀεὶ κατ᾽ ἐνέργειάν ἐστι Δημιουργός), but creatures exist first in potential, and only later in actuality" (emphasis added). How God can be eternally active and yet create in time is a problem I address in the next chapter.
[385] See *Amb*.7, 1081B; *Amb*.42, 1328C-1329A.
[386] For a remarkable discussion concerning freedom and necessity in relation to the Origenist notion of pre-existent souls, see *Amb*.42, 1325D-1332B. Here Maximos rejects the idea that bodies were created in response to the Fall as this would imply that God was compelled to create something He had not originally intended to create. How could it be, Maximos asks, "that God, being forced by necessity (τυραννηθείς...πρὸς ἀνάγκης), was led, contrary to His will, to call into being things marked for ultimate destruction?" (1332A) How indeed.

because he recently decided it was good."[387] God forbid that we ascribe such a divided, gnomic will to Him!

In essence, what we have seen is that Maximos implicitly embraces the enduring truth of Plotinus' position while adapting it to his own theological purposes. By contrasting the freedom of Plotinian emanation with the necessity of Maximian creation I hope to have sufficiently problematized the polemic such that any superficial opposition between them becomes impossible. The outworn – albeit enduring – opposition between these two positions seems to rest upon a monolithic understanding of freedom and necessity as exclusively that of F1-N1: Plotinus' application of ἀνάγκη to God can thus only mean external compulsion, while Maximos' language of will must equate to radical voluntarism.[388] Gallaher's nuancing of the problem of freedom and necessity reveals that there is in fact a multiplicity of freedoms and necessities, some of which are applicable to God and some of which are not. The real opposition, or rather contrast, between Plotinus and Maximos is not that of N1 vs. F1, but in fact *N2 vs. F2* – and these two poles, as we have seen, are mutually implicated. In other words, the difference between them comes down to a matter of emphasis. Plotinus emphasises the free necessity of the One (N2), while Maximos stresses the necessary freedom of God (F2). The former aligns with Plotinus' emphasis upon the transcendence of the One, while the latter accords with Maximos' emphasis upon the relationality of God.

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[387] *Amb*.42, 1328C. Compare Plotinus, *Enn*.VI.7.3, 5: "For it is not possible to reason in what is always; for to do so would belong to someone who had forgotten how it was before."

[388] One of the motivating factors here is perhaps a kind of mistaken piety, which fears attributing any kind of determinateness to God for fear of compromising His transcendence. This is complicated by the fact that, whatever our religious or philosophical tradition, it is difficult to escape the influence of nominalism which unconsciously predisposes us moderns to think of divine freedom in these terms. This is strikingly evident in Florovsky who, for all his talk of returning to "the mind of the Fathers" was a self-professed admirer of Duns Scotus (see Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*., 52.) With all due respect to this great contemporary theologian, it seems to me that Florovsky's understanding of divine freedom is, to a significant extent, nominalism posing as Orthodoxy.

V. Conclusion: The Kenotic Freedom of God

What I hope to have accomplished in this section is not an *apologia* for Plotinian emanation *per se*, but of Maximos' doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation. If an emanationist understanding of creation does not implicate God in (N1) necessity *even in Plotinus*, how much less so for Maximos whose emphasis upon divine volition far outstrips his pagan predecessor? The fact that all things are created from God (and from nothing) does not in any way undermine the divine freedom, nor diminish His lofty transcendence or His unwavering love and providential care for the world down to the finest detail – quite the contrary, as a matter of fact. By carefully parsing out the different levels of freedoms and necessities, I hope to have clarified some of the confusion regarding their true nature. The moment we cease regarding these as monolithic entities, the dichotomy dissolves – and with it the outworn theological polemic based on a superficial opposition between necessary emanation and a free creation.

Having leveled the playing field, so to speak, we are now in a position to appreciate the legitimate differences between Plotinian and Maximian 'emanation'. To begin with, as I noted in passing at the outset, the ubiquity of divine volition in the writings of Maximos is in stark contrast to the single treatise which Plotinus dedicates to the subject (though the richness and profundity of this single treatise is perhaps sufficient unto itself!). On the one hand, this points primarily to a difference in emphasis. Plotinus overwhelmingly stresses the lofty transcendence of the One beyond thought and being; his language tends invariably towards the apophatic such that he shows a great reluctance to assert anything of the One that might implicate it in change or multiplicity. Plotinus shows genuine discomfort even in asserting existence of the One, let alone activity or will – as his awkward repetition of οἷον in *Enn*.VI.8 clearly reveals.[389]

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[389] See *Enn*.VI.8.7, 48: "But when his, so to speak (οἷον), existence is his, as it were (οἷον), activity….."

Maximos, of course, is also deeply sensitive to the issue of God's transcendence, even to the point of himself denying relationality to God who is beyond thought and being, and thus transcends every possible category pertaining to existent things.[390] As a rule, however, Maximos is quite comfortable speaking about God in positive, relational, and volitional terms.[391] This greater emphasis upon the freedom of the divine will, however, has little bearing on whether Maximos' doctrine of creation is 'emanationist' or 'creationist'. Instead, it stems from a Biblically inspired sense of the One God as intimately involved in His own self-imparted creation. Maximos, after all, is not merely a metaphysician, but a monk, a Father of the Church whose intellectual activity is grounded in Scripture and saturated by the affectivity and relationality of prayer and asceticism.[392] On a philosophical level, the Christian telescoping of the spiritual hierarchy enables Maximos to ascribe attributes to the One which Plotinus prefers to delegate to the lower hypostases. As such, Maximos is much freer to speak in terms of *voluntary* emanation, of creation as an "ever-giving effusion" whereby God "*willed* to impart Himself."[393] Maximos' heightened emphasis upon volition is not merely a superficial difference; it expresses a profound ontological shift, a reconstrual of the relation of the One and the many.

Ultimately, Maximos goes beyond Plotinus in his understanding of the creative kenosis of the Logos who freely subjects Himself to the necessity of creation. This represents the final pair of freedoms and necessities (F3-N3). While Gallaher identifies this ultimate form of freedom with the historical incarnation, this is also true for Maximos in terms of the cosmic

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[390] See *CTh*. 1.7.

[391] As Trouillard would say, Maximos is more comfortable speaking the language of religion than is Plotinus. See above, note 346.

[392] This is not to succumb to another cherished dichotomy between the 'God of the philosophers' and the 'God of revelation'; these are absolutely integrated in Maximos. Yet, it is nonetheless true that Maximos is not only or even primarily driven by logical or ontological concerns, but by soteriological and eschatological ones.

[393] *Amb*.35, 1289A. Emphasis added.

Logos – what Jordan Wood calls 'creation as incarnation.'[394] For this, we need look no further than the famous utterance that "the Logos of God (who is God) *wills* (Βούλεται) always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."[395] God not only "wills to impart Himself"[396] to beings in keeping with His voluntary emanation; as Logos He wills to enter directly into creation as its immanent governing principle – Wisdom incarnate.[397] As such, God voluntarily subjects Himself to the limitations of creation, finitizing Himself in His overflowing generosity and love for the world. What is more, He does this solely that the world might be resolved back into Him and become God – for this is "the mystery hidden from the ages."[398]

Insofar as God's intention for the world, as we have seen, is unwavering, this creative kenosis whereby the Creator willingly subjects Himself to the finitude of His own creation in love, while voluntarily accepting His own creative self-abasement as the necessary condition for the deification of the world (the mystery hidden from the ages), could be described as the ultimate expression of divine freedom: F3-N3. This, it is safe to say, goes well beyond Plotinus. In terms of sacramentality, the self-abasement of creation as divine self-impartation, of creation from (ἐκ) God according to (κατά) the Logos, involves God's own freely offered gift of His own infinite Being to finite beings, a gift which the latter is called to freely offer back in gratitude (*eucharistia*). This free exchange of gifts *thine own of thine own*, what Loudovikos refers to as

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[394] See doctoral dissertation by Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor."
[395] *Amb*.7, 1084D, emphasis added. Consider also *Amb*.6, 1068B: "For it is true – though it may be a jarring and unusual thing to say – that both man and the Word of God, the Creator and master of the universe, exist in a kind of womb, owing to the present condition of our life. In this sense-perceptible world, just as if he were enclosed in a womb, the Word of God appears only obscurely…."
[396] *Amb*.35, 1289A.
[397] I deal with this topic in detail in Chapter Five.
[398] Col 1:26; See *Thal. Q*.60.2., 63.18.

an ontology of dialogical reciprocity,[399] lies at the heart of Maximos' sacramental and eucharistic ontology.

In conclusion, I have argued that Maximos adheres to a doctrine of creation as *voluntary emanation,* a doctrine that transcends the dichotomy of free versus necessary creation. The self-abasement of creation *ex deo* involves God's free gift of His own infinite Being to finite beings, a gift which the latter is called to offer back in gratitude (*eucharistia*), through the practice of virtue & contemplation. God Himself is the Ground of both freedom and necessity, such that there is freedom in necessity and necessity in freedom. This, then, brings to completion our consideration of the twin spectres of pantheism and necessity in relation to the doctrine of creation from God. In terms of the first, I argued that the world is not derived from the divine *ousia*, but the *energeiai*. In this way, it is intimately related to God yet without identity of essence. In terms of the second, I have argued that God ultimately transcends the dichotomy of freedom and necessity in His voluntary self-abasement in creation.

Having dealt with these issues, I want to conclude my exposition of the broadly sacramental character of Maximos' ontology with a consideration of Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* – for Maximos states not merely that the world is created from God, but that it is created from God *from nothing*.[400] It is this nothingness of the world, I argue in the next chapter, that definitively distinguishes it from God and hence establishes it as genuinely other. Indeed, it is precisely the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* – with its attendant notion of temporal creation – that represents the true opposition between pagan emanation and Christian creation.

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[399] See Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*.

[400] See *Amb*.10, 1188C: *"Ἀλλ' ἐκ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος τὰ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ μή ὄντος γενέσθαι."* I follow Maximos' expression by omitting even a copulative 'and' (*καὶ*) which would subtly reify the *nihil* as something alongside God. Maximos does *not* say that the world is created from God *and* from nothing, but simply from God from nothing. Constas, incidentally, omits the reference to *ἐκ Θεοῦ* by simply translating the passage as "the eternally existing God has created all things out of nothing."

Chapter Four

Creation Ex Nihilo*: From Eternal to Temporal*

I. Introduction

I began by arguing in Chapter One for the continuity between the metaphysics of monarchy of

Plotinus and Proclus and the metaphysics of monotheism of Dionysius and Maximos. For pagans

and Christians alike, creation as divine self-impartation means that all things are derived from

God or the One as the sole *archē* of existence, the irreducible simplicity constitutive of being. I

went on to argue in Chapter Two that, for Maximos, creation from God does not mean creation

from the divine *ousia*, but from the *energeiai*, the eternal *erga* of God. This latter distinction led,

on the one hand, to a heightened immediacy between God and the world created directly from

the divine energies; on the other hand, the distinction between God's unparticipated essence and

His participated attributes culminated in a clearer division between Creator and creation. The

world is not *homoousios* with God, but *homoiousios*, a visible icon of its invisible archetype. I

concluded that this was not pantheism, but pan*en*theism – a sacramental vision of the world as

imbued with the uncreated grace of God. Finally, in Chapter Three I addressed the problem of

freedom and necessity, arguing that creation from God does not implicate God in necessity. To

the contrary, the derivation of all things from God points to the boundless freedom of the

Trihypostatic Monad whose liberality as an eternally active Creator infinitely transcends any

external imposition. I want now to complete my account of the broadly sacramental character of Maximos' ontology[401] with a consideration of his doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

As I noted at the conclusion of the previous chapter, Maximos states that the world is created simultaneously from God from nothing. It is this nothingness of the world that definitively distinguishes it from God, and hence establishes it as genuinely other. In this chapter I argue that it is precisely Maximos' adoption of the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* that radically and irrevocably distances his sacramental ontology from that of Plotinus and Proclus. Insofar as creation *ex nihilo* involves the rejection of ontological dualism (i.e. creation from pre-existent matter), Maximos is in continuity with the pagan Neoplatonists who, as we have seen, also subscribe to a monarchic metaphysics.[402] Unlike the latter, however, for whom the world is eternally generated from the One, Maximos further understands creation as temporal, as involving a movement from the world's potential existence in God, to its actual existence as other. For Maximos, creation *ex nihilo* means above all this temporal motion of the creature from potentiality to actuality, such that the world created *from* God is radically contingent *upon* God as its Ground.

I argue that Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* can be understood on three distinct yet interrelated levels: 1) creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings); 2) creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality (creation from *not yet* being); 3) creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation (creation *not from eternity*). All three of these levels work together to unequivocally affirm the otherness of the world from God, yet without undermining the continuity between them crucial to sacramental ontology. The latter two levels

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[401] That is to say, my account of Maximos' sacramental ontology in the broad sense of the term. The remaining chapters deal with the specifically *eucharistic* character of this sacramental ontology.

[402] This goes to show how misleading it is to casually invoke terms such as 'Platonic dualism' – as though there were no development or diversity of views from Plato to Proclus, a tradition spanning a thousand years!

in particular open up an ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and the world created from God. If in the previous chapters I have emphasized the sameness between God and the world created *from God* (ἐκ Θεοῦ) from nothing, in this chapter I emphasize the otherness of the world as created from God *from nothing* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).

In my opinion, it is precisely in the idea of temporal creation that the real opposition between pagan and Christian thought lies – *not* in dubious dichotomies concerning 'free' versus 'necessary' creation, which are largely polemical constructs rather than real philosophical differences. For the Neoplatonists following the logic of Aristotle, the world is eternal and in a sense *must* be so in accordance with the timeless actuality of the One. This 'necessity', as I argued in the previous chapter, does not impose some kind of external compulsion upon the One but is, in fact, an innate expression of the One's unbounded freedom – for what could possibly limit the irrepressible fecundity of the One, or Good, as the productive power of all things? Maximos too affirms the eternal creativity of God who has determined from before all ages what, and when, He intends to create. For him, however, the timeless actuality of God does not lead inevitably to a correspondingly eternal creation. Rather, following Philoponus, Maximos insists upon the temporal origin of the world, whereby the eternally actual Creator brings all things from potentiality to actuality at the appropriate time.

In departing from the pagans on this crucial point, however, Maximos does *not* by the same token depart from the metaphysics of emanation, or creation *ex deo*. To the contrary, Maximos insists that it is precisely *because* all things are *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) as the sole *archē* of existence that they must have a temporal beginning. In a way that shatters our cherished dichotomies, Maximos manages to combine emanation with volition and time in such a way as to arrive at a stunning new vision of creation as *voluntary and temporal emanation* – that is,

creation as divine self-impartation. Creation *ex deo* and creation *ex nihilo* are not opposed, but seen to be two complementary poles of a single sacramental reality. The world is created not merely from God, but *from God from nothing* (ἐκ Θεοῦ... ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).[403] In this way, Maximos simultaneously rejects ontological dualism while affirming difference. On the one hand, the world is derived from God alone as the solitary Ground of being; on the other hand, it differs from the timeless actuality of God in its temporal and potential character. God is an eternally actual Creator, the world is a temporal creation radically contingent upon God who brings it from nonexistence into being; that is, from its potential existence in God to its actual existence as other. This motion implicates the world in time as well as all the other qualifications attendant upon finite creatures. God is beyond qualification; beings created from God from nothing possess a wholly qualified existence.

In sum, the voluntary and temporal creation of the world from the uncreated energies of God means that the world is grounded in God while being neither consubstantial nor coeternal with Him. As such, creation as divine self-impartation is neither monism nor dualism, but a uniquely Christian form of 'qualified nondualism'[404] that eludes the inevitable one-sidedness of our rational categorizations. For Maximos, the sacramentality of the world stems simultaneously from its *identity with* God and its *independence from* God – the world as created from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) from nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος). This ontology of identity and difference which affirms the otherness of the world from God without undermining the continuity between them, provides the

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[403] See *Amb*.10.41, 1188C. Constas obscures the reference to ἐκ Θεοῦ in his English translation.
[404] *Vishishtadvaita*, a Vedantic term that affirms the continuity between God and world while opposing the unqualified monism of Advaita philosophy. For a comparative study of Hindu and Orthodox Christian philosophy, see Frost, *The Human Icon*., esp. 83-86.

sacramental basis for Maximos' eucharistic ontology rooted in the Logos, a topic to which I devote the penultimate chapter of my dissertation.

For now, however, I want to conclude my exposition of Maximos' foundational sacramental ontology with a consideration of his doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. In keeping with my historical philosophical methodology, I begin by examining the pagan philosophical understanding of the eternity of the world, followed by a brief look at Philoponus' argument *against* the eternity of the world, and concluding with Maximos' threefold doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Maximos' dramatic reversal of the pagan position *utilizing pagan philosophical arguments* provides a superb example of the creative and critical character of his Christian appropriation of pagan wisdom.

II. Plotinus & Proclus: *De Aeternitate Mundi*

While Plato would seem to have argued for a temporal beginning to the world in the *Timaeus*, subsequent Platonists took to allegorizing this account in a way that harmonized it with Aristotle's position regarding the eternity of the cosmos. Thus, if certain thinkers such as Plutarch and Atticus upheld the notion of a temporal creation, the majority – among them Plotinus and Proclus – professed the world's perpetual existence.[405] While the philosophical reasonings in support of this latter position are manifold, as the eighteen arguments of Proclus' *De Aeternitate Mundi* amply demonstrate, I shall limit my discussion primarily to the arguments concerning the eternal activity and limitless power of the One, or God, which, for both Plotinus

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[405] See Helen S. Lang and A.D. Macro, Introduction to Proclus et al., *On the Eternity of the World = De Aeternitate Mundi.*, 12. For a broad survey, see Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*. Also Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity.*, esp. 93-132.

and Proclus, demands a correspondingly eternal cosmos. This argument is overturned by

Maximos, with the help of Philoponus.

For Plotinus, the eternity of the world stems from the perfection and liberality of the One

which, as the productive power of all things, is unceasingly active – what Dodds refers to as the

"law of emanation." This law, as Dodds notes, "seeks to account for the existence of a universe

outside the One by the principle that everything which is 'complete' (i.e. has realized the full

potentialities of its nature) tends to reproduce itself."[406] As Plotinus puts it, "all things when they

come to perfection (τέλεια) produce; the One is always perfect (ἀεὶ τέλειον) and therefore

produces everlastingly (ἀίδιον γεννᾷ); and its product is less than itself."[407] In a way that

parallels the key emanationist passage we discussed in the previous chapter in relation to

freedom and necessity,[408] Plotinus draws an analogy here between the productivity of the One

and that of lower entities. Just as fire radiates heat and snow emanates cold, so the One generates

being "like the bright light of the sun which, so to speak, runs round it, springing from it

continually (ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀεὶ) while it remains (μένοντος) unchanged."[409] As I have stressed

repeatedly, it is crucial to grasp the *metaphorical* character of these analogies from nature.

Plotinus is *not* saying that the One generates the world due to some sort of blind, natural

necessity; the One is not some sort of being-generating automaton. Rather, the analogy to natural

processes attempts to convey the way in which the One produces beings effortlessly and

spontaneously[410] while remaining (μένοντος) unchanged in terms of its transcendent simplicity,

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[406] Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 212.
[407] *Enn*.V.1.6, 40.
[408] *Enn*.V.4.1, 25-35. See above, 122-123.
[409] *Enn*.V.1.6, 30.
[410] The analogy rests upon the resemblance between the *automatic* processes of nature and the *spontaneous* activity of the One. The key is that both processes are *non-deliberative*. In the former, however, this amounts to an unconscious automatism, while in the latter it represents a free and conscious activity. A better analogy might be

and unmoved in light of its eternal self-completion.[411] The Plotinian One, one might say, is a kind of Unmoved Mover with the additional burden that it does not merely move as final cause, but also as efficient cause.[412]

If productivity follows upon perfection (i.e. completion [τέλειον]), and if the One is eternally perfect, it follows that its production of the whole of reality will be correspondingly eternal. Lurking behind the Plotinian language of perfection, or completion (τέλειον), is the Aristotelian equivalence between 'complete reality' (ἐντελέχεια)[413] and actuality (ἐνέργεια) along with his understanding of God as perfect actuality.[414] To be perfect, or complete (τέλειον), is to be self-actualized (ἐντελέχεια), and so in full possession of one's natural powers. Just as an oak tree, when it reaches full maturity begets oakish offspring, so the One as the perfect, eternally actualized Ground of being eternally begets beings. For Plotinus – for whom God is both efficient and final cause – the actuality (ἐνέργεια) of being coincides with the activity (ἐνέργεια) of generating beings. Nothing, Plotinus insists, when it comes to perfection "endures to remain by itself, but makes something else."[415] Whereas finite entities do so intermittently insofar as they must first complete their natural motion from potentiality to actuality (in the case of our example, from acorn to mature oak tree), the One as eternally actual and self-perfect – and hence unmoved – produces perpetually.

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that of human intuition – the rare ability to grasp the truth of a complex situation in a kind of immediate, non-deliberative flash of apprehension enabling one to respond accurately without doubt or hesitation.

[411] See *Enn*.V.1.6, 15: "Everything which is moved must have some end to which it moves. The One has no such end, se we must not consider that it moves. If anything comes into being after it (μετ' αὐτὸ), we must think that it necessarily does so while the One remains continually turned towards itself." The Aristotelian notion of motion as incomplete actuality is key here. To be eternally actual is to be eternally unmoved (though not inactive!). See Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII.5, 257b8; *Meta.* IX.6, 1048b28.

[412] The doctrine of emanation, it seems to me, is an attempt to give utterance to the idea of unmoved *efficient* causality.

[413] Literally 'to have one's end in oneself'.

[414] See Aristotle, *Meta.* XII.7, 1072b 25-30.

[415] *Enn*.V.4.1, 29.

Another way in which Plotinus expresses this is in terms of the power (δύναμις) and goodness of the One. How, he asks, "could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged (φθονῆσαν) to give of itself or was impotent (ἀδυνατῆσαν), when it is the productive power of all things (ἡ πάντων δύναμις)?"[416] The notion of the ungrudgingness of the One, or Good, goes back of course to Plato's *Timaeus*;[417] insofar as the One is Good it cannot begrudge its goodness (which it does not merely have, but *is*), as this would imply an internal contradiction. To be good is to be generous, magnanimous; it means wanting to share one's abundance as widely as possible. The goodness of God is, according to Plato, the primary motivation for the creation of the world – a point which the Church Fathers quite happily accepted as their own.[418] Plotinus joins this notion of goodness with power (δύναμις). Just as the Good is not begrudging in its goodness, so the One as the productive power of all things is not deficient in power (ἀδύνατος). If the One is ungrudging in its self-bestowal, and if its power to do so is infinite, then there are no conceivable limits to its productive activity. In other words, the One is radically *free* from any (inner or outer) obstacle to its creative *energeia* and hence creates the world eternally. In sum, we find in Plotinus a seamless synthesis of Platonic theology and Aristotelian philosophy such that the eternally actual, perfect, good, omnipotent One unceasingly generates reality as both Demiurge (efficient cause) and Unmoved Mover (final cause).[419]

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[416] *Enn*.V.4.1, 30-35. See also *Enn*.IV.8.6. Dodds and Proclus, *Proclus*., 212-213.

[417] See *Tim.* 29E.

[418] See *Tim.* 29E.

[419] The logic here, as Gersh explains, involves a Neoplatonic adaptation of Aristotle where the latter's physical theory is applied analogously to metaphysical realities. This involves, among other things, the assimilation of *dynamis* to *energeia* such that the former no longer means 'potentiality' in relation to first principles, but rather 'power'. The One's *dynamis*, its power to act, and its *energeia*, the actualization of its power are identical with respect to eternal realities: *dynamis = energeia*. Thus, whenever Plotinus speaks of the One/Good in terms of power (δύναμις) – indeed as superabundant, limitless power – one should be attuned to the implications of *energeia* in the dual sense of both activity and actuality (i.e. perfection [τέλειον]). For a detailed exposition see Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*., 27-37.

Proclus largely follows the Plotinian view elucidated above. For example, he agrees with Plotinus that "the One brings its consequents into existence without movement."[420] Like Plotinus, Proclus regards the introduction of motion as either compromising the simplicity of the One, or as introducing an infinite regress (for if the One produces motion which produces the effect, then the motion mediating between them itself requires a motion to produce it *ad infinitum*). As a consequence, Proclus insists with Plotinus that the One is an Unmoved Mover which produces the world from itself (ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ) "not through a movement but by its mere existence (αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι)." As the ultimate *archē* of existence, the One simply *is* undiminished productivity, perpetually overflowing in the superabundance of its being – as illustrated by the various metaphors of emanation. If this strikes the Christian thinker as 'automatic' or involuntary, it has for Proclus the advantage of avoiding overly anthropomorphic ideas of divine creativity as deliberative and *dianoetic*.[421] For our purposes, what is crucial is that for Proclus the identity of existence and activity in relation to the One issues in an eternal cosmos. Because it exists perpetually (ἀεὶ ἔστιν), argues Proclus, "therefore it perpetually produces (ἀεὶ ὑφίστησι) its consequent, so that the latter arises perpetually (ἀεὶ γίνεται) from it and perpetually exists (ἀεὶ ἔστι), attaching its ceaseless procession (πρόοδον ἀεί) to the ceaseless activity (ἀεὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν) of its cause."[422] The striking repetition of the Greek ἀεὶ leaves no room for ambiguity: the eternal activity of the One has as its 'necessary' correlative the eternal existence and eternal coming-*into*-existence of the world.

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[420] Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.26.

[421] See Gersh, *[Kinēsis Akinētos]; a Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus.*, 30. Also, Trouillard, "« Agir par son être même ». La causalité selon Proclus." 347-357.

[422] Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop.76.

The Aristotelian language of *energeia* which makes an appearance here is much more explicit in Argument III of Proclus' *De Aeternitate Mundi.* Here, Proclus argues similarly from the eternal actuality of the demiurge to the eternal actualization of the cosmos:

> If the demiurge of something is a demiurge, then either he will be always an actual demiurge (κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἔσται δημιουργὸς ἀεὶ) or he will be sometimes potential (δυνάμει) so not always productive; if the demiurge is always an active demiurge (κατ' ἐνέργειαν ὁ δημιουργὸς ἀεὶ δημιουργός), then what is produced (τὸ δημιουργούμενον) will also always be actually produced (ἀεὶ κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἔσται δημιουργούμενον).[423]

Proclus illustrates his argument by citing Aristotle's example of the builder. Just as a builder who is actually building corresponds to something actually being built, so an actual creator produces an actual creation. The difference of course is that the creator is *eternally* (ἀεὶ) actual and so the creation must be correspondingly eternal (albeit not in quite the same way).[424] The reasoning here rests upon the Aristotelian identity of cause and effect, or action and recipient, such that the actualizing cause finds its fulfilment, not in itself, but in the effect being actualized.[425] A house builder actualizes their capacity to build only in the act of building a house. There is, in other words, a shared *energeia* between mover and moved, though differently defined – for the former represents the actualization of an active power, while the latter a passive potency.[426]

Unlike an ordinary craftsman, however, the Supreme Craftsman according to Proclus must be unceasingly active.[427] This is because, as Aristotle teaches, everything that exists

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[423] Proclus, *De Aet.* Argument III, 45. For parallel arguments, see Argument IV where Proclus argues from motion; Argument XVIII an argument from the changeless actuality of god; and Argument I, an argument from divine goodness (translated from the Arabic).

[424] See Proclus, *De Aet.* Argument I, 159. Here Proclus distinguishes between the eternal being of the demiurge and the perpetual coming-into-being of the cosmos. The former is strictly speaking timeless, while the latter exists in limitless time.

[425] See *Phys.* II.3, 195b5-25; III.2, 202a20, 202b10; *Meta.* IX.8, 1050a25.

[426] See *Phys.* III.2, 202a20, 202b10. Aristotle famously expresses this by saying that the road from Athens to Thebes and from Thebes to Athens are the same road.

[427] It is important to note that what is primarily a discussion of physical causality for Aristotle becomes a doctrine of metaphysical causality for the Neoplatonists, for whom the One is both efficient and final cause of the cosmos.

potentially needs to be brought from potentiality to actuality by a prior actuality.[428] For example,

a kettle of cold water can only become hot through the agency of a heated stove. Given the

identity of cause and effect, the temporal origin of the world would mean that the demiurge is

sometimes active and sometimes not – for he would be actual when the world was actual and

potential when the world was potential.[429] And if potential, then the demiurge himself would

require a prior, actual demiurge to move him from potentiality to actuality. The same is true, of

course, for this demiurge and so on *ad infinitum*. So either we have an eternally actual demiurge

– an Unmoved Mover – or we have an infinite regress of potential demiurges and moved movers.

The only solution, for Proclus, is to assert the eternal actuality of the demiurge along with a

corresponding eternally being actualized cosmos – for the latter is attendant upon the former.

III. Philoponus : *De Aeternitate Mundi Contra Proclum*

Before moving on to Maximos, I want briefly to lay out an important counterargument from the

6th century Byzantine Neoplatonist John Philoponus. It is, in fact, solely thanks to Philoponus,

who meticulously recorded every one of Proclus' arguments for the purpose of refuting them,

that we have the latter's 'treatise' at all.[430] While it is difficult to establish with certainty that

Maximos read Philoponus, given their close proximity in time and place, not to mention

Maximos' patent familiarity with philosophy, it seems likely that he would have done so.[431]

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[428] See *Phys.* III.5, 257b10; *Meta.* IX.8, 1049b25.

[429] Proclus, *De Aet.* Argument III, 45.

[430] All 18 arguments are preserved in a single Greek manuscript of Philoponus' *De Aeternitate Mundi Contra Proclum,* while Proclus's original Argument I is also preserved in Arabic translation. Even the title of Proclus' work, *De Aeternitate Mundi,* is an editorial conjecture derived from the title of Philoponus' refutation. See Proclus et al., *De Aeternitate Mundi.*, introduction 2-4.

[431] Tollefsen makes a plausible suggestion on the basis of another Christian Neoplatonist, Stephanus, who may have mediated Philoponus' teaching to Maximos. See, Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought.*, 119.

Although Maximos never cites Philoponus directly, it seems to me that the latter's refutation of Proclus' Argument III in particular fills an important lacuna in the thought of Maximos. That is to say, Philoponus' solution as to how the eternally actual Creator can produce a temporal creation helps make sense of Maximos' own parallel position – one which Maximos asserts without philosophical elaboration. Laying out Philoponus' reasoning, then, offers a useful vantage point from which to consider Maximos' own understanding of the eternal actuality of God who brings all creatures from potentiality to actuality.

In Chapter 3 of *De Aeternitate Mundi Contra Proclum*, Philoponus attacks Proclus' argument for the eternity of the world based upon the eternal *energeia* of God. As we noted above, Proclus argues on the basis of the shared activity of cause and effect that an eternally actual demiurge requires a corresponding eternally being actualized cosmos. If the world had a beginning in time, this would mean that at one time it did not exist – or rather, that it did not always exist actually, but merely potentially. And if so for the world, then so for the creator of the world – for we cannot properly speak of an active creator in the absence of an actual creation. Or can we? Philoponus insists that we can.

According to Philoponus, Proclus' argument is sophistic in that it consciously exploits the ambiguity of terms such as potentiality and actuality. Proclus, Philoponus argues, limits these terms to a single sense whereas Aristotle in fact taught a twofold understanding of these terms.[432] Potentiality, according to Aristotle, may be understood both as *natural fitness* and as an *acquired capacity*.[433] A child, for example, is potentially a grammarian insofar as she possesses a natural fitness for learning grammar. On the other hand, if this same child goes on to master the art of

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[432] *ContraPr.* III.1.1-20.
[433] See Aristotle, *De An.* II.1. 412a10-25. Also *Meta.* IX.5, 1048a1, 6, 1048a25; V.12, 1019a15-25.

grammar she becomes an actual grammarian, someone with an acquired capacity for grammar. Both fitness and capacity are potentialities, but not in the same way. The former, called *first potentiality*, merely refers to an innate receptivity to grammar while the latter, called *second potentiality*, refers to the actual ability of a grammarian who, though in full possession of the art of grammar, happens not to be actually exercising that ability.[434] Perhaps she is on vacation or at home eating dinner instead of teaching in the classroom.

Now, as Philoponus rightly explains, second potentiality coincides with what Aristotle calls *first actuality*.[435] First actuality refers to the fact that, though the grammarian is not actually exercising her capacity for grammar, she nonetheless remains in full possession of the grammatical art which she can activate at will. The actual activation of her capacity, say in the act of teaching, is what Aristotle calls *second actuality* – an actual grammarian actually teaching grammar. According to Philoponus, what is sophistical about Proclus' argument is that the latter takes no account of this twofold understanding of potentiality and actuality. Instead, he presents them as singular in meaning such that potentiality means exclusively first potentiality and actuality means exclusively second actuality.[436] The overlapping second potentiality/first actuality is conveniently left out. This simplification of Aristotle's doctrine means that for Proclus there are only two possibilities: either the demiurge is fully actual or he is purely potential. Since the latter leads to an infinite regress of potential demiurges he must be the former – an eternally active creator with a corresponding eternally being created cosmos.

For Philoponus, the overlapping second potentiality/first actuality is the key to overturning Proclus' argument. In essence, Proclus' argument rests upon two fundamental

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[434] See *ContraPr.* III.2.5-3.10.
[435] *ContraPr.* III.2.25.
[436] See *ContraPr.* III.5.1-25.

axioms: 1) whenever the cause is actually producing, the effect is actually being produced; 2) everything potential needs something actual to produce it actually.[437] Now, as Philoponus rightly points out, the first axiom is only valid in relation to second actuality. An actual grammarian actually teaching grammar simultaneously requires actual students actually being taught grammar. However, this is *not* true for first actuality. The grammarian does not cease to be a grammarian the moment she stops teaching. To the contrary, her knowledge of grammar remains perfectly intact as actual knowledge. *The same is true for God as an eternally actual creator*. For Philoponus, God possesses both first and second actuality such that He eternally possesses the actual capacity for creation, while actualizing this capacity at some predetermined moment in the temporal creation of the world.[438] In light of Aristotle's twofold actuality, Proclus' argument collapses. The eternity of the world does not follow from God's eternal actuality because it is possible for God to be eternally actual (1st actuality) without actually eternally creating something (2nd actuality).

As such, the second axiom which states that everything potential needs something actual to bring it to actuality turns out to be inapplicable. Just as a grammarian at rest does not need another active grammarian to activate her acquired capacity, so God has no need of a prior active Creator to bring Him from first actuality to second actuality. Proclus' argument of infinite regress is only valid if we limit Aristotle's doctrine to first potentiality and second actuality such that God can only be one or the other of these two extremes – either purely potential or actively actual. However, if we recognize that God can be second potentially/first actuality then both the necessity for an eternal cosmos and the problem of an infinite regress of potential demiurges are

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[437] See *ContraPr.* III.3.20, 4.15.
[438] See *ContraPr.* III.5.10-25.

rendered moot.[439] Whether or not Proclus would have found Philoponus' counterargument

ultimately persuasive – for even the transition from first to second actuality would seem to

implicate God in time, at the very least – he would have to concede the real limitations of his

own argument from actuality. Philoponus is right: the transition from first actuality to second

actuality is not the same as the movement from first potentiality to second actuality.[440] Whatever

the shortcomings of Philoponus' own position, his refutation of Proclus enables us to see how a

Christian thinker like Maximos can simultaneously assert the eternal actuality of God while

insisting upon a temporal creation of the world.

IV. Maximos: Creation *Ex Nihilo*: From Eternal to Temporal

Having acquired some understanding of Plotinus' and Proclus' arguments concerning the

eternity of the world, as well as Philoponus' counterarguments in favour of a temporal creation, I

want now to turn to Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Though Maximos neither argues

directly against the pagan Neoplatonists as does Philoponus, nor explicitly invokes the

counterarguments of the latter, his understanding of the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*

contains elements of all of the above thinkers, whose philosophical terminology and

presuppositions he broadly shares. This is particularly true for Maximos' Aristotelianism which,

however, leads him to conclusions diametrically opposed to that of the great Stagirite.

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[439] See *ContraPr.* III.4.15-25.
[440] I have deliberately chosen the respective terms 'transition' and 'motion'. Insofar as motion, according to Aristotle is an 'incomplete activity', i.e. a movement from potentiality to actuality, it is arguably inapplicable to the 'transition' from first actuality to second actuality. See note 411 above.

One way to approach Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is in response to a possible terminological objection.[441] I have argued throughout for a strong reading of Maximos' many references to creation from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) such that ἐκ means the literal derivation of beings *from* God. What, then, one might well ask, are we to make of the same preposition in relation to creation *from* nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος)? If the proposition ἐκ means the derivation of beings *from* God, must it not mean something analogous in relation to *ex nihilo*? In what sense are beings created *from* (ἐκ) nothing? I propose three possible solutions to this problem: the first, is that creation from nothing is simply a way of saying creation *not from something*.[442] That is to say, creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism. The second possibility is to interpret the *nihil* (μὴ ὄν) in a more relative sense as potential being, creation *ex nihilo* as the creaturely motion *from* potential existence in God to actual existence as other; that is, creation from not *yet* being. Thirdly, creation *ex nihilo* may be taken in a temporal sense as the rejection of an eternal cosmos – creation *not from eternity*.

In what follows, I argue that Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* can be read on these three distinct yet interrelated levels: 1) creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings); 2) creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality (creation from *not yet* being); 3) creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation (creation *not from eternity*). Taken together, these three senses of *ex nihilo* help us to understand how beings can be derived *from* (ἐκ) nothing without reifying the nothing as a quasi-something. Most importantly,

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[441] I owe this objection to Professor Douglas Farrow who raised it in the context of my Doktorklub presentation, McGill University. Comments by Dr Torrance Kirby, Dr Garth Green, and Dr Brandon Gallaher inspired further reflection.

[442] See comments by May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*., 7 note 27. In fact, two classic Biblical source texts for creation *ex nihilo* express it in precisely this way. 2 Macc 7:28 literally states that God made things "not from beings (οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων ἐποίησεν)", while Heb11:3 says that "the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι)."

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all three of these levels work together to unequivocally affirm the otherness of the world from God, yet without undermining the crucial continuity between them.

1) Creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism

The first level on which to approach Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* involves the Christian rejection of the doctrine of creation from pre-existent matter such as one finds, for example, in Plato's *Timaeus*. The rejection of pre-existent matter means, in essence, the uncompromising rejection of ontological dualism such that God alone is the supreme *archē* of existence. From this point of view, creation *ex nihilo* in fact coincides with creation *ex deo* – the two are not opposed to each other as some might presume, but rather complementary ways of talking about the same thing; namely, the metaphysics of monarchy, or rather, monotheism.[443] As such, creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism does not, in itself, represent a radical break with the Platonic tradition – for the Neoplatonists themselves modified Plato's position in a way that brings them quite close to that of the Christians. Just as for the Christians matter itself is created, so for Plotinus and Proclus matter is derived from the One as the term of the emanative process. The crucial difference emerges with the Christian rejection of an eternal creation as illustrated in our case by Maximos' second and third levels of *ex nihilo*.

Needless to say, the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* has a long history, one which we can only touch upon in the most cursory manner.[444] Traditionally, evidence for this doctrine is found in Scriptural passages such as 2 Maccabees 7:28 in which the mother of the seven martyrs encourages her youngest son "to look at heaven and earth and see everything in them,

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[443] It is not without reason that Eriugena, that great Latin commentator upon the Greeks, explicitly – albeit problematically – equates them in *Periphyseon* III.

[444] For a thorough treatment of this topic, see May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*.

and know that God made them out of nothing (ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων ἐποίησεν αὐτὰ ὁ θεός).” In

Romans 4:17 we read that God “calls those things which do not exist as existing (καλοῦντος τὰ

μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα)”, while Hebrews 11:3 states that “the things which are seen were not made of

things which are visible (τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι).” Finally, the *Shepherd

of Hermas* states that God created “that which exists out of that which does not exist (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ

ὄντος τὰ ὄντα).”[445] As Gerhard May points out, however, none of these passages *in themselves*

unequivocally bear witness to the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* understood as the

rejection of the doctrine of creation from pre-existent matter.[446] Such an understanding only

emerges in the late 2nd century after a lengthy process of theological reflection as witnessed first

in the writings of Tatian (circa AD 185+), and then more definitively in Theophilus of Antioch

(circa AD 183-5+), and Irenaeus of Lyons (circa AD 202+).[447] Only from Athanasius (circa AD

373+) onwards does the formal Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* becomes an accepted

premise in patristic theology.[448] Prior to these thinkers, the language of *ex nihilo* – as one finds it

in Philo or Clement, for example – remains ambiguous and arguably still refers to the ancient

model of world formation from pre-existent matter, the relative nonbeing[449] of formless *hyle*.[450]

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[445] *Shepherd of Hermas* 1 (I.1) 6.
[446] See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*., 27.
[447] See May., 148-178.
[448] See Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*., 76.
[449] The distinction that is made among some commentators and philosophers between ‘relative’ nonbeing as μὴ ὄν and ‘absolute’ nonbeing as οὐκ ὄν does not appear to have a historical basis. In many cases the two expressions are used interchangeably by ancient philosophers and theologians without difference in meaning (this is evident even in the quotations from 2 Maccabees, the Epistles, and the *Shepherd*) . See May, 17, n. 73; also Beierwaltes, *Proklos*., 137, n. 37. Louth observes that the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom uses both expressions without any difference in meaning. See Louth, “Theology of Creation in Orthodoxy.” 56.
[450] See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo*., 6-26. May points to Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi* 8 where Philo invokes the Stoic doctrine of an active and passive principle: “the former is the perfect Nous – God – the latter is no doubt the formless matter” (10). This would seem to find confirmation later at *De Opif*. 22 where Philo appears to speak of God as bestowing order upon an original substance destitute of form, order and distinction, very much as Plato does in the *Timaeus*. There is also the interesting case of the Hellenistic Jewish Wis 11:22 which states that God “created the world out of unformed matter (κτίσασα τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης).” For Clement, see May’s comments 178.

The above mentioned Athanasius offers a clear statement of the meaning of creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of pre-existent matter. Athanasius singles out Plato "that giant among the Greeks" as chief among those who taught that God created the world from pre-existent and uncreated matter. Just as a carpenter is dependent upon his building materials without which he cannot manufacture anything, so God, according to the Platonic view, "is not able to make anything unless matter pre-existed." For Athanasius, such a demiurgic view of creation is unacceptable insofar as it imputes weakness and limitation to God, "for if he is not himself the cause of matter, but simply makes things from pre-existent matter, then he is weak, not being able without matter to fashion any of the things that exist."[451] Such a god may well be called "craftsman" after the analogy of human artisans who also depend upon external materials, but he cannot rightly be called "Creator" or "Maker". For Athanasius, these terms are reserved for the omnipotent God of Genesis who brought the universe into being "from nothing and having absolutely no existence."[452] In support of his understanding of creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of the demiurgic model of world formation from pre-existent matter, Athanasius invokes the above mentioned passages from the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Hebrews 11:3. As noted above, however, the formal *doctrine* of creation *ex nihilo* does not originate with these passages; rather, it derives from a lengthy process of theological reflection which gradually comes to recognize the unacceptable dualism of the demiurgic model of world formation. While Athanasius frames his discussion in terms of divine omnipotence, the ontological implications of creation *ex nihilo* are apparent: God alone is the supreme *archē* of existence, such that matter cannot stand as a rival principle or even an auxiliary cause – for God Himself is the cause of matter.

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[451] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*., 2.
[452] Athanasius and Behr., 3.

The ontological implications in Athanasius are more explicitly worked out by Maximos, who fully accepts the by now well-established Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* while providing it with a more robust philosophical foundation. In *Amb*. 10, Maximos argues against the eternity of matter on the grounds that whatever is subject to motion, or genesis, or some kind of limitation cannot be coeternal with God who alone is unmoved, ungenerated, and infinite. Basing himself on the philosophical identification of matter as dyad,[453] Maximos argues that matter-as-dyad cannot be infinite or uncircumscribed because the *dyad* is quite literally composed of *two monads*. Matter by definition is *dyadic*, that is, composite and hence susceptible to division. As such, matter is not infinite but finite – it is both circumscribed by a prior principle of unity, the Monad, to which it owes whatever derivative unity it possesses, as well as limited by the individual monads which make up the dyad and which stand in finitizing relation to one another. In other words, a multiplicity of finitudes does not make a simple infinity.[454]

If, then, matter is not infinite but finite, argues Maximos, then neither can it be ungenerated or without beginning (ἄναρχον), "for the beginning (ἀρχὴ) of every dyad is the monad."[455] Moreover, if matter-as-dyad is generated or possesses a beginning, or principle (ἀρχὴ), of its existence, then it is not without motion (ἀκίνητον) for the dyad is constituted by the numerical motion of multiplication and division, expanding from the One into multiplicity and resolving back from multiplicity into unity.[456] Finally, if the dyad is not unmoved then, Maximos concludes, "neither is it the beginning (ἀρχὴν) of something else. For that which is moved

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[453] On matter as dyad, see Rist, "The Indefinite Dyad and Intelligible Matter in Plotinus." and Rist, "Monism."
[454] See *Amb*.10, 40. 1184B-D; also *Amb*.10, 41. 1184D-1185B. The logic of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Props.1-6 on the priority of the One over the many seems to be lurking in the background here, though Maximos articulates it somewhat differently.
[455] *Amb*.10, 41. 1185B.
[456] *Amb*.10, 41. 1185B-C.

(κινούμενον) is not a beginning, but *from* a beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς), that is, from whatever set it in motion (τοῦ κινοῦντος)."[457] This Unmoved Mover, as Maximos indicates, is the (Trihypostatic) Monad which alone is unmoved, ungenerated, and infinite. Given that matter-as-dyad cannot serve as a self-subsistent, coeternal principle alongside God-as-Monad, Maximos concludes that "there is only one God (Εἷς Θεὸς), who is beyond all infinity," and who alone is the creator and fashioner of all things. As such, he asserts, "it must be accepted that all things have been created *from the eternally existing God from nothing* (ἐκ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος τὰ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γενέσθαι)."[458]

Maximos' abstract argument, composed of a mesmerizing mixture of Aristotelian metaphysics, Neopythagorean numerology, and Neoplatonic emanationism, requires some unpacking. To begin with, we encounter the notion – familiar to us from our discussion in Chapter One – of the One as irreducible simplicity constitutive of being. All things *are*, only insofar as they are *one*. Yet matter is not one – at least not in terms of its intrinsic nature, which is dyadic. As unity-in-multiplicity, matter is contingent upon the One as the principle of its existence "for the beginning (ἀρχὴ) of every dyad is the monad." Insofar as matter is itself dependent upon something prior, it cannot serve as an ontological principle alongside God. As Maximos puts it, matter is "not a beginning, but *from* a beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς)." In other words, matter is itself derived *from* God as the sole *archē* of existence.[459] This in turn implicates matter in motion – for the very act of becoming involves a movement from nonexistence into being. Invoking Aristotle, Maximos insists that whatever is in motion cannot itself be the ultimate

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[457] *Amb*.10, 41. 1185B-C, emphasis added.
[458] *Amb*.10, 41. 1188A, 1188C, emphasis added. I have significantly modified Constas' translation which entirely obscures the dual reference to creation from God from nothing.
[459] See *Amb*.10, 39. 1184B: "And if every substance (οὐσία), and all matter (ὕλη), and all forms (εἶδος) are from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ), then no one, unless he had been deprived of his ability to think rationally, would say that matter is without beginning and uncreated, since God has created and given form to everything."

source of motion for this would lead to an infinite regress. Instead, only God as Trihypostatic Monad, as infinite and uncircumscribable, as perfect actuality (and so unmoved), can act as the Unmoved Mover of matter, and with it the whole of creation. Hence Maximos arrives at his final conclusion: "it must be accepted that all things have been created *from the eternally existing God from nothing* (ἐκ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὄντος τὰ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γενέσθαι)."

All of this is Maximos' infinitely more complex way of reiterating Athanasius' position concerning the rejection of pre-existent matter as a principle alongside God. What Athanasius expresses in theological terms, Maximos renders in the philosophical language of ontology. The first key point here is how the rejection of matter culminates in the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Creation *ex nihilo* here simply means that beings are brought from nonexistence into being *without recourse to any additional principle apart from God*.[460] The Latin Anselm in fact arrives at precisely the same solution. For him, creation *ex nihilo* "indicates the *manner* of the world's creation: affirming that it was made, *but not out of anything*."[461] The preposition ἐκ, then, may be affirmed as possessing the same meaning in the case of both *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ) and *ex nihilo* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος). In both cases, ἐκ has the meaning of "derived from." In the first case it affirms the derivation of beings from God, while in the second it denies their derivation from anything other than God. Hence, Maximos is able to assert that the world is created from God from nothing. This uncompromising rejection of ontological dualism means that God alone is the Ground of being. At this level, creation *ex nihilo* essentially means the rejection of ontological dualism; that is, creation *not* from beings.

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[460] See, Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia, the Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology*., 61. The controversy surrounding Bulgakov's sophiology, it seems to me, obscures what an astute reader of Maximos he is. It is not surprising, therefore, that Bulgakov's understanding of creation comes close, in some respects, to that of Maximos.
[461] McFarland, *From Nothing*., 87.

This, then, brings us to our second key point – creation *ex nihilo* coincides here with creation *ex deo*. These two expressions are not opposed to each other but, as Maximos so vividly demonstrates, complementary perspectives upon a single reality – the world is created *from God from nothing*. Whereas creation from God gives positive expression to the metaphysics of monotheism whereby God alone is the Ground of being, creation from nothing expresses this negatively in terms of the rejection of pre-existent matter. The first asserts the fundamental Unity at the heart of reality, the second represents the denial of duality. *Both* proclaim the radical *givenness* of the creature as wholly contingent upon God as its Ground. As such, it is equally possible to affirm the eucharistic character of creation as gift in terms of both *ex deo* and *ex nihilo*.[462]

If creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism coincides with creation *ex deo*, in what sense may it be said to serve as a means of distinguishing the world from God ? The answer, of course, rests with the radical contingency of the world created from God from nothing. The distinction between Ground and grounded is in itself sufficient for Maximos to affirm "the infinite distance and difference (*διάφορον*) between the uncreated and the created."[463] Yet this ought not to be exaggerated, as Thunberg does, to imply "a basic gulf (*χάσμα*) between uncreated and created natures, which only the creative will can overbridge."[464] Nor should one unreservedly follow Florovsky's interpretation of this "infinite distance" in terms of an ontological otherness so extreme that he can only describe it as a "*living duality of God and*

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[462] For an insightful and balanced discussion concerning seemingly opposed views of creation among several prominent Orthodox theologians, see Louth, "Theology of Creation in Orthodoxy."

[463] *Amb*.7, 1077A.

[464] See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 1995., 53. See comments by Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur*., 28. Tollefsen would seem to follow Thunberg in this regard. See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*., 62.

creation."[465] With all respect to this great Orthodox theologian, Florovsky's views in this regard would seem to owe more to Duns Scotus[466] than to Maximos or any other Greek Father. For Maximos, Creation *ex nihilo* does not imply a radical rift between God, and the world created from God, such that they have absolutely nothing in common. Such an extreme view (however 'orthodox' it may instinctively seem to us moderns) can only culminate in a desacralizing dualism.[467] Rather, as Maximos' conjunction of *ex deo* and *ex nihilo* illustrates, the world is both infinitely other than God insofar as it is wholly contingent upon God (creation *ex nihilo*), as well as intimately related to God from whom alone it derives its being (creation *ex deo*).

2) Creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality

If, as I suggested above, the fundamental distinction between Ground and grounded is already sufficient to affirm the infinite distance and difference between God, and the world derived from God *from nothing*, this basic understanding of creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism nonetheless represents merely the first level of Maximos' doctrine. In a sense, this initial level is not so different from that of the pagan Neoplatonists who, though they do not employ the language of *ex nihilo*, equally reject ontological dualism while affirming the derivation of matter from God, or the One.[468] Where Maximos diverges crucially from the pagans is in his

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[465] Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption.,* 47. Italics in original.

[466] Indeed it comes as little surprise that Florovsky explicitly praises the voluntarism of the "Subtle Doctor" a few pages later; See Florovsky., 52. For an insightful analysis of the "sophiological subtext" of Florovsky's position see Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*., 132-158. Aristotle Papanikolaou points to a similar nominalist tendency in John Zizioulas; see "Creation as Communion" in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*., 119.

[467] For a helpful overview of the Orthodox debate concerning the God/world relation, see Ladouceur, *Modern Orthodox Theology*., 193-229.

[468] To insist that creation *ex nihilo* is somehow a radical break from the 'Hellenistic' worldview, as Zizioulas does, is really quite misleading. Certainly, this is true for the 'Hellenic' world inhabited by Plato; yet it is scarcely true for the 'Hellenistic' world of Plotinus, Proclus, and countless other non-Christian philosophers. See, Louth, "Theology of Creation in Orthodoxy." 55.

understanding of creation *ex nihilo* as, firstly, involving a movement from the world's potential existence in God to its actual existence as other; and, secondly, as creation in time. I shall deal with the first here, while concluding with the second in section 3.

In addition to creation *ex nihilo* as creation *not* from beings, then, Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) may be understood in terms of creation from not *yet* being; that is, as the world's movement *from* (ἐκ) its potential existence in God to its actual existence as other. This approach involves interpreting the nonbeing of *ex nihilo* in a more relative sense. Rather than understanding it purely in terms of negation, as creation "*not* from beings", it is possible to regard the *nihil* more positively as creation "from *potential* beings (ἐκ μὴ ὄντων)."[469] Aristotle, for example, equates the non-existent with potential existence when he observes that it is possible for non-existent things to be conceivable and desirable. This is because "although these things do not exist actually (οὐκ ὄντα ἐνεργείᾳ), they will exist actually; for some non-existent things (μὴ ὄντων) exist potentially (δυνάμει); yet they do not exist (οὐκ ἔστι), because they do not exist in complete reality (οὐκ ἐντελεχείᾳ ἐστίν)."[470] According to Aristotle, then, it is possible to understand nonbeing as "not *yet* being," as potentially being.

It might be tempting, in this regard, to take Maximos' use of the negation μὴ rather than οὐκ as indicative of this relative nonbeing.[471] Bulgakov, for example, distinguishes between the 'relative' nonbeing of μὴ ὄν and the 'absolute' nonbeing of οὐκ ὄν. The former corresponds merely to "nonmanifestation and nondefinition", the fecundity of potential existence, while the latter refers to the "full negation of being", the sterility of absolute nothingness.[472] Tempting though it may be, this distinction would seem to have little bearing on Maximos' position. As

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[469] See *Amb*.28, 1272C. This use of the plural is rare in Maximos.
[470] *Meta*. IX.3. 1047b.
[471] See note 449, above.
[472] Bulgakov, *Unfading Light*., 188-189.

several commentators have pointed out, both expressions are often used interchangeably by philosophers and theologians of antiquity without any discernible difference in meaning.[473] 2 Maccabees for example, uses *οὐκ,* while the *Shephard of Hermas* employs *μὴ.*[474] The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom uses both particles of negation indifferently.[475] None of these sources are of an especially philosophical nature. Bulgakov's distinction between *μὴ ὄν* and *οὐκ ὄν,* while philosophically interesting in its own right, would seem ultimately to owe more to the genius of Schelling than to actual historical usage.[476] Maximos, for his part, exhibits a singular preference for *μὴ ὄν* which, I am arguing, he employs in a variety of distinct yet interrelated ways.

If the intriguing distinction between *μὴ ὄν* and *οὐκ ὄν* cannot help us here, it nonetheless remains possible to interpret the *nihil* of creation *ex nihilo* in the Aristotelian sense of potential existence, of creation from not *yet* being. Evidence for this is found in Maximos' discussion concerning the pre-existence of the *logoi* of beings in God. From all eternity, Maximos insists, God "contained within Himself the pre-existing logoi of created beings. When, in His goodwill, He formed out of nothing (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*) the substance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so on the basis of these logoi."[477] Maximos goes on to explain how a particular *logos* precedes and guides the creation of every particular being, whether in heaven or on earth, "at the appropriate time (*τὸν δέοντα χρόνον*)." Everything which receives its being from God (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*)[478] does so according to its own *logos* eternally pre-existing in God and precisely for this

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[473] See May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo.*, 17, n. 73; also Beierwaltes, *Proklos.*, 137, n. 37.
[474] See above, 156.
[475] See Louth, "Theology of Creation in Orthodoxy." 56.
[476] See, Bulgakov, *Unfading Light.*, 469, note 9.
[477] *Amb.*7, 1080A.
[478] See *Amb.*7, 1080B.

reason is called a "portion of God."[479] Though the *logoi* of beings are eternal insofar as they

represent the timeless intentionalities of God,[480] Maximos reiterates that beings created

according to (κατὰ) the *logoi* do not exist simultaneously with them. Instead, and here we

approach the critical passage:

> [I]n the wisdom of the Creator, individual things were created at the appropriate time (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ), in a manner consistent with their logoi, and thus they received in themselves actual existence as beings (τὸ εἶναι τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ). For God is eternally an active creator (ὁ μὲν ἀεὶ κατ᾽ ἐνέργιάν ἐστι Δημιουργός), but creatures exist first in potential (δυνάμει) and only later in actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ).[481]

Within this discussion of the *logoi* (painfully condensed for our purposes), we encounter

a number of essential ideas: Maximos once again states both that beings are created from nothing

and that they are created from God, while introducing the notion of creation in time. Maximos

further associates his doctrine of creation with his doctrine of the *logoi*: all beings are created

from God from nothing *in time* and *according to* the *logoi* eternally pre-existing in God. All of

this culminates in the idea that, while God is an eternally active Creator, beings exist first in

potentiality and only later in actuality. Given Maximos' juxtaposition of these ideas, it would

seem that the potential existence of beings, their 'relative' nonbeing, is somehow equivalent

(though not identical) to their respective *logoi*. As the 'content' of the Logos, beings possess a

kind of potential existence in God, while acquiring actual existence in their own right at the

foreordained time. Creation *ex nihilo*, then, could be understood here as a movement *from* (ἐκ)

the timeless not *yet* being of potentiality to the state of actual existence in time.

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[479] *Amb*.7, 1080C.
[480] That is, the "predeterminations" (προορισμοὺς) and "divine wills" (θεῖα θελήματα). *Amb*.7, 1085A-B.
[481] *Amb*.7, 1081B.

Like his pagan and Christian predecessors, Maximos understands God to be an eternally

active, or actual (*κατ' ἐνέργιάν*), Creator.[482] Creatures, on the other hand, exist first in potentiality

and only later in actuality. Like Philoponus, then, Maximos affirms the eternal activity of God

while rejecting a correspondingly eternal creation. While Maximos unfortunately does not

elaborate on his position, it is possible with the help of Philoponus to offer a plausible

reconstruction of his argument. As we noted earlier, Philoponus distinguishes between two kinds

of *energeia*: first actuality as a kind of latent power or 'actual capacity' for action, and second

actuality as the 'actual actualization' of that capacity or power. According to Philoponus, it is the

former that characterizes God's eternal activity, not the latter. In the case of Maximos, the eternal

activity of God would seem to take two forms: 1) the eternal *erga*[483] which we discussed in

Chapter Two, and 2) the *logoi* as the timeless intentionalities of God. It is these latter that are

most closely associated with the potential existence of beings.[484]

In what sense are the *logoi* simultaneously tied to the eternal activity of God and the

potentiality of beings? They are the former insofar as they represent the unwavering will and

eternal foreknowledge of God concerning every finite temporal creation. Following Dionysius,

Maximos calls the *logoi* "predeterminations" (*προορισμοὺς*) and "divine wills" (*θεῖα θελήματα*);

that is, the timeless intentionalities of God according to which beings are known and constituted.

As Maximos puts it, "God knows beings as His own wills."[485] God's eternal creative activity

thus consists in a kind of timeless self-contemplation which is simultaneously noetic and

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[482] At *Amb*.23, 1260A Maximos describes God as an "actively efficacious power (*Δραστήριος δύναμις*)"; at *CTh*. 1.35 he describes Him as One who "never rests from good things."

[483] See *CTh*. 1.48. At *CTh*. 1.35 As Maximos states: "…for God never rests from good things (*τῶν καλῶν*), of which there is also no beginning (*οὐδὲ ἀρχήν*). For just as it is the property of light to shine, just so it is the property of God to do good."

[484] There tends to be a certain confusion concerning the relation of the energies to the *logoi* among commentators. I address this problem in Chapter Five.

[485] *Amb*.7, 1085B-C.

volitional, such that God wills from all eternity that which he intends to create in time.[486] Indeed, an essential part of God's timeless thought-willing is precisely the divinely determined time allocated to each individual being in accordance with the divine wisdom.[487] God's eternal foreknowledge of beings is thus analogous to Aristotle's first actuality insofar as it represents the eternal perfection of wisdom, the primordially actualized art of divine demiurgy. God freely and independently 'transitions' from first to second actuality in the temporal act of creation.

If the *logoi* represent the eternal actuality of God, in what sense are they also the potentiality of beings? To begin with, we need to be careful to distinguish the *logoi,* the principles *according to* which beings are created, from the beings themselves. The former are God (for the many *logoi* are the One Logos) while the latter are creatures. Moreover, the *logoi* are not some sort of fully formed *kosmos noetos*, such that sensible beings become the pale instantiations of intelligible veracities. The many *logoi* simply *are* the One Logos in their transcendent aspect, only becoming manifold as the immanent principles of creation.[488] Nor is this to say that beings possess some kind of murky, amorphous existence in God apart from the *logoi* prior to their actualization in time. Their potentiality, rather, is owing purely to the fact that God foreknows and forewills them in a transcendently unified manner. In other words, their existence is purely virtual; they have no existence in themselves whatsoever, but exist solely as concepts (or rather as a single unified Concept) within the divine Mind.[489] Their potential

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[486] See *Amb*.7, 1080A.

[487] As to why God chose to create at a particular point in time, Maximos remains silent: "Seek the reason why God created, for this is knowledge. But do not seek how or why he only created recently, for this question does not fall under your mind…" *CL*. 4.5.

[488] This transition from transcendent unity to immanent multiplicity could itself be understood as a movement from first to second actuality. For the incarnate Logos as immanent principle of creation see Chapter Five.

[489] Maximus further illustrates this with the Biblical example of Levi. Just as Levi existed potentially (ἐν δυνάμει) in the loins of Abraham prior to his actual birth (κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν), says Maximos, so beings exist as formal possibilities in God prior to their actual creation. This masculine example is illuminating. It is not the case that beings possess a quasi-material existence in the womb of God, so to speak; rather, their potential existence is purely formal and hence indistinguishable from God. Just as Levi is, as it were, part of the very DNA of Abraham and only acquires separate,

existence, in other words, is equivalent to nonbeing in the Aristotelian sense of not *yet* being –

for creatures are eternally conceived and willed by God, and as such possess a kind of potential

existence. What is eternally actual in God – the *logoi* as timeless intentionalities – is potential in

relation to created beings. Hence, creation *ex nihilo* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) could be understood as the

creaturely motion *from* (ἐκ) the timeless not *yet* being of potential existence to the state of actual

existence in time.

If the first understanding of creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism

established a fundamental distinction between Ground and grounded, this second conception of

creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality, as creation from not *yet* being,

establishes the incommensurable otherness of Creator and creation:

> For God is eternally an active creator (ἀεὶ κατ᾽ ἐνέργειάν), but creatures exist first in
> potential (δυνάμει), and only later in actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ), since it is not possible for the
> infinite (τὸ ἄπειρον) and the finite (τὰ πεπερασμένα) to exist simultaneously on the same
> level of being. Indeed no argument will ever be able to demonstrate the simultaneous
> (ἅμα) interdependence of being (οὐσίαν) and what transcends being (ὑπερούσιον), or of
> the measureless (τὸ ἄμετρον) and what is subject to measurement (τῷ ἐν μέτρῳ), or that
> the absolute (τὸ ἄσχετον) can be ranked with the relative (τῷ ἐν σχέσει), or that something
> of which no specific category can positively be predicated can be placed in the same class
> as what is constituted by all the categories. For in their substance and formation all
> created things are positively defined by their own logoi, and by the logoi that exist around
> them and which constitute their defining limits.[490]

The movement from potential being in God to actual existence as other means that the world is

subject to all the categories of derivative existence. As the transcendent Ground of being, the

'Groundless Ground' as it were, God is not subject to any kind of categorization – for He is the

very criterion of all possible categories, the measure of all things, the ultimate limit of all

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fleshly existence after his birth, so creatures are initially nothing other than the formal content of the Logos,
acquiring a distinct, embodied existence only at the moment of creation. See *Amb*.41, 1328D. Also Heb 7:10.
[490] *Amb*.7, 1081B.

delimitation. As Logos, He is the Wisdom which governs the cosmos, beyond which no further ordering principle may be sought. All beings are defined and constituted by their *logoi* – that is, by God's eternal predeterminations concerning their being, time, place, relation, quantity, etc.[491] – and thus come to exist as distinct, particular *beings*. For to *be*, is to be determined, defined, delimited as a particular *something* (τι).[492] Yet God, as the very Ground of being, is infinitely beyond being – for if God were a being (even a so-called 'Supreme Being'), then He, too, would require some prior determining principle, and so on *ad infinitum*. Hence, God is the Unmoved Mover, the eternally actual Ground *in whom* all things abide as potentialities and *from whom* they emerge from nonexistence into being as finite actualities.

3) Creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation

This, then, brings us to Maximos' third level of creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation. If the first level of creation *ex nihilo* meant creation *not from beings*, while the second level meant creation from not *yet* being, the third and final level, I shall conclude by arguing, means creation *not from eternity* or, as Maximos, puts it, "when once beings were not." The notion of creation *ex nihilo* as creation in time follows closely upon the idea of creation as involving a creaturely motion from potential existence in God to actual existence as other. For Proclus, as we saw, the eternal actuality of God had as its counterpart the eternally being actualized cosmos, such that the latter could have no discernible beginning in time. For Maximos following Philoponus, however, the understanding of the eternal actuality of God in terms of first actuality opens up the possibility for a temporal beginning to the world – for God's transition from first to second actuality

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[491] See Aristotle, *Cat.* II, 1b 25.
[492] See Aristotle, *Meta.* VII, 1037a 25-27; 1038b 5.

coincides with the creaturely motion from potentiality to actuality such that all things receive their existence "at the appropriate moment in time (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ)."[493] It is precisely Maximos' insistence upon the world's beginning in time that irrevocably separates him from the prevailing pagan Neoplatonic position – exemplified by Plotinus and Proclus – concerning the eternity of the cosmos. All things are created from God from nothing *in time*. In other words, creation *not* from eternity.

One of Maximos' central arguments for creation in time rests upon the idea of motion. God alone as the Prime Mover (πρώτως κινοῦν) is absolutely unmoved (ἀκίνητον), while beings are in perpetual motion (κινούμενον). And if beings are in motion, Maximos argues, then it follows that they have a beginning in time "for whatever is in motion began to move [at a particular point in time (ἤρξατο)]."[494] Moreover, if beings are in motion then they are neither without a beginning (ἄναρχος) nor without a cause (ἀναίτιος), for the *archē* is that which sets them in motion while the same as *aitia* draws them towards completion. God alone as the Ground of being, as the ultimate *archē* and *telos* of existence, is unmoved. It follows, Maximos concludes, that "no beings are without a beginning (ἄναρχον), since none of them is unmoved (ἀκίνητον)."[495] Now, strictly speaking, the idea of time is merely implicit in this argument (the verb ἤρξατο being amenable to a purely ontological interpretation). An Aristotelian or a Neoplatonist would have no difficulty interpreting Maximos' line of reasoning in ontological terms. The fact *that* beings are in motion (something Maximos assumes rather than demonstrates) in itself indicates nothing more than that there must be a principle of motion

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[493] *Amb*.7, 1081B.
[494] *Amb*.10, 1177A. The square brackets are my own. The bracketed section indicates Constas' paraphrase of the ambiguous Greek verb ἤρξατο which is more literally rendered simply as "beginning". Like the noun ἀρχή from which it is derived, ἤρξατο can refer both to a temporal and/or to an ontological beginning. The broader context, however, justifies Constas' rendering of it in temporal terms.
[495] *Amb*.10, 1177A-B.

which both sets beings in motion (efficient cause), and draws them to completion (final cause). In order to avoid an infinite regress, there must be an ultimate Source of motion, an Unmoved Mover which sets all things in motion without itself being subject to motion.

That Maximos (with a certain delightful irony!) draws upon this Aristotelian argumentation to demonstrate that the world has not merely an ontological origin, but a temporal beginning becomes evident from the broader contours of Maximos' thought.[496] To begin with, as we noted in the previous section, Maximos associates the creaturely movement from potential existence in God to actual existence as other with time. All things, he says, "were created at the appropriate moment in time (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ), in a manner consistent with their logoi, and thus they received in themselves actual existence as beings (τὸ εἶναι τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ)."[497] This passage suggests that Maximos understands motion in Aristotelian terms as a movement from potentiality to actuality.[498] Insofar as beings have their primordial origin in God, the 'beginning' (ἤρξατο, ἀρχή) of beings is simultaneously ontological *and* temporal – for all beings are derived from God from nothing at the divinely preordained time. Unlike Aristotle, God for Maximos is not merely the final cause of an eternal cosmos, but also the efficient cause of a temporal creation.[499] God alone is eternally actual; beings exist first in potentiality and only later in actuality. To be created is to be subject to time, for time is inseparable from motion.[500] As to why God only created recently, Maximos remains reticent: "Seek the reason why God created, for this

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[496] Maximos explicitly rejects the pagan notion of an eternal creation at *CL.* 4.6.
[497] *Amb*.7, 1081B.
[498] See also *Amb*.7, 1069B-C, 1072B-C.
[499] See Constas, *The Ambigua*, Vol. I, note 61, 489. The nature of this modification would seem to involve the transposition of Aristotelian physics upon the plane of metaphysics. Just as every finite object (be it art or nature) has an efficient cause, so the entire world has God, the Demiurgos, as its efficient cause.
[500] See Aristotle, *Phys.* IV, 217b30-224a15.

is knowledge. But do not seek how or why he only created recently, for this question does not fall under your mind…."[501]

Maximos further subverts Aristotle by arguing for the temporal origin of the world in terms of the Aristotelian Categories. Who, he insists,

> [D]oes not know that every kind of being whatsoever, with the sole exception of the Divine (which strictly speaking is beyond being), presupposes the concept of a "where," (ποῦ) which in absolutely every instance necessarily requires the related concept of a "when" (πότε)? For it is not possible for a "where" to be thought of separately from a "when" (for they belong to those things that are simultaneous (ἅμα), and do not exist apart from their mutual conditioning.[502]

We noted above that to be moved from potential existence in God to actual existence as other is to be subject to all the categories of existence, for "all created things are positively defined by their own logoi, and by the logoi that exist around them and which constitute their defining limits."[503] To *be* is to be *finite* – for which reason God as Ground is beyond being and beyond categorization. Here, Maximos essentially argues that to be subject to one of the categories of created being is to be subject to them all. To be in place is simultaneously (ἅμα) to be in time, for it is impossible to conceive of one in the absence of the other.[504] For Maximos, this is true not only of individual beings but of the entire cosmos. To be in place means to be circumscribed. Insofar as the entire world is circumscribed by God, the latter may be said to be its "place" (τόπος).[505] This, Maximos argues, demonstrates "that beings are subject to the category of 'when' (πότε), *as completely existing in time* (ἐν χρόνῳ), since no being after God (μετὰ Θεὸν) exists simply (ἁπλῶς), but in a certain way (πῶς), and for this reason beings are not without a

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[501] *CL.* 4.5.
[502] *Amb*.10, 1180B-C.
[503] *Amb*.7, 1081B; see above, 168.
[504] See Aristotle, *Cat.* 6. 5-10.
[505] *Amb*.10, 1180C-D.

beginning (ἄναρχα)."[506] Here Maximos unambiguously identifies the *archē* with time. All beings

in virtue of being created exist in God as their place and, hence, in time. By ingeniously

transposing Aristotle's physics upon the plane of metaphysics, Maximos affirms the temporal

origin of the world, arriving at a position diametrically opposed to that of the great Stagirite.

Finally, Maximos links the temporal origin of the world with the doctrine of creation *ex

nihilo*. Continuing to argue from the Categories, Maximos states:

> Therefore no being is without a beginning (ἄναρχον) if its existence presupposes even a
> single qualitative distinction; neither is it without limits if its existence is conditioned by
> relation to something else. If, then, no being is without beginning (ἄναρχον) or limitation
> (as the argument has demonstrated, consistent with the nature of beings), *then there
> certainly was when each being was not* (ἦν πάντως <u>ποτὲ</u> ὅτε τι τῶν ὄντων οὐκ ἦν), from
> which it follows that, if it did not always exist (οὐκ ἦν), it was brought into being
> (γέγονεν), because there certainly *was when it was not* (εἴπερ οὐκ ἦν).[507]

To be without a beginning – in both the ontological and temporal sense – is impossible for finite

creatures, whose delimited character points to their dependence upon a constitutive principle.

And for Maximos, to be constituted means to be subject to all the categories of finite existence

including time. Here, Maximos expresses this temporal dimension in terms of the prior

nonexistence of beings. If something has a beginning (as every creature must) then there was a

'time' when it did not exist, and if there once was when it was not (οὐκ ἦν), then it must have

been created (γέγονεν). To be a creature, then, means to have been brought from nonexistence

into being in time; that is, creation *not from eternity* or, as Maximos puts it, when once it was not

(οὐκ ἦν). The *nihil* of creation *ex nihilo,* then, may be understood in a temporal sense as the prior

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[506] *Amb*.10, 1180D. Emphasis added.

[507] *Amb*.10, 1181C. I have modified the translation to bring out the terseness of Maximos' expression. As Constas notes, "This phrase would seem to pun on the Arian slogan that 'there was a time when He (i.e. the Son of God) was not.'" See *The Ambigua*, vol.1, 490, note 70.

nonexistence of beings.[508] Insofar as there is, strictly speaking, no 'time' prior to creation,

creation in time essentially means creation as negation of eternity. In addition to creation *ex*

nihilo as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings) and as the creaturely motion

from potentiality to actuality (creation from not *yet* being), we also have creation *ex nihilo* as

temporal creation – creation *not from eternity*.[509]

V. Conclusion

Along with the preceding two understandings of creation *ex nihilo*, the equation of *ex nihilo* with

temporal creation is crucial if we are to avoid subtly reifying the *nihil* of creation as a quasi-

something from which beings are created. The irony of such a reification – however unconscious

or unintended – among radical proponents of creation *ex nihilo* is that it culminates in the very

dualism that this Christian doctrine was designed to overcome. If the idea of creation *ex deo*

carries with it the danger of pantheistic confusion, it is equally true that an exclusive emphasis

upon creation *ex nihilo* tends towards the opposite extreme of a kind of gnostic dualism – one

which threatens to undermine the very ground of sacramentality. For if the world is not grounded

in God, then it inevitably comes to be regarded as a separate, self-subsistent entity devoid of

sacred significance. Maximos, to his eternal credit, charts a middle course: the world is created

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[508] Maximos expresses a parallel idea in his discussion of the eternal and temporal works of God: "the works of God beginning their existence temporally (χρονικῶς)," he states, "are all participating beings…since they have non-being (μὴ ὄν) prior to their existence. For there was a 'when' (ποτε) when participating beings were not (οὐκ ἦν)." *CTh.* 1.48. Though the language here is Platonic rather than Aristotelian, the point is the same: all beings are contingent upon a prior constitutive principle – whether it be the unparticipated Godhead or the Unmoved Mover. It is worth noting that Maximos uses the negative particles μή and οὐκ interchangeably without any significant difference in meaning.

[509] The first and the third levels parallel each other, though one is ontological and the other temporal. The emphasis of each, however, is unique. The aim of the first is the negation of pre-existent matter and thus tends to affirm the sameness of God and world, while the aim of the latter is the negation of an eternal creation and thus emphasises the otherness of God and world.

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both from God *and* from nothing – or rather, from God alone who, from His own infinite resources brought it from nonexistence into being at the eternally predetermined time.

If Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* does *not* imply a radical rift between God and the world created from God from nothing, culminating in a desacralizing dualism, neither does it issue in a kind of indiscriminate monism. Maximos, as we have noted repeatedly, affirms the "infinite distance (*μέσον*) and difference (*διάφορον*) between the uncreated and the created."[510] If not quite Thunberg's "unbridgeable chasm," the utter incommensurability of Creator and creature, the ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and world, is emphatically affirmed by Maximos in his threefold understanding of creation *ex nihilo*. While the first level of creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings), importantly affirms the *continuity* between God and the world created *from God alone*, the second and third levels (creation from not *yet* being and creation *not from eternity*), unambiguously assert the infinite otherness of Creator and creature.

With the second level, creation as the creaturely *kinesis* from potentiality to actuality, Maximos definitively departs from the pagan Neoplatonists for whom the cosmos is eternally being actualized. If, in the latter case, the shared *energeia* between the One and the many tends to obscure the distinction between Ground and grounded, this is not so for Maximos. God alone is eternally active; beings exist first in potentiality and only later in actuality. As such, there is no confusion between God and the world derived from God from nothing. Indeed, the intrinsically kinetic character of beings means that God alone as Prime Mover is absolute (*ἁπλῶς*), while beings possess a merely qualified (*πῶς*) existence. This, in turn, leads to the third level of creation as temporal. As we saw, for Maximos, the contingency of beings indicates their

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[510] *Amb*.7, 1077A-B. For the utter incommensurability of God and beings see also, *Myst.* 105-115 [CCSG 9].

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dependence upon an *archē* that is not only ontological, but also temporal. If something is moved then it must have begun to move at some point in time. Moreover, if to *be* is to be subject to the categories of finite existence, then all beings must be subject to time as one of those categories. Maximos would regard the pagan notion of an eternal creation as a failure to properly distinguish between the Creator who transcends the categories, and creatures constituted by *all* of them. God alone is eternally unmoved; creatures are moved from nonexistence into being when once they were not (*οὐκ ἦν*).

By rejecting the eternal cosmos of the pagan Neoplatonists in favour of a temporal creation, Maximos succeeds in establishing the otherness of the world from God without sacrificing the continuity between them crucial to his sacramental ontology. The world is created from God from nothing; that is, *not* from beings, from not *yet* being, and *not from eternity*. Maximos' allegiance to the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* introduces an ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and creation which, along with the collapsing of the spiritual hierarchy, and the heightened emphasis upon volition, marks a definitive departure from the pagans. From all eternity God *wills* to create the world in time. If the transformation of mediation led to an initial distinction between the unparticipated divine *ousia* and participating beings derived from the eternal *erga*, Maximos' threefold understanding of creation *ex nihilo* further affirms the infinite otherness between Creator and creation. Though the world is derived from God as the sole *archē* of existence, its contingent – and above all temporal – character ensures that the creature is never confused with the Creator. Between Ground and grounded there is no univocity whatsoever such that Maximos can say that if God *is*, then beings *are not*, and if beings *are*, then God *is not*.[511]

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[511] See *Myst.* 105-115 [CCSG 9].

Despite their infinite incommensurability, God and world are nonetheless linked by an analogical or participatory relation. What God *is*, beings *have*, in a finite measured way (ἀναλόγως), by participation. As Maximos' conjunction of creation *ex deo* and *ex nihilo* illustrates (ἐκ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀεὶ τὰ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γενέσθαι),[512] the world is both intimately related to God from whom alone it derives its being (creation *ex deo*), as well as infinitely other than God insofar as it possesses a wholly qualified, contingent, and circumscribed existence (creation *ex nihilo*). Maximos' threefold doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* succeeds in affirming the genuine otherness of the world without sundering it from its transcendent Ground. As such, Maximos invites us to ascend beyond the simple binaries of identity and difference to the mystery of identity *in* difference. Only by simultaneously affirming the sameness and otherness of the God/world relation – an antinomy that transcends reason – can the sacramental outlook be preserved. For Maximos, creation *ex nihilo* as creation *not* from beings, as creation from *not yet* being, and as creation *not from eternity* establishes an ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and the world created from God from nothing without sacrificing the crucial continuity between them. Together, creation *ex deo* and creation *ex nihilo* give perfect expression to Maximos' broad understanding of the world as sacrament. How it is specifically *eucharistic* is a subject to which we now turn.

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[512] *Amb*.10, 1188C.

Chapter Five

Eucharistic Ontology: The Logos as Christian Formal Principle

I. Introduction

Up to this point I have dealt primarily with the broadly sacramental character of Maximos'

ontology. In sum, I have argued that Maximos subscribes to a uniquely Christian doctrine of

creation *ex deo,* or creation as divine self-impartation; namely, the voluntary and temporal

creation of the world from God from nothing. Creation is revelation, a radiant disclosure of the

One *who made darkness His hiding place*. The world as sacrament means that all things are

imbued with the uncreated grace of God who stands alone as the supreme principle of reality.

Yet, already in Chapter One I touched upon the specifically eucharistic character of

Maximos' sacramental ontology in relation to the Logos. I argued that by conjoining the

monarchic ontology of creation from the One God to Logos-theology, Maximos signals the

emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God

and rooted in the incarnate Christ. All things proceed *from* God *according to* the Logos as

immanent principle of differentiation. As such, it is not simply the One Trihypostatic God who

serves as the ultimate, solitary Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from

before all ages and incarnate in creation. Creation as divine self-impartation means creation *from*

God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) *according to* (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made.*

I had further occasion to mention the Logos in Chapter Three, where I concluded that the

cosmic incarnation of the One Logos as many *logoi* constituted the ultimate freedom of God's

voluntary submission to finitude. Ultimately, it is the creative kenosis of the Logos who freely

subjects Himself to the limitations of creation that represents the pinnacle of divine freedom –

for "the Logos of God (who is God) *wills* (Βούλεται) always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."[513] God not only "wills to impart Himself"[514] to beings in keeping with His voluntary emanation but, as Logos, He yearns to enter directly into creation as its immanent governing principle – Wisdom incarnate.

In the present chapter I return to these preliminary reflections in order to develop them in greater detail. I argue that Maximos' ontology is not merely sacramental – something which may also be said of non-Christian philosophical and religious traditions – but specifically eucharistic. This eucharistic element – to repeat – stems from the fact that beings are not simply grounded in God as the sole *archē* of existence, but rooted specifically in Christ the Logos whose cosmic incarnation constitutes the world in both its particularity and its overarching unity. Creation from God according to the Logos is eucharistic in that it involves God's own freely offered gift of His own infinite Being – multiplied in and through the Logos – to finite beings, a gift which the latter is called to freely offer back (*anaphora*) – *thine own of thine own* – in gratitude (*eucharistia*).

I shall deal with the *anaphoric* return of the many to the One in the following, final chapter of this dissertation. The aim of the present chapter is to sketch out Maximos' eucharistic ontology in terms of his Logos-theology; namely, his understanding of the cosmic incarnation of the One Logos as the many *logoi*. I argue that Maximos' striking retrieval of Origen's Logos-theology can only be understood within the context of the Christian transformation of Neoplatonic ontology outlined in the preceding chapters. The world is simultaneously more intimately related to God, from whom it proceeds *im*mediately by way of the uncreated energies, and more radically distinguished – for, despite its derivation from God, it is neither consubstantial nor coeternal with God. This transformation of mediation, I argue, requires a

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[513] *Amb*.7, 1084D, emphasis added.
[514] *Amb*.35, 1289A.

corresponding immediate formal principle. Maximos finds this in the idea of the cosmic

incarnation of the One Logos as many *logoi*. I argue that Maximos' eucharistic ontology

represents a synthesis of two, distinct models of mediation: the *energeic* model of the

Cappadocians and the Logos-theology of Origen. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus*

formal incarnation: the Logos enters directly into His own creation as immanent principle of

differentiation. As such, God is both the *energeic* and formal cause of creation. In finitizing and

differentiating the infinite energies, the Logos establishes the crucial distinction between the

eternal *erga* and the temporal *erga* of God. This signals the emergence of a specifically Christian

sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ.

Much has been written about Maximos' Logos-theology, from the foundational works of

von Balthasar, Polycarp Sherwood, and Louth to the more recent writings of Bradshaw and

Jordan Wood. In what follows, I draw upon all of these writings – be it directly or indirectly.

Given the abundance of insight that has been generated over the years in regards to Maximos'

Logos-theology, I cannot claim to offer anything especially novel or groundbreaking. That being

said, it seems to me that there still remains an important angle that, to my knowledge, has not

been adequately addressed: the basic question concerning *why* Logos-theology?

Andrew Louth describes Maximos' Logos-theology as a "lonely meteorite" whose

"antecedents are scarce and its influence almost nil."[515] In light of this peculiar and precarious

status of what is unquestionably a fundamental element of Maximos' thought, the question

becomes all the more urgent: *why* Logos-theology? What inspired, or compelled, Maximos to

retrieve this ancient philosophical and theological idea from the dustbin of history to which it

seems to have been relegated following the demise of Origenism? As to its singular lack of

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[515] Louth, "The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World." 593.

influence *after* Maximos – that is a question for another time. What is important for the present discussion is to try to gain a better understanding regarding Maximos' retrieval of the Logos as an ontological and cosmological principle. My own thesis is that Maximos regards the Logos as the only real solution, within a Christian theological context, to a problem largely neglected by his Cappadocian predecessors; namely, the need for a formal principle of reality. As von Balthasar notes, this formal principle – be it something akin to the Platonic Ideas, or the Plotinian Nous – is largely absent from the thought of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.[516] The reason for this absence is twofold: the transformation of mediation discussed in Chapter Two, and the condemnation of Origenism. It is the first reason that is of primary interest to us here.

As we discovered in Chapter Two, the Christian rejection of mediating hypostases characteristic of the thought of Plotinus and Proclus culminates in a profoundly altered ontology: the world is simultaneously more intimately related to God, from whom it proceeds *im*mediately by way of the uncreated energies, and more radically distinguished – for, despite its derivation from God, it is neither consubstantial nor (as we noted in Chapter Four) coeternal with God. The world, as Maximos states, is created from God from nothing. Yet, like every philosophical 'solution', this one leads to a new problem; namely, the loss of a clearly defined formal principle. To say that the energies mediate between the One and the many is insufficient insofar as this does not really address the problem of particularity. Granted that beings are broadly determined by their participation in the eternal *erga* of Being, Life, Wisdom, and so on, what accounts for the *particularity* of beings in terms of genera, species, and individuals? How do God's being-making processions constitute particulars? What, in other words, *governs* finite beings' participation in the infinite *energeiai* of God? For Neoplatonists like Plotinus and

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[516] See "Presence and Thought."18-21.

Proclus the solution consists in a declining hierarchy of principles such that the generative power of the One is progressively particularized in, and as, the substantive formal content of Nous, Soul, and the immanent *logoi* of Nature.

The Christian rejection of mediating hypostases, as we have seen, does away with this scheme. The One Trihypostatic God stands alone as the ultimate principle of reality, at once transcendently simple *and* the source of multiplicity. Yet how can this be? Dionysius hints at a solution when he identifies the paradigms as the *logoi* which, though they pre-exist as a unity in God, are the cause of multiplicity in the world. As predeterminations and divine wills, the *logoi* are not fully formed Ideas, or noetic entities – as they are for the pagan Neoplatonists – but rather the divine intentionality for creation unified in God and multiple in the world. While Dionysius does not elaborate, Maximos does. In fact, Maximos' striking retrieval of the old Logos-theology with its subordinationist overtones in Clement and Origen (and before them Philo) as well as its materialist tenor via the Stoics, can only be understood within the context of this new problem of mediation.[517] How can God be both One and many at the same time? Maximos sees the solution in a bold cosmic conception of the Logos. Rather than a succession of subordinate hypostases mediating the Ideas from Nous to Nature, the One Hypostatic Logos *im*mediately constitutes reality by becoming incarnate as the many *logoi* of creation – what Wood calls creation as incarnation.[518] In this way, the Logos becomes the 'new' formal principle of reality.[519]

In order for Maximos to restore the Logos to its proper place of honour as the very centrepiece of his 'Christocentric cosmology', however, he first has to deal with the problem of

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[517] See the remarks of Cvetković, "The Mystery of Christ as Revived Logos Theology" in Lévy et al., *The Architecture of the Cosmos. St. Maximus the Confessor, New Perspectives*. 193.

[518] Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor."

[519] I put the word 'new' in quotations, of course, because Maximos' Logos-theology represents the retrieval of an idea that is very old indeed.

Origenism – for Origen is at once the problem and the solution. Origen is a problem insofar as his understanding of the Logos is tainted by a flawed, subordinationist Christology. Yet, he is also the solution in that there is arguably no better, Scripturally grounded candidate for a Christian formal principle – as Origen clearly recognized – than the very Word and Wisdom of God. In order to retrieve this indispensable piece of metaphysical machinery from the dustbin of history, then, Maximos has no choice but to go back to Origen and, by means of rigorous critique, re-establish the Logos as immanent principle of differentiation.

In sum, the transformation of mediation culminating in a more immediate relation between God and world via the uncreated energies, requires a correspondingly immediate formal principle. Maximos finds this in the idea of the cosmic incarnation of the Logos as many *logoi*. In His transcendent aspect, the Logos is One – *homoousios* with the Father, and thus utterly simple; in His immanent aspect He is the many *logoi* diversified without division, according to which all things are constituted.[520] Because there is no place in the Christian cosmos for a subordinate Nous as a *cosmos noetos*, a fully formed intelligible world of intelligible principles in addition to the One Trihypostatic God, the Logos as formal principle can only be *actually* many as immanent in the world; in His transcendent aspect He is One. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus formal incarnation*: the Logos enters directly into His own creation as its immanent governing principle. It is the Logos who finitizes the infinite energies of God, differentiating between the eternal *erga* and the temporal *erga* derived from them.

My primary thesis, then, is that Maximos' Logos-theology must be understood within this context of the Christian transformation of mediation. All things are created from (ἐκ) the uncreated energies of God according to (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made*.

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[520] I differ substantially from Wood insofar as Wood sees cosmic incarnation as the sole all-encompassing cause of creation, whereas I understand it merely as the formal cause of creation.

This signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos who, *broken but not divided*, multiplies Himself as the many *logoi* of creation.[521]

My exploration of Maximos' Logos-theology proceeds in the following manner: I begin (Section II) with a brief historical examination of the Logos speculations of Plotinus, Origen, and Dionysius. Given how vast a topic the Logos is, it is obviously impossible to give anything resembling a comprehensive account of the philosophical historical developments within the scope of a single chapter. My aim, rather, is to highlight three key figures which help shed some light on Maximos' own conception of the Logos as formal principle. I then move on (Section III) to an in-depth analysis of Maximos' Logos-theology as cosmic eucharistic incarnation. Particular attention will be paid to Maximos' use of the *'kata logon'* formula which he shares with Plotinus, his understanding of the Logos as immanent principle of unity and differentiation (derived from Origen), as well as his adoption of Dionysius' identification of the *logoi* as divine wills. Finally, (Section IV) I address some longstanding ambiguities regarding the *logoi* and the uncreated energies; namely, the tendency among some commentators and theologians to conflate these two distinct yet interrelated mediatory principles. To repeat: I argue that Maximos' eucharistic ontology represents a synthesis of two, distinct models of mediation: the *energeic* model of the Cappadocians and the Logos-theology of Origen. Creation *ex deo* coincides with cosmic incarnation. As such, God is both the *energeic* and formal cause of creation. In finitizing and differentiating the infinite energies, the Logos establishes the crucial distinction between the

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[521] In the Divine Liturgy when the priest divides up the Holy Bread prior to putting it in the chalice he says: "broken but not divided, ever eaten but never consumed." In the Eucharist the Logos becomes many so that the many communicants may become one.

eternal *erga* and the temporal *erga* of God. I conclude (Section V) with a brief summary and concluding reflections concerning Maximos' eucharistic ontology.

II. Philosophical Precursors

i. Plotinus

While Plotinus may seem an unlikely source for Maximos' Logos-theology, I begin with him for two reasons: first, one of the aims of this dissertation is to gain a better understanding of Maximos' relation to Neoplatonism. For this reason alone it is important to include Plotinus in the present conversation – if only to draw attention to the *dis*continuity between our two thinkers. Second, there are in fact notable parallels between Plotinus and Maximos that help shed light on the latter's understanding of the Logos as immanent formal principle. One of these is the shared use of the *kata logon* formula. For both thinkers, the *logoi* are that 'according to which' all things are made. Another is Plotinus' understanding of the *logoi* in Aristotelian terms as immanent formal principles. Finally, there is Plotinus' understanding of *logos* as a one-many, as simultaneously a unifying and diversifying power. While Plotinus construes all of this in accordance with the ontological hierarchy typical of Neoplatonism, the telescoping of the hierarchy by subsequent Christian thinkers means that many of Plotinus' values reappear in Maximos in modified form. In the following discussion I make no effort at a comprehensive exposition of Plotinus' *logos*-doctrine. Instead, I focus on a few select elements of special relevance to Maximos' own speculations concerning the Logos.[522]

   Strictly speaking, Plotinus does not possess a logos-doctrine. What he *does* have is a kind of World-Soul doctrine in which the *logos*/*logoi* play a key role. Broadly speaking, Soul as the

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[522] For more comprehensive accounts of the *logos* in Plotinus, see Rist, *Plotinus*.84-102; Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*.

lowest hypostasis is, in its 'descended' aspect,[523] immanent in the world as its governing,

ordering principle. The *logos*, or *logoi*, seem to represent a kind of faculty or intelligible content

of Soul, its intrinsic rationality according to which it operates in the cosmos. Plotinus speaks of

this in terms of "soul directing the All according to rational plan (κατὰ λόγον)", or as Soul

having within it "the power to set [the cosmos] in order according to rational principles (κατὰ

λόγους)."[524] While Plotinus does not say it in so many words, Soul appears as a kind of

immanent demiurge[525] who creates and oversees the cosmos from within in accordance with the

logos/*logoi* as its formal content. The *logos*, or 'rational plan' as Armstrong renders it, includes

both Soul's creation of individual things as well as its providential care and direction of them –

like a farmer who does not abandon what he sows to the vagaries of weather, but is continually

responding and adapting to conditions to ensure the ultimate wellbeing of his crop.[526] Soul in

conjunction with its immanent *logoi* accounts for the ordered beauty of the cosmos; the world is

not arbitrary or evil, but created and governed according to reason. *Logos* encapsulates both

creation and providence.

One of the more striking parallels between Plotinus and Maximos here is their shared use

of the *kata logon* formula. Plotinus' use of this formula is not limited to the above examples, but

consistently crops up whenever he speaks of the forms as immanent – whether he calls them

logoi (most of the time) or paradigms or thoughts. An example of the latter is when Plotinus says

that "providence for the All is its being according to intellect (κατα νοῦν)."[527] In this case,

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[523] Soul itself appears to be divided into a 'transcendent' aspect in constant communion with Nous, and an 'immanent' aspect present to the world of matter. See Rist, *Plotinus*. 89-91, 96-97.
[524] *Enn*.II.3.13,5 & 16.5; *Enn*.IV.3.10,10.
[525] Plotinus reserves the term 'demiurge' for the Intellect above Soul; the latter is nonetheless a kind of derivative, immanent demiurge insofar as it mediates the content of Intellect to the lower sensible world. See *Enn*.II.3.18, 15.
[526] See *Enn*.II.3.16.
[527] *Enn*.III.2.1, 23.

Plotinus is speaking from the higher perspective of Nous whose formal content "flows" *via* Soul into the sensible world as the immanent *logoi*.[528] In speaking of the intrinsic creativity of nature in *Ennead* III.8, Plotinus says that "action must take place according to a rational principle (κατὰ λόγον)."[529] Here, too, *kata logon* is used to indicate the immanent rationality in accordance with which the cosmos is generated.

The *kata logon* formula would appear to have its origin in Aristotle. In speaking of the modes of natural generation, Aristotle states that "in general both that from which (ἐξ οὗ) and that in accordance with which (καθ' ὅ) they are generated is nature (φύσις)."[530] Here, Aristotle is saying that both matter (that *from* which) and form (that *according to* which) may be regarded as nature. In at least one instance Aristotle identifies form with logos understood as the mathematical ratio, formula, or the parts which make up the definition of a thing.[531] The *logos*-as-form is that which encapsulates the 'what' of a thing, literally the 'account' of its essence. Alternatively, Aristotle employs the term 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν). In this instance, the aim is to distinguish nature from art – nature being that which possess within itself a principle of motion and rest (in contrast to artifacts which have this principle extrinsic to them). Aristotle states: "The term 'according to nature' (κατὰ φύσιν) is applied to all these [natural] things and also to the attributes which belong to them in virtue of what they are."[532] For example, fire has the attribute or activity of upward motion in accordance with its nature as fire; an acorn grows into an oak tree in accordance with its innate formal principle. When Aristotle subsequently identifies form alone with nature,[533] the two formulae *kata logon* and *kata physin* become

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[528] See *Enn*.III.2.2, 20.
[529] *Enn*.III.8.3, 5.
[530] Aristotle, *Meta.* VII.7. 1032a15, 25.
[531] *Meta.* V.2. 1013a 25-30.
[532] *Phys.* II.1. 192b35.
[533] *Phys.* II.1. 193a30-193b10.

essentially equivalent. The immanent form, nature, or *logos* of something is not merely an abstract definition, but an active moving principle that governs both animate and inanimate beings from within. *Kata logon* refers both to the immanent form according to which individual things are constituted, and to that principle intrinsic to the things themselves according to which they act (or are 'called' to act)[534] or function.

This Aristotelian background sheds some light on Plotinus' use of the *kata logon* (or *kata physin*)[535] formula when dealing with causality on the lowest levels of reality. While Plotinus' overarching understanding of causality conforms to the Platonic doctrine of participation, of archetypes and derivative images, he adopts a distinctly Aristotelian approach when dealing with the sensible world far removed from the lofty transcendence of the One and Intellect. Though the *logoi*, as we shall see, are merely derivative images of the Forms (Plato), they nonetheless acquire substantive existence as forms immanent in nature (Aristotle). On the one hand, the *logos*/*logoi* represent the rational formulae in Soul according to which Soul enforms nature; on the other hand, they represent the motive principles within beings themselves according to which they grow and develop and *are*. Simply put, when dealing with the sensible world Plotinus adopts Aristotle's hylomorphic model as a more suitable way of describing the immanent character of the forms-as-*logoi*. On this level, beings are *not* said to participate in the forms (Plato) but to be constituted *according to* the *logoi* (Aristotle).[536] Aristotle's immanent model

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[534] Maximos opens up an ethical dimension to the *logoi* in his understanding of beings acting according to their *logoi* leading to a state of well-being, or contrary to their *logoi* leading to a state of ill-being.

[535] See *Enn*.IV.4.11, 18.

[536] That is, they are not said to participate *directly* in the forms. It is the *logoi* that participate in the forms insofar as they are lower derivatives of them, while beings are constituted *in accordance with* these lowest formal instantiations.

represents an effective way of expressing the intrinsically rational and purposive character of the sensible world.[537]

A final feature of Plotinus' logos speculations is his construal of the *logos*/*logoi* as a one-many. The oneness of the *logos* is in fact another way of speaking about the unvarying will and intelligence of Soul. The Soul of the All does not deliberate, and so it is never fragmented into a multiplicity of conflicting ideas or intentions. Just as a living being is governed by a single *logos* – say, the *logos* of human – according to which a diversity of parts and functions emerge and operate, says Plotinus,

> So it is right to attribute the same [unchanging] intelligence [to the Soul of the All] and that this, as belonging to the universe, is a kind of static universal intelligence (*φρόνησιν*), manifold and varied, and yet at the same time simple, belonging to a single mighty living being, not subject to change because of the multiplicity of things, but a single rational principle and all things at once (*ἕνα λόγον καὶ ὁμοῦ πάντα*)."[538]

The fact that Soul operates in the world according to a single, unvarying paradigm does not preclude diversity. The same dialectic of oneness and manyness which we encountered in earlier chapters is present here too. In order for a single entity – be it a human being or the entire cosmos – to *be*, it must be one integral whole. It is precisely because an entity is governed by a single *logos*, or form, that it is capable of possessing complexity. Yet, insofar as this complexity refers back to a single overarching unity it does not compromise the integrity of the individual. Instead, it *enriches* it. Elsewhere, Plotinus compares this to the plot (*λόγος*) of a play which, though it has multiple parts, nonetheless represents a complete and coherent story.[539] The oneness of Soul – or the *logos* as its intelligible content – is not some impoverished singularity,

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[537] That it is also providential is something which Plotinus undoubtedly derives from the Stoics.
[538] *Enn*.IV.4.11, 15-25.
[539] See *Enn*.III.2.16, 25-35.

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but "a garden of Plenty (*Πόρος*)" filled with the "glories and adornments" of Zeus; that is, the many *logoi* which flow down from him into the ensouled cosmos.[540]

If the elements elucidated above find resonance in the later thought of Maximos, there is a crucial dissonance that must be noted in conclusion. This latter has to do with the status of the *logoi* in Plotinus and their mode of entry into the world. In essence, the *logoi* as immanent formal principles represent the lowest instantiations of the Ideas, of which they are mere derivatives and shadows. In keeping with Neoplatonic mediation, the One is the source of Intellect which gives of itself to Soul which, in its turn, communicates its intelligible content to the sensible world in the form of *logoi*. These latter thus represent the lowest instantiations of the Ideas in matter. In fact, Plotinus divides Soul itself into two aspects: a transcendent 'undescended' aspect, and an immanent aspect indistinguishable from nature.[541] Plotinus describes nature as a "*logos* which makes another *logos*" – this latter *logos* being "dead" insofar as it represents the final formal instantiation beyond which there is nothing more.[542] The *logoi*, then, as immanent formal principles represent the term of the emanative process, the final flickering rays of a singular Sun.

Rist sums up Plotinus' doctrine admirably: "Whatever *logos* may mean to other ancient thinkers, it means to Plotinus that aspect of Soul which by transmitting the creative Forms creates, maintains and orders the visible world. And as Soul embraces all individual souls, so the *logos* embraces individual *logoi*."[543] As I stated at the outset, Plotinus does not have a *logos*-doctrine so much as a World-Soul doctrine in which the *logos/logoi* play a key role. As such, the *logoi* for him can only represent something vastly inferior to the lofty transcendence of the One,

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[540] See *Enn*.III.5.8-9.
[541] *Enn*.II.3.17, 15-20.
[542] *Enn*.III.8.2, 28.
[543] Rist, *Plotinus*. 102.

Nous, and even the higher Soul. The *logoi* are pale images of the Ideas, according to which material beings are constituted. Bearing this in mind will help us to appreciate how radical and breathtaking is Maximos' conception of the Logos as simultaneously transcendent and immanent, and as *im*mediately present to the world *via* His creative incarnation. Before we get to Maximos, however, we need to take a brief look at Origen followed by Dionysius.

ii. Origen

If Plotinus cannot really be said to possess a fully formed *logos*-doctrine, the same reservation does not apply to Origen. Drawing upon the foundational work of Philo and Clement, Origen assimilates elements of the Stoic World-Soul and Platonic Nous (or Ideas in the Mind of God)[544] to the Logos as the Biblical Word and Wisdom of God.[545] As with Plotinus, the *logoi* serve as immanent formal principles; yet, unlike Plotinus, the *logoi* also acquire a loftier status roughly akin to the Plotinian *intelligibles*. In essence, Origen replaces the immanent World-Soul with the immanent Logos, while assimilating Intellect to the same Logos in its transcendent aspect. The Johannine Word thus comes to embrace the 'values'[546] of both the pagan Soul and Intellect within a single hypostasis.

   In this section, I will focus on Origen's Christianization of Hellenic principles culminating in what, in retrospect,[547] amounts to only a partial transformation of mediation. On

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[544] Depending on whether one regards Origen as the last of the so-called 'Middle-Platonists', or a nascent Neoplatonist!

[545] See Wis 9:1-2. Origen is regarded as the first Christian thinker to make this identification. See Bradshaw in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*. 11-12.

[546] I say 'values' because while Origen's Logos takes over the metaphysical functions of these principles, its content (see below) is not identical.

[547] I say in retrospect because much of Origen's doctrine is only deemed faulty in light of subsequent developments. Origen is less a determined heretic than he is a pioneering theologian whose seminal speculations come to fruition in thinkers such as the Cappadocians, Dionysius, and Maximos. See Heide, "The Origenism of Maximus Confessor."

the one hand, the merging of Soul and Intellect leads to a much more intimate relation between Creator and creation (the One and the many) than one finds, for example, in Plotinus; on the other hand, Origen's philosophical commitments and primitive Christology still prevent him from fully embracing the kind of immediacy that we encounter in Maximos' incarnational ontology. Despite the shortcomings of Origen's position, I argue that his understanding of the Logos as Word and Wisdom of God offers the ideal (arguably only) option for a specifically Christian formal principle, one that is at once philosophically informed and grounded in Scripture. It is the loss of this indispensable bit of metaphysical machinery following the condemnation of Origenism that makes Maximos' retrieval an absolute necessity – for in the absence of the Logos there is no real accounting for the particularity and ordered beauty of the Christian cosmos. Not, at any rate, in philosophical terms.

While Origen is sometimes criticized (somewhat unfairly) for being too much of a Platonist, he remains nonetheless a deeply Christian thinker (as his vast body of exegetical works abundantly illustrates).[548] As such, there is no place in his monotheistic worldview for a multiplicity of principles such as a separate realm of transcendent Ideas in addition to an immanent World-Soul. That being said, the values which these pagan principles represent, that is, the work of enforming, constituting, governing, the sensible world – in sum, the work of transforming the chaos of indeterminacy into an ordered cosmos – still need to be accounted for. Fortunately for Origen, Scripture in both the OT and the NT offers a compelling account of the Wisdom and Word of God which, with a little help from Philo and Clement, is capable of

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[548] The identification of Origen as a "Platonist" and the association of this with heresy is an ancient trope going back to Justinian. An overemphasis in modern scholarship on Origen's *De Principiis* at the expense of his exegetical works (which form the overwhelming bulk of Origen's writing) further adds to the distortion. See forward by John C. Cavadini in Origen, *On First Principles*. Also, Heide, "Heresy, Hermeneutics, and the Hellenization of Christianity."

fulfilling the role of formal principle of reality.[549] The catch is that the One Logos needs to account for the functions of *both* the transcendent Ideas *and* the immanent World-Soul as a single divine principle.

In terms of the first, Origen's understanding of the Logos benefits in some respects from the Middle-Platonist construal of the Ideas as thoughts in the mind of God, while also tending in the direction of the Neoplatonic Nous in terms of its existence as a distinct hypostasis.[550] In a way reminiscent of Philo, Origen describes the Logos as a kind of *cosmos noetos* who, on account of being "the manifold wisdom" and "the principles (λόγοι) of absolutely *everything according to which* (καθ' οὓς) all things made by God in wisdom have come to be," is in himself also "a 'world' (κόσμος) that surpasses the world of sense perception in its diversity."[551] Also like Philo, Origen refers to the Logos as the "being of beings and idea of ideas", the sum total as it were of the intelligible content of reality.[552] Unlike Philo and other Middle-Platonists like Alcinous,[553] however, Origen understands the Logos not merely as the content or expression of God's thoughts, but as an hypostasis in His own right: "God's wisdom hypostatically existing."[554] In this latter regard, Origen is closer to Plotinus for whom the totality of the intelligible world also represents a distinct hypostasis. Moreover, not unlike Plotinus, Origen

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[549] Needless to say, a complete account of Origen's (and Maximos') Logos-theology would include a thorough examination of Philo as well as Clement, a task which lies beyond the scope of this chapter.
[550] See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*., 47; Alcinous, *Handbook* IX.2.25-4.5; for Dillon's commentary see 93-100. Also, Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*. 113-119.
[551] *CommJohn*, 9.147 (emphasis added); also I.244. See Philo, *De Opif.* IV.16-19.
[552] *ContraCels*. VI.64; V.39 "the Logos which includes every logos."
[553] See *Handbook*, 9.3.35.
[554] *DePrinc*. I.II.2. Also *CommJohn*, I.243.

understands the Logos as a secondary, subordinate principle, a one-many after the One God and Father.[555]

Broad similarities aside, Berchman (following Koch) is right in arguing that Origen's understanding of the Ideas differs markedly from that of his Middle-Platonist predecessors and, I would add, from later Neoplatonist conceptions as well.[556] This is evident in Origen's reconceptualization of the Ideas in terms of the prefigurations and outlines within the Wisdom and Word of God, according to which sensible things were created. "In this Wisdom, therefore," Origen states, "who ever existed with the Father, the creation was always present in form and outline (*descripta ac formata*), and there was never a time when the pre-figurations (*praefiguratio*) of those things which hereafter were to be did not exist in Wisdom."[557] Commenting on the Prologue of John, Origen interprets the Logos as meaning that "all things came to be *in accordance with* (κατὰ) the wisdom and plans of the system of thoughts (τὴν σοφίαν καὶ τοὺς τύπους τοῦ συστήματος τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ νοημάτων) in the Word."[558] He goes on to illustrate this using the examples of an architect or a shipbuilder who build a house or a ship "according to" (κατὰ) the plans or thoughts they have in their minds prior to construction. So, too, he argues, all things "were prefigured by God in wisdom."[559]

The language of pre-figurations coupled with the *kata logon* formula suggests that "the relation of the sensibles to the intelligibles is not that of copy to model, the Platonic thesis, but

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[555] See *CommJohn*, II.12-18, 72; VI.202; XIII. 152-153; *ContraCels*. VI.61. Origen also resembles thinkers such as Numenius, who posits a 1st God and a 2nd God. See, Numenius of Apamea and Guthrie, *The Neoplatonic Writings of Numenius*. 30-40.

[556] See Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*. 126-134.

[557] *DePrinc*. I.IV.4. Also I.IV.5: "And certainly if 'all things have been made in wisdom,' then since wisdom has always existed, there have always existed in wisdom, by a pre-figuration (*praefigurationem*) and pre-formation (*praeformationem*), those things which afterwards have received substantial existence."

[558] *CommJohn*, I.113, emphasis added.

[559] *CommJohn*, I.114-115; 288.

that of matter to form, the Peripatetic thesis."[560] That is to say, the Ideas for Origen are not transcendent Perfections of which things below are pale reflections, but rather the eternal intentions within the Wisdom of God which only acquire substantive existence within the actual sensible creation. The Latin *praefiguratio* is presumably the Greek *προορισμός* which we find in Maximos, and which has a Scriptural origin.[561] We find, then, in Origen a crucial modification of the Ideas which is directly taken up by Maximos. Indeed, Origen also refers to the Ideas as *rationes* (=*λόγοι*). For both thinkers the *logoi* are not participated perfections, but prefigurations and potentialities in the Logos, which the Logos as formal and efficient cause actualizes in creation. It is the demiurgic model which Plotinus employs in speaking of the sublunar world. In sharp contrast to Plotinus, however, for whom the *logoi* merely represent the lowest level of causation, Origen does not distinguish between transcendent Ideas and immanent *logoi*. The same *logoi* which exist as eternal prefigurations in the Logos of God according to which all things are constituted are, in the act of creation, instantiated in matter. While a distinction between transcendence and immanence is certainly present, this does not imply two separate levels of reality, but rather two modes of a single principle – the transcendent/immanent Logos as the Word and Wisdom of God.

In terms of immanence, Origen hints at the assimilation of the pagan World-Soul when he compares the universe to one body composed of many members held together by one soul: "we should, I think, accept the opinion that the universe is as it were an immense, monstrous animal, held together by the power and reason (*virtute ac ratione*) of God as by one soul."[562] Origen goes on to cite St. Paul's statement that "in him we live and move and have our being"

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[560] Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*.131.
[561] The source of this terminology is presumably Scriptural. See Eph 1:5; Rm 8:29; 1 Cor 2:7.
[562] *DePrinc*. II.1.3. Berchman's insistence that Origen refuses Philo and Clement's identification of the Logos with the World-Soul would seem to be refuted by this passage. See Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*.133.

(Acts 17:28) in support of his depiction of the immanent Logos as Soul. "How else," he asks, "could this be understood "except through the fact that he binds (*constringit*) and holds together the universe by his power?" For "God's power fills all things."[563] Origen's construal of the immanent Logos in terms of an all-pervading power and reason is ubiquitous in his writings and reflects not only his characteristic fidelity to Scripture, but equally his indebtedness to Philo and the Stoics.[564] Like Philo, Origen rejects the pantheistic and corporealist Stoic conception of divine immanence while replacing its administrative function with the immanent Logos as the power and wisdom of God. In fact, both attributes are seen to be one insofar as the Logos governs and subjects all things by the power of rational persuasion. It is Wisdom itself, wielding the irresistible power of Truth, that holds all things together.[565]

While Origen assimilates the pagan World-Soul and Intellect to a single principle, the One Logos as the hypostatic Word and Wisdom of God, a detailed account of the immanent *logoi* such as one finds in Plotinus (and later in Maximos) is largely absent. In its place, Origen posits his tragic account of creation as precipitated by the fall of the *logika*, the rational beings. In essence, Origen regards the creation of the material world as due to a combination of the free choices of the *logika* – originally created equal as purely spiritual beings – and God's providential response to the actions of the *logika*. Each being, in accordance with the extent of its fall from grace, is granted a material body that best reflects its diminished spiritual state and which, moreover, will serve as a kind of correction enabling it, if it so chooses, to return to its original state of blessedness. The diversity of the material world, then, is construed

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[563] *DePrinc.* II.1.3.
[564] In terms of Scripture, the key passages would seem to be Wis 7:25 which describes Wisdom as an emanation of the power and glory of God, and 1 Cor 1:24 in which Christ is identified as the power and wisdom of God.[564] Taken together, these two passages enable Origen to identify the Wisdom of the OT with the Word of the NT, an identification accepted as normative by subsequent Tradition.
[565] See *DePrinc.* I.II.10; II.I.2; II.VI.2; III.V.7-8.

pessimistically as the result of a primal fall, the foundation of the world being for Origen a

katabole, a descent or 'casting downwards' of an originally pristine, noetic creation.[566]

On the other hand, this pessimism is counterbalanced by the providential goodness and

wisdom of God; the embodiment of beings is not so much punishment as 'physical therapy', a

kind of corporeal pedagogy whose sole aim is the ultimate restitution of creation, the

apokatastasis when God will (once again) be 'all in all.'[567] It is here that the immanent Logos as

the wisdom and power of God comes to the fore. Having foreseen the thoughts and motives of

the *logika* from all eternity, God established the corporeal creation in accordance with the pre-

figurations and outlines in the Logos. As immanent, these pre-figurations manifest as the wisdom

and power of the Logos who binds the cosmos together by means of rational persuasion: "For

there is one power which binds and holds together all the diversity of the world and guides the

various motions to the accomplishment of one task, lest so immense a work as the world should

be dissolved by the conflicts of souls."[568] This one power, as we have seen, is none other than the

power of reason by which all things will be subjected in Christ to the Father "no[t] by the use of

force, but by word, by reason, by teaching, by exhortation to better things."[569] The transcendent

Logos as the sum total of the *logoi*, the pre-figurations and outlines of creation, enters into the

world as providence, the immanent governing principles and predetermined genera and species

of fallen beings according to which they are constituted and coerced back to their origin as end.

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[566] See *DePrinc*. III.V.4; also *CommJohn*, 19.149-150. Yet consider Bradshaw's more positive evaluation in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*. 12. In my view, this seed of optimism in Origen primarily comes to fruition in Maximos' transformation of Origen. See Heide, "The Origenism of Maximus Confessor."

[567] See *DePrinc*. III.V.6.

[568] *DePrinc*. II.I.2.

[569] *DePrinc*. III.V.8.

In this way, Origen arrives at his highly idiosyncratic understanding of the Logos as immanent principle of differentiation. The Logos is immanent as the many *logoi* – for according to Origen the Logos *is* "the manifold wisdom (σοφία πολῃποίκιλος)…the principles (λόγους) of absolutely everything according to which (καθ' οὓς) all things made by God in wisdom have come to be"[570] – yet this immanence is largely (if not wholly) a concession to the fallenness of the original creation. The primary principle of differentiation is arguably *not* the Logos, but the ill-begotten freedom of the creature. On the other hand, insofar as God in His timeless Wisdom has foreseen the choices of the *logika*, the principles according to which the material world comes to be ordered cannot rightly be said to be secondary. Instead, we have a kind of 'synergistic'[571] account of creation whereby the will of God in conjunction with the freedom of the creature together constitute the world in its diversity.

The motive for Origen's ingenious scheme – one which has not been sufficiently appreciated – is theodicy (on the divine side) and freedom (on the creaturely side). In a single stroke, Origen manages to absolve God of all responsibility for the evil and inequality in the world while radically affirming the freedom of the creature. Unfortunately, this solution does not come cheap. It comes at the expense of a pessimistic understanding of particularity as evil. The fact that the Logos has wisely and providentially ordered this particularity does not do away with the fact that its ultimate aim is arguably the dissolution of multiplicity and a return to the blessed unity of the original spiritual creation. On the one hand, Origen's many allusions to the immanence of the Logos points towards the possibility of a kind of Christo-centric sacramentality, or eucharistic ontology. On the other hand, his identification of diversity with

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[570] *CommJohn* 19.147.

[571] I put synergistic in quotations marks because the '*erga*' of the *logika* are only works in a negative sense in opposition to the divine will. A better term, to coin a neologism, might be syn*an*ergistic, 'un-cooperation'.

fallenness makes it difficult to contemplate creation as theophany – as divine self-differentiation, as the radiant disclosure of Wisdom incarnate.

In addition to the problem of pessimism, Origen's Logos was deemed inadequate by subsequent Tradition on account of its subordinationism. Philosophically speaking, Origen's Logos-doctrine amounts to only a partial transformation of mediation. He succeeds in combining the ontological values of the pagan World-Soul and Intellect into a single transcendent/immanent principle (while simultaneously reconfiguring them), yet falls short of equating the Logos with the One God and Father. Instead, the Logos remains a subordinate one-many in keeping with the Platonic tendency to insulate the Absolute from too close a relationship with multiplicity. In a sense, Origen's Logos is neither transcendent enough nor immanent enough. Not transcendent enough in that He is not equal to God the Father; not immanent enough in that the diversity of the cosmos is not an unqualified expression of manifold Wisdom. Nonetheless, Origen succeeds in elevating the Logos to a status akin to the Plotinian Nous, while paving the way for a more immediate conception of divine immanence. While Origen's pioneering efforts deserve our appreciation and admiration, his failure to adequately account for the fundamental goodness of creation, coupled with his faulty Christology, meant that his understanding of the Logos as formal principle could only be appropriated in light of later Christological developments, and by means of rigorous critique. This Maximos accomplishes with the help of Dionysius to whom we now turn.

iii. Dionysius

While Dionysius is not primarily known as a Logos-theologian, his theologizing of the Ideas as the predeterminations and wills of God, along with his identification of these with the *logoi*,

makes him the crucial link between Origen and Maximos. Moreover, as we noted in Chapter Two, Dionysius plays a key role in the transformation of mediation. As such, he completes the task begun by Origen while paving the way for Maximos' mature Christological articulation of the transcendent/immanent Logos.

One of the key passages discussed in Chapter Two involved Dionysius' explicit rejection of the Procline proliferation of mediating hypostases. For Dionysius, as we saw, Goodness, Being, Life, Wisdom, and so on, do not represent a descending hierarchy of principles but are rather manifold expressions of a single divine providence.[572] I argued that this change marked a radical new approach to the problem of the One and the many, whereby the source of multiplicity and otherness is located immediately within the One God. As such, the antinomy between the One and the many, transcendence and immanence is radically affirmed – God is "all things in all things, and nothing in any."[573] I went on to argue that the Christian suppression of mean terms resulted in a new model of mediation *via* the uncreated energies. In place of Proclus' participated terms, Dionysius posits the being-making processions or participated powers derived directly from the imparticipable Godhead. These divine *dynameis* are not hypostasized realities but *energeic* communications of God *ad extra.*

In addition to the being-making processions of God, Dionysius posits a formal doctrine according to which (κατά) these processions are diversified, and which he identifies as *logoi*. He states:

> We say that 'paradigms' (παραδείγματα) are those being-making principles (οὐσιοποιοὺς λόγους) pre-existing henadically in God and which theology calls predeterminations (προορισμοὺς), and divine and good wills (θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα) which determine

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[572] *DN*.5, 816D. See Chapter Two above, 93.
[573] *DN*.7.3, 872A.

and make beings, and according to which (καθ' οὓς) the Supraessential has predetermined (προώρισε) and produced all beings.[574]

While Dionysius does not offer a detailed argumentation concerning these *logoi*, or their relation to the participated processions, a number of important elements are nonetheless introduced. Firstly, his explicit identification of the Ideas as *logoi* and as predeterminations, reminiscent of Origen.[575] Secondly, Dionysius goes beyond Origen in explicitly equating the *logoi* with the divine wills, thereby introducing a dynamic volitional element into his formal doctrine. Thirdly, we encounter the familiar *kata logon* formula which once again indicates that we are faced with a demiurgic, not an exemplarist, conception of the Ideas. The so-called 'paradigms' are not participated forms, but differentiating principles *according to which* all things are constituted. These three elements reveal the continuity between Origen and Dionysius which, along with the latter's contribution of the volitional element, is taken up directly by Maximos as the foundation for his own fully developed Logos-theology.

Although in the above passage Dionysius simply states that the *logoi* pre-exist henadically in God, he specifies his position in his discussion of the divine name 'Logos'. God, he says, "is hymned as 'Logos' by the sacred Scriptures not only as the leader of word, mind, and wisdom (λόγου καὶ νοῦ καὶ σοφίας), but also because he uniformly pre-embraces (μονοειδῶς προείληφε) within himself the causes (αἰτίας) of all things and because he penetrates all things, reaching, as the Scriptures say, to the very end of all things."[576] Here the *logoi* – termed 'causes'

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[574] *DN*.5.8, 824C50-55. My translation in consultation with Luibheid and De Andia.
[575] It would seem that John Scythopolis in his *Scholia* fails to grasp the transformation of the Ideas as predeterminations wrought by Dionysius here, insofar as he still interprets them as participated Ideas in the mind of God. See Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus*. 204, 219.
[576] *DN*.7.4, 872C. Bradshaw insists that the *logoi* as wills "are not identical to the *hypostasis* of the Logos nor, obviously enough, to the divine essence or nature. They are acts that God performs and that presumably, in at least some cases, could be different." Yet this would seem to reduce the *logoi* to some sort of insubstantial and arbitrary divine operations. Bradshaw, it would seem, still holds to the voluntaristic notion that unchanging *logoi* would

– are explicitly said to pre-exist uniformly within the One Logos who, moreover, is said to penetrate all things. What we find succinctly expressed here in Dionysius, then, is a conception of the transcendent/immanent Logos as unity of the many *logoi*, the predeterminations and divinely willed causes of creation. Of crucial importance, is the emphasis upon the oneness of the Logos who pre-embraces the many *logoi* in an absolutely uniform and henadic manner. Dionysius emphasises this point when he further remarks that "the divine Logos is simpler (ὑπερήπλωται) than any simplicity (ἁπλότητος) and, in its utter transcendence, is independent (ἀπολελυμένος) of all things."[577] Dionysius' understanding of the Logos as God and hence as radically one and simple, marks the completion of Origen's partial transformation of mediation.[578] Whereas for Origen the Logos remains a one-many subordinate to the simple unity of the Father, Dionysius embraces the antinomy head on by declaring the Logos at once utterly one and equal to the Father, and at the same time the source of multiplicity.

Needless to say, Dionysius' characteristically cryptic exposition leaves much to be desired. One potential source of confusion lies in trying to understand the relation between the *logoi* and the participated processions – both of which he terms 'being-making' (οὐσιοποιοὺς).[579] Moreover, in his attempts to illustrate how the One God/Logos can be the Source of multiplicity Dionysius employs exactly the same analogies such as, for example, the classic circle with its radii, or the sun whose one light illuminates and enlivens all things. What we find in Dionysius, it would seem, is the merger of two, distinct models of mediation: the essence/energies model

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undermine the divine freedom. See "The *Logoi* of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought," in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration.*, 16.

[577] *DN*.7.4, 872C.

[578] It remains for Maximos to work out the precise argumentation for Dionysius' nascent Logos-theology.

[579] See *DN*.5.1, 816B; V.8, 824C.

derived from the Cappadocians[580], and the Logos/*logoi* model derived from Origen. Dionysius gives voice to both streams of thought without explicitly reconciling them.[581] His work, after all, is more inspired utterance than elaborate argumentation. Nonetheless, by bringing these two traditions of thought together he sets the stage both for the rehabilitation of Origen's Logos-theology, and the future synthesis of this all-important formal doctrine with that of the uncreated energies. It is this momentous task that is bequeathed to Maximos.

III. Maximos: The Logos as Christian Formal Principle

As I argued in the Introduction, Maximos' retrieval of the old Alexandrian Logos from the obscurity to which it had been relegated following the condemnation of Origen, can only be understood within the context of the Christian transformation of mediation. In brief, while the dissolution of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of principles led to a more immediate relation between the One God and His manifold creation – a relation mediated by the eternal *erga*, or energies of God – this new model of mediation failed to account for the particularity of things. Granted that beings are broadly constituted by their participation in the uncreated energies of Being, Life, Wisdom, and so on, what accounts for the *particularity* of beings in terms of genera, species, and individuals? How do God's being-making processions constitute particulars? What, in other words, *governs* finite beings' participation in the infinite *energeiai* of God? Dionysius hints at a

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[580] As we discussed in Chapter Two, this is not to claim that the Cappadocians possessed a fully developed essence/energies doctrine such as one finds only much later in Gregory Palamas. Insofar as the seeds of the latter doctrine are present it might best be termed 'proto-Palamite'. Keeping this qualification in mind, I employ 'essence/energies model' as a convenient label, or shorthand, for what is still a nascent (albeit undeniable) distinction in the 4th century.

[581] This ambiguity in Dionysius sometimes results in scholarly confusion regarding the precise relationship between the *logoi* and the energies. Lossky, for example, both problematically identifies the *logoi* with the energies and, more promisingly, describes them as the principles *according to which* the energies are diversified. See, Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 95-99; Lossky, "La Notion Des' Analogies' Chez Denys Le Pseudo-Aréopagite." 285.

solution when he identifies the paradigms as the *logoi* which, though they pre-exist as a unity in God, are the cause of multiplicity in the world. As predeterminations and divine wills, the *logoi* are not fully formed Ideas, or noetic entities – as they are for the pagan Neoplatonists – but rather the divine intentionality for creation unified in God and multiple in the world. In this, Dionysius brings Origen's partial transformation of mediation to completion. The Logos as formal principle is not a unity-in-multiplicity subordinate to the Father, but a radical One/many of one essence with the Father and immanent in creation.

It is with the help of Dionysius, then, that Maximos is able to rehabilitate Origen's Logos which, though marred by subordinationism and an inadequate understanding of immanence, nonetheless remains the only real candidate for a specifically Christian formal principle – the Word and Wisdom of God *through whom all things were made*. While Dionysius does not elaborate, Maximos does, providing a detailed working out of the Logos principle in terms of incarnational ontology.[582] In His transcendent aspect, the Logos is One – *homoousios* with the Father, and thus utterly simple; in His immanent aspect He is the many *logoi* diversified without division, according to which all things are constituted. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus formal incarnation*: just as God generates the world *im*mediately from His uncreated energies, so the Logos enters directly into His own creation as its immanent governing principle. As such, the immanent Logos is no longer seen as a concession to the fall as in Origen but, following Dionysius, as theophany – a dazzling display of divine self-differentiation. Maximos therefore offers us a positive and genuinely eucharistic conception of creation as *gift*.

In sum, I argue that Maximos' Logos-theology must be understood within the context of the Christian transformation of mediation. Because there is no place in the Christian cosmos for a

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[582] See Louth, "The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World." 593.

subordinate Nous understood as an actual intelligible world of noetic entities sequent to the One

Trihypostatic God, the Logos as formal principle can only be *actually* many as immanent in the

world; in His transcendent aspect He is One.[583] Creation-as-emanation and creation-as-

incarnation thus coincide: All things are created from (ἐκ) the uncreated energies of God

according to (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made*. This signals the emergence

of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in

the incarnate Christ. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through

the Logos.

Maximos' Logos-theology incorporates many of the themes and elements discussed

above in Plotinus, Origen, and Dionysius. With Plotinus, Maximos shares the Aristotelian

understanding of the *logoi* as immanent principles according to which (κατά λόγον) things are

constituted, as well as the *logos/logoi* as a kind of one-many. From Origen, Maximos retrieves

the Logos as Christian formal principle, the recasting of the Ideas as the eternal prefigurations

and *logoi* of God, along with a provisional conception of the Logos as simultaneously

transcendent and immanent. Finally, Maximos absorbs Dionysius' further identification of the

logoi as divine wills, as well as the heightened antinomy of the simultaneous oneness/manyness

of the Logos. In what follows, I approach these multiple themes and elements in Maximos'

Logos-theology in three stages: 1) I begin with Maximos' understanding of the transcendent

Logos as One; 2) I then examine the immanent Logos as the many *logoi*; 3) I conclude with the

transcendent/immanent *logoi* as the formal principles *according to which* things are created. The

result will hopefully be a clearer understanding of the Logos as Christian principle of

differentiation.

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[583] That is to say, the Logos is One in His contracted, or enfolded, aspect, and many in His expanded, or unfolded, aspect. I address this point in detail below.

1) Transcendence: Unity Without Confusion

One of Maximos' most recognized passages concerning the Logos occurs in *Amb*.7 when, meditating upon the dazzling diversity of creation, Maximos rhetorically poses the question as to how anyone could possibly "fail to know the one Logos as many *logoi*, indivisibly distinguished (ἀδιαιρέτως συνδιακρινόμενον) amid the differences of created things," while simultaneously recognizing "that the many *logoi* are the one (ἕνα) Logos, seeing that all things are related (ἀναφορᾷ) to Him, who is the essential and personally distinct Logos of God the Father."[584] This passage is fundamental to any discussion of Maximos' Logos-theology insofar as it proclaims the basic antinomy that the One Logos *is* the many *logoi* and the many *logoi are* the One Logos.[585] Not only is the One, one, and the many, many; but the One is many and the many are One such that there is simultaneously a unity that is diversified, and a diversity that is unified. The Christological language of "indivisibly distinguished" along with the eucharistic language of all things being "related" or "referred back" (ἀναφορᾷ) to the One Logos suggests that Maximos' construal of the relation between the One and the many embraces a logic beyond that of pagan Neoplatonism, a logic informed by the foolishness of the Incarnation.

So how are we to understand the oneness of the Logos in terms of His transcendence? On the one hand, Maximos gives every indication that we are to understand it exactly the same way as we would understand the Neoplatonic One. To begin with, in the above passage Maximos calls the Logos *Hen*, the very same term used by the Neoplatonists to signify the First Principle. Elsewhere he refers to the Logos as "the first, only, and one (ἑνὶ) God the Word," while "the

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[584] *Amb*.7, 1077C.
[585] Some commentators still fail to grasp this fundamental point of Maximos' Logos-theology. See, Bradshaw "The *Logoi* of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought" ,Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*. 16; also Wen, "Maximus the Confessor and the Problem of Participation." 9-14.

principles of everything that exists are and subsist singly (ἑνοειδῶς) in Him according to one

unintelligible simplicity (ἀπερινόητον ἁπλότητα)."[586] Not only is the Logos *Hen*, but the many

logoi subsist within Him in a correspondingly uniform – that is, *heni*form – manner.

Alternatively, Maximos employs the term *Monas* as another way of indicating the transcendent

simplicity of the Logos: "the Monad," he says, "exists as something primary and unique (πρώτη

καὶ μόνη)."[587] And yet, like Plotinus, he insists that the term *Monas* is in no way indicative of the

divine *ousia* itself, "but rather as indicative of its utter simplicity (ἁπλότητος), which is beyond

(ἐπέκεινα) every quantity, quality, and relation (σχέσεως)."[588] The language of simplicity

(ἁπλότητα, ἁπλότητος), transcendence (ἐπέκεινα), and non-intelligibility (ἀπερινόητον) are further

indicators that Maximos regards the status of the Logos as equivalent to that of the Plotinian

One. Indeed, Maximos explicitly states that the Logos is beyond thought and being, and so

beyond the subtle duality of Intellect.[589] Finally, Maximos employs the classic Neoplatonic

image of the circle to illustrate the transcendent simplicity of the Logos (the point) from which

proceeds all multiplicity (the radii).[590]

Now all of this is fine and well until we recall that we are dealing here with the Logos

which, despite its henadic simplicity, represents the formal principle of Maximos' Christian

cosmos. In Neoplatonic terms, the transcendent Logos somehow encompasses *both* the One *and*

Intellect. Revealing his debt to Origen, Maximos declares that from all eternity the Logos

"contained within Himself the pre-existing *logoi* (λόγους προϋφεστῶτας) of created beings."[591]

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[586] *Myst.* 5. 475 [CCSG 30], emphasis added.
[587] See also, *Amb*.67, 1400C; *Thal. Q*.55.8; 54.23.
[588] *Amb*.10, 1185C-D. Those who are quick to accuse Plotinus of an "impersonal One" on account of its freedom from relation would do well to ponder the numerous similar statements in Maximos. The apophatic language of unrelatedness must always be counterbalanced by the more kataphatic language of providence in both thinkers.
[589] See *Amb*.7, 1081C; *Thal. Q*.35.2; *Myst.* 110 [CCSG 9].
[590] See *Amb*.7, 1081C; *Myst.* 1, 190 [CCSG 14]; *CTh.* 2.4.
[591] *Amb*.7, 1080A.

Invoking the authority of Dionysius, he further states that "Scripture calls these *logoi* 'predeterminations' (προορισμοὺς) and 'divine wills' (θεῖα θελήματα)," as do the disciples of Pantainos the teacher of Clement.[592] Elsewhere, Maximos states that "in Him preexist (προϋφεστήκασί) the principles (λόγοι) of all good things, as if from an ever-flowing spring, in a single, simple (ἁπλῆν), unified (ἑνιαίαν) embrace."[593] In numerous places Maximos makes reference to the pre-existent *logoi* "hidden" (ἀπόκρυφον) within the Logos from all eternity, or of beings have been "predestined" (προωρίσθημεν) by God from before the ages.[594] The radical simplicity of the One Logos, then, somehow also contains a kind of latent multiplicity – albeit one that is hidden and henadic. Even here on the transcendent level, the One is many and the many One.

This paradoxical position results from Maximos' own working out of the Christian suppression of mean terms. Because there is no place in the Christian cosmos for a descending hierarchy of ontological principles – nor, after the condemnation of Origen, for a subordinate Logos – the formal principles of creation have no place apart from the consubstantial Word. The One Trihypostatic God Himself becomes the source of multiplicity. As we noted with Perl in Chapter Two,[595] this is not merely a matter of theology, but philosophy – for no matter how much one tries to disguise the problem of the derivation of the many from the One by multiplying intermediaries, the fundamental antinomy remains. This, as Plotinus himself admits, is truly a "marvel" (θαῦμα).[596] While in Chapter Two I spoke about the transformation of mediation in terms of the eternal *erga*, or uncreated energies, of God, here I address it in terms of

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[592] *Amb*.7, 1085A. See also, *Thal. Q.* 13.2;
[593] *Amb*.10, 1205D.
[594] See *Amb*.42, 1328B, 1329A; *Amb*.7, 1097C; *Thal. Q.* 22.2.
[595] See above, 94.
[596] *Enn*.VI.9.5, 30.

the formal principles of reality, in the absence of which the particularity of creation remains inexplicable. Maximos recognizes this and, acknowledging the wisdom and folly of both the pagan and the Origenist solutions, faces the antinomy head on by uncompromisingly identifying the One Logos *as* the many *logoi*.

Yet how are we to understand this? Is it possible to understand this? Apophatically speaking, the answer is ultimately no. As One, the Logos is beyond thought and being and, hence, beyond conceptualization.[597] The One-manyness of the Logos is no more thinkable than the Triunity of the Godhead, or the Incarnate Christ as fully God, fully man. *As* antinomy the One-manyness of the transcendent Logos can only be affirmed, not thought – for though manyness seemingly cannot be derived from the One, in the absence of the One multiplicity itself dissolves into an abyss of infinite divisibility.[598] *How* the One is the Ground of multiplicity is unintelligible (ἀπερινόητον); *that* it is so must nonetheless be asserted.

That being said, Maximos does not wholly abandon us to apophatic silence but, in his infinite mercy, offers a few helpful hints as to how we might conceptualize this *mystery hidden from the ages*. One way to approach this is in terms of potentiality and actuality. What Dodds remarks about Plotinus – that the One as the potency (δύναμις) of all things must in some sense also be all things in potentiality (δυνάμει) – would seem to apply equally to Maximos.[599] Indeed, Maximos' frequent use of the image of the circle and radii indicates as much. The centre of the circle is the point at which the many radii come together as one. This image tries to illustrate

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[597] See *Amb*.7, 1081C.

[598] Proclus, *ElTh.*, Prop. 1.

[599] See Dodds *Elements*, 259. In a rare moment of kataphatic candour Plotinus acknowledges that the One must somehow possess all things "beforehand" (πρότερον). And yet, he hastens to add, "it had them in such a way as not to be distinct (μὴ διακεκριμένα): they are distinguished on the second level, in the rational form (τῷ λόγῳ)." *Enn*.V.3.15, 35. In contrast to Plotinus, Maximos neither defers this latent multiplicity to a secondary principle, nor regards it as indistinct. The many *are* the One in a unity without confusion.

how the One Logos somehow pre-contains the many *logoi* in a unified way. Maximos'

comparison of the Logos to a mustard seed which, though small, reveals itself as the source of

the many *logoi* further exemplifies the way in which the many exist as potentialities in the One.

We could say that the many *logoi* exist as potentialities in God only becoming actualized in their

procession as the immanent principles of creation. As Maximos states: "God is an eternally

active (ἐνέργειάν) creator, but creatures exist first in potential (δυνάμει), and only later in

actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ)."[600] In His transcendence the Logos is actually One but potentially many,

while in His immanence He is actually many but potentially One.

    While there is a measure of truth to this scheme – particularly from the perspective of the

creature – it is misleading to the extent that it suggests a kind of potentiality or incompletion in

God. Granted beings exist as potentialities in the Logos, it is not the case that the *logoi*, God's

eternal intentions for each of these beings, are somehow potentialities – for from all eternity God

knows what He wills, and wills what He knows, for this *is* God in the fullness of His actuality. A

related and more suitable paradigm which Maximos uses is that of diastole/systole, or expansion

and contraction.[601] According to this scheme, the many *logoi* are contracted in the One Logos in

His transcendence, while being expanded in His immanence. To put it another way, the oneness

of the Logos remains *implicit* in His self-multiplication as the many *logoi,* while being *explicit* in

His abiding transcendence. Creation as incarnation marks the unfolding of the One Logos as the

many *logoi* of beings, while deification represents the *en*folding of the many *logoi* as the One

Logos. This is the cosmic liturgy, the onto-dialectic of procession and return.

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[600] *Amb*.7, 1081B.
[601] See Cvetković, "The Mystery of Christ as Revived Logos Theology" in Lévy et al., *The Architecture of the Cosmos. St. Maximus the Confessor, New Perspectives*., 199.

One of the principal ways Maximos articulates this is by recourse to the logical categories of genus, species, and particulars, a system of classification associated with Porphyry's *Isagoge*.[602] Maximos states:

> But even what is called "substance" (*οὐσία*) in a simple sense (*ἁπλῶς*) – not just the substance of things subject to generation and corruption, which moves according to generation and corruption, but the substance of all beings – has been set in motion and continues to move according to the principle and mode of expansion and contraction (*διαστολὴν καὶ συστολὴν*). For it is moved from the most generic genus through the more generic genera to particular species, through which and in which it is naturally divided, proceeding down (*προϊοῦσα*) to the most specific species, where its expansion (*διαστολή*) comes to a limit…and once again is gathered back (*συνάγεται*) from the most specific kinds of species, moving back through more and more general categories, until it is gathered up into the most generic genus, and there its contraction (*συστολή*) comes to an end.[603]

While this passage focuses specifically on the created order – the reference to substance *per se* would seem to indicate the generic *created* substance[604] of which created beings partake and not the divine *ousia* which is strictly unparticipated – it nonetheless offers important clues regarding the One-manyness of the transcendent Logos. The most simple and generic category – *ousia* – is seen to pre-contain, according to the principle of contraction (*συστολή*), all the subsequent genera, species and particulars which represent the expansion (*διαστολή*), procession, or unfolding, of created *ousia* as such. Conversely, the multiplicity of particulars are able to be gathered back up (*συνάγεται*)[605] such that they are seen to be ultimately one in essence, yet in a way that preserves their particularity.

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[602] See, Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. 81-92.
[603] *Amb*.10, 1177C.
[604] See *Amb*.10, 1184B: "And if every substance (*οὐσία*), and all matter, and all forms are from God (*ἐκ Θεοῦ*)…"; also *Amb*.7, 1080A, for created universals.
[605] Note the liturgical resonance: the Divine Liturgy is termed Synaxis (*συνάξεως*) by both Maximos and Dionysius.

Now granted that the above passage is speaking specifically about creation, the latter is nonetheless inseparable from the *logoi* which *govern* that creation. It comes as no surprise then that Maximos identifies this very same scheme with the *logoi* when he states in another passage that "the principles (*λόγοι*) of whatever is separated and particular are, as they say, contained by the principles (*λόγοις*) of what is universal and generic, and the more generic and more universal principles (*λόγους*) are held together by wisdom (*σοφίας*)." He then gives a parallel account culminating in prudence (*φρονήσεως*) before concluding that "the *Wisdom* and Prudence *of God the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ*, who through the power of wisdom sustains the universals of beings, and through the prudence of understanding embraces the parts from which they were completed."[606] In other words, when we ascend from the multiplicity of particulars through species and genera we end up in the One Logos who draws all this diversity together into a unified embrace – literally into One (*εἰς ἓν ἄγων*).[607] In the Logos the manifold *logoi* are one in a way *analogous* to the categories of particulars, species, and genera. [608] Just as all beings in their infinite variety are simply one in the singular fact of their existence, so the many *logoi* according to which beings are created are one in terms of their 'logicality'. As Maximos aptly puts it, the One Word is not wordy (*πολύλογος*) for Truth is singular no matter how loquacious one chooses to be about it.[609] Most important of all, this logical analogy allows Maximos to express the One-

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[606] *Amb*.41, 1313B. Emphasis in original to indicate allusions to Scripture [1 Cor 1:24, 30].
[607] *Amb*.41, 1313C.
[608] Tollefsen criticizes Perl's assertion that the One Logos is Himself the highest universal, or Genus. There is, admittedly, something untoward about identifying the living Word and Wisdom of God with an impersonal and abstract logical category. Yet, it seems to me that it is not inappropriate to say that the Logos is in some ineffable way *analogous* to Genus. In applying these logical categories to the Logos/*logoi*, Maximos' aim is not to reduce the divine Wisdom to some sort of conceptual apparatus, but to figuratively illustrate how the many *logoi* can be One Logos without compromising their individuality. In other words, it is an analogy. The fact that Maximos uses abstract concepts rather than poetic images should not blind us to the figurative, analogous character of the discussion. See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. 91; Perl, *Methexis*. 169.
[609] *CTh. 2.20.*

manyness of the Logos without doing violence to particulars. The many *logoi* are enfolded in the

One Logos in a unity without confusion.[610]

 A final way in which one might approach the One-manyness of the transcendent Logos is

in terms of the *logoi* as divine wills. As we noted above, Maximos identifies the *logoi* as the

predeterminations and divine wills eternally existing in God. It is worth asking, then: what *is* the

ultimate will of God? If the many *logoi* are One Logos, and if the *logoi* are wills, then the Logos

arguably represents a single overarching divine Will in which the many wills are enfolded. What,

then, is this One Will and eternal predetermination of God which finds its manifold unfolding in

the history of the world? The answer is scarcely surprising. It is none other than Christ Himself

the *mystery hidden from the ages* – "for the Logos of God (who is God) *wills* (βούλεται) always

and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."[611] This singular will to

incarnation (historical, Scriptural, and cosmic) is simultaneously the will for deification. Christ

conjoined us to Himself, says Maximos, "since we were *predestined* (προωρίσθημεν) before the

ages to be in Him as the members of His body."[612] The incarnation, Maximos continues,

"showed us that *this was why we were created*, and that *this was God's good purpose*

(παντάγαθον σκοπόν) concerning us from before the ages."[613] The many *logoi* according to

which the world is created, sustained, and perfected; the *logos* of every mineral, plant, animal,

and angel; the *logos* of every human individual that was, is, and shall be; all of these *logoi*

predetermined from before the ages are united by a single Logos – God's unwavering Will to

unite us to Himself in a union without confusion. This is the ultimate plan,[614] intention, account,

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[610] *See also Amb.41, 1312C-D; Thal. Q.48.17, scholia 15.*

[611] *Amb.*7, 1084D. Emphasis added. Also *Thal. Q.*60.2-3.

[612] *Amb.*7, 1097C. Emphasis in original to indicate Scriptural allusion [Rom 8:23; Ja 1:18}

[613] *Amb.*7, 1097C. Emphasis added.

[614] See *Thal. Q.*22.2. So Thunberg: "This unification without annihilation is thus indeed the divine purpose itself." Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d. 79. Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*. 76.

truth, *logos* concerning creation – and this Logos *is* the Word and Wisdom of God *through whom* and *for whom* all things were made.[615] To paraphrase a fundamental Patristic maxim: God became world so that the world could become god.

Thanks to his understanding of the Ideas as predeterminations and divine wills, Maximos is able to ascribe a kind of multiplicity to the One that (in his view at least) neither compromises the unicity of God, nor undermines the integrity of particulars. The many *logoi* really *are* One in their contractedness in the Logos – for they are simply the elaborations of a single divine Idea. Just as the many words of Scripture bear witness to a single Word – Christ – so the many words of creation form a single, unitary account of God's wondrous plan for the world centred upon the Incarnation. Maximos illustrates this with the help of logical categories. In the same way that individuals are one in species, and species are one in genus, and just as this oneness in no way undermines their individual existences, so the many *logoi* are united without confusion in the One Logos. In this way, Maximos is able to combine the values of the Plotinian One and Intellect into a single transcendent principle such that the One Trihypostatic God is at once the unitary Ground of being and the sole Source of multiplicity and intelligibility in the cosmos. By the same token, Maximos is able to rehabilitate Origen's Logos which, though He is *homoousios* with the Father and the Holy Spirit and thus radically simple, is nonetheless able to serve as Christian formal principle.

2) Immanence: Distinction Without Division

If the One Logos is best described as a unity without confusion in His transcendence, then His immanence as the many *logoi* of beings is best thought of in terms of distinction without

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[615] Col 1:16. See *Amb*.7, 1080A.

division. For this one may look to some of the same passages discussed above, only from the opposite perspective. The One Logos, as we already noted, is the many *logoi* "indivisibly distinguished (ἀδιαιρέτως συνδιακρινόμενον) amid the differences of created things."[616] Maximos further declares that "this same One is manifested and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in Him."[617] The multiplicity which is contracted or enfolded in the One Logos becomes expanded or unfolded in the One's self-differentiation in creation. Yet if the emphasis now is upon the pluralization of the One in creation, this plurality never departs from its fundamental unity. Once again the image of the circle illustrates this. Whereas earlier we explored this image in terms of the unicity of the many *logoi* contracted into a point at the centre of the circle, by shifting our attention to the circumference we discover the unified differentiation of the One Logos as many *logoi*. If Maximos sometimes uses this image to stress the oneness of the many *logoi* in their contraction into the One Logos, he also employs it to illustrate the way in which the *logoi* in their manifold expansion remain unified. The Logos, he states, "according to the one, simple, and single cause and power…does not permit the principles (ἀρχὰς) of the things that are to depart from their boundaries, but he limits their extents with a circle."[618] The periphery of the circle illustrates how even in their expansion the *logoi* – and hence the beings created *according to* the *logoi* – never dissolve into indeterminacy, but remain unified. If the transcendent Logos is explicitly One and implicitly many, the immanent Logos is explicitly many and implicitly One.

Maximos' dialectic of unity-in-multiplicity resembles that of Plotinus. Plotinus too, as we noted, understands the immanent intelligence of Soul as a unified multiplicity as "a single

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[616] *Amb*.7, 1077C.
[617] *Amb*.7, 1080B.
[618] *Myst.* 1, 190 [CCSG 14].

rational principle and all things at once (ἕνα λόγον καὶ ὁμοῦ πάντα)."[619] Plotinus compares this to

the singular plot (λόγος) of a play which, though it has multiple parts, nonetheless represents a

complete and coherent narrative.[620] The oneness of Soul – or the *logos* as its intelligible content

– is not some impoverished singularity, but a radiant display of reason, a richness of

intelligibility, of unity-in-distinction.[621] Maximos expresses something similar in his insistence

that the Word is not "wordy" (πολύλογος). No matter how many words are used to express the

truth of reality – be it the many words of Scripture, or the 'letters' of creation – ultimately one

"has spoken about one *logos* of God (ἕνα λόγον εἴρηκε τοῦ Θεοῦ)."[622] The dramatic difference

between Plotinus and Maximos, however, is that whereas for Plotinus this unity-in-multiplicity is

regarded as the lowest instantiation of the Ideas (themselves subordinate to the transcendent

One), for Maximos it is none other than the self-multiplication of the One Logos Himself.

Because there is no descending hierarchy of principles to mediate between the One God and His

manifold creation, the procession of the many *logoi* as the immanent principles of differentiation

occurs *im*mediately by a kind of cosmic incarnation. The One Himself becomes many.

The idea that creation is itself a kind of incarnation is one that is well attested in the

writings of Maximos, and which has drawn varying degrees of endorsement from commentators.

Thunberg in his groundbreaking work on Maximos unambiguously endorsed it nearly sixty years

ago, while more recently Tollefsen has done so in a more qualified manner. In fact, Tollefsen

claims that Thunberg himself modified his views in a later edition (1995) of his seminal study.

Tollefsen's suggestion that Thunberg's change of terminology in one instance from 'incarnation'

to 'embodiment' indicates a softening of the latter's position is a rather weak one (both terms

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[619] *Enn*.IV.4.11, 15-25. See above, 189.
[620] See *Enn*.III.2.16, 25-35.
[621] See *Enn*.III.5.8-9.
[622] *CTh.* 2.20.

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could be used to translate ἐνσωματώσεως), as well as irrelevant insofar as Thunberg

unambiguously affirms the reality of cosmic *incarnation* in multiple places elsewhere in the very

same later edition.[623] Tollefsen, for whatever reason, appears uncomfortable with the boldness of

Maximos' thought regarding the cosmic role of the Logos, preferring to qualify it as

"metaphorical."[624] Even more recently, Jordan Wood has affirmed the idea of cosmic incarnation

arguing that the whole of Maximos' ontology conforms to the same Neochalcedonian 'Christo-

logic' as does the historical incarnation.[625] For my part, I agree with Wood that Maximos never

qualifies his incarnation talk as metaphorical in relation to creation.[626] Nonetheless, I am not

prepared to follow Wood in his totalizing account of creation as incarnation. Instead, I follow the

original lead of Thunberg who affirms the centrality of cosmic incarnation in Maximos, yet

without making it the exclusive principle of Maximos' ontology as does Wood.

That Maximos regards creation as incarnation is evident from numerous passages in his

writings. To begin with, there is the oft-quoted passage that "the Logos of God (who is God)

wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery (μυστήριον) of His embodiment

(ἐνσωματώσεως)."[627] This passage, which comes at the culmination of a lengthy discussion

concerning first the reciprocal Oneness and manyness of the Logos/*logoi*, followed by a

consideration of how we might be considered "portions of God", makes no explicit mention of

the historical incarnation. That Maximos terms it "mystery" nonetheless brings to mind the

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[623] A few examples from *Microcosm and Mediator*, (1995): "The cosmological (ontological), the providential and the historical Logos are not separate elements in Maximus' theology, but consciously depicted as one and the same: Christ, the Son of God the Father, and the Lord of the Church." (77) "The presence of the Logos in the *logoi* is always seen as a kind of incarnation – a parallel to the incarnation in the historical Jesus." (76) See also, 75,79, 81.
[624] See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. 67. Tollefsen exhibits a similar tendency with respect to Maximos' language of *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ), which he also insists is "clearly" metaphorical. See *Christocentric Cosmology*, 72. It would seem perhaps that Tollefsen is unduly haunted by the spectre of pantheism.
[625] Jordan Daniel Wood, "That Creation Is Incarnation in Maximus Confessor."
[626] See, "That Creation Is Incarnation" 19, 93.
[627] *Amb*.7, 1084D.

mystery hidden from the ages, that is, the Incarnation – yet clearly understood here in an all-encompassing way. There is no suggestion that this is somehow metaphorical. Similarly, when Maximos says that the Logos exists in the sensible world as "in a kind of womb" and that the "ineffable and supernatural divine fire…exists, as if in a burning bush, within the essences of things, that is, God the Word, who shone forth in these latter days from the holy Virgin and spoke to us through the flesh,"[628] there is no indication that he does not mean exactly what he says. In fact, in this latter passage Maximos explicitly identifies the cosmic Logos immanent in creation with the historical incarnation. *Both* are incarnations of the One Logos. Indeed, what is truly astounding is that this cosmic principle could enter into the world as a finite human individual, and that a finite fleshly womb could have contained Him who exceeds the entire cosmos.[629] To limit Maximos' understanding of incarnation to a singular historical event impoverishes his vision of the Logos as a cosmic principle utterly transcendent and actually immanent in creation.

Finally, there is the matter of the threefold incarnation. Briefly stated, Maximos distinguishes three modes whereby the Logos is said to "become thick ($\pi\alpha\chi\acute{\upsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$)." First, is the historical incarnation whereby the Logos "deemed it worthy to 'become thick' through His manifestation in the flesh"; second, is the cosmic incarnation in which the Logos "ineffably concealed Himself in the *logoi* of beings"; third, is the Scriptural incarnation whereby the Logos "consented to be both embodied and expressed through letters, syllables, and sounds."[630] Maximos speaks of these three incarnations (particularly the latter two) interchangeably in the familiar terms of remaining whole ($\H{o}\lambda o\varsigma$) in His self-differentiation, simple and uncompounded

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[628] *Amb*.10, 1148D.
[629] For this reason, Orthodox iconography and hymnography often refers to the Virgin Theotokos as "wider than heaven" or "container of the uncontainable."
[630] *Amb*.34, 1285D-1288A. See also *Amb*.10, 1129D.

(ἀπλοῦς καὶ ἀσύνθετος) in composite things, having providentially expanded (διέστειλεν) Himself

for the sake of contracting (συστείλας) us into union with Himself (πρὸς ἕνωσιν ἑαυτοῦ). All

three incarnations follow – literally – the same 'logic'; all three embody the single divine will to

become many so that the many might become One, in a union without confusion. And, as

everyone knows, this precisely *is* the logic of the Incarnation, it is what the incarnate Logos *is*.

So how are we to understand the cosmic incarnation of the One Logos as many *logoi*? To

begin with, Maximos unsurprisingly asserts that when the Logos who transcends being

determined to enter into the world He did so "in a manner known to Himself alone."[631] Whatever

incarnation we are dealing with – historical, Scriptural, cosmic – we are ultimately dealing with

mystery. Yet what does seem clear is that we are not dealing with some sort of progressive

descent or declension of being such that the Logos gradually filters down into the sensible world

in the classic Neoplatonic manner – and this despite the fact that Maximos employs some of the

same terminology. The immediacy of cosmic incarnation finds expression in Maximos' language

of the *logoi* being "implanted" (ἐγκατέσπειρεν), "intermingled" (ἐγκαταμίξαι), "engrafted"

(περιγράφουσαν), "pre-inscribed" (προδιαγράφων), and "embedded" (ἐγκαταβληθέντες) within

created beings.[632] While Maximos never elaborates, these terms suggest a kind of immediacy

whereby the Creator Word is directly involved in His creation. Just as a farmer implants seeds or

shoots into the earth, or an artist intermingles their ideas in matter, or a scholar inscribes letters

on a page, so the One Logos implants, intermingles, inscribes, and embeds *Himself* in creation as

the many *logoi*.

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[631] *Thal. Q.*.35.2.
[632] *Thal. Q.*.51.2, 51.3; *Myst.* 7, 560 [CCSG 35]; *CTh.* 2.28; *Amb*.17, 1228B.

It is important to keep these terms and the images of immediacy they invoke in mind whenever we encounter Maximos' use of the Neoplatonic terminology of procession and return. We concluded in Chapter One that the procession of the One Logos as the many *logoi* could not be taken in a straightforwardly Neoplatonic manner. When Maximos says that the One Logos is many according to procession (πρόοδος), while the many *logoi* are One in terms of their reversion (ἐπιστροφή), his meaning is fundamentally different from that of Plotinus or Proclus. For the latter, procession represents the emergence of otherness which distinguishes an effect from its cause, while reversion indicates the overcoming of this otherness in the effect's conformity to its origin as end.[633] In terms of the Logos/*logoi*, however, there is no substantive element of otherness. The One Logos simply *is* the many *logoi* in their transcendent aspect while the many *logoi are* the One Logos in His immanent aspect. In other words, while the *logoi* are certainly causal in relation to creatures, the relation between the One Logos and the many *logoi* is emphatically *not* causal – for the simple fact that the *logoi* are not creatures but the changeless principles *according to* which beings are created. Thus, whereas for the Neoplatonists procession indicates a declension of being from the One, to Intellect, to Soul, to Nature, such that the *logoi* are merely the lowest instantiations of the Forms, for Maximos procession indicates the immediate implantation of the One Logos *Himself* as the many *logoi*, the immanent principles of differentiation. Procession for Maximos means cosmic incarnation as the counterpart to *energeic* mediation.

The immediacy of creation within the Christian cosmos means that, for Maximos, the hierarchy of being is no longer vertical, but horizontal. Tollefsen argues that there is in fact a kind of double movement in Maximos, a vertical movement comprised of procession and

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[633] See *ElTh.*, Props. 30, 31, 35.

reversion on the one hand, and a horizontal movement of contraction and expansion on the other. The first is cosmological while the second is ontological.[634] Tollefsen's suggestion that this double movement (as opposed to a single Neoplatonic procession) is due to the temporality of the Christian cosmos is at least partly correct. I would add that Maximos' understanding of procession and reversion is profoundly altered by this temporal dimension such that what is primarily an *ontological* motion within the eternal cosmos of the Neoplatonists, becomes for Maximos a *cosmological* motion whereby God constitutes the world in time. The ontological dimension then resurfaces in the movement of expansion and contraction. In other words, the loss of the vertical ontology of procession and reversion is recouped by the addition of a horizontal hierarchy of expansion and contraction. It is, once again, the Christian transformation of mediation that culminates in a kind of 'flattened' hierarchy within the created cosmos itself.[635]

Instead of a great chain of being stretching from heaven to earth, then, we find the image of the Porphyrian tree. As Maximos tells us, "when the Logos, who transcends being and who is the Creator of all beings, determined to enter into being in a manner known to Himself alone, He bore within Himself the natural *logoi* of all visible and intelligible beings."[636] The vertical descent of cosmic incarnation culminates in a horizontal hierarchy of genera, species, and individuals. This flattened hierarchy represents the unfolding of the multiplicity enfolded within the transcendent Logos. If earlier this logical scheme helped us to understand how the One Logos could embrace multiplicity without compromising His unicity, here it helps us to see how the diversity of the world is contained within an overarching unity. If this overarching unity – which Maximos identifies with providence – reminds us of Origen, there is nonetheless a crucial

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[634] See Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*.Tollefsen, 78.
[635] See the remarks of k 8.
[636] *Thal. Q.*35.2.

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difference. Whereas Origen associates diversity with fallenness, and hence as something to be overcome in the providential return to Unity, Maximos sees it as an expression of the fundamental goodness and Wisdom of God. Diversity is not destroyed but redeemed in being referred back to its unitary Ground. Diversity is good because it never truly departs from oneness[637] – for individuals are one in species, species one in genera, and genera one in Christ the Word and Wisdom of God who uncontainably contains all things.[638] With Maximos, we arrive at a genuinely eucharistic conception of the One Logos who, *broken but not divided*, multiplies Himself as the many *logoi* of creation *for the life of the world*.

3) The Transcendent/Immanent *Logoi* as Formal Principles

Before concluding this section it is necessary to touch upon a final, crucial component of Maximos' Logos-theology – the *kata logon* formula. The Christian telescoping of mediating principles means that this formula cannot be strictly confined to the immanent level as in Plotinus. The Maximian *logoi* are simultaneously transcendent as the eternal wills and predeterminations of God *and* the immanent governing principles of temporal creation. Nonetheless, what we learned about the *kata logon* formula in Plotinus – as well as Origen and Dionysius – can still shed light on Maximos' own understanding of the Logos as Christian formal principle.

To begin with, Maximos states that "from all eternity, He contained within Himself the pre-existing *logoi* (λόγους προϋφεστῶτας) of created beings. When, in His goodwill (βουλήσει ἀγαθῇ), He formed out of nothing the substance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so

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[637] Recall Proclus' identification of Oneness with Goodness, *ElTh.*, Prop. 13.
[638] See *Amb*.41, 1313C.

according to these *logoi* (κατ' αὐτοὺς)."[639] Maximos goes on to say that God created all things –

universals and particulars – according to these *logoi* at the appropriate time. He further states that

"in God the *logoi* of all things are steadfastly fixed" and that it is according to these *logoi* (καθ'

οὓς) that God foreknows all things that come to be in time "for God is eternally an active creator

(κατ' ἐνέργειάν), but creatures exist first in potential (δυνάμει), and only later in actuality

(ἐνεργείᾳ)."[640] The first thing to note is that the *logoi* are described here as *transcendent*, not

immanent as in Plotinus. The *logoi* according to which all things are created simply *are* the

unchanging thought-wills of God eternally enfolded, as we discussed above, within the One

Logos. Secondly, these *logoi* are eternal actualities in God – for God, as Maximos emphasises

elsewhere, contains no recent acquisitions among the pre-existent principles of beings.[641] The

fact that they are contracted in their transcendence does not mean that they are mere potencies –

though the beings created in time *according to* these *logoi are* potentialities in the Mind of God.

The *logoi* in their transcendence, then, would seem to occupy a kind of liminal space as

eternally actual in relation to God, and yet potential in relation to creatures. They are, I would

argue, best understood in terms of Philoponus' understanding of Aristotle's first actuality. As we

discussed in the previous chapter, Philoponus argues against Proclus that God does not need to

be actually engaged in creating the world (second actuality) in order to be eternally actual.

Instead, God is eternally actual in the sense of possessing the unchanging capacity for creation

(first actuality), a capacity He is free to exercise at will.[642] Philoponus' argument helps us to

understand how Maximos, too, is able to affirm the eternal activity of God while rejecting a

correspondingly eternal creation. The pre-existent *logoi* are eternally actual as the timeless will

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[639] *Amb*.7, 1080A; Constas' translation slightly modified for a more literally rendering.
[640] *Amb*.7, 1081B.
[641] See *Amb*.42, 1328B.
[642] See above, 149-153.

and Wisdom of God, and at the same time potentialities in relation to creatures whose existence

in God is purely virtual. That is to say, creatures are potential in the Aristotelian sense of not *yet*

being – for creatures are eternally conceived and willed by God, and as such possess a kind of

potential existence.[643] What is eternally actual in God – the *logoi* as timeless intentionalities – is

potential in relation to created beings.[644]

At the same time, Maximos also describes these same *logoi* as immanent when he asks,

"what are the intelligible principles (λόγοι) that were first embedded within (ἐγκαταβληθέντες)

the subsistence of beings, according to which (καθ' οὒς) each being is and has its nature, and was

formed, shaped, and structured?"[645] Earlier, we spoke at length about the fact of cosmic

incarnation and the many ways Maximos describes the implantation or inscribing of the many

logoi within the created cosmos. The very same *logoi* eternally existing in God according to

which beings are created in time, are immanent in that very creation and are described in much

the same way. The only difference is the expandedness of the *logoi* as immanent, an ontological

procession which coincides with – indeed generates – the creaturely motion from potential

existence in God to actual existence as other. Unlike the *logoi* of Plotinus – or the Stoics for that

matter – Maximos' *logoi* are simultaneously transcendent/immanent. It is not merely Soul that

acts as a kind of immanent demiurge, but the One Logos *homoousios* with the Father and

incarnate in creation.

The fact that the Logos is simultaneously transcendent/immanent, however, does not

fundamentally change the Aristotelian character of Maximos' *logoi*. For Maximos following

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[643] See *Meta.* IX.3. 1047b. See above, 162-169.

[644] Again, the Aristotelian understanding of art can help us here. There is nothing potential or incomplete in the artisan's possession of his art. Yet, what is actual in the mind of the artisan is potential from the perspective of what is to be created *according to* the principles contained within that art. The artisan's movement from first actuality to second actuality is simultaneously the movement of the thing created from potentiality to actuality.

[645] *Amb*.17, 1228B; translation slightly modified.

Origen, the *logoi* are not pale reflections of transcendent Ideas, but the eternal intentions of God incarnate in creation. For both thinkers the *logoi* are not participated perfections, but prefigurations in the Logos which the latter, as formal and efficient cause, actualizes in creation. It is the demiurgic model which Plotinus relegates to the sublunar world. In contrast to Plotinus, for Maximos the same *logoi* which exist as eternal prefigurations in the Logos are, in the act of creation, instantiated in matter. Instead of participated Forms, Maximos posits the transcendent/immanent *logoi* according to which (κατά) all things are constituted. It is for this reason that, as numerous scholars have pointed out, Maximos never says that the *logoi* are participated.[646] They are not participated because they are conceived along Aristotelian lines, rather than Platonic. While Maximos does find a place for participation in terms of the eternal *erga*, or energies, of God, he consistently refers to the *logoi* in Aristotelian fashion as "that according to which" (κατά λόγον) things are constituted. What is analogy for nature in Aristotle, and what acquires a certain immanent reality for Plotinus, becomes a cosmic causal principle in Maximos – the Creator-Logos whose eternal intentionalities find embodiment in the world "at the appropriate time."[647]

    If Maximos' conception of the Logos in His transcendence combines the Neoplatonic One and Nous into a single principle, his understanding of the immanent *logoi* combines the values of Nous and Soul. As the overlap between the two indicates, the One Logos encompasses the *entirety* of the Neoplatonic hierarchy from the lofty transcendence of the One to the immanent *logoi* of Soul. Maximos builds upon Origen's pioneering efforts whereby the transcendent/immanent Logos alone bridges the gap between Creator and creation. With the help

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[646] See Perl, *Methexis*. 159; Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. 169; Wood, "Creation Is Incarnation." 89.
[647] *Amb*.7, 1081B.

of Dionysius (and subsequent Christological developments) Maximos is able to overcome both the subordinationism and the pessimism of Origen's Logos-theology. In His transcendence, the Logos is One, *homoousios* with the Father and the Holy Spirit and thus utterly simple, a simplicity not compromised by the many *logoi* henadically enfolded within Him; in His immanence, the Logos is diversified as the many *logoi* governing creation, according to which all things are constituted in their universality and particularity. Insofar as Maximos' Logos enters immediately into creation by way of cosmic incarnation bearing with Him the constitutive principles of reality, the Neoplatonic proliferation of principles, as well as Origen's subordinationism and pessimism are overcome. The Logos alone mediates between God and world, such that the world is revealed as theophany. Diversity is not a concession to the fallenness of the creature but, rather, a radiant disclosure of divine Goodness and Wisdom. The One Logos wills to become many so that the many might become One.

 IV. Eucharistic Ontology

Having gained some sense of the transcendent/immanent Logos as Christian formal principle, I want now to consider how Maximos relates formal incarnation with *energeic* mediation. The fundamental thesis, the one *logos* as it were, of my entire dissertation with its multiple chapters and sub sections, could be summed up in the single phrase: "creation *from* God *according to* the Logos." This is sacramental eucharistic ontology in a nutshell. In this final section, then, I attempt to bring together the two streams of thought which together comprise the heart of Maximos' eucharistic ontology: *energeic* and incarnational mediation. I argue that Maximos' thought represents a synthesis of two distinct mediatory models – the proto-Palamite essence/energies model of the Cappadocians, and the Logos-theology of Origen. Both schemes

are already present in Dionysius, though it is left to Maximos to reconcile them in a comprehensive manner. This section also addresses some longstanding ambiguities regarding the *logoi* and the uncreated energies; namely, the tendency among some commentators and theologians to conflate these two distinct yet interrelated mediatory models. I argue that Maximos' eucharistic ontology embraces both models in an unconfused union such that God is both the *energeic* and formal cause of creation. Divine self-impartation coincides with cosmic incarnation, the Logos finitizing and distributing the infinite energies of God.

The best way to approach this topic is to begin by addressing some of the scholarly confusion surrounding the relation of the *logoi* to the energies. In the process of sorting out some of these problems Maximos' synthesis will emerge more clearly. A particularly illustrative example in this regard is that of Vladimir Lossky. As a Neopatristic theologian, Lossky was instrumental (following Meyendorff's lead) in bringing the essence/energies distinction into contemporary Orthodox discourse. His understanding of the relation of the *logoi* to the energies is thus especially germane. In essence, Lossky problematically locates the *logoi* within the energies and thus risks conflating the two. This is evident when Lossky states that:

> Les idées ne sont pas contenues dans l'Essence divine, elles ne sont pas l'Essence de Dieu «secundum quod ad alia comparatur », – mais les principes divers selon lesquels les *δυνάμεις* manifestent dans la créature Dieu, dont l'Essence est inexprimable. En appelant les idées «volontés divines » (*θεῖα θελήματα*) Denys les distingue nettement de l'Essence de Dieu et les rapporte aux vertus, par lesquelles Dieu se fait omniprésent, créant tout et se manifestant.[648]

This passage contains two crucial elements for our discussion: the first is Lossky's understanding of the *logoi* as that *according to* which the energies (here *δυνάμεις/ vertus*) are distributed among

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[648] Lossky, "La Notion Des' Analogies' Chez Denys Le Pseudo-Aréopagite." 285.

creatures; the second is his insistence that the *logoi* exist outside the divine *ousia* being somehow related to the energies.

Lossky develops this idea in his influential *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. In this work, Lossky argues that the *logoi* are not located within the divine *ousia* – a position he regards as a Latin, Augustinian one – but, rather, "in 'that which is after the essence', the divine energies."[649] Lossky's justification for placing the *logoi* in the energies is Maximos' identification of the *logoi* as divine wills (θεῖα θελήματα). Insofar as God's will is distinct from His essence, the *logoi* cannot reside within the former. The only remaining option, then, is in the energies. Lossky's theological motive for this would appear to be the all too familiar fear of necessity. By placing the *logoi* outside the divine *ousia*, he claims, "it follows that not only the act of creation but also the very thoughts of God Himself can no longer be considered as a necessary determination of His nature and part of the intelligible content of the divine Being."[650] In a way reminiscent of Florovsky, Lossky is eager to see creation as radically other, as "an entirely new being, as creation fresh from the hands of the God of Genesis."[651] Unfortunately for Lossky Maximos, as we have seen repeatedly, is utterly unambiguous on this point: God "in no way contains any recent acquisitions among the principles of beings that preexist within Him."[652] From all eternity God has willed what, and when, He intends to create. This interior determination, as we discussed in Chapter Three, does not implicate God in necessity, but is rather the ultimate expression of divine freedom – an expression of God's unchanging Goodness and Wisdom.

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[649] Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 184. This does, in all fairness to Lossky, seem to be the position of Gregory Palamas. Yet, it is not that of Maximos. See Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*., Cap.87.
[650] Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*., 185.
[651] Lossky.185.
[652] See *Amb*.42, 1328B.

Ultimately, Lossky's position rests upon a fundamental confusion between two distinct models of mediation, the *logoi* and the energies. Because he is unwilling to identify the *logoi* with the divine *ousia* for fear of implicating God in necessity, he defaults by equating them with the energies *ad extra*. In this way at least the radical voluntarism of God is safeguarded. In the process, the truth of Lossky's position falls by the wayside; namely, that the *logoi* are that *according to* which the energies are diversified in creation.

Yet if the *logoi* are not contained in the energies, where are they contained? This is indeed a delicate question. Do they belong within the divine *ousia*? Lossky regards this as the fundamental error of the Sophiologists. Nor does this seem quite to be Maximos' position. Perhaps the only thing that can be said on the basis of Maximos is that the many *logoi are* the One Logos. In other words, it is not that the *logoi* are *in* something – be it the essence or the energies – but that they *are* something; namely, the One Logos. To ask *where* the *logoi* are located is to treat them as though they were Platonic Ideas in the mind of God. Yet, the *logoi* are not Ideas; they are the divine intentions according to which things are constituted. In truth, the many *logoi* contracted within the One Logos simply *are* the One Logos. If one must speak in spatial metaphors, then the best answer would simply be that the *logoi* are 'in' the Logos. As such, they are neither in the divine *ousia* nor the uncreated energies but in the second Hypostasis of the Trihypostatic God – indeed, they *are* that Hypostasis.

A more recent example of a similar confusion is an article by Clement Yung Wen. In contrast to Lossky who tries to locate the *logoi* within the energies, Yung Wen goes so far as to identify the *logoi as* the energies; or rather, the energies as *logoi*. In order to accomplish this, Yung Wen invents a novel distinction between two kinds of *logoi*, the *logoi* of being *according to which* beings participate in God, and the *logoi* of the virtues *in which* beings participate

directly. In this, Yung Wen dissents from the general scholarly consensus that the Maximian *logoi* are not participated.[653] He arrives at his idiosyncratic position by identifying the "second kind" of *logoi*, the *logoi* of the virtues, with the eternal *erga* of God. Insofar as Maximos identifies the eternal works with "goodness (ἀγαθόττητος) and anything particular that is encompassed by the principle of goodness (ἐμπεριέχεται λόγῳ)," and insofar as he identifies the Logos as "the essence in every virtue (ἀρετῆς)," Yung Wen feels justified in equating the works with the *logoi*.[654] Once the *erga*, or the energies, have been assimilated to the *logoi* it becomes possible to claim that the latter are participated.

Yung Wen bases his argument primarily on the fact that Maximos employs the term *logoi* in two instances in relation to what I, following Tollefsen, regard as the uncreated energies of God. The two passages are the following:

> When you intend to know God do not seek the reasons about his being (τοὺς κατ᾽ αὐτὸν λόγους), for the human mind and that of any other being after God cannot discover this. Rather, consider as you can the things around him (τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν), for example his eternity, immensity, infinity, his goodness, wisdom, and power which creates, governs, and judges creatures. For that person among others is a great theologian if he searches out the principles (λόγους) of these things, however much or little.[655]

> For it was on the highest attributes (λόγους) accessible by man concerning God (περὶ Θεοῦ), namely, His goodness and love, that they rightly concentrated their vision, and it was from these that they learned that God was moved to give being to all the things that exist, and to grant them the grace of well-being.[656]

As we can see, Maximos does indeed use the term *logoi* in relation to the energies, or attributes, of God. In the first passage, Maximos instructs us to seek out the *logoi* concerning the attributes

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[653] Wen, "Maximus the Confessor and the Problem of Participation.", 9-10.
[654] See *CTh.* 1.48; *Amb.*7, 1081D.
[655] *CL.* 2.27
[656] *Amb.*10, 1204D-1205A.

of God, "the things around Him", while in the second passage Maximos associates the *logoi* with

God's goodness and love. This would appear to contradict my own argument that the *logoi* and

the energies are distinct. However, what Yung Wen conveniently ignores in the first passage is

that Maximos also applies the term *logoi* to God Himself! Do not seek out the *logoi* concerning

God's very being, His *ousia*, says Maximos, for this is unknowable. Seek, rather, the *logoi*

concerning His divine attributes which *are* accessible to thought. Yung Wen wants to say that

Maximos is calling the attributes *logoi* because that is what they are – the *logoi* of the virtues, the

supposed "second class" of *logoi*. Yet he never explains why Maximos simultaneously refers to

the *logoi* of the divine Being. Are the *logoi* also identical to the divine *ousia*? What could it

possibly mean for the *ousia* to have, or be, *logoi*? How are there *logoi* of both the divine *ousia*

and the divine attributes – the former unknowable, and the latter knowable?

And here lies the fatal weakness of Yung Wen's argument. Maximos' perplexing use of

logoi in both of these passages can only be explained when taken in a non-technical sense. Given

the polyvalent (to put it mildly) character of *logos*, any argument based solely on terminology is

inadequate. Indeed, there are numerous instances in which Maximos employs the term *logos* in a

more general sense. For example, Maximos states that "whereas one will not say unreasonably,

by my rationale (*κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον*), that the abyss is the mystery of the economy."[657] Here

logos is best rendered as 'account' or 'rationale'. Elsewhere Maximos says that "he who

qualifiedly has been initiated into the rationale behind oneness (*περὶ μονάδος λόγος*), has

necessarily also come to know the rationales behind providence and judgement (*περὶ προνοίας*

καὶ κρίσεως λόγους)."[658] This latter case is a bit trickier insofar as there really are *logoi* of

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[657] *CTh.* 2.36.
[658] *CTh.* 2.16; also, 2.8.

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providence and judgement. Still, apart from the fact that we once again encounter a mysterious *logos* of oneness (does God will/intend His own oneness?), the grammatical construction alerts us to a non-technical usage. In both cases, the preposition *περὶ* is used with the genitive. The translator accordingly renders it "rationale behind" in each case. Maximos is not speaking of the pre-existing *logoi* here. He is simply talking about the account, the logic or reasoning behind, or concerning (*περὶ*), one's understanding of the oneness of God as well as His providence and judgement.[659] When Maximos does speak of the *logoi* of providence and judgement in the technical sense he renders it directly as *logos of* providence and *logos of* judgement (*τῆς προνοίας ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ τῆς κρίσεως λόγος*).[660]

Beyond the terminological shortcomings, Yung Wen's argument suffers from further incongruities, particularly his claim that the relation between the One Logos and the many *logoi* is that of union without confusion. Yet, this implies that the *logoi* are creatures – for the Christological union without confusion refers to the hypostatic identity of divine and human natures in Christ. Maximos never says that the *logoi* are creatures – for the One Logos *is* the many *logoi* and vice versa. While Maximos does draw upon the language of unconfused union, he never applies this to the relation of the One Logos to the many *logoi* – as though these were two separate realities hypostatically united. Instead, as we discussed above, Maximos prefers the diastole/systole model to illustrate the *essential identity* of the Logos/*logoi* in His contracted/expanded aspects. When Maximos applies the Christologically inspired language of

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[659] See also *Amb*.22 where Maximos states that "If, therefore, consistent with true teaching (*κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον*), every divine energy indicates though itself the whole God, indivisibly present in each particular thing, according to the logos (*καθ' ὅνπερ τινὰ λόγον*) through which that thing exists in its own way." (1257B). In the first instance *logos* is used in a non-technical sense while in the second instance it is used in the technical sense.
[660] See *Amb*.37, 1297A. Similar examples of general usage can be found in Gregory of Nyssa. For example, when Gregory says that "the notion of being ungenerated is one thing, the sense (*λόγος*) of the divine essence another" (*Eun*.2. 380). For further examples, see Krivochéine, "Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St Gregory of Nyssa." 82, 92.

unconfused union to the Logos/*logoi*, it is precisely in order to express the way in which the

diastole/systole model reconciles the One and the many such that particularity is preserved in

unity. Yung Wen confuses the *logoi* with the beings created *according to* the *logoi*. Thus, his

claim that participation in the (second class of) *logoi* enables a kind of non-pantheistic

participation insofar as these *logoi* are not identical to the Logos, is untenable. If the *logoi* are as

Yung Wen wishes them to be, then they are creatures and so would only amount to a

participation in something creaturely and not in God at all.

 A better model of mediation would be the one that I argue Maximos actually subscribes

to: participation in the eternal *erga*, or attributes, of God according to the *logoi*. While Maximos'

use of *logos/logoi* is not always as clear as one might like, by far his most consistent usage rests

with the *kata logon* formula. The Aristotelian provenance of this idea would seem to rule out the

idea that the *logoi* are participated. Indeed, what Maximos most frequently says is that beings

participate, not in the *logoi*, but in God *according to* the *logoi*; or, to approach it from the

opposite perspective, that God created *in accordance with* the pre-existent *logoi*.[661] The *logoi* are

not participated, but *govern* both creation and participation. There are not two classes of *logoi*,

one of which is participated. Instead, there are two distinct models of mediation: the *logoi* which

govern participation and the eternal *erga* in which beings participate.[662] Maximos derives the

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[661] In the *Ambigua* alone we find at least a dozen examples: *Amb*.7, 1080A; 1080C; 1081A; 1081B; *Amb*.10, 1133C-D; 1160D; *Amb*.17, 1228B; *Amb*.22, 1257A; *Amb*.35, 1289A; *Amb*.41, 1312C-D; *Amb*.42, 1329A; 1329C; *Amb*.65, 1392D.

[662] Bradshaw arrives at a similar conclusion when he argues that Maximos "splits the Cappadocian conception of the divine *energeiai* into three: one part relating to creation (the *logoi*), another to God's eternal attributes (the "things around God"), and the third to the activity and energy that can be shared by creatures." See, Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*. 206. I differ from Bradshaw insofar as I see the *logoi* as a distinct model deriving from Origen, while failing to see any meaningful distinction between Bradshaw's eternal attributes and participated energies derived from the Cappadocians. Yet see Bradshaw, "Nature as a Manifestation of the Divine." 4, for a twofold conception very close to what I am proposing.

first from Origen and the second from the Cappadocians. Together, they constitute his sacramental eucharistic ontology.

While it would be misleading to assert that Maximos explicitly sets out to reconcile these two models of mediation, his thought in many ways represents a seamless synthesis of *energeic* and incarnational ontology. Nor, given what we know of Maximos, should this be at all surprising. For it is well known by now that Maximos draws extensively upon Origen, the Cappadocians, and Dionysius – among numerous other sources – and that his philosophical acumen enables him to integrate these sources in meaningful and original ways. Maximos is less a systematician than he is a synthesizer (in the best possible sense of that term), whose work encompasses a vast range of sources both pagan and Patristic. Maximos himself is a master of drawing the many into a unified whole, a theological union without confusion.

That being said, I would like to conclude this section with a few passages that best illustrate Maximos' ontological synthesis. While Maximos frequently says that beings are created from God and that they are created according to the *logoi*, it is rare for him to say both of these things at the same time. The synthesis, in other words, is often implicit rather than explicit. There are, however, several passages in which he speaks more openly about creation from God according to the Logos/*logoi*. One of these follows upon Maximos' pivotal statement in *Ambiguum* 7 concerning how the One Logos is many *logoi* and the many, One. Maximos goes on to talk about how all things – universals and particulars – are created according to the *logoi*. A *logos* of angels preceded their creation, and likewise a *logos* of human beings. In fact, Maximos concludes, "a *logos* preceded the creation of everything that has received its being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ)."[663] In this pithy statement we find both elements of our synthesis: the incarnational

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[663] *Amb.*7, 1080B.

ontology of the Logos/*logoi* and the emanationist ontology of creation from God. All things are derived from God in accordance with the *logoi* which serve to differentiate the uncreated energies as formal principles of reality. This is further evidenced in Maximos' subsequent statement that God is "manifested and multiplied in all the things that have their origin from Him (ἐξ αὐτοῦ), in a manner *analogous* to the being of each (κατὰ ἑκάστου ἀναλογίαν)."[664] The formula *kata analogian* is very close to *kata logon*, the emphasis being on the actual distribution of the energies, rather than on the formal principles according to which the distributing is done.

The idea of analogy is ubiquitous in the writings of Maximos, though this ought not to be understood in a Thomistic sense. By analogy, Maximos seems simply to mean the proportionate or measured way in which beings participate in God. For example, Maximos says that "by virtue of the fact that all things have their being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ), they participate in God in a manner appropriate and proportionate (ἀναλόγως) to each."[665] Creatures do not receive the fullness of the divine attributes which, *qua* creatures, they could never endure; rather, they partake of a finite portion – for which reason they are called "portions of God."[666] It is not merely that fact *that* beings possess *logoi* that makes them portions of God, as is often assumed, but rather the fact that they are created *according to* these *logoi*, i.e. that they have been *portioned out* as finite vessels of the infinite attributes of God. When we recall the many passages in which Maximos says that beings are created *kata logon*, or that they participate *kata logon*, it becomes abundantly clear that it is none other than the Logos who is the ultimate principle of analogy, "the cause of every number, and all things numerable."[667] It is according to the *logoi*, then, that finite beings possess an *ana-logous* relation to the infinite God from whom they derive their

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[664] *Amb*.7, 1080B; Emphasis added, translation slightly modified.
[665] *Amb*.7, 1080B.
[666] See *Amb*.7 for Maximos' extended discussion of what Gregory Nazianzus meant by this phrase.
[667] See *Amb*.10, 1185C.

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being and in whom they participate. The notion of analogy in Maximos encapsulates the seamless synthesis of *energeic* emanation and formal incarnation.[668]

This is further evident in Maximos' discussion of the Transfiguration. Maximos' description of the brightness of the Lord's face as a revelation of the power and glory of the incomprehensible deity is powerfully reminiscent of the Cappadocian depiction of the uncreated energies we discussed in Chapter Two.[669] Maximos goes on to talk about the bright garments of the transfigured Lord in a similar way. If Christ's shining face reveals to us something of the unknowable Godhead *via* His uncreated energies, His luminous clothing reveals to us "both the magnificence (μεγαλουργίαν) that lies within created things consistent (ἀναλόγως) with the principles (λόγοις) whereby (καθ' οὖς) they were brought into being, and the deeper meaning hidden in the words of Holy Scripture."[670] The bright clothing, in other words, reveals the energies as immanent in creation and Holy Writ. What is remarkable about this passage is the interweaving of *analogia* and *logoi* in relation to the divine attributes. The power, glory and magnificence of God is revealed, is immanent *ana-logous* with the *logoi* according to which beings were created. The *logoi* are the principles of analogy, and it is precisely because of the *logoi* that creation is an *analogia* of God – that is, a finite, measured icon of what is infinite and immeasurable.

A final passage worth considering is one where Maximos explicitly brings together the *logoi* and the *energeiai*. He begins by arguing that the multiplicity of beings depends upon difference, for in the absence of differentiation all things dissolve into undifferentiated unity.

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[668] A further illustration of this may be found in *Amb*.35 where Maximos says that God "willed to impart Himself (μεταδοῦναι) without defilement in a manner proportionate (ἀναλόγως) to all and to each," and that "the one God is multiplied in the impartation (μεταδόσει) of good things proportionally (ἀναλόγως) to the recipients." The language of emanation and self-impartation conjoined with that of analogy in these passages is further evidence of the synthesis for which I am arguing. See *Amb*.35, 1289A-B.

[669] See above, 89-90.

[670] *Amb*.10, 1160D.

Now, it is because of the *logoi*, says Maximos, that different things differ, "for different things would not be different from each other if their *logoi*, according to which they came into being (μὴ τῶν λόγων οἷς γεγόνασιν), did not themselves admit of difference."[671] This being the case, says Maximos, it is possible when contemplating the diversity of sensible objects to intellectually grasp the inner principles governing this diversity:

> So, too, when the intellect naturally apprehends all the *logoi* in beings (τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι λόγων) and contemplates within them the infinite energies of God (ἀπείρους ἐνεργείας Θεοῦ), it recognizes the differences of the divine energies (θείων ἐνεργειῶν) it perceives to be multiple and – to speak truly – infinite (ἀπείρους).[672]

What is remarkable about this passage is the conjoining of the language of *logoi* and *energeiai*. In contemplating beings one apprehends not only the *logoi* according to which beings exist, but simultaneously the infinite energies of God within these *logoi*.[673] The immanent *logoi* and the immanent energies are entirely intermingled here, yet without confusion. Insofar as the *logoi* are that according to which different things differ, the infinite energies *from which* beings are broadly derived are diversified by the *logoi according to which* beings are constituted. "Every divine energy," says Maximos, is "indivisibly present in each particular thing, according to the *logos* through which that thing exists in its own way."[674] When engaged in natural contemplation one encounters *both* the magnificence of the uncreated energies and the wisdom of the Logos incarnate in creation. Together, they constitute the world in all its dazzling diversity.

   Energeic emanation alone cannot account for the differentiated character of creation. For this, the formal incarnation of the Logos as *logoi* is indispensable. Granted that beings are

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[671] *Amb*.22, 1257A.
[672] *Amb*.22, 1257A.
[673] That the energies are twice called "infinite" (ἀπείρους) links them to the eternal *erga*, the participated attributes among which is infinity (ἀπειρία). See *CTh*. 1.48.
[674] *Amb*.22, 1257B.

broadly constituted by their participation in the uncreated energies of Being, Life, Wisdom and so on, this does not account for the fact that they are (in the case of humans) concrete living, thinking, individuated *beings*. Without a principle of differentiation the energies alone cannot constitute the world – for to *be* is to be defined as a particular *something*. And this is precisely what the Logos as Christian formal principle accomplishes. Maximos does well to retrieve this indispensable piece of metaphysical machinery from the dustbin of history, transforming it in the process. Yet there is more. In the absence of the Logos it would be impossible to distinguish between the uncreated energies and the beings created from them – what Maximos calls the eternal and temporal works of God. I argued at length in Chapter Two that creation from the energies absolved Maximos of the charge of pantheism – for beings are not derived from the divine *ousia*, but from the energies/*erga*/attributes of God. Yet what distinguishes the uncreated works from the created? What prevents the world derived *from* the energies from collapsing *into* those same energies in a kind of 'pan-*energeism*'? The answer is the Logos as formal principle. It is precisely the Logos who, as the manifold will of God, differentiates the energies, finitizing Himself in the act of cosmic incarnation. The world, as Maximos repeatedly insists, is other than God precisely in its qualified, contingent character.[675]

The relation of the energies to the *logoi* might best be illustrated by the analogy of a prism. The uncreated energies flow *from* the Godhead *according to* the Logos like light passing through a prism. As principle of differentiation, the Logos 'splits' the being-making, life-bestowing *energeiai* into a dazzling diversity of particular living beings. The Logos ensures that all temporal beings receive the analogous 'portion of God' allotted to them from all eternity. To put it in Aristotelian terms, the energies represent the 'material', or *energeic*, cause of creation,

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[675] See, *Amb*.10, 1180B-1181A.

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while the Logos/*logoi* represent the formal, final, and efficient causes. As the sole *archē* of existence, God ineffably embraces this fourfold causality within His own supraessential Being. As mentioned above, it is the Logos which enforms and finitizes the infinite energies of God, thereby establishing the crucial distinction between the eternal *erga* and the temporal *erga*. Like the sun passing through a single, multifaceted prism, the creative energies of God illuminate the world as a multiplicity of individual rays of light, the infinite becoming finite. This analogy with its materialistic and deterministic overtones is admittedly a crude similitude, and falls very short indeed of the glory of God. Its aim is simply to illustrate in some general way the relation between the uncreated energies and the *logoi* which, though distinct, together constitute the world. The *logoi* are neither in the essence nor the energies of God; they are 'in' the Hypostasis of the Logos. Or rather, they *are* that Hypostasis – for the One Logos *is* the many *logoi* and the many *logoi are* the One Logos.

V. Conclusion

Maximos' ontological synthesis can be summed up in the phrase: "creation *from* God *according to* the Logos." As such, it represents the conjoining of two distinct models of mediation, the essence/energies model of the Cappadocians and the Logos-theology of Origen. Maximos' ontology embraces both models in an unconfused union such that God is both the *energeic* and formal cause of creation. Divine self-impartation coincides with cosmic incarnation. This signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ. All things proceed *from* God *according to* the Logos as principle of differentiation. As such, it is not simply the One Trihypostatic God who serves as the ultimate, solitary Ground of being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all

ages and incarnate in creation. Creation as divine self-impartation means creation *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) *according to* (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made.*

This Maximian synthesis, I have argued, has its roots in the problem of mediation; or rather, the Christian transformation of mediation wrought by the Cappadocians and Dionysius and bequeathed to Maximos. Rather than a declining hierarchy of principles bridging the gap between the One and the many such as one finds in Plotinus and Proclus, the Christians posit the uncreated energies, attributes, or works, of God. As such, the world is simultaneously more intimately related to God, from whom it proceeds *im*mediately by way of the uncreated energies, and more radically distinguished – for, despite its derivation from God, it is neither consubstantial nor coeternal with God. Yet, this philosophical solution, I argued, was incomplete insofar as it failed to account for the problem of particularity. Granted that beings are broadly determined by their participation in the eternal *erga* of Being, Life, Wisdom, and so on, what accounts for the *particularity* of beings in terms of genera, species, and individuals? How do God's being-making processions constitute individual beings? What, in other words, *governs* finite beings' participation in the infinite *energeiai* of God?

The conceit of this chapter has been that it is precisely the Logos, begotten from before the ages and incarnate in creation, that serves as the necessary principle of differentiation, as Christian formal principle. It is the lack of a clearly articulated formal principle within the Christian cosmos as conceived by the Cappadocians that, I argued, explains Maximos' striking retrieval of Origen's Logos-theology. The transformation of mediation culminating in a more immediate relation between God and world via the uncreated energies, requires a correspondingly immediate formal principle. Maximos finds this in a bold conception of the cosmic incarnation of the Logos as many *logoi*. In His transcendent aspect, the Logos is One –

homoousios with the Father; in His immanent aspect He is the many *logoi* diversified without division, according to which all things are constituted. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus formal incarnation*: the Logos enters directly into His own creation as its immanent governing principle. As such, we arrive at a genuinely eucharistic conception of creation in which the One Logos, *broken but not divided*, multiplies Himself as the many *logoi* of creation *for the life of the world*. All things are created from (ἐκ) the uncreated energies of God according to (κατά) the Logos *through whom all things were made*. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos.

The idea of creation as divine self-impartation, as God's own freely offered gift of His own infinite Being – multiplied in and through the Logos – to finite beings is not a unilateral gesture; it has as its counterpart the creature's appropriation of this precious gift, which the latter is called to freely offer back (*anaphora*) – *thine own of thine own* – in gratitude (*eucharistia*). The ontology of the Word is a dialogue, not a monologue. It is the task of the next and final chapter to sketch this *anaphoric* return of the many to the One, the creaturely counterpart to creation outlined in the preceding chapters up to this point. To speak only about the procession of the world from God while ignoring its corresponding reversion, or *con*version, would result in an incomplete account of Maximos' ontology. It is precisely in the return of creation – mediated by the human as rational agent – that the gift of being is transformed into well-being and, ultimately, the eternal well-being of deification. It is here that the Logos finally accomplishes the mystery of His embodiment in all things.

Chapter Six

Ascent to the Kingdom

I. Introduction

While the primary aim of this dissertation has been to elucidate Maximos' sacramental eucharistic ontology in terms of his doctrine of creation, it would be amiss to conclude without saying a few words about the consummation of creation. To speak only about the procession of the world from God while ignoring its corresponding reversion, or *con*version, would result in an incomplete account of Maximos' ontology. The sole aim of creation, after all, is deification. God, as we noted in the previous chapter, wills to become many so that the many might become One. In this final chapter, then, I aim to sketch out the barest outlines of the return of the cosmos back into God. Given that this topic itself deserves an entire monograph, I make no attempt at a comprehensive account; instead, I limit myself to the bare minimum necessary to bring my dissertation to completion. If the preceding chapters have dealt with the divine will for things to *be*, that is, the *logos* of being, this chapter will explore what it means for God also to will goodness and eternity for His creation, that is the *logoi* of well-being and eternal-being.

In what follows, I emphasise the role of the human as cosmic priest and mediator of creation who, through the practice of virtue & contemplation, resolves the multiplicity of the world back into its original and eschatological oneness in Christ. I begin by arguing that it is the ethical freedom of the creature that accomplishes this mediatory task; it is the voluntary practice of virtue which mediates between the gift of being and the grace of eternal well-being. I further argue that it is precisely the microcosmic character of humanity that grounds its natural potential for mediation. Insofar as the rational creature possesses an innate solidarity with all things, it is able to grasp the singular origin of all creation in God, drawing all things into one through the

practice of virtue & contemplation. In this way, humanity is called to realize within itself the ecclesial character of the cosmos. Multiplicity is 'redeemed' in being referred back to Unity. I conclude by arguing that creation *from* God according to the Logos has as its counterpart deification *in* God according to the Logos – that is, according to beings' voluntary conformity to, and cooperation with, the Logos as the divine will uniquely determined *for them*. This is the heavenly synaxis, the onto-liturgical ascent to the Kingdom presided over by the human as hierarch. In the eschatological return of all things to God the eucharistic character of Maximos' ontology is fully revealed – *broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed* – God diversifies Himself in creation without division so that the diversity of creation might become unified without confusion.

II. A Threefold Logos

In order to complete our account of the world's procession from God as its *archē*, and its return to Him as its *telos*, it is helpful to have before us some sort of itinerary. The most basic form which this takes in Maximos is the threefold *logos* of being (εἶναι), well-being (εὖ εἶναι), and eternal being (ἀεὶ εἶναι). These three *logoi* map the creature's circular-yet-linear[676] journey from God as origin, to God as end, mediated by the human (Adam) called to freely cooperate with God in the activity of creation and deification. Insofar as the *logos* of being only finds its completion in the *logos* of well-being culminating in the *logos* of eternal being, these three *logoi* comprise a single threefold *logos* – the eternal determination and will of God for beings to share as fully as possible in the infinity of divine Being.

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[676] As von Balthasar aptly notes: "What seems to be circular from God's point of view, because the beginning and the end are the same, can appear just as authentically as genuine development and movement, from the standpoint of the world: the course of loving movement toward "the ideas that pre-exist in God, or better: towards God himself." See, Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*., 134.

Ever since von Balthasar's groundbreaking study, numerous commentators (myself included) have reiterated how Maximos critically transforms Origen's understanding of creaturely motion.[677] Rather than positing an original unity in God whence rational beings subsequently fell, necessitating the creation of bodies to contain and rehabilitate them culminating in a restoration to the original state (*apokatastasis*), Maximos envisions unity as an eschatological reality and life as a voluntary journey towards that end. To say too much more would be to traverse ground that has already been well trodden.[678] Suffice it to say, rather than conceive of the unfolding of cosmic events in terms of rest (original unity), motion (descent into multiplicity), genesis (creation of corporeal world) as does Origen; Maximos understands it in reverse order as genesis (creation of spiritual/corporeal world), motion (ascent towards unity), rest (final attainment of unity in God). The problem with Origen, according to Maximos, is that he puts the cart before the horse – it is illogical, he argues, to posit motion prior to genesis (the production of beings capable of motion), while positing rest (the *telos* of beings) at the beginning. Not only is this illogical (from an Aristotelian point of view) it is ultimately pessimistic, and this for two reasons: 1) if creation entails a fall from an original noetic unity into embodied existence, this implies that matter and multiplicity are evil; 2) if beings once fell from a state of perfection in God, what is to prevent them from falling again and again *ad infinitum*? For Maximos, this is a recipe for despair.[679]

Maximos' threefold scheme concerning the *logos* of being, the *logos* of well-being, and the *logos* of eternal-being emerges, to a significant extent, as a response to Origen's problematic cosmology.[680] That is to say, the *logos* of being indicates the proper starting point of genesis, the

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[677] See Balthasar. 127-136. Heide, "The Origenism of Maximus Confessor."
[678] The definitive account still remains that of von Balthasar.
[679] For Maximos' argument see, *Amb*.7, 1069A-1077C.
[680] For a helpful recent account of the threefold *logoi* see, Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*., 76-84.

origination of beings *from* God; the *logos* of well-being indicates natural motion, the creature's voluntary journey *towards* God; and the *logos* of eternal-being indicates rest, the consummation of beings *in* God.[681] As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the procession of the world from God according to the Logos is fundamentally good; creation is divine self-impartation, the gift of infinite Being analogously parcelled out to finite beings in accordance with the will and Wisdom of God. Yet, as I noted a moment ago, God wills not merely for beings to *be*, but that they be *well*, and be well *eternally*. For Maximos, *contra* Origen, the experience of eternal well-being (union with God) is not where beings begin, but where they *end* – an end which requires the free cooperation of the individual with God. Like the *logos* of being, the *logos* of eternal-being is pure *gift*.[682] What mediates between these two *logoi* is the *logos* of well-being – God's timeless intention that beings freely choose Him as their proper end, and cooperate with Him in the cultivation of goodness and wisdom culminating in eternal well-being. In this way, Maximos transforms the pessimism and despair of Origen's cosmology into a sacramental ontology based upon an optimistic evaluation of creation and a positive understanding of creaturely motion. As such, the human as embodied spirit acquires a beneficial role as cosmic hierarch, the priestly mediator between creation and deification, being and eternal well-being.

One way to understand this is in terms of potentiality and actuality. In a passage in which Maximos refers to the *logoi* of being, well-being, and eternal being as three modes (τρόπους) of a single all-encompassing *logos* (σύμπας λόγος), he identifies them with potentiality (δύναμις), actuality (ἐνέργεια), and rest (ἀργία/στάσις). All three *logoi*, as I suggested above, are three aspects of a single *logos* – the eternal determination and will of God for beings to share as fully

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[681] At *Amb*.7, 1084B Maximos identifies this threefold *logos* with the Scriptural utterance that "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

[682] As we shall see below, whether the creature experiences this final state as eternal well-being or eternal *ill*-being is entirely up to them.

as possible in the infinity of divine Being. With regard to these, says Maximos, "that of being is first given to beings by essence (*κατ' οὐσίαν*); that of well-being is granted to them second, by their power to choose (*κατὰ προαίρεσιν*), inasmuch as they are self-moved; and that of eternal-being is lavished on them third, by grace (*κατὰ χάριν*)." The first, he continues, "contains potential (*δυνάμεως*), the second activity (*ἐνεργείας*), and the third, rest (*ἀργίας*) from activity."[683] In other words, the *logos* of being represents genesis, the starting point of creatures which, in contrast to Origen, is not originally complete but rather represents a state of potentiality, of initial *in*completion; the *logos* of well-being represents motion, the activity/actualization of the creature's God-given capacity for virtue & contemplation; the *logos* of eternal being represents the gratuitous gift of deification, the unmoving rest from all activity, the ultimate completion of created beings.

Maximos' reasoning is broadly Aristotelian. No being apart from God is devoid of motion. In order to have motion they must first exist. And as beings in motion they must be moved towards something that is itself unmoved (so as to avoid an infinite regress).[684] From this perspective, Origen's conflation of the beginning with the end leaves no positive role for motion. Because everything is already perfect from the beginning, motion can only represent a departure from the original perfection. For Maximos, on the other hand, motion mediates between the original *in*completion of beings and their eschatological perfection in Christ. Ultimately, it is God as efficient and final cause who acts as the Unmoved Mover of beings subject to motion – "for it is from Him (*ἐξ αὐτοῦ*) that they have come into being, and by Him (*δἰ αὐτοῦ*) that they are moved, and it is in Him (*εἰς αὐτὸν*) that they will achieve rest."[685] The *logos* of being, then,

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[683] *Amb*.65, 1392A-B.
[684] See Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII. 258b-259b. Maximos, *Amb*.7, 1072B-1076A.
[685] *Amb*.15, 1217D.

indicates the natural potential granted to beings for the exercise of virtue and knowledge; according to the *logos* of well-being, beings are called to actualize this natural God-given potential, to become actually good and knowledgeable and wise, to realize what it means to be a rational creature created in the image and likeness of God; the *logos* of eternal being represents the culmination of all natural motion in the infinity around God.[686]

This threefold scheme which represents the basic itinerary of the soul's journey into God contains a seeming aporia; namely, both the beginning and the end of creatures lies beyond them. Nature finds itself circumscribed by the supra-natural.[687] As we have discussed throughout this dissertation, creation is *gift* – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos. The same is true for deification – the perfection of beings is analogously lavished upon them by grace. What, then, is the role of human freedom? How does the creature realize an end which lies beyond its natural bounds?

To begin with, the fact that creatures have their beginning and end outside themselves is not regarded as problematic by Maximos. Indeed, this is precisely what it means to be a creature; namely, to be utterly contingent upon God for one's being, well-being, and eternal-being. If this were not so, there would be nothing marvelous (παράδοξον) about deification (or creation for that matter).[688] If the attainment of eternal well-being existed within the bounds of nature, Maximos points out, "it would rightly be a work of nature, and not a gift (δῶρον) of God, and a person so divinized would be God by nature."[689] To be a creature means to be neither self-caused (αὐταίτιον) nor self-perfected (αὐτοτελές).[690] Yet the fact remains, paradoxically, that the *telos* of

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[686] See *Amb*.15, 1220C;
[687] See the remarks of von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*. 132.
[688] See *Amb*.20, 1237B.
[689] *Amb*.20, 1237B. It is precisely the graced character of creation and deification that distinguishes the creature derived *from* God as *other* than God. This is indeed a "paradox" – albeit a crucially important one.
[690] See *Amb*.7, 1072C.

the creature, that *for the sake of which* it was created, lies beyond its natural capacity. The creature was made *for* God, a goal which it cannot attain solely by means of its own powers. All of this points to eucharistic *gifted* character of creation, both in that it receives its being and perfection from God, and in that the creature is meant to offer these gifts back to the Creator *thine own of thine own*. So what, then, is the role of creaturely freedom? What does the human hierarch bring to the altar of existence?

The answer lies in the *logos* of well-being. This *logos*, Maximos insists, somehow mediates between the two givens, the *logos* of being and the *logos* of eternal-being:

> The two extremes (i.e. being and eternal-being) belong solely to God, who is their author, but the intermediate mode depends on our inclination and motion (*γνώμης τε καὶ κινήσεως*), and through it the extremes are properly said to be what they are, for if the middle term were absent, their designation would be meaningless (*ἄχρηστος*), for the good (i.e. well-being) would not be present in their midst, and thus the saints realized that apart from their eternal movement towards God, there was no other way for them to possess and preserve (*προσγενέσθαι καὶ φυλαχθῆναι*) the truth of the extremes, which is assured only when well-being (*εὖ εἶναι*) is mixed in the middle of them.[691]

This is a striking assertion. Maximos is saying that while the extremes of being and eternal-being belong solely to God, it is human will and action that bind them together and render them meaningful, or profitable (*χρηστός*). God may well grant being and eternal-being to the world; yet, if the rational creature fails to take up its determination, if it refuses to cooperate with God by joining the *leitourgia* of virtue & contemplation to the *theurgia* of creation and deification, then all is for naught. The creature is neither self-caused nor self-perfected; yet, *qua* creature it is called to preserve the gift of being and to possess, or align itself with (*προσγενέσθαι*), the grace of eternal-being.

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[691] *Amb*.10, 1116C.

A clue to what this means emerges in Maximos' discussion of eternal-being. While Maximos tends to use the formula *logos* of eternal-being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) as a kind of shorthand for the final beatific state – that is, eternal *well*-being – these two terms are not wholly equivalent. Maximos in fact recognizes two kinds of eternal being: eternal well-being (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) and eternal *ill*-being (ἀεὶ φεῦ εἶναι). Strictly speaking, the latter is not a *logos* (for God does not will evil) but a deviation from the *logos* of eternal (well)being. At any rate, Maximos says that the *logos* of eternal-being acts as a limit (ὅρος) "bringing a halt to nature in terms of its potential (δύναμιν), and to free choice in terms of its activity (ἐνέργειαν)."[692] It is here that the *logos* of well-being comes into play. Like the gift of being, the grace of eternal-being is unconditionally bestowed upon all alike in the *eschaton,* thus bringing an end to all creaturely motion. Yet *how* the creature experiences this end depends entirely upon their freewill. If, during one's lifetime, one chooses to live in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν), bringing one's natural potentiality for virtue & knowledge to actuality, one's realization of the *logos* of well-being will be joined to the *logos* of eternal-being culminating in the *logos* of eternal *well*-being. If, however, one lives contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν), failing to actualize one's God-given potential, this absence of well-being will also be joined to the grace of eternal-being culminating in eternal *ill*-being.[693] Thus, while it is true that that the creature cannot attain to eternal being on its own, it *does* have the power to determine what its experience of eternity will be like. This is what Maximos means when he says that the *logos* of well-being mediates between the extremes. The human is called both to actualize its given potential (*logos* of being), and to ensure that its experience of the end (*logos* of eternal-being) will be a beatific one; the realization of the former becomes the basis for

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[692] *Amb*.65, 1392C.
[693] See *Amb*.65, 1392D; *Thal. Q*.61, [16].

the latter. Ultimately, the world *will* become the body of Christ, a cosmic *ecclesia*; yet whether one worships at the altar with the seraphim and the cherubim, or some less exalted place, depends upon the rational freedom of the individual.

In this way, the threefold *logos* of being, well-being, and eternal-being provides the basic itinerary for the creature's journey back to God. In liturgical terms, the gift of being is freely offered with the intent of its being received back as well-being, culminating in the transfigured state of eternal well-being. Maximos alludes to this when he states that "the saints deemed it only right that [the soul's] activities should be offered (*προσενέγκαι*), not to themselves, but to God who gave them, because *from Him and to Him are due all things*."[694] The gift of divine self-impartation according to the Logos (*logos* of being) is meant to be offered back through the practice of virtue & contemplation (*logos* of well-being) culminating in the grace of deification (*logos* of eternal well-being), what Loudovikos calls "dialogical reciprocity", the free "circulation of being as gift between God and man."[695] This onto-liturgical dialectic of reciprocal gift-giving offers yet another approach to the perennial problem of the One and the many. According to the *logos* of being, the One becomes many; according to the *logos* of well-being, the many are referred back to the One; according to the *logos* of eternal well-being, the One and the many are united in a higher union without confusion. All of this will be spelt out in greater detail in Section IV dealing with virtue & contemplation as heavenly synaxis. Before doing that, however, I want briefly to touch upon Maximos' understanding of the human as cosmic hierarch whose chief task is to mediate between the One and the many.

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[694] *Amb*.10, 1116B; italics in original indicating Scriptural allusion (1 Cor 8:6; Heb 2:10).
[695] Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*., 39, 40.

III. The Human as Hierarch

Maximos' anthropology offers profound insights into the nature of man (*anthropos*)[696] as a worshiping being, what Schmemann refers to as *homo adorans*.[697] Maximos variously calls the human "a second cosmos" (i.e. a microcosm), "another angel", "a worshiper formed of diverse elements", a "mediator", "a capacious workshop" (ἐργαστήριον), and a "mystical Church".[698] All of these epithets emphasise the unique character of the human as the focal point of creation, along with the sacred responsibility that comes with this special status. It would be a mistake to label Maximos' lofty humanism "anthropocentric" in the negative sense of this term – as though the whole of creation exists solely for the benefit of the human.[699] Maximos' anthropology could not be further from this utilitarian and potentially exploitative vision of human dominion.[700] For him, "to have dominion" (ἄρχειν)[701] means nothing less than to contemplatively gather in the whole of creation while lovingly offering it up to be transfigured in Christ. Insofar as Maximos' anthropology is God-centred it might best be termed a kind of "theocentric anthropology" – the human as hierarch. In this section, I focus on Adam's role as mediator between the One and the many.[702]

According to Maximos, man was created last in order to serve as a kind of natural bond (σύνδεσμός) of the created cosmos, drawing together within the unity of his own being the

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[696] The term 'man', to the extent that I use it, is always meant in the non-gendered sense of *anthropos*, synonymous with 'Adam'.

[697] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*., 15.

[698] See *Amb*.7, 1096A; *Amb*.41, 1305B; *Myst.* 4, 270 [CCSG 19].

[699] Even the more positive notion of 'stewardship' still fails to escape a utilitarian, anthropocentric perspective. See John Zizioulas "Proprietors or Priests of Creation?" in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*., 164.

[700] For an important Orthodox critique of Lynne White's thesis see, Jurretta Jordan Heckscher "Orthodox Christianity and the Failures of Environmental History" in Chryssavgis, Foltz, and Bartholomew., 136-151.

[701] See *Amb*.41, 1308D; Gen 1:26, 28.

[702] The definitive account of Maximos' anthropology still remains that of Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d.

diversity of creation.[703] In fact, Maximos claims that the human mediates both the incarnation of God in the world, as well as the deification of the world in God.[704] That is to say, the human is called to cooperate with the will of the Logos to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment in all things,[705] a will which includes the ultimate transfiguration of the whole of creation. As we noted above, God wills not merely for beings to *be*, but for them to be *well*, and to be well *eternally*. It is for this reason, says Maximos, that humanity was created as a soul/body composite ascending to God by means of his intellect, while mediating God to the body by means of the virtues. The aim was that, citing Gregory Nazianzus, "'what God is to the soul, the soul might become to the body.'"[706] This is theocentric anthropology in a nutshell. As embodied spirit, the human unites heaven and earth drawing God down (so to speak)[707] into matter through the practice of the virtues, while elevating matter up to God by means of contemplation.[708] Man's 'dominion' involves caring for the whole of bodily existence in the same way that God cares for humanity. This task is essentially unifying: the One having become many in and through humanity (as microcosm), the latter is called to draw the many together into "the one human nature."[709] Regrettably, Adam chose otherwise. Rather than unite the many by referring them to the One, he introduced further divisions by focusing his attention exclusively on the multiplicity of creation.

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[703] See *Amb*.41, 1305C.
[704] Maximos suggests that virtue represents a kind of incarnation; see *Amb*.7, 1081D; *Amb*.10, 1109B; 1113C; 1145C; 1205A; *Amb*.54, 1376C-D; *CTh.* 2.37. The reciprocity of incarnation/deification is a pervasive theme in the writings of Maximos (see esp. *Amb*.10, 1113C).
[705] See *Amb*.7, 1084D.
[706] *Amb*.7, 1092C.
[707] Maximos speaks circumspectly of the saints having drawn to themselves the *manifestation* (ἐμφάσεως) of God. See *Amb*.10, 1113C.
[708] See *CTh.* 2.37, 47.
[709] *Amb*.7, 1092C.

If all of this seems rather opaque and even bewildering to us, this is partly due to our modern presuppositions. We are accustomed to seeing ourselves as separate from the world, as though humanity and the rest of creation form two distinct poles of reality – 'man and nature' as it were. Maximos sees things differently. Humanity has a central role to play precisely insofar as it is *an integral part* of the created order. As microcosm, as workshop of creation, the human is unique only insofar as it contains the totality of creation within itself. Humanity *is* the cosmos in miniature "a great creature in a small frame."[710] This is not a metaphor; it is an ontological fact. This is evident in Maximos' understanding of the Fall. The Fall of Adam does not merely have an adverse effect on humanity; it drastically changes the entire nature of reality for the worse. The disobedience of Adam at once undermines the integrity of human nature while introducing painful divisions into the world.[711] By contrast, the perfect obedience of Christ the second Adam overcomes death and corruption, not only for humanity, but for the entire cosmos.[712] Man is a mediator precisely in that he contains the multiplicity of creation within his own singular being. In this sense he truly is created in the image of God – for just as God contains multiplicity enfolded within His overarching Unity, so the multiplicity of creation is implicit within the finite human being.

It is this microcosmic character of humanity that grounds its natural potential for mediation. Maximos states that the human as a soul/body composite is both contained within the divisions of nature and contains them: "the former by virtue of his substance (οὐσίᾳ), and the latter by his potential (δύναμιν)."[713] As a creature, man is himself circumscribed within the

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[710] *Amb*.7, 1096A.

[711] To some extent this is not so difficult to understand in light of the contemporary ecological crisis. The developed world's addiction to consumerism is literally undermining the integrity of life on earth.

[712] Indeed, it is precisely because man is a microcosm that Christ's assumption of human nature is simultaneously the assumption and redemption of the entire cosmos.

[713] *Amb*.10, 1153B.

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created order, for his soul is contained within the intelligible realm while his body is bounded by the sensible creation. And yet, insofar as man possesses the faculties of intellect and sensation he is also able to *contain* both of these realms within himself. Unlike the rest of creation (irrational animals, plants, minerals) the human is able to consciously appropriate his own creatureliness. Man is not limited to merely being a part of the multiplicity of creation; he has the natural capacity to recognize his solidarity with all things, to grasp their singular origin in God, and thus to draw all things into one. In this sense, the human is able to transcend its particularity, to realize within itself the ecclesial character of the cosmos, thereby "bringing to light the great mystery of the divine plan, realizing in God the union of the extremes which exist among beings."[714] The mystery of the divine plan in this case refers to the ultimate unification of creation, the return of the many to the One.

The language of potentiality (*δύναμις*) in relation to humanity brings to mind Maximos' earlier identification of this term with the *logos* of being. The *logos* of being, we noted, represents the genesis of beings, their original *in*completion. This initial state of potentiality is to be actualized according to the *logos* of well-being, culminating in the perfection of eternal well-being. If man is a microcosm containing within himself the entire spectrum of beings, it follows that the *logos* of *being human* contains within itself, like a universal genus, the *logoi* of *all* beings. This is crucial – for not all beings are capable of realizing well-being, not to mention eternal well-being. Left to themselves, animals, plants, and minerals are essentially limited to the *logos* of being, mere existence; they lack the rational freedom to appropriate well-being for themselves. It is the human as cosmic hierarch that must elevate these beings, drawing them into a higher unity by means of the unificatory practice of virtue & contemplation. The attainment of

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[714] *Amb*.41, 1305B.

well-being for the human represents a state of inner cohesion, of spiritual integrity such that the individual is no longer inwardly fragmented or dispersed, but quite literally *recollected*.[715] Insofar as humanity forms an integral part of creation – indeed *is* that creation in miniature – this interior recollection is simultaneously an exterior recollection. In becoming one, the human unifies the whole of creation as an extension of itself culminating in eternal well-being – the cosmic deification of the whole of creation, plants, animals, amoebas and minerals included.[716]

None of this is to say that humanity actually *makes* – or is *called* to make – the world one. The world, as we have had repeated occasion to note, is *implicitly* one in virtue of its creation from God according to the Logos. All things are circumscribed within the overarching embrace of divine providence – like radii contained within the circumference of a circle – without which they could not even exist *as* a multiplicity.[717] The mediatory task of the human is simply to make this implicit unity *explicit*. Recall our discussion in the previous chapter concerning the enfolding of multiplicity in God and its unfolding in the act of creation.[718] In its potential existence in God, the multiplicity of creation is merely implicit, while its unity is explicit; in its actual creation as other, its multiplicity becomes explicit while its unity is rendered implicit. From the perspective of divinity nothing fundamentally changes: God is an eternally actual creator who wills from all eternity what will be in time. Yet, from the creaturely perspective, its enfoldment in God represents a state of potentiality, of *not yet* being. The world only acquires actual existence as a multiplicity constituted by the categories of existence. In other words, *contra* Origen, while creation might be said to be originally one in the mind of God,

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[715] See *Thal. Q*.16.2-4.

[716] Regarding the child's question as to whether dogs go to heaven, Maximos' answer would appear to be yes – though not without the help of its master!

[717] Recall Proclus, Prop.1. that "Every manifold in some way participates unity."

[718] See above, 210-211, 221.

it is only so *in the form of potentiality*.[719] The moment the world becomes an actual created

entity it is many – for this is what it means to be a creature; namely, to be defined, delimited,

existing in relation to other finite beings. The world only becomes *actually* one in God in the

eschaton at the culmination of an arduous spiritual journey.

What this means is that creation according to the *logos* of being has its genesis as an

actual multiplicity and a potential unity. According to the *logos* of well-being, the human is

tasked with bringing this potential unity to actuality, to make explicit what is merely implicit in

the created order; namely, that the world is – and is called to be – a cosmic *ecclesia*.[720] Like

Adam naming the animals, man is called to be a co-creator with God, making explicit by means

of his own God-given powers, the implicit truth of creation; namely, its inner cohesion as a

unity-in-multiplicity. Having done so, he then offers the totality back to God *thine own of thine*

own culminating in the deifying grace of eternal well-being. Humanity is called to cooperate in

the return of all things to God. Alas, Adam refused his priestly vocation preferring, as Maximos

puts it, "to be *a pile of dust* rather than God by grace."[721] In other words, rejecting the crucial

reference point of the One, Adam sought to enjoy the multiplicity of the world on its own

terms.[722] The result was predictably disastrous – for in the absence of unity multiplicity itself

disintegrates into an abyss of infinite divisibility.[723] In this sense, Maximos recognizes the kernel

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[719] Again, this is only true from the perspective of the creature. The many *logoi* enfolded within the One Logos are fully actual as the timeless intentionalities of God; however, the creatures created *according to* these *logoi* are merely potentialities in God awaiting actualization as other in time. Origen does not make this distinction. Because he regards creatures (*logika*) as originally *actual*, motion and embodiment inevitably acquire negative connotations.

[720] In the Holy Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, the priest gives thanks to God for "having endowed us with your Kingdom that is to come." As the juxtaposition of past and future tenses indicates, the world already is a cosmic *ecclesia* in virtue of its being created from God according to the Logos; the human is tasked with making this actual and explicit in free cooperation with the divine will.

[721] *Amb*.7, 1093A; italics in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Gen 2:7).

[722] See *Amb*.41, 1308D; *Amb*.10, 1156C-D.

[723] Of course, given that the cosmos is by its very nature circumscribed by divine providence, the detrimental effects of the Fall remain limited. Adam's ignorance of the One introduces new divisions and is destabilizing, yet cannot ultimately alter the fundamental unity of creation. It can only obscure it.

of truth in Origen's cosmology; namely, that multiplicity understood as a departure from unity culminates in evil – a kind of 'bad infinity'.[724] What 'redeems' multiplicity is its reference to the One which circumscribes it, puts a limit to its expansion, and transforms it into a 'good infinity', a fully actualized multiplicity-in-unity.[725]

IV. Virtue & Contemplation as Heavenly Synaxis

Having acquired some sense of the sacerdotal role of humanity in the return of the many to the One, I want to conclude with a closer reflection upon what exactly this mediatory role entails. I have noted repeatedly in passing that the practice of virtue & contemplation lies at the heart of the *logos* of well-being, thus mediating between the extremes of being and eternal-being. In this section, I will focus on the liturgical character of these practices as 'heavenly synaxis' whereby the spiritual adept as hierarch offers up the totality of creation to be transfigured in God.[726] This heavenly synaxis culminates in the ascent to the Kingdom, the unceasing participation in the eternal *erga* of God *kata logon*; that is, participation in the uncreated energies *ana-logous* to beings' acquired receptivity.

Among Maximos' reflections concerning the anagogical reversion of the world upon God one encounters at least five distinct models ranging in emphasis from ethical and ontological, to

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[724] The term is Hegel's. I employ it naively without implying anything specifically Hegelian beyond the compelling descriptiveness of the term.

[725] I am guided here by Proclus' identification of the Good with the One, see *ElTh.*, Prop.13: "But again, if unification is in itself good, and all good tends to create unity, then the Good unqualified and the One unqualified merge as a single principle, *a principle which makes things one and in doing so makes them good*." Emphasis added. Maximos concurs when he states that "evil by nature is fragmented, unstable, multiform, and divisive. *If the good by nature unifies and gathers together things that are divided*, it is obvious that evil divides and destroys what is united." *Thal. Q.*16.4, emphasis added.

[726] For a compelling attempt at identifying the various stages of ascent with the liturgical movement outlined in the *Mystagogy*, see Cvetković "The Mystery of Christ as Revived Logos Theology" in Lévy et al., *The Architecture of the Cosmos. St. Maximus the Confessor, New Perspectives*., 204-216. See also Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*.74.

exegetical, logical, and cosmological.[727] All of these models converge insofar as they

collectively articulate, in diverse ways, the anagogical ascent by way of virtue & contemplation.

In what follows, I focus upon a single model centred upon the well-known 'five divisions of

nature'.[728] This model is useful for our condensed discussion as it encapsulates elements of all

the other models, being simultaneously logical, cosmological, ontological, and ethical. As such,

it succinctly illustrates the anagogical ascent of the many to the One by way of human mediation

– that is, the practice of virtue & contemplation as 'heavenly synaxis'.

According to Maximos, the whole of reality can be conceptually divided into five basic

divisions (*πέντε διαιρέσεσι*): the first is that of the uncreated nature from the created; the second

is the division of created nature into intelligible and sensible; the third is the division of sensible

nature into heaven and earth; the fourth is the division of earth into paradise and the inhabited

world (*οἰκουμένην*); and the fifth and final division is that of the human into male and female.[729]

There are few 'oddities' within this basic scheme worth mentioning at the outset. To begin with,

the first division between uncreated and created would seem to circumscribe God Himself within

nature, as though He were merely the first in an ordered series – a kind of 'Supreme Being'

enthroned above, yet nonetheless circumscribed within, the totality of nature. That this is not the

case is evident not only from the general thrust of Maximos' theology, but also from an

extremely enigmatic comment which he makes in regard to this first division. Maximos remarks

that, while the saints affirm that God is the Creator of all things, "it is not immediately self-

evident who and what God is, and they call 'division' the ignorance (*ἄγνοιαν*) of what it is that

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[727] See *Amb*.10, 1133B-1137C; *Amb*.10, 1177C-1180A; *Amb*.21, 1249A-1252C; *Amb*.37, 1293B-1297A; *Amb*.41, 1305A-1313C.

[728] I am indebted to Thunberg's insightful discussion of the recollection of these five modes in Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 373-427.

[729] See *Amb*.41, 1305A-B.

distinguishes creation from God (*τοῦ Θεοῦ*)."[730] The fact that the world exists at all tells us *that* God is, as the necessary Ground of being, but reveals nothing about *what* God is in His essence. Nor, Maximos insists, do we know precisely what it is that distinguishes creation from God. *That* the world is distinct from God must be affirmed – for the world evidently exists and its contingency excludes it from being identical with God – yet *what* it is that distinguishes it from God Maximos terms "ignorance" (*ἄγνοιαν*).

Now, any attempt at unpacking this enigmatic statement is bound to fail insofar as it represents an attempt to make intelligible what has been affirmed to be fundamentally *un*intelligible.[731] Nonetheless, what this unintelligibility indicates to us, it seems, is that this first 'division' differs crucially from the subsequent divisions – for the uncreated does not exist in opposition to the created, but serves as its Ground. The uncreated pervades the created insofar as God is simultaneously transcendent/immanent; and yet, insofar as there is a meaningful distinction between Ground and grounded, an inexplicable otherness must be affirmed. The first 'division', arguably, is not so much a fixed category of being, as an *act* – the primal act of creation whereby the world emerges *from* God (*τοῦ Θεοῦ*) as other. Having emerged as a distinct entity it becomes possible, in retrospect, to conceptually distinguish between uncreated and created.

The second oddity involves the fourth and fifth divisions; respectively, of earth into paradise and the *oikumene*, and humanity into male and female. These divisions are odd in that Maximos describes them from the outset as though they were included in the original fivefold scheme that Adam was to have united through his natural mediatory capacity. As it turns out,

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[730] *Amb*.41, 1305A.
[731] Fundamentally unintelligible in that it transcends the categories of thought insofar as God is beyond thought and being.

however, these latter divisions are in fact consequences of the Fall. It is because Adam "misused his natural God-given capacity to unite what is divided," Maximos subsequently tells us, that he "divided what was united, and thus was in danger of lamentably returning to nonbeing."[732] That the division between paradise and the inhabited world is due to sin is common knowledge, as it were; yet, the division into genders is also due to sin. Maximos insists that the property of male and female "in no way was linked to the original principle (προηγούμενον λόγον) of the divine plan concerning human generation."[733] The need to overcome the final two divisions, then, would appear to be postlapsarian.

That Maximos presents them as being original can be explained in two ways: first, he adopts Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of the simultaneity of creation and fall, whereby God foresees Adam's declension from the angelic life to a more bestial mode of existence, and thus provides for him a gendered means of procreation in accordance with his diminished status.[734] The simultaneity of creation and fall also means that humanity never actually spent any time in paradise – the latter representing a projection of the final beatific state upon an idealized beginning.[735] As such, the final two divisions are at once a consequence of the fall and at the same time present from the very beginning. The second explanation, is that Maximos is not primarily interested in history, but in the existential truth of creation. The fact is that we inhabit a fallen world as gendered beings; Adam's priestly vocation is our vocation, and his failure marks the tragedy of our human existence. The truth of Maximos' cosmological narrative is that all of

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[732] *Amb*.41, 1308D.
[733] *Amb*.41, 1305C.
[734] See *Thal. Q*.1: "Based on what I have learned from the great Gregory of Nyssa, I believe that the passions were introduced on account of the fall from perfection, emerging in the more irrational part of human nature, and it was through them that, *at the very moment of the transgression*, the distinct and definite likeness to irrational animals appeared in man instead of the divine and blessed image." Emphasis added. See Gregory of Nyssa, *DeHom*. Chapters XVI-XVII, XXII. For a helpful discussion see Balthasar, *Presence and Thought*. 71-87.
[735] Von Balthasar alludes to this in *Presence and Thought*, 65-69.

us are called to the priestly task of mediation, to heal the divisions of the world and to unite the extremes, taking as point of departure our own divided, gendered, fallen human existences.

The sacerdotal task of unifying the whole of creation thus begins with the individual fragmented human self – a task made possible by the incarnate Logos who, having Himself completed the charge neglected by Adam by means of the cross, bequeaths it anew to the rational creature.[736] The dividedness of humanity itself becomes the basis for the task of mediation, which begins with the reintegration of the self; that is, with the practice of virtue as asceticism.[737] The first step, according to Maximos, is to overcome the division of gender "completely shaking off from nature, by means of a supremely dispassionate (ἀπαθεστάτῃ) condition of divine virtue, the property of male and female."[738] The overcoming of gender is simultaneously contemplative and ascetical. On the contemplative level it represents, not so much a rejection of gender, as the recognition that the male/female binary is subsumed within the one human nature (ἄνθρωπον μόνον) – "*for in Christ Jesus,*" says the divine apostle, "*there is neither male nor female.*"[739] The transcending of gender, as Maximos' allusion to Galatians 3:28 indicates, extends to the overcoming of *all* human difference – gender, race, socio-economic status, political and religious affiliation, etc. – along with the divisions and conflicts arising from excessive attachment to these differences. To shake off the property of male and female means acknowledging our solidarity with the whole of humanity, recognising each individual as created in the image of

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[736] The fact that Christ's completion of Adam's task does not exempt the creature from its original vocation is reflected in the Divine Liturgy when the priest offers thanks saying, in a poignant mixture of past and future tense: "Thou hast endowed us with thy Kingdom which is to come." In a sense, the Incarnation has already accomplished everything; yet, the human is still called to freely appropriate this for themself.

[737] As Louth notes: "The divisions are not done away, rather they contribute to the multiplicity inevitable in creatures who are 'after God' (as Maximus often puts it): from isolating and diminishing, they come to represent the richness and diversity of God's creation." Louth, *Maximus the Confessor.*, 74.

[738] *Amb.*41, 1305C.

[739] *Amb.*41, 1309B. Italics in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Gal 3:28).

God – for God is One and simple, and the one human nature (ἄνθρωπον μόνον) is an icon of its solitary Archetype.

On the practical level, the overcoming of male and female represents, respectively, the overcoming of anger and desire. This is hinted at in Maximos' reference to dispassion, or *apatheia*, as the means whereby the properties of male and female are overcome. In his commentary on the Lord's Prayer Maximos explicitly states that when Paul says that "there is neither male nor female" in Christ, he means that there is "neither anger nor lust."[740] On an interior level, the shaking off of male and female marks the beginning of the path of virtue, the overcoming of disintegrating passions and conflicting fears and desires, resulting in greater peace and equanimity. One is no longer fragmented by sin, as Maximos puts it, but recollected into the natural simplicity of one's true nature.[741]

Yet, as Thunberg rightly notes, the overcoming of anger and desire does not mean the simple suppression or elimination of the passions. What it means, rather, is the rehabilitation and transformation of the passions which are problematic only insofar as they are misdirected.[742] Maximos defines evil as "the irrational movement of natural powers (φυσικῶν δυνάμεων) toward something other than their proper goal."[743] Similar to the Platonic model of the tripartite soul, the *thymotic* and *epithymotic* powers of the soul were (and are) meant to support the intellect's quest for God. Desire, or *erōs*, after all, are unifying impulses. However, when directed towards multiplicity without the reference point of unity, *erōs* disintegrates into manifold conflicting attachments. It was precisely Adam's failure to oriente himself towards the One God, and to

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[740] *Or. Dom.*, (CCSG 23:47, 51) For a helpful discussion concerning the history of this identification see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 373-376.
[741] See *Thal. Q*.16.2.
[742] Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 380-381.
[743] *Thal. Q*.1.2.12.

apply his God-given natural powers of unity towards the sacred task of mediation that his natural powers became corrupted. Instead of having dominion over the earth, Adam become dominated by his earthly preoccupations.[744] The recollection of one's own natural powers from their manifold dispersion thus marks the first stage in the task of mediation.

The second stage involves overcoming the division between paradise and *oikumene*. Regarding this division Maximos says that, having realized the oneness of humanity, Adam was to have "united paradise and the inhabited world through his own proper holy way of life (ἁγιοπρεποῦς)," having "fashioned a single earth (μίαν γῆν), not divided (μὴ διαιρουμένην) by him in the difference (διαφοράν) of its parts, but rather gathered together (συναγομένην), for to none of its parts would he be subjected (παθόντι)."[745] This brief description is vexingly short on specifics; all we are told is that somehow holy conduct, the practice of virtue, overcomes the division between paradise and *oikumene* culminating in a unified (μίαν) earth. Of interest is Maximos' use of the terms "division" (διαιρουμένην) and "difference" (διαφοράν). Insofar as Maximos employs "division" in reference to the five basic divisions (πέντε διαιρέσεσι) of nature, the distinction between these two terms here may be irrelevant. Nonetheless, it is tempting to see here a subtle yet crucial distinction between "division" and "distinction"; namely, that the one earth is no longer divided by difference, but rather "gathered up" (συναγομένην) into a harmonious whole, a unity-in-multiplicity.[746] The liturgical overtones of *synagomenēn* (*synaxis*) support this reading insofar as the Church is precisely such a gathering together of diverse peoples into a single ecclesial body.[747] The task of mediation, then, is once again seen not to be

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[744] See *Amb*.41, 1308D.

[745] *Amb*.41, 1308A.

[746] A little further one when Maximos describes how Christ accomplished the task neglected by Adam he once again states that Christ demonstrated that the earth is not divided against itself (ἑαυτὴν ἀδιαίρετος) "for it preserves the principle of its existence free of any difference caused by division (διαφορὰν διαιρέσεως)." See *Amb*.41, 1309C.

[747] See *Myst.* 1. 165 [CCSG 12].

about the elimination of divisions, but the reconciliation of difference.[748] Or rather, the elimination of division *is* the reconciliation of difference. In other words, it is not diversity that is problematic but the conflicts which arise when diversity fails to be referred back (συνάγειν) to its unitary Ground.

In terms of how this fourth mediation works, we gain a valuable clue in Maximos' description of Christ's accomplishment of the task neglected by Adam. Maximos tells us that Christ "having sanctified (ἁγιάσας) our inhabited world by the dignity of his conduct as a man (ἀνθρωποπρεποῦς), He proceeded unhindered to paradise after His death, just as He truly promised to the thief, saying: *Today, you will be with me in paradise*."[749] After the resurrection, says Maximos, the difference between paradise and *oikumene* was overcome, Christ having demonstrated the fundamental unity of the earth by inhabiting it subsequent to His glorification. The key to the fourth mediation, then, is the cross. Each person, Maximos says elsewhere, "brings about his own crucifixion according to the mode of virtue that is appropriate to him."[750] It is through the practice of self-mortification (be it the crucifixion of abstaining from sin, of dying to the passions, or abandoning one's cherished delusions) that one finds oneself spiritually crucified together with Christ.

But there is more. It is the good thief crucified alongside Christ that truly illustrates the mediation of paradise and *oikumene*. "A grateful thief crucified together with Christ," says Maximos, "is every man who, in suffering ill treatment because of his sins for which he is to blame, suffers ill-treatment together with the Word (who blamelessly suffered ill treatment for his sake), and endures this with gratitude (εὐχαριστίας)."[751] Just as Christ, being blameless,

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[748] See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 389.
[749] *Amb*.41, 1309B; emphasis in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Lk 23:43).
[750] *Amb*.47, 1360B.
[751] *Amb*.53, 1373B.

voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of the world so each of us, being culpable, is called to voluntarily take upon ourselves our own sins, regarding life's trials and tribulations as chastisements for our own wrongdoings. By rejoicing in the spiritual healing imparted by our sufferings, says Maximos, we transmute involuntary pain into something freely chosen. It is this eucharistic attitude to suffering that transforms our fallen existence into a paradisaical life. Again, it is not the case that suffering is abolished and we escape into some sort of blissful oblivion. The point of this mediation, rather, is to pass over from a painful existence in which we perpetuate our suffering by refusing to take responsibility for our wrongdoings, to a life of repentance and humility whereby that same pain is transformed into joyful acceptance. In contrast to the former mediation, the emphasis here is not so much on the transformation of the passions (though this is certainly assumed), but on the transmutation of pain. By choosing to radically *own* one's suffering, sorrow is transformed into joy and suffering is rendered meaningful.[752] The result is self-knowledge, a deeper understanding of suffering and its causes – paradise, according to Maximos, being also "the realm of knowledge."[753]

On the basis of this practical wisdom (φρόνησιν)[754] we pass to the third mediation between earth and heaven. Whereas the previous mediations emphasized the practice of virtue in relation to fallen existence, the next two mediations emphasize contemplation in relation to what might hypothetically be regarded as the 'original' prelapsarian distinctions of nature.[755] That being said, the first of these (3rd division) tends more towards virtue than its successor (4th division) in which contemplation predominates. In a sense, the third mediation between earth and

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[752] Consider Maximos' discussion of the inseparability of pleasure and pain and hence the absurdity and futility of pursuing one while trying to avoid the other. See *Thal. Q.*1.2.14.

[753] *Amb.*53. 1373A. For an insightful treatment of this mediation see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 381-391.

[754] See *Amb.*10, 1109C.

[755] Bearing in mind, of course, that such a hypothetical state never actually existed.

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heaven itself mediates between the first two divisions (virtue/postlapsarian) and the following two divisions (contemplation/prelapsarian) representing virtue & contemplation in equal measure.[756]

Having united paradise and *oikumene* through a holy way of life proper to his human nature Adam, Maximos continues, was to have "united heaven and earth through a life identical in virtue in every manner with that of the angels."[757] The result of this angelic life was to have been the overcoming of all earthly divisions such that the sensible creation was made (or revealed to be) "absolutely identical and indivisible with itself", in no way divided into places separated by distances. In terms of Christ, we learn that He accomplished this mediation insofar as "He entered heaven with His earthly body, which is the same nature and consubstantial with ours", demonstrating by his ascension that "according to its more universal principle (καθολικωτέρῳ λόγῳ), all sensible nature is one (μίαν)."[758] As we can see, this mediation is simultaneously ethical and epistemological; the angelic life of virtue represents the ascent to a higher plane of virtue coinciding with a more panoramic vision of the unity of creation. The reference to ascension emphasises the contemplative aspect insofar as Maximos identifies virtue with incarnation and contemplation with ascension.[759]

The key to understanding this mediation, however, would seem to be the reference to the angelic way of life. It is a well-known fact that the angelic life is a common description of the monastic vocation; it is also, according to Gregory of Nyssa, a description of the 'original'

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[756] This kind of schematic cannot be pressed too hard, however; Maximos endlessly reiterates the inseparability of virtue & contemplation. It is never the case that one 'progresses', in a kind of linear fashion, from virtue to contemplation – as though the former were somehow dispensable.
[757] *Amb*.41, 1308A.
[758] *Amb*.41, 1309C.
[759] See *Amb*.32, 1285B.

character of humanity.[760] Insofar as this latter represents an originally androgynous existence involving asexual multiplication, the angelic life in both the cosmic and monastic sense suggests a life of interior unity, of simplicity and dispassion (*apatheia*).[761] As Thunberg notes, this mediation marks the stage where man begins to leave behind his affective relationship to the world.[762] As such, it marks the culmination of the preceding stages. Having overcome the passions of male and female one becomes spiritually androgynous; through voluntary crucifixion one begins to see through the illusory constructs of the *oikumene*, of reality interpreted solely through the egoistic, self-loving (*philautia*) lens of passion, aggression, avarice, and pride. When these dissolve one finds oneself in the paradise of the virtues. From here it is but a short step to the angelic life – an established state of virtue and collectedness no longer centred upon the instability of the self, but grounded in the love of God.[763] Upon this firm foundation dawns contemplative insight into the nature of created reality.

The second mediation between sensible and intelligible realities resembles the preceding one in many ways. The main difference is that whereas the former emphasized virtue, the present one emphasizes contemplation. As Maximos says regarding Adam, "Then, once he had united intelligible and sensible realities through *knowledge (γνῶσιν)* equal to the angels, he would have made the whole of creation one single creation (*μίαν...ἅπασαν κτίσιν*), not divided by him in terms of knowledge and ignorance, since his cognitive science of the principles (*λόγων*) of beings would be completely equal to the knowledge of the angels."[764] Where the previous mediation emphasized angelic virtue, the present mediation stresses angelic knowledge. There is

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[760] See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 392.
[761] Recall also that the monk is the one who is *monachos*; that is, single, solitary, unique.
[762] See, Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 393.
[763] See *Amb*.7, 1089B.
[764] *Amb*.41, 1308B. Emphasis added.

an ambiguity here, however, in that Maximos describes this stage simultaneously as the union of sensible and intelligible *creation* (for it is precisely *ktisis* that becomes *mia*), and as involving knowledge of the (uncreated) *logoi* of created beings – a distinction that sometimes befuddles commentators.[765] In other words, the union of sensible and intelligible creation is closely related to, but *not* synonymous with, the knowledge of the uncreated *logoi* of sensible and intelligible (i.e. earthly and angelic) creation. The solution, perhaps, is that it is precisely one's knowledge of the uncreated *logoi* of created beings that makes one angelic and the result is the unification of sensible and intelligible creation – earthly human nature having ascended to the angelic realm through the practice of contemplation. It is, as Maximos clearly states, *through (κατὰ) knowledge equal to the angels* that this mediation is accomplished.

At any rate, the key insight here is the realization concerning the ultimate oneness of the entire created cosmos from the inanimate to the angelic, "in accordance with its most primal and most universal principle (ἀρχικώτατόν τε καὶ καθολικώτατον λόγον)."[766] Whereas earlier Maximos used the comparative (καθολικωτέρῳ λόγῳ), here he emphatically employs the superlative. The move from *more* universal to *most* universal signals the culmination of natural contemplation, beyond which one can only ascend by the grace of God. Regarding this most universal and primal *logos*, Maximos tells us two crucial things: first, he says that having passed through the divine and intelligible orders of heaven with His earthly human nature, Christ showed "that the whole creation is one, *as if it were another human being (ἄνθρωπον ἄλλον)*, completed by the coming together of all its members"; and second, that the unity of creation is

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[765] Thunberg in his otherwise excellent account of this mediation would seem to confuse them when he identifies the sensible and intelligible with the outward appearance of something and its inner *logos*. Certainly, Maximos *is* speaking of this, yet he is also – or so it seems – speaking about intelligible *creatures* (i.e. the angels). The *logoi* as the eternal intentions of God unified in the One Logos are not creatures. See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 402.
[766] *Amb*.41, 1309C.

due "to one, unique, simple, undefined, and unchangeable idea: *that it comes from nothing* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος)."[767]

The reference to the cosmos as "another human being" is the counterpart to the human as "a second cosmos";[768] just as man is a microcosm, so the cosmos is a *macroanthropos* – a human being writ large. It is this reciprocity that accounts for man's mediatory nature. The entire continuum of creation is enfolded within the human, while this same continuum is unfolded in the cosmos. It is for this reason that humanity is able to draw the extremes of the created cosmos into one within its own unified being. Moreover, the deep *sympatheia* between man and cosmos helps to explain why deification is never merely individual, but necessarily cosmic – for man and cosmos are inextricably intertwined. Ultimately, the cosmos as *macroanthropos* points to the ecclesial character of creation. Just as the Church is not some impoverished singularity, but a single harmonious body composed of various members, so the oneness of creation does not involve a negation of multiplicity and difference but rather the gathering up of diversity within a single unifying *logos* – the fundamental principle of creation *ex nihilo*. This, as Maximos immediately makes clear, is synonymous with creation *ex deo*, for "all beings *after* God (μετὰ Θεὸν) which have their being *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) in virtue of their createdness, coincide with all the others."[769] From the most illustrious seraphim to the lowliest earthworm all beings derived from God from nothing are one in the simple fact of their createdness, their utter contingency upon God as their Ground.

It is at this point that Maximos reintroduces the Porphyrian scheme of genus and species. All things, he insists, "that are distinguished from each other by virtue of their individual

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[767] *Amb*.41, 1312B. emphasis added.
[768] See *Amb*.7, 1096A.
[769] *Amb*.41, 1312C. Translation slightly modified for a more literal rendering of Maximos' Greek. Emphasis added.

differences are generically united (ἥνωνται) by universal and common identities, and they are

drawn together (συνωθοῦνται) to one and the same (πρὸς τὸ ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν) by means of a certain

generic principle of nature (τινι λόγῳ φύσεως)."[770] Accidents are one in the subject in which they

inhere; subjects are joined under a common species; species are united by a shared genus; and

genera are gathered up into a single overarching genus – the fundamental category of

creatureliness. Maximos' language of synthesis (συνωθοῦνται) is crucial to note here.[771] The

model of *henosis* is, as we have seen repeatedly, one of unity-in-multiplicity such that difference

is preserved in its incorporation into a higher unity. For each of these stages of created being

there are corresponding *logoi* according to which they are simultaneously diversified and unified.

The unfolding of the One Logos as the many *logoi* of creation that we discussed in the previous

chapter has as its counterpart the return, or recapitulation, of the many back into the One – a task

in which the human as hierarch is called to participate through the practice of virtue &

contemplation. Ultimately, it is Christ the supreme Logos who draws all things together "in

peaceful friendship and undivided concord, both *in heaven* and *on earth*."[772]

Having joined all things together into a cosmic *ecclesia*, a single body composed of many

members, man in cooperation with Christ was to have completed his sacramental task by

offering the totality of creation to its Creator in gratitude, uniting "created and uncreated through

love (ἀγάπης)," to which Maximos appends "(oh, the wonder of God's love for mankind

(φιλανθρωπίας)!)."[773] If the first four mediations sketch out the path from being to well-being

according to which humanity's natural potential for unity is (or ought to be) progressively

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[770] *Amb*.41, 1312C.
[771] The Greek meaning of σύνθεσις which emphasises the joining together of parts does not substantially differ from the English meaning of synthesis.
[772] *Amb*.41, 1313C. Emphasis in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Col 1:20).
[773] *Amb*.41, 1308B.

brought to actuality, the fifth and final mediation represents the transition beyond nature to the grace of eternal well-being. Once again we are confronted with the aporia of man's impossible vocation. Maximos is clear that Adam was to have joined the created to the uncreated. Indeed this mighty act of priestly mediation is the whole point of creation ordained from before the ages.[774] The One became many precisely in order that the many might become One. This is the cosmic liturgy over which the human hierarch is called to preside, receiving the manifold gift of being and offering it back transformed into well-being, a harmonious whole worthy of final transfiguration in Christ.

And yet, it is equally clear that the finite human creature cannot attain to the infinite by means of its own resources – for the grace of divinization, as Maximos makes clear, "finds no faculty or capacity of any sort within nature that could receive it."[775] Indeed, if nature did have this capacity then the distinction between uncreated and created would dissolve, the human becoming God by nature rather than by grace. The mystery of the primal division between the uncreated and the created confronts us anew at the culmination of the return of the world back into God.[776] The resolution of this aporia lies with the reference to love. It is by means of love (ἀγάπης), says Maximos, that the fundamental division between God and creature is overcome. At this final stage, then, we leave behind natural contemplation and return to the pinnacle of the virtues; namely to "that power which preeminently divinizes all" – *love*.[777]

In truth, love marks the perfect coincidence of both virtue *and* contemplation; it is not merely the pinnacle of the virtues, but the consummation of the contemplative life as well.

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[774] See *Amb*.41, 1309D.
[775] *Amb*.20, 1237B. See also *Amb*.65, 1392B.
[776] The fact that Christ accomplishes this final mediation on our behalf does not help us here, for Maximos is clear that Adam was originally to have completed this task on his own (with the help of grace).
[777] *Amb*.21, 1249B.

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Maximos affirms this when he insists that the knowing intellect "surely loves (ἐρᾷ)[778] that which it knows; and if it loves (ἐρᾷ), it certainly suffers (πάσχει) an ecstasy toward it as an object of love (ἐραστὸν)."[779] It is this ecstatic character of love[780] that makes of it a divinizing power, for it wrenches the lover outside themself such that they find themself unexpectedly within the ambit of the Beloved.[781] This experience is simultaneously passive and active – for which reason, as we noted above, Maximos appends the *philanthropia* of God to the *agape* of the creature. Having had a taste of God, the questing soul only intensifies its desire, not ceasing "until it is wholly present in the whole beloved, and wholly encompassed by it, willingly (ἐκουσίως) receiving the whole saving circumscription by its own choice (κατὰ προαίρεσιν)."[782] At this point, says Maximos, the ecstatic soul "will no longer be able (μηδ'...δύνασθαι) to wish to be known from its own qualities, but rather from those of the circumscriber, in the same way that air is thoroughly permeated by light, or iron is completely penetrated by fire."[783] Here the one who circumscribed nature within his own microcosmic being is himself willingly circumscribed by the Creator of all, voluntarily subjecting his volition to the divine will, desiring no longer to belong to himself but to God alone.[784]

This ecstatic ascent, Maximos assures us, does not involve the abolition of freewill. Rather, it marks the perfection of the will which now finds eternal rest[785] in actively willing what

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[778] Maximos presumably accepts the identity of *agape* and *erōs* established by Origen and Dionysius. See *DN*.4.12, 709B-D.

[779] *Amb*.7, 1073D.

[780] On this see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, n.d., 418-425.

[781] As Dionysius puts it: "This divine yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to the self but to the beloved." After which he cites the Pauline utterance that "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." *DN*.4.13, 712A; Gal 2:20.

[782] *Amb*.7, 1076A.

[783] *Amb*.7, 1076A.

[784] A little further on Maximos in fact refers to the deified individual as circumscribing the divine insofar as God is "contained in them uncontainably according to the measure of the participation of each" – a clear reference to the Theotokos who 'uncontainably contained' God in her earthly womb. See *Amb*.7, 1076D.

[785] See *Amb*.7, 1073C: "For the end of the motion of things that are moved is to rest within eternal-being itself."

God wills "like an image that has ascended to its archetype."[786] The inability of the soul to will what is contrary to God mirrors God's own 'inability' not to will the Good that He is – and this, as we noted in Chapter Three, is in fact the ultimate freedom, the freedom to will the good for all eternity. In truth, the entire mediating ascent marked the progressive attainment of this unattainable goal, first overcoming the painful divisions of self-willing, and then gradually realizing the oneness of the good and natural distinctions of nature becoming, with the help of grace, ever more conformed to the divine will through the unificatory practice of virtue & contemplation – for the ultimate will of God is simply the making explicit of the ecclesial character of creation as a single body composed of many members, the eschatological completion of the world as the cosmic body of Christ. This is how well-being mediates between being and eternal well-being. The spiritual adept travels the path of unification to its natural limit in love – the ultimate unifying power – at which point the divine *philanthropia* takes over, reaching across the divide to embrace the ecstasy of the questing creature halfway, establishing it firmly in the supranatural state of eternal well-being.[787] This is the ascent to the Kingdom, the simultaneously active/passive ecstasy of love whereby the creature obtains "as a kind of prize (οἷον ἔπαθλον) for his ascent to God the absolutely unique God (μονώτατον Θεόν)."[788]

Having offered the gift of being back to the Giver, *thine own of thine own*, culminating in eternal well-being, all that remains is to make a few closing remarks concerning the

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[786] *Amb*.7, 1076C.

[787] Consider *Amb*.60, 1385C: "For man has been guided by God, through the stages of divine ascent, into the highest regions, *to the same degree that God has descended down to the farthest reaches of our nature, emptying Himself without change*." Emphasis added. The reciprocity of incarnation/deification to which Maximos frequently alludes is key. Meister Eckhart could have been quoting Maximos when he says that "to be empty of all creatures is to be full of God." See, Eckhart and O'Neal, *Meister Eckhart, from Whom God Hid Nothing*., 113. The activity of self-emptying has as its counterpart the passivity of being filled with God – like a glass emptied of water naturally becomes filled with air.

[788] *Amb*.41,1308C.

consummation of creation. As Loudovikos notes, Maximos' ontology is fundamentally an eschatological ontology, such that the completion of creation, the fulness of being, is only realized at the end in the *eschaton*.[789] The human as hierarch, as we have seen, is called to cooperate in this grand cosmic design drawing together the multiplicity of creation and offering it back to the One origin as end. The counterpart to cosmic incarnation is deification, the universal transfiguration according to which Creator and creature wholly interpenetrate like iron in fire or air illuminated by an all-pervading light.[790] Just as the procession of the world from God as *archē* involved creation from the uncreated energies according to the Logos, so here the deifying return of the world back into God as *telos* involves participation in the uncreated energies according to the *logoi*. This is the 'dialogical reciprocity' whereby the manifold gift of being is offered back as a unified whole, culminating in the transfiguration by grace of eternal well-being – the eternal Sabbath that marks the onto-liturgical ascent to the Kingdom.

That Maximos posits a doctrine of deification *kata logon* as the counterpart to his doctrine of creation *kata logon* comes out in a somewhat oblique manner through his frequent use of the term analogy (ἀναλόγως). As we noted in Chapter Five, *analogōs* for Maximos refers to the measured participation finite beings enjoy in the infinite attributes of God portioned out by the Logos as principle of differentiation.[791] As Maximos tells us, "by virtue of the fact that all things have their being from God (ἐκ Θεοῦ), they participate (μετέχει) in God in a manner appropriate and proportionate (ἀναλόγως) to each."[792] Creation and participation are inseparable. To be created *from* God is to participate *in* God as the Ground of being. Some creatures participate in God simply in virtue of being alive (i.e. plants); others by being sensate (animals);

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[789] Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology*., 83
[790] See *Amb*.7, 1076A.
[791] See above, 235.
[792] *Amb*.7, 1080B.

still others by being rational (humans) or intellective (angels).[793] All beings created from God, in other words, participate in God – that is, in the eternal attributes of Being, Life, Wisdom, Goodness, etc. – in their own *ana-logous*, divinely willed way. That Maximos insists that each of these beings is a "portion of God" "insofar as it has been created in accordance with (*καθ᾽*) the *logos* that exists in and *with* God" demonstrates the close connection between *analogōs* and *kata logon*.[794] Both expressions point to the measured participation of finite beings in the infinite attributes of God.

The inseparability of these terms is further evident within the context of the threefold *logos* of being, well-being, and eternal-being. The *logos* of being coincides with the fact that each being has been created *kata logon*; the *logos* of well-being involves the voluntary appropriation of one's own *logos*, whereby one chooses to *live kata logon*, actualizing one's potential in conformity with the divine will *for us*. To the extent that we are able to accomplish this, we participate in beatitude according to the *logos* of eternal well-being. Thus, says Maximos, "for those who participate or do not participate *proportionately* (*ἀνάλογος*) in Him who, in the truest sense (*κυρίως*) is (*ὄντος*) and is good (*εὖ ὄντος*), and is forever (*ἀεὶ ὄντος*) there is an intensification and increase of punishment for those who cannot participate, and of enjoyment for those who can participate."[795] Participation in the imparticipable Godhead is analogous to the degree of conformity to one's *logos*; in other words, the *logos* is the criterion according to which (*κατὰ*) one *ana-logously* participates in the uncreated energies of Being, Goodness, and Eternity. In essence, *analogōs* represents the free appropriation of the principle of *kata logon*.

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[793] *Amb*.7, 1080B.
[794] *Amb*.7, 1080C. Emphasis in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Jn 1:1).
[795] *Amb*. 42, 1329B. Emphasis added.

In the return of all things to God, then, the freedom of the creature plays a crucial role. It is not only the Logos as principle of differentiation that determines the nature of reality, but the free cooperation of the rational creature. It is this, as we have seen, that mediates between the gift of being and the grace of eternal well-being. It is by way of human mediation, says Maximos, that the Creator of all was "to reside in all beings in a manner appropriate (ἀναλόγως) to each."[796] In its convergence around the one human nature, the cosmos becomes the body and members of God. By being referred, or offered back (ἀναφορά) to the One, multiplicity is redeemed and becomes good each particular being becoming an analogous portion of God, such that "*God will be all things in everything*, encompassing all things and making them subsist in Himself."[797] This marks the eschatological realization of the divine plan for creation, the ascent to the Kingdom, the perpetual Sabbath on which all beings find eternal rest. Having freely chosen to live in accordance with the *logos* of being, having appropriated for themselves the *logos* of well-being, creatures receive their final determination – the deifying grace of eternal well-being. In them, says Maximos, "the whole God suitably (προσηκόντως) abides, bestowing on them eternal well-being by giving them a share in Himself, because He alone, properly speaking, is (ὄντος), and is good (εὖ ὄντος), and is eternal (ἀεὶ ὄντος)."[798] This, of course, does not imply a share in God's essence, but in His eternal *erga*, the infinite attributes "around God (περὶ Θεὸν)."[799]

Creation *from* God according to the Logos thus culminates in deification *in* God according to the Logos – that is, according to beings' voluntary conformity to, and cooperation

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[796] *Amb*.7, 1092C.

[797] *Amb*.7, 1092C. Emphasis in original indicating Scriptural allusion (1 Cor 15:28).

[798] *Amb*.65, 1392D.

[799] Maximos says that "the multiform movement of beings" will come to rest "in the infinity that is around God (περὶ Θεὸν)….For infinity is around God (Περὶ Θεὸν), but it is not God Himself, for He incomparably transcends even this." See *Amb*.15, 1220C.

with, the Logos as the divine will uniquely determined *for them*. This is the heavenly synaxis; the onto-liturgical ascent to the Kingdom presided over by the human as hierarch; the realization of the mystery hidden from before the ages – God's unwavering will and singular loving *(L)ogos* to become many so that the many might freely choose to become One. In sum: God diversifies Himself in creation without division so that the diversity of creation might become unified without confusion.

V. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to elucidate Maximos' understanding of the human as cosmic priest and mediator of creation called to resolve the multiplicity of the world back into its original and eschatological oneness in Christ. I began by arguing that it is the ethical freedom of the creature that accomplishes this mediatory task; it is the voluntary practice of virtue which mediates between the gift of being and the grace of eternal well-being. I further argued that it is precisely the microcosmic character of humanity that grounds its natural potential for mediation. Insofar as the rational creature possesses an innate solidarity with all things, it is able to grasp the singular origin of all creation in God, drawing all things into one through the practice of virtue & contemplation. In this way, humanity is called to realize within itself the ecclesial character of the cosmos, to make explicit the unity implicit in the world of multiplicity. I concluded by arguing that creation *from* God according to the Logos has as its counterpart deification *in* God according to the Logos – that is, according to beings' voluntary conformity to, and cooperation with, their own divinely appointed *logoi*. As with creation, deification *kata logon* does not mean participation in the divine *ousia*, but in the uncreated *erga*, or energies, of God.

With the conclusion of this chapter, my exposition of Maximos' sacramental eucharistic ontology finds its completion. Whereas the first five chapters of my dissertation dealt with the idea of creation as divine self-impartation, as God's own freely offered gift of His own infinite Being – multiplied in and through the Logos – to finite beings, this sixth and final chapter has dealt with the creature's response to this divine outpouring. To speak only about the procession of the world from God while ignoring its corresponding reversion would result in an incomplete account of Maximos' ontology. It is precisely in the return of creation – mediated by the human as rational agent – that the gift of being is transformed into the grace of eternal well-being. The counterpart to creation is deification. It is here that the Logos finally accomplishes the mystery of His embodiment in all things. This is eucharistic ontology: the creature's referral (*anaphora*) of the precious gift of being back to its Source – *thine own of thine own* – in gratitude (*eucharistia*) culminating in the grace of eternal well-being.

Conclusion

I began my dissertation by remarking that at the heart of any sacramental vision of reality lies the affirmation of a certain continuity between God and world – a continuity which Latin medieval scholastics express in terms of the *analogia entis*, but which can more generally be referred to as the ontology of participation. Maximos, I argued, articulates a similar intuition through his doctrine of creation *ex deo* (ἐκ Θεοῦ), or creation as divine self-impartation. All things are created *from* God *according to* the Logos. This doctrine, I have argued throughout, points not merely to the sacramentality of the world as imbued with divinity but, in addition, to the eucharistic character of the cosmos as *gift* – the gift of God's own infinite Being, offered in the form of uncreated grace in and through the Logos, to finite beings.

I developed this idea in Chapter One arguing that Maximos' many references to creation *from* God (ἐκ Θεοῦ) were more than merely metaphorical. On the basis of philosophical-historical evidence drawn from Maximos' pagan and Christian predecessors, I argued that Maximos' use of the preposition ἐκ, as well as his employment of classic emanationist metaphors, demonstrates a basic continuity between the constitutive procession of Neoplatonist ontology and Maximos' own doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation. As such, I argued that the language of creation ἐκ Θεοῦ points unequivocally to Maximos' sacramental ontology, to the implicitly or potentially deific character of the cosmos as imbued with divine energy. In addition, I argued that Maximos' assimilation of Neoplatonic causality to Logos-theology signals the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology rooted in Christ as the Monadic Ground of being. It is not merely the One Trihypostatic God who serves as

the ultimate, solitary Ground of Being, but specifically Christ the Logos begotten from before all ages and incarnate in creation. It is precisely the Christocentric character of Maximos' ontology, the fact that the Logos plays a central role in the creation and deification of the world, that transforms Maximos' sacramental ontology into a specifically eucharistic ontology, an ontology grounded in God and rooted in the Logos.

Having argued for a basic continuity between Neoplatonic emanation and Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex deo* in Chapter One, I proceeded in Chapter Two to present the first of two ways in which the Christian Maximos diverges from the pagan Neoplatonists. In essence, whereas the pagan Neoplatonists conceive of being emanating from the One by means of successive subordinate hypostases, I argued that Maximos following the Cappadocians and Dionysius understands it as flowing directly from the Godhead via the 'uncreated energies'. While it would be anachronistic to claim that Maximos possesses a fully articulated doctrine of uncreated energies in the Palamist sense, I argued that – like his theological predecessors – he ascribes to a basic distinction between God's *ousia* and God's *energeia*. Maximos expresses this most clearly in terms of the eternal works (ἔργα) by means of which beings participate the 'imparticipable' God. As such, creation from God does not mean creation from the divine *ousia*, but from the eternal *erga*, attributes, or energies of God.

Insofar as these processions *are* God, the world is indeed created *from* God – for, in the absence of subordinate principles all creative energies must be predicated of God alone. And yet, insofar as these energies are distinct from the essence, the world is not created from God – not, at any rate, in any kind of unqualified 'essential' sense. This, I argued, marks a crucial difference between pagan and Christian emanationism: the former understands emanation as proceeding by means of successive subordinate hypostases, while the latter understands it as flowing directly

from the Godhead via the uncreated energies, or grace. In light of this transformation, I argued that Maximos' Christian doctrine of creation as divine self-impartation avoids charges of pantheism. By distinguishing between God *in se* and God *ad extra*, Maximos at once affirms the continuity between God and world crucial to his sacramental ontology, while insisting upon the element of *dis*continuity which prevents the two from collapsing into pantheistic confusion. Though the world is derived *from* God as the sole *archē* of existence, it is not thereby identical with God.

In Chapter Three I addressed the perennial problem of freedom and necessity in relation to God. Granted the important correctives Maximos applies to the pagan doctrine of emanation, the question as to whether Maximos' doctrine of creation as *energeic* emanation nonetheless undermines the freedom of God is unavoidable. In this chapter, I sought to challenge the popular dichotomy regarding the supposed 'necessity' of Neoplatonic emanation vis-à-vis the 'freedom' of Christian creation. I argued, on the one hand, for the presence of freedom and volition in the emanationism of Plotinus while, on the other hand, exploring the role of necessity in the creationism of Maximos. I concluded by asserting that, all things being equal, one does find in Maximos (and Christian thinkers generally) a heightened sense of divine volition and relationality beyond that of the pagan Neoplatonists. Maximos, I argued, adheres to a doctrine of creation as *voluntary emanation* that explodes the cherished trope of free versus necessary creation. God not only voluntarily imparts Himself to beings in keeping with His unwavering goodness but, as Logos, wills to enter directly into creation as its immanent governing principle – Wisdom incarnate. As such, God freely subjects Himself to the necessity of creation, finitizing Himself in His overflowing generosity and love for the world.

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Having arrived at an understanding of creation *ex deo* as voluntary and *energeic* emanation, I concluded my discussion of Maximos' broadly sacramental ontology in Chapter Four with a final modification which further distances his thought from that of his pagan predecessors: the idea of the world's temporal creation. This represents the second of the above-mentioned two ways in which Maximos diverges from the thought of Plotinus and Proclus. This, I argued, is where the real opposition between pagan emanation and Christian creation lies. For Plotinus, following the logic of Aristotle, the world is eternal and in a sense *must* be so in accordance with the timeless actuality of the One. For Maximos, drawing upon Philoponus' arguments against the eternity of the world, the radical contingency of the world points to its temporal beginning. Utilizing the notion of time, I maintained, Maximos establishes a much stronger distinction between the One and the many than one finds among the pagan Neoplatonists. This temporal element deepens the emergent distinction between the essence and the 'energies' such that the world created *from* God is in no way identical *with* God. I argued that Maximos combines voluntary emanation with temporal creation so as to arrive at a new vision of creation as *voluntary and temporal emanation* – that is, creation as divine self-impartation.

I further argued that Maximos' doctrine of creation in time is inseparable from his doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. To be created from nothing (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος) means precisely to be brought into existence when (ποτὲ) previously one was not (οὐκ ἦν). Maximos' doctrine of creation *ex nihilo,* I suggested, can be understood on three distinct yet interrelated levels: 1) creation *ex nihilo* as rejection of ontological dualism (creation *not* from beings); 2) creation *ex nihilo* as movement from potentiality to actuality (creation from *not yet* being); 3) creation *ex nihilo* as temporal creation (creation *not from eternity*). All three levels work together to unequivocally affirm the otherness of the world from God, yet without undermining the

continuity between them crucial to sacramental ontology. I argued that the latter two levels in particular open up an ontological and temporal *diaphora* between God and the world created from God. If in the previous chapters I emphasized the sameness between God and the world created *from God* (ἐκ Θεοῦ) from nothing, in Chapter Four I emphasized the otherness of the world as created from God *from nothing* (ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος).

Chapter Five marked the transition from a broadly sacramental conception of Maximos' ontology, to a consideration of its specifically eucharistic character centred upon the Logos as Christian formal principle. I argued that the rejection of mediating hypostases and the introduction of a temporal dimension culminated in a profoundly altered ontology. By means of these changes Maximos renders the world simultaneously more intimately related to God, from whom it proceeds *im*mediately by way of the uncreated energies, and more radically distinguished – for, despite its derivation from God, it is neither consubstantial nor coeternal with God. The world, as Maximos states, is created from God from nothing. Yet, this transformation of mediation, I argued, issued in a new philosophical problem – the loss of a clearly defined formal principle. To say that the energies mediate between the One and many is, from a philosophical perspective, insufficient insofar as this does not address the problem of particularity. Granted that beings are broadly determined by their participation in the energies of Being, Life, Wisdom, Goodness, and so on, what accounts for the *particularity* of beings in terms of genera, species, and individuals? How do God's being-making processions constitute particulars?

In the absence of the Ideas – understood in Platonic fashion as a fully formed *cosmos noetos* – a new principle of differentiation needs to be articulated. Maximos, I argued in this chapter, accomplishes this by his retrieval of Origen's Logos-theology according to which the

One Logos becomes incarnate in the world as the many *logoi* of creation. As predeterminations and divine wills, the *logoi* are not fully formed Ideas, or noetic entities – as they are for the pagan Neoplatonists – but rather the divine intentionality for creation unified in God and multiple in the world. Rather than a succession of subordinate hypostases mediating the Ideas from Nous to Nature, the One Hypostatic Logos, I argued, *im*mediately constitutes reality by becoming incarnate as the many *logoi* of creation – what Wood calls creation as incarnation. In this way, Maximos establishes the Logos as Christian formal principle. *The counterpart to* energeic *mediation is thus formal incarnation*: the Logos enters directly into His own creation as its immanent governing principle. This, I concluded, signaled the emergence of a specifically Christian sacramentality, a eucharistic ontology grounded in God and rooted in the incarnate Christ. The whole of creation is gift – the self-impartation of God in and through the Logos who, *broken but not divided*, multiplies Himself as the many *logoi* of creation.

I devoted Chapter Six, the final chapter of my dissertation, to a brief consideration of the return of creatures back into God. To speak only about the procession of the world from God while ignoring its corresponding reversion, or *con*version, would result in an incomplete account of Maximos' ontology. The sole aim of creation, after all, is deification. I sketched out this return in terms of Maximos' threefold *logos* of being, well-being, and eternal well-being, while emphasizing the role of the human as cosmic priest and mediator of creation. It is the unificatory practice of virtue & contemplation, I argued, that mediates between the *logos* of being and the *logos* of eternal well-being. In this way, the human as hierarch resolves the multiplicity of the world back into its original and eschatological oneness in Christ. In the return of all things to God the eucharistic character of Maximos' ontology is fully revealed – *broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed* – God diversifies Himself in creation without division so that the

diversity of creation might become unified without confusion. As with creation, I argued by way of conclusion, deification for Maximos involves participation in the energies, not the essence, of God.

Final Thoughts

I would like to conclude by addressing several objections that are bound to arise in relation to Maximos' Logos-theology: 1) How are we to understand Maximos' doctrine of a threefold embodiment of the Logos – Scriptural, historical, and cosmic – such that it does not lead to a multiplicity of Christs? 2) Is the uniqueness and necessity of the historical incarnation undermined or diminished by this more expansive understanding of incarnation?

To begin with, Maximos himself does not seem particularly concerned with these kinds of objections; for him, there does not appear to be any conflict between the manifold incarnations of the Logos. Nor is there any indication that his expansive view of the Logos leads to a devaluation of the historical incarnation. Maximos, in other words, does not explicitly address these problems because he does not seem to regard them as such. Why not? The answer, it seems to me, lies in his understanding of the Logos as the fundamental Truth of existence, the all-encompassing Word and Wisdom of God through whom all things were made, and in whom all things find their completion. I will try to illustrate this with recourse to several key passages in the *Ambigua*.

The most straightforward articulation of Maximos' Logos-theology is found in his discussion of the threefold incarnation of the Logos in *Amb*.33. Here, in fact, Maximos prioritizes the historical incarnation when he states first and foremost that when Gregory Nazianzus says that the "Logos becomes thick", he is referring to the Word's manifestation in

the flesh – the aim of the human incarnation of the Logos being "that He might instruct us."[800]

Yet, for Maximos, this is too limited an exposition. The Logos also "becomes thick" in the sense that He "ineffably concealed Himself in the *logoi* of beings."[801] While remaining utterly whole and undifferentiated in Himself, the Logos nonetheless differentiates Himself as the many *logoi* of beings, the infinite finitizing Himself as the immanent Wisdom of creation. Finally, the Logos is said to "become thick" in the sense that "He consented to be both embodied (σωματωθῆναι) and expressed through [the] letters, syllables, and sounds" of Scripture.[802] The reason for the Word's expansion as the many words of Scripture, says Maximos, is for our dispersed minds to be recollected and gathered back up to the One Logos, the fundamental Truth of existence. The One becomes many so that the many might become One.

Now, all three of these distinct incarnations – the historical, cosmic, and Scriptural – are alike insofar as they all represent the finitizing of the infinite, the condescension of the Creator into His own creation. Does this lead to a multiplicity of Christs? Not at all. All three incarnations are manifestations of a single Wisdom – Wisdom as teacher, Wisdom as the inherent order of the cosmos, Wisdom as the edifying words of Sacred Scripture. Insofar as the One Logos is the fundamental Truth of existence, the all-encompassing Word and Wisdom of God through whom all things were made, and in whom all things find their completion, there can be no conflict or division among these manifold incarnations. Wisdom is Wisdom. It is a basic Platonic principle. Whatever truth or wisdom exists in the world must, *qua* truth or wisdom, be traced back to Wisdom Itself. There simply is no other Source of truth apart from Truth Itself. All logic, every scientific 'ology', is a manifestation of the Logos as the very Ground of

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[800] *Amb*.33, 1285C.
[801] *Amb*.33, 1285D.
[802] *Amb*.33, 1288A.

intelligibility. Wherever there is intelligibility, wherever there is truth, wherever there is order –

wherever there is 'logicality' – Maximos sees the One Logos "undifferentiated and always the

same in beings marked by difference."[803] To limit the Word and Wisdom of God to the historical

incarnation would be to leave the cosmos bereft of its principle of intelligibility. Maximos'

threefold understanding of incarnation does not lead to a multiplicity of Christs – it issues in an

infinitely expanded vision of the One Logos whose boundless Wisdom encompasses all things.

Still, one might object, if there exists a *logos* for every being in creation from angels to

earthworms, as Maximos claims, does this not imply that every one of those beings is a kind of

incarnation – as though the cosmos were populated by an infinite multiplicity of Christs? Not at

all. The multiplicity of beings created *kata logon* are not individual incarnations, but *the many*

members of the One body of Christ – the unified diversity of the cosmic *ecclesia*. This is

precisely how Maximos interprets Gregory's reference to beings as "portions of God." Insofar as

every being "has been created in accordance with the *logos* (*καθ' ὃν*) that exists in and *with*

God," Maximos argues, it "is and is called a 'portion of God'."[804] This is what Maximos means

when he declares that the One Logos *is* the many *logoi*, and the many *logoi are* the One

Logos.[805] There is only One Christ – the Word and Wisdom of God who diversifies Himself

without division in the act of creation. The entire world is, and is called to *be*, the cosmic body of

Christ. One might say that each *logos* and the being created *according to* that *logos* are united in

a union without confusion; yet, insofar as the many *logoi* are not separate entities, but the

manifold articulation of the One Logos, this does not issue in a multicity of incarnations, but in a

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[803] *Amb*.33, 1285D. Also *Amb*.7, 1077C.
[804] *Amb*.7, 1080C.
[805] See *Amb*.7, 1077C, 1081C.

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multiplicity of members of a single ecclesial body. It is the totality of creation as a unity-in-diversity that is united with Christ in a union without confusion.

Similarly, with the Scriptural incarnation, the many words of Scripture are simply the manifold elaborations of a single Word – Christ Himself as the ultimate Truth of existence. The simplicity and oneness of Wisdom, when it enters into the spatio-temporal dimension, inevitably becomes diversified – indeed providentially diversifies *Itself* for the life of the world.[806] Now, if Maximos does not teach a multiplicity of Christs, he does nonetheless posit a multiplicity of incarnations of the One Christ: "For the Logos of God (who is God) will always and in all things (ἀεὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν) to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment."[807] Maximos is unwilling to limit the Logos to a single historical and geographical event; the Logos, rather, yearns for embodiment *always* (ἀεὶ) and in *all things* (ἐν πᾶσιν). Indeed, beyond the formal threefold incarnation, Maximos also suggests that every act of virtue is an incarnation of Christ as Good. The whole point of creation, after all, is to embody Christ as fully as possible. Deification is inseparable from hominification.

While Maximos does not make this explicit, one might venture to say that these multiple incarnations of Christ are also ultimately one, all-encompassing incarnation – the One Logos timelessly seeking embodiment in His one spatio-temporal creation. Maximos strongly emphasises the oneness of all creation as united by a single *logos*: "that its existence is preceded by nonexistence."[808] The whole of creation from angels to inanimate beings is united in its radical contingency upon God as its Ground. In the *Mystagogy*, Maximos compares the universe

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[806] As the priest intones during the prayers of the Holy Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, "when in the night when He was given, or rather, *gave Himself up* for the life of the world…"
[807] *Amb.*7, 1084D.
[808] *Amb.*41, 1312B.

to an immense human being – the world as macroanthropos.[809] From this perspective, one might say that just as the human person consists not only of multiple bodily members, but equally of ethical, intellectual, and spiritual faculties, so the whole of creation forms a single body composed of these same members and faculties. The cosmic incarnation of the One Logos as the *logoi* of Scripture, of created beings, of the virtues, etc., ultimately represents a single incarnation encompassing the whole of creation in all its physical, ethical, epistemological, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions – all of which are united as the many 'members' of a single created body. From this perspective, Maximos' threefold incarnation could ultimately be seen as one. Maximos, however, never explicitly argues this. Whatever discomfort we might have with the idea of a threefold incarnation would not appear to be shared by Maximos.

That being said, where does this leave the historical incarnation? If all things are already implicitly the body of Christ what need is there for the personal incarnation of Jesus Christ born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary? The answer, for Maximos, lies with the fall. Although the world as constituted by the cosmic incarnation of the Logos is already implicitly the body of Christ from its very inception, Maximos does not regard the original prelapsarian state as complete. In the beginning, the world is only potentially a cosmic *ecclesia* – a potentiality which the human was to bring to actuality. Maximos discusses this most extensively in his famous five divisions of nature in *Amb*.41, the fifth and final division being that of the gendered human. Humanity, says Maximos, was introduced last in order to act as a kind of bond of creation "making of his own division a beginning of the unity which gathers up all things to God."[810] As *microcosmos*, Adam was tasked with bringing to completion the cosmos as *macroanthropos*. In other words, Adam was to have made explicit the implicit unity of the world as the cosmic body

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[809] *Myst*.7, 540 [CCSG 34].
[810] *Amb*.41, 1305C.

of Christ composed of many members. Tragically, Adam did the exact opposite. Instead of using his natural God-given capacity to unite what was divided, he instead divided what was united, thereby introducing further divisions and conflicts into the world.[811]

It was precisely for this reason, says Maximos, that "'the natures were innovated'"[812] God becoming man in order to accomplish the sacred task neglected by humanity. The reason for the historical incarnation couldn't be clearer. Christ came to complete the task initially assigned to Adam, but which Adam failed to accomplish. In light of the fall, Maximos insists, creation was in grave danger of returning to nonbeing – for having strayed from its unitary Ground the manifold creation risked descending into an abyss of infinite divisibility. For this reason the infinite Logos-Creator Himself entered into His own creation as a finite *logikos*, uniting the five divisions of nature and offering them up to the Father on our behalf, "fulfilling as man…all that He Himself as God had preordained should take place, having completed the whole plan of God the Father for us."[813] For Maximos, then, the fact that the Logos seeks embodiment in all things in no way undermines the value or significance of the historical incarnation. It is only in Christ Jesus that humanity recovers its priestly vocation and the world regains its ecclesial character.

Would the historical incarnation have happened had there been no fall? Maximos' answer would appear to be no. "It is perfectly clear to all," he insists, "that the mystery accomplished in Christ *at the end of the age* is nothing other than the proof and fulfilment of the mystery which our forefather failed to attain at the beginning of the age."[814] Had Adam attained his goal the incarnation would have been unnecessary. On the other hand, the question is ultimately irrelevant insofar as Maximos, like Gregory of Nyssa, teaches the simultaneity of creation and

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[811] See *Amb*.41, 1308C-1308D.
[812] The quotation is from Gregory Nazianzus, and forms the basis of Maximos' discussion here.
[813] *Amb*.41, 1309D.
[814] Amb.7, 1097D; italics in original indicating Scriptural allusion (Hbr 9:26).

fall.[815] From all eternity God foresaw the fall and thus eternally willed to enter into His own creation in order to redeem it. As such, it is impossible to think creation apart from the incarnation. It is only with the help of the historical Jesus that creation realizes its true aim: deification. God became man so that man (once again) could become god.

It may well be that the historical incarnation loses some of its 'exclusivity' in light of the His cosmic and Scriptural incarnations. Yet this, arguably, is more than compensated for by the infinite expansion of His majesty and glory. Too often we think of Christ as merely human – the gentle sometimes stern Jesus of the synoptic gospels. Maximos emphasises the Johannine Logos. What greater support to piety could there be than to recognize that the Creator-Logos Himself, the very Wisdom which grounds and governs the cosmos became, like us, a finite feeling passible creature? This is the radical claim of Christianity – that the infinite, illimitable, Ground of being became a finite, limited grounded being *for the life of the world*. It is for this reason that we deem Mary 'Wider than Heaven'. This, then, is my response to the above mentioned objections.

In conclusion, the aim of this dissertation has not been to challenge orthodoxy – be it by undermining the crucial God/world distinction, or by diminishing the centrality of the historical incarnation. To the contrary, I have sought to affirm the groundedness of the world in God and its rootedness in the Logos *through whom all things were made*. I have maintained throughout that my interpretation of Maximos is not a form of pantheism – though it is unapologetically pan*en*theistic. To quote the words of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware:

> As a Christian in the tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, I cannot accept any worldview that identifies God with the universe, and for that reason I cannot be a pantheist. But I find no

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[815] See *Amb*.42, 1321B.

difficulty in endorsing panentheism – that is to say, the position that affirms not "God is everything and everything is God" but "God is *in* everything and everything is *in* God.[816]

It is my conviction that an overemphasis upon the radical otherness of the world from God issues in a dualism every bit as damaging as an undue emphasis upon sameness. Maximos, I have argued, offers us a middle way between pantheism and gnosticism; his ontology represents a kind of 'qualified nondualism' which simultaneously affirms the sameness and otherness of the God/world relation. As such, he offers us the possibility of a sacramental vision of reality, a eucharistic ontology as the working basis for a more humane and ecological ethics. Creation is revelation – the self-disclosure of He *who made darkness His hiding place.* Everything is grace – the analogous gift of God's own infinite Being *for the life of the world*.

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[816] "Through Creation to the Creator", Chryssavgis and Foltz, *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration*., 90.

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