

Maximus Study Guide

THE 6302 Cosmology

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Terms

ἀλλὰ δὴ γ', ὦ Σώκρατες, τί οἶει ταῦτ' εἶναι ξυνάπαντα;
κνίσματά τοί ἐστι καὶ περιτμήματα τῶν λόγων,
ὅπερ ἄρτι ἔλεγον, κατὰ βραχὺ διηρημένα.

But I must ask you, Socrates, what do you suppose is the upshot of all this?
As I said a little while ago, it is the scraping and shaving of an argument,
Cut up into little bits.

—*Greater Hippias* 304a

“Words, words, words!”

—*Hamlet* 2.2.192

St. Maximus is “often characterized as a systematic thinker, but not a systematic writer.”¹ One need read but a few pages to see how he uses a peculiar terminology, with more definite and more stable meanings than casual speech, but one might read a great many pages and yet not know what his words mean. Again and again, we find pairs and triplets and pentads, which he relates and overlays, but we struggle to grasp what is the meaning of it all. These word-figures are like hard, cut gems, but jumbled together as in a bucket. Because his language is obviously systematic, many Roman Catholics have read him as a proto-scholastic and tried to attribute to him the ideas of the schoolmen.² Others read him along more “eastern” lines.³ Any interpretation of St. Maximus will depend on what sense we make of these verbal constellations. Thus, rather than arguing for a single thesis, I decided to explore some of Maximus’s distinctions. I hope this paper will be an introduction to myself and, by God’s grace, to others, presenting the terminology in clear, simple language, and serving as an index into the texts. Here and there I also pause to consider controversies

¹Joseph P. Farrell, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of Our Father Among the Saints Maximus the Confessor* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary, 1990) iii. A few scholars argue rather that St. Maximus’s thought is incoherent. See I. Hausherr, “Ignorance infinie ou science infinie,” *Orientalia christiana periodica* 2 (1936): 361 and the review of *Kosmische Liturgie* in the same periodical, 8 (1942): 221, cited in Polycarp Sherwood, *St. Maximus the Confessor: The Ascetic Life, the Four Centuries on Charity*, *Ancient Christian Writers* 21 (New York: Newman, 1955) 214n.5.

²E.g. Heinzer, Garrigues, and Riou. See bibliography.

³E.g. Perl, Larchet, and Doucet.

related to ontology and Trinitarian theology, using Maximus as a guide. These sections express my questions no less than my opinions.

λόγος and τρόπος

One of the most common and versatile distinctions in St. Maximus is that between λόγος and τρόπος. λόγος in this context means principle. τρόπος means mode. A thing's λόγος is what it is; a thing's τρόπος is how it is. Maximus often uses these terms as adverbs. A thing can be either κατὰ λόγον (by λόγος) or κατὰ τρόπον (by τρόπος). To be by λόγος is to be from one's own nature, from what one is in oneself. To be by τρόπος is to be by one's way of being, one's acts. By our λόγος comes our οὐσία, our essence. It is common to all. A man has a human οὐσία because man is man by nature; he is man by λόγος. What we are by τρόπος comes from our separate acts; it varies for each ὑπόστασις. Our λόγος is given to us, but our τρόπος we help create.

Maximus also applies the λόγος–τρόπος pair to the Holy Trinity. God is Unity by λόγος but Trinity by τρόπος.⁴ This follows the Cappadocian teaching which identifies the Three by their τρόπος ὑπάρξεως (mode of existence). The Three are Unity by their λόγος οὐσίας (principle of essence). Here we see two word clusters: on the one hand, λόγος with essence; on the other hand, τρόπος with existence and ὑπόστασις. It is common for Maximus to associate λόγος with essence when he contrasts it with τρόπος.

The λόγος–τρόπος distinction will appear often in relation to Maximus's other teachings. It is one of his favorite tools. Because λόγος and τρόπος are not two definite somethings, but rather two aspects of any given something, this distinction tends to be more flexible than most.

Λόγος and λόγοι

The λόγοι are God's principles for creation. By Maximus's day, there was already an established tradition of the λόγοι.⁵ Origen “regarded them as ideas present in Christ as Wisdom,”⁶ which “together form the intelligible world.”⁷ Evagrius followed this usage. Augustine used the word “rationes” to translate the λόγοι that inhere in the Λόγος. Dionysius likewise taught that they “produce the essences of things,” but he also “introduced the dynamic and intentional understanding of λόγοι,” calling them “θελήματα.”⁸ This was the tradition that Maximus received.

⁴ *Our Father* PG 90.892D–893A. All translations from this work are from George C. Berthold, *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1985).

⁵ Thunberg gives a brief history in *Microcosm and Mediator*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1995) 73n.157.

⁶ *Comm. In Io.* 1.34.

⁷ *Comm. In Io.* 1.38.

⁸ *Divine Names* 5.8, PG 3.824C.

He by and large followed it, with some corrections to Origenism. He taught that a thing's λόγος is its “ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία” (beginning and cause).⁹ According to the λόγοι, Christ brought all things into being.

Because he held together in himself the λόγοι before they came to be, by his gracious will he created all things visible and invisible out of non-being. . . . We believe that a λόγος of angels preceded their creation, a λόγος preceded the creation of each of the beings and powers that fill the upper world, a λόγος preceded the creation of human beings, a λόγος preceded everything that receives its being (τό εἶναι λαβόντων) from God.¹⁰

The λόγοι are ἀσύγχυτοι: without confusion. They make each thing to be what it is and not something else.¹¹ They are the basis of creation.

The λόγοι are in Christ, the Λόγος. “The one Λόγος is many λόγοι.”¹² Maximus calls them blood and flesh of Christ.¹³ Again, “The λόγοι of all things known by God before their creation are securely fixed in God. They are in him who is the truth of all things.”¹⁴ The λόγοι are God’s presence in the world. Through them He is “whole in all things commonly, and in each being individuatingly.”¹⁵ By knowing the λόγοι, we know Christ. We can know the λόγοι, because Maximus calls them “ἐξεταστικοί” (intelligible).¹⁶

There is a λόγος for each individual thing, along with λόγοι for species and genera. The particular λόγοι are gathered together into the general λόγοι; they are also gathered together into prudence. The general λόγοι are gathered together into wisdom. But prudence and wisdom are Christ:

The λόγοι of all the separated and partial things are contained, as they say, by the λόγοι of the universal and generic; and the λόγοι of the most generic and most universal things are held together by wisdom, and those of partial things, variously held fast in those of the generic ones, are contained by prudence (φρόνησις). . . . But the Wisdom and Prudence of God the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ, who both holds together the universals of beings by the power of wisdom, and contains their fulfilling parts by the prudence of thought.¹⁷

Thus the λόγοι form a pyramid, and the top is the Λόγος.

The unity of the λόγοι in the Λόγος is a mystery. The mind “is unable to think how God is in each λόγος of each thing in itself and in all the λόγοι together, according to which all things exist, who is truly none of the beings and properly is all things and above all things.”¹⁸ This mystery is the old problem of the one

⁹ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080C.

¹⁰ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080A. Translations from *Ambigua* 7 use Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2003), with some modifications.

¹¹ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1077C.

¹² *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1077C.

¹³ *Ad Thal.* 35, PG 90.380B.

¹⁴ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1081A.

¹⁵ *Ambigua* 22, PG 91.1257A–B, trans. Eric David Perl, “Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor,” diss., Yale U, 1991, 178.

¹⁶ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1077C.

¹⁷ *Ambigua* 41, 91.1313A–B. Translation from Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁸ *Ambigua* 22, PG 91.1257A, trans. Perl 177–178.

and the many, which Perl chases in his dissertation from one chapter to another, eventually cornering it in the mystery of the Incarnation.¹⁹

The λόγοι are also God's purposes for things. "God's natural creations . . . declare to us secretly the λόγοι according to which they were made, and display together with themselves the divine purpose (σκοπός) in each creature."²⁰ Maximus identifies the λόγοι with the προορισμοί (predeterminations) and θελήματα (wills) of Dionysius.²¹ Not only do they make a thing what it is; they define the thing's end. In Aristotle's language, they are creatures' final cause.

Ultimately, the end of all things is Christ. "Nothing that comes into being is its own end."²² Maximus makes this most evident with other terms, discussed below, but the idea appears also in the context of the λόγοι. Creatures are from (ἐκ) the Λόγος, and they are directed back to Him (ἐπί): "The things that so came to be came from Him and for His sake, and by abiding and moving, they participate in God."²³

The λόγοι are eternal. They "pre-exist" (προένεσπιν) in Christ.²⁴ As λόγοι, things "exist in potentiality (δυνάμει) before they exist in actuality (ἐνεργεία)."²⁵ This is the meaning of Maximus's words, "He held together in Himself the λόγοι before they came to be."²⁶ The λόγοι already were present in Christ before creation. Because of the λόγοι, Maximus can say, in refutation of Origen, that while God did not create from eternity, He from eternity has been Creator.²⁷

Things created according to the λόγοι are not eternal. Although God's knowledge is "eternally preexisting," things themselves were created by Him in time "when He willed."²⁸ All things exist in time,²⁹ and everything in motion has a beginning.³⁰ Elsewhere, Maximus writes, "All these things, things present and things to come, have not been brought into being contemporaneously with their being known by God; rather each was created in an appropriate way according to its λόγος at the proper time."³¹ He explicitly rejects Origenism when he writes, "Some say that created things eternally exist with God, which is impossible. . . . Creatures do not eternally coexist with God."³² Thus, the world is created, but the λόγοι are uncreated.

Yet the λόγοι are from God's will, not His nature. We have seen already that the λόγοι are θελήματα.

¹⁹See, for example, Perl 178.

²⁰*Ad Thal.* 13, PG 91.296A, CCSG 7.95. Trans. slightly modified from Paul M. Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor: An Investigation of the Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1991) 157.

²¹*Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1085A. See also *Ad Thal.* 13, PG 90.296A, where Maximus calls the λόγοι "ἀγαθὰ θελήματα."

²²*Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1072C.

²³*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080B. My translation. The Greek here is difficult: καὶ ἐξ οὗ τὰ γεγονότα ὡς γέγονε, καὶ ἐφ' ᾧ γέγονε, καὶ μένοντα καὶ κινούμενα μετέχει θεοῦ. For other translations, see Blowers, *Cosmic Mystery* 55 and Perl 153.

²⁴*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080C.

²⁵*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1081A.

²⁶*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080A.

²⁷*Chapters on Love* 4.3, PG 90.1048C. Translations from this work are from Berthold.

²⁸*Chapters on Love* 4.4, PG 90.1048D.

²⁹*Ambigua* 10.38, PG 91.1180C.

³⁰*Ambigua* 10.36, PG 91.1177A.

³¹*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1081A.

³²*Chapters on Love* 4.6, PG 90.1049A.

Perl takes this to mean the λόγοι “are not produced *by* God’s will, but are that uncreated will itself.”³³ He is close, but he ignores the plural. They are God’s acts of will.³⁴ The point is that God’s choice is not constrained; the λόγοι are whatever He chooses them to be. The λόγοι are not the essence of God.³⁵ Maximus also writes, “God made all things by His will, which no one denies.”³⁶ He advises, “Seek the reason why God created.”³⁷ Maximus therefore rejects the idea that the λόγοι are what they are by necessity; they are so because of God’s choice.

Neither are the λόγοι themselves natures, essences, or universals. They are not natures (φύσεις), but rather the principles of natures.³⁸ From the λόγοι “each being is and has its nature (πέφυκε).”³⁹ They are not essences (οὐσίαι), but they give all things their essence and existence: “For all created things are entirely affirmed (παντάπασι καταφάσκεται), in their essence (κατ’ οὐσίαν) and in their becoming (κατὰ γένεσιν), by their own λόγοι.”⁴⁰ Neither are λόγοι universals (τὰ καθόλου), for universals have no existence but for their particulars. They pass away when their particulars pass away.⁴¹ Natures, essences, and universals are created, but the λόγοι are uncreated.

So if λόγοι are eternal and uncreated, but not identical with the essence of God, what are they? Lossky suggests that they are Palamite ἐνέργειαι (energies).⁴² Indeed, Maximus relates them to the shining garments of Christ on Mount Tabor.⁴³ Sherwood does not accept this conclusion, though he gives little argument against it.⁴⁴ Bradshaw gives a history of ἐνέργειαι and shows how Maximus’s thought is a natural part of it.⁴⁵ This much seems clear: the λόγοι are fully God, yet they are not the divine essence. By participating in them, we participate in God.

The Λόγος-λόγοι distinction does not fit perfectly with the λόγος-τρόπος distinction. That is, the λόγος from one distinction is not necessarily the same as the λόγος from the other. On the one hand, the λόγοι that are divine principles all have corresponding τρόποι. On the other hand, the λόγος from Λόγος-τρόπος is not always a divine principle. Λόγος-τρόπος is a broader distinction. Maximus uses λόγος there to mean

³³Perl 172.

³⁴This is the translation used by Blowers in e.g. *Cosmic Mystery* 62.

³⁵See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003) 117–118, arguing on the basis of *Ambigua* 7, PG 91.1081A–B, and Thunberg 77, 73n.157.

³⁶*Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1085B.

³⁷*Chapters on Love* 4.5, PG 90.1048D.

³⁸*Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1341D.

³⁹*Ambigua* 17, PG 91.1228A, trans. Perl 150.

⁴⁰*Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1081B.

⁴¹*Ambigua* 10.42, PG 91.1189C–D.

⁴²Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s, 1998) 99.

⁴³*Ambigua* 10.31e–g, PG 91.1168B–D.

⁴⁴Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism*, *Studia Anselmiana* 36 (Rome: Herder, 1955) 179f and “Survey of Recent Work of St. Maximus the Confessor,” *Traditio* 20 (1964): 435f, cited in Thunberg 64n.109.

⁴⁵David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005). See especially 188–207.

anything inherent, whether a divine principle or not, in contrast to its *τρόπος* or way of being.

τὰ καθόλου and τὰ κατὰ μέρος

These phrases are usually translated “universals” and “particulars.” Universals consist of particulars. The *λόγοι* are not universals. If the particulars perish, so does the universal.⁴⁶ But *λόγοι*, on the other hand, are eternal and changeless. Therefore they are not identical to universals.

But as we have seen, there are more and less general *λόγοι*. Maximus calls particulars “examples” of their *λόγοι*.⁴⁷ The point seems to be that the only self-existing universals are the *λόγοι*. There are no created universals with independent existence apart from particulars. Elsewhere, Maximus writes that God works to conform particulars to their universals, thereby deifying the universe.⁴⁸ Here he seems to use “universals” in the sense of *λόγοι*.

God’s providence covers both universals and particulars. Aristotle seems to teach that God knows only universals.⁴⁹ But Maximus argues that since the existence of universals depends on the existence of particulars, particulars are prior in being, and God cannot know what is posterior in being but not know what is prior. His providence therefore covers both.⁵⁰

Men know particulars by sense and universals by intellect, but God knows both by His will. All things are created by God’s *θελήματα*, which Maximus associates with the *λόγοι*. Since God knows His own *θελήματα*, He knows all He has made. But to those who act against God’s will, He will say “I do not know you.”⁵¹ This seems to imply that God does not foreknow our sins, but Maximus would insist that God knows all. He said, “Foreknowledge pertains to thoughts and words and actions which come from us. Predestination pertains to those accidents which do not come from us.”⁵²

This controversy of God’s knowledge appeared again in the Arabic interpreters of Aristotle. Avicenna taught that existence is an accident and God has no direct knowledge or providence over particulars.⁵³ Aquinas rejected this view, although he gave a different explanation than Maximus. He taught that since God knows Himself, and since all beings are like God by analogy, God knows all beings by knowing how they are like and unlike Himself.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ *Ambigua* 10.42, PG 91.1189C.

⁴⁷ *Ambigua* 10.42, PG 91.1189C.

⁴⁸ *Ad Thal.* 2, CCSG 7.51.

⁴⁹ This interpretation is commonly based on *Metaphysics* 12.9 and *De Anima* 3.6.

⁵⁰ *Ambigua* 10.42, PG 91.1188C–1193C.

⁵¹ *Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1085B–C.

⁵² *Disputatio Bizyae*, PG 90.97. Translation from Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Maximus and His Companions: Documents from Exile* (New York: Oxford, 2002) 79.

⁵³ Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955) 215, 220; Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Garden City, New York: Image, 1985) 193; Anton C. Pegis, trans., *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, by Thomas Aquinas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1975) 209n.1.

⁵⁴ *Summa Contra Gentiles* 1.54.

οὐσία, κίνησις, διαφορά, κράσις, θέσις

Maximus describes five modes of natural contemplation.⁵⁵ Every translator renders their names slightly differently. According to Sherwood, the five terms are substance, motion, difference, composition, and position.⁵⁶ Louth translates them being, movement, difference, mixture, and position.⁵⁷ Thunberg translates them substance, motion, difference, mixture, and position.⁵⁸ Blowers, albeit in a different context, translates the last word status.⁵⁹

Together, these five terms represent types of natural contemplation. As natural contemplation, they are cataphatic theology.⁶⁰ They are topics that are salutary to consider:

They say that three of them are intended to lead us to the knowledge of God, that is, being, movement, and difference, in accordance with which God makes himself known to men who from the things that are conclude that He is the fashioner, provider, and judge. The other two—mixture and position—educate us to virtue and to assimilation to God.⁶¹

All five are modes of contemplation. By thinking the first three, we learn about God. By thinking the latter two, we learn virtue.

Although the first triad teaches us about God, it does not teach us about God's essence. The first term, being, teaches us that God is; movement and difference teach us about God's work in creation. This triad overlays another triad: God as fashioner, provider (or provident), and judge. God is fashioner because He is the cause of all being. God is provider because He causes the movement of things—that is, the perseverance of each thing in its λόγος.⁶² And God is judge because He distributes the λόγοι among the manifold beings of creation.⁶³ In other words, as judge God determines what each thing will be; as provider He sustains each thing as what it is; as fashioner He gives each thing actual existence.

πρόνοια and κρίσις

πρόνοια (providence) and κρίσις (judgment) are acts of God. Commentators generally remark that Maximus uses providence and judgment in two different ways: with an ontological meaning and a moral meaning.⁶⁴ In some contexts, such as the five modes of natural contemplation in *Ambigua* 10, they have an ontological meaning: they describe the creation of the world. Elsewhere they have a moral meaning: they describe

⁵⁵ *Ambigua* 10.19, PG 91.1133A–1137C.

⁵⁶ Sherwood, *Ascetic Life* 39.

⁵⁷ Louth, *Maximus* 112.

⁵⁸ Thunberg 68.

⁵⁹ Blowers 142.

⁶⁰ *Ambigua* 10.31e, PG 91.1168B.

⁶¹ *Ambigua* 10.19, PG 91.1133B. Translations of *Ambigua* 10 are from Louth, *Maximus*.

⁶² See also Perl 171, citing *Ambigua* 7, PG 91.1081BC, that providence unifies.

⁶³ Sherwood, *Ascetic Life* 39.

⁶⁴ E.g. Thunberg 66–72.

God's approach to our conduct. Maximus never makes explicit the difference between ontological and moral, but some texts seem to support it, and it helps commentators to present providence and judgment in a neat system. The texts don't always support such tidyness, but usually it seems to fit.

The terms providence and judgment come from Origen and Evagrius. According to Origen, "Judgment decreed the crassness of each spirit's body in proportion to its sin, while providence, through many worlds, would bring back all to the original spiritual state and unity."⁶⁵ Difference was a result of the Fall, and providence was the reunification of all things.

Evagrius followed Origen's teaching.⁶⁶ He writes, "And you will discover the λόγοι of judgment in the diversity of bodies and worlds, and those of providence in the means by which we return from vice and ignorance to virtue or knowledge."⁶⁷ By judgment, beings are diverse and divided; they move from God as from their origin. By providence, beings are united; they return to God as to their end. Like Origen, Evagrius teaches that beings become material based on their choices. "Judgment is the creation of an age which distributes to each of the reasoning beings a body corresponding to its state."⁶⁸ Providence includes all God's purposes for restoring creation to unity with Himself. Higher beings aid lower beings in their return. The monk should contemplate the λόγοι of providence and judgment to see God's purposes in the world.

Maximus gives providence and judgment similar meanings, but he separates the moral sense from the ontological. In a moral context, the meaning of πρόνοια and κρίσις is fairly conventional. By God's πρόνοια, He strengthens us in virtue. By God's κρίσις, He renders rewards or punishments according to their due. In this moral sense, providence is convertive (ἐπιστρεπτική), educative (παιδευτική), and punitive (κολαστική).⁶⁹ God gives us His πρόνοια based on our λόγος, but He gives us His κρίσις based on our τρόπος.⁷⁰ That is, we all receive His aid, but His judgment depends on our acts.

Maximus discusses providence and judgment in moral terms when he describes the transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Moses and Elijah, standing on either side of Christ, are God's providence and judgment. By providence God directs beings "from the material (ὕλικά) and corruptible (φθαρτά) and bodily (σωματικά) to the divine (θεῖα) and immaterial (ἄϋλα) and bodiless (ἄσώματα)."⁷¹ Providence is God's effort to save mankind. Judgment renders to each his due. It "punishes by word and deed those who deserve it, and deals

⁶⁵Sherwood, *Ascetic Life* 39. For a good description of the Origenist teaching, see Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua* 72–92. According to Sherwood, Origen's theories are found in *De Principiis* 1.6.2; 2.9.5,6; and 3.1.13,17.

⁶⁶Luke Dysinger, "The *Logoi* of Providence and Judgment in the Exegetical Writings of Evagrius Ponticus" *Studia Patristica* 37 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001): 462–471. My citations of Evagrius are taken from this essay.

⁶⁷Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 48, *Sources Chrétiennes* 356.186.

⁶⁸Evagrius, *Scholion 275 on Proverbs 24:22*, *Sources Chrétiennes* 340.370.

⁶⁹*Quaestiones et Dubia* 17, CCSG 10.15, cited in Thunberg 67.

⁷⁰Thunberg 71.

⁷¹*Ambigua* 10.31f, PG 91.1168C.

with others suitably in each case in accordance with the underlying matter and kind of virtue or evil.”⁷²

The ontological sense of these words is more complicated. Here Maximus relies on another meaning of *κρίσις*: division. By *κρίσις*, God distributes the *λόγοι* to each being. By *πρόνοια*, God sustains each being in its *λόγος*. They are two sides of the same thing. Maximus writes, “I do not say that in these things providence is one thing and judgment another. But I know them as potentially one and the same, but having a differing and many-formed activity in relation to us.”⁷³ They are the same in that each accounts for the *λόγοι* of things.

κρίσις causes the difference of one thing with another; *πρόνοια* causes the unity of one thing with itself. If we take a thing and compare it to another, we see *κρίσις*. If we take a thing and compare it to itself, we see *πρόνοια*. The unity of a thing with itself is not a tautological unity, but a thing’s unity across time. Since *λόγοι* are purposes, a thing must fulfill its *λόγος*; it must become what it is. By *πρόνοια* God helps it do so.

There cannot be judgment without providence, nor vice versa. Indeed, sometimes Maximus describes one in terms of the other. He writes that by providence we “understand how everything in the universe is separated one from another in an orderly (*εὐκρινῶς*) manner.” On the other hand, judgment is “saving and preserving.”⁷⁴ The two support each other, and together they establish the *κόσμος* of the world.

In direct contrast to moral providence, ontological providence is not convertive (*ἐπιστρεπτική*), and judgment is neither educative (*παιδευτική*) nor punitive (*κολαστική*).⁷⁵ This is a refutation of Origen, who held together the morality and ontology of providence and judgment, teaching that things have difference because of sin, and redemption means overcoming that difference. Maximus, on the other hand, taught that difference comes from the *λόγοι*, and providence does not convert beings from their *λόγοι*, but it helps beings to achieve the *λόγοι* given to them.

οὐσία and ὑπόστασις

These words were used, as early as Athanasius, to delineate the Unity-in-Trinity of the Godhead. God is one in *οὐσία* and three in *ὑπόστασις*. In ancient Greek philosophy, the terms were basically synonyms, although even then they had different connotations. “Both hypostasis and ousia describe positive, substantial existence, that which is, that which subsists; τὸ ὄν, τὸ ὑφ’εστηχός. But ousia tends to regard internal characteristics and relations, or metaphysical reality; while hypostasis regularly emphasises [sic] the externally concrete character of the substance, or empirical objectivity.”⁷⁶

⁷² *Ambigua* 10.31g, PG 91.1168C–D.

⁷³ *Ambigua* 10.19, PG 91.1136A–B.

⁷⁴ *Ambigua* 10.19, PG 91.1133C–D.

⁷⁵ *Ambigua* 10.19, PG 91.1133D.

⁷⁶ G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952) 188.

The word οὐσία commonly had two meanings: one concrete, one abstract. It could be a single substance: the “primary substance” of Aristotle.⁷⁷ It could also mean a common nature, a species: Aristotle’s “secondary substance.”⁷⁸ Prestige traces these meanings through the early Trinitarian controversies and concludes, “The ousia of God is not to be understood as an abstract species, but as a single undifferentiated substance, identically expressed in each of the three Persons.”⁷⁹ Sometimes theologians did use οὐσία in the generic sense, as when the Cappadocians likened the divine nature to our human nature,⁸⁰ but such usage was merely heuristic and did not express the full meaning of the word in relation to the Trinity. Christians would all agree that God’s one οὐσία implies that He is a single being.⁸¹

But οὐσία gradually began to mean simply abstract species. The original meaning of ὁμοούσιος, before theologians adopted it, was “of the same stuff,” and although the Nicene party denied this meaning,⁸² it gradually reasserted itself. The drift of οὐσία was especially prevalent in Christology when discussing Christ’s human and divine natures.⁸³ Prestige especially laments the Neochalcedonians Leontius of Jerusalem and Leontius of Byzantium. The Neochalcedonians, also called Cyrillian Chalcedonians, sought to interpret Chalcedon using Cyrilline language.⁸⁴ The two Leontii thus equated οὐσία with φύσις and even εἶδος (species)⁸⁵ and thereby applied the Trinitarian terms ὑπόστασις and οὐσία to Christology.⁸⁶ If Christ has two οὐσίαι, the term no longer means a concrete substance, but an abstract species.

Maximus followed the Neochalcedonian doctrine of ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, especially as developed by Leontius of Byzantium. Following Leontius, he used οὐσία primarily in the abstract sense. He identified οὐσία, φύσις, and εἶδος.⁸⁷ A ὑπόστασις is simply an embodied οὐσία: an οὐσία plus accidents. A thing is what it is by its οὐσία, but it has existence because it is a ὑπόστασις.⁸⁸ The result is that the Second ὑπόστασις of the Trinity is the same as the ὑπόστασις of the incarnate Christ, and the divine οὐσία of the Trinity is the same as Christ’s divine nature.⁸⁹

The Neochalcedonians linked Christology to the Trinity by the terms ἐνυπόστατος and ἀνυπόστατος.

⁷⁷Prestige 191.

⁷⁸Prestige 215-216.

⁷⁹Prestige 265.

⁸⁰Prestige 216.

⁸¹Prestige 265.

⁸²Prestige 197-218.

⁸³Prestige 265-269.

⁸⁴Louth, *Maximus* 11-12.

⁸⁵This doesn’t make much sense to me, considering that Cyril taught μία φύσις and the Leontii taught two οὐσίαι. But I confess I don’t know much about Neochalcedonianism.

⁸⁶Prestige 269-274. Perhaps the difference between οὐσία as abstract or concrete matters less if we recall that the Son and Spirit do not merely share an οὐσία with the Father, but they receive their οὐσία from Him, the πηγὴ θεότητος and sole ἀρχή. Also, if Prestige is correct that that divine οὐσία is really a concrete substance, then there is no clear way to relate ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, whereas when οὐσία is an abstract nature they naturally complement each other.

⁸⁷Thunberg 87. Although Prestige in 281 praises St. John of Damascus for returning to a concrete understanding of οὐσία, he also identified these three terms, plus a fourth: μορφή, in *Fount of Knowledge* 30, PG 94.592B-593A.

⁸⁸Prestige 278-279. Perl gives the same reading, though without criticism, in 186, 193. I would have to read the texts a few times in Greek before I could agree or disagree.

⁸⁹Perl 185.

A being is ἀνυπόστατος if it lacks a ὑπόστασις—in other words, if it does not exist. There can be no ἀνυπόστατος nature, because natures only exist in ὑποστάσεις. But an οὐσία that exists in a particular being is ἐνυπόστατος: it has received a ὑπόστασις. It is “enhypostasized.” Louth expresses skepticism at this reading, preferring to read ἐνυπόστατος as simply “existent.”⁹⁰ I don’t know the texts well enough to judge from their evidence, but Louth seems to be posing a false distinction. ἐνυπόστατος does mean “existent,” as he says, but the existence comes by virtue of the ὑπόστασις.

Two consequences follow from this doctrine of ὑπόστασις. First, if ὑπόστασις is simply an existing thing, then it is not the same as “person” in our modern sense. Perl criticizes theologians who attribute personalism to the patristic teaching.⁹¹ Equally inappropriate is trying to cram personalism into ὑπόστασις while keeping the patristic formulae without strain or warp.⁹²

Second, if ὑπόστασις is the source of existence, then Platonism seems an invalid ontology. But Perl says otherwise. Although no οὐσία exists but a ὑπόστασις gives it existence, he defends the Platonic doctrine that essence causes existence. “This understanding of the relation of nature to hypostasis as that of universal to particular is often said to be opposed to Platonism in that it regards the ‘concrete particular’ alone as real, and as the ground of being for the form or universal, rather than the reverse.”⁹³ He agrees that a nature cannot exist apart from ὑποστάσεις, because nature is purely an abstraction. But in Platonism, the “most real” is not the most abstract—or the most vague—but rather the most determined. What is most determined most has being, until finally the fully-determined actually exists.

The full determination of each ὑπόστασις is contained in its λόγος. The λόγοι are the cause of “difference and individuality (διαφορὰν καὶ ἰδιότητα),”⁹⁴ and difference causes both existence and essence.⁹⁵ So although ὑπόστασις is the cause of natures, λόγος is the cause of ὑποστάσεις. Thus Perl maintains “the Platonic principle of existence by formal determination.”⁹⁶

But as exegesis, this is a stretch. Perl argues from λόγοι to existence via the middle term of διαφορὰν by pasting together two unrelated texts. That might be convincing if other texts supported it, but in Maximus, existence-caused-by-essence is not a major theme. To make matters worse, Perl’s latter text is obscure, and he gives it with several elipses. The supposed causality from difference to existence is not in the Greek, but he supplies it as interpretation.

The context shows that Maximus’s point is not the same as Perl’s. Maximus is trying to prove that will

⁹⁰ Andrew Louth, “Recent Research on St. Maximus the Confessor: A Survey” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 42.1 (1998): 73, 81–82.

⁹¹ Perl 186n.20, citing John Meyendorf, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington: 1969) 110 and Kenneth W. Wesche, “The Defense of Chalcedon in the 6th Century,” diss. Fordam U, 1986, 57.

⁹² E.g. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s, 2000) 39.

⁹³ Perl 187n.21.

⁹⁴ *Ambigua* 17, PG 91.1228B, cited in Perl 150.

⁹⁵ *Opuscula* 16, PG 91.200B, cited in Perl 148.

⁹⁶ Perl 187n.21.

pertains to nature, not hypostasis. He argues that the only existing things are natures. A bare hypostasis has no content unless united to a nature. A hypostasis is the existent, but anything that receives existence must be from a nature. This is not the same as saying, with Perl, that nature causes hypostasis. So it is difficult to accept his exegesis.

Neither does Perl's reasoning seem cogent. Even if the λόγοι cause existence, it is not by formal determination. An individual's λόγος is eternal, but the individual is temporal. He moves from non-existence to existence, yet his λόγος remains unchanged. Since the λόγος holds the individual's form even before he exists, it is not the form per se that causes his existence. Here Gilson seems correct: "God *knows* essences, but he *says* existences, and He does not say all that He knows."⁹⁷

Perl seems here to confuse λόγος with οὐσία, when in fact the λόγοι are σκοποί. As purposes, the λόγοι can confer both essence and existence, but not necessarily one because of the other. If existence indeed comes from form, Perl must demonstrate this, not merely point to the λόγοι. And if existence is a part of "formal determination," how so? Is existence an accident, as Avicenna taught? Or the "eleventh category" of Duns Scotus?⁹⁸ It would be more reasonable to consider existence an independent dimension of being, alongside essence and accidents, and all three addressed by God's λόγοι. When God intends a horse to be, it is not only because He intends it to be a horse.

περιχώρησις

περιχώρησις means interpenetration. By περιχώρησις, two things are wholly inside one another. Maximus gives three examples to help explain this term.⁹⁹ By περιχώρησις, light is wholly present within air.¹⁰⁰ It fills the air, yet it remains different: not air but light. According to Aristotelian science, the air is transparent because of the light.¹⁰¹ The light makes the air luminous; it transforms it, even while it remains air. Also by περιχώρησις, fire fills an iron sword.¹⁰² The iron is iron and the fire is fire, but they both exist in the same space, and the sword acquires the properties of fire. It becomes hot and radiant. It cuts and burns. Finally, περιχώρησις is how the soul fills the body.¹⁰³ It was a commonplace among ancient philosophers to say that the soul was wholly present at every point of the body.¹⁰⁴ The soul is not part here and part there, but wholly everywhere, as much in the toe as in the brain. Moreover, it is not outside the body, as though

⁹⁷ Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952) 177.

⁹⁸ Gilson, *Being* 87–88.

⁹⁹ Perl 131.

¹⁰⁰ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1076A.

¹⁰¹ Bradshaw 94–95.

¹⁰² *Disputation* 170, PG 91.337D–340A. I adopt Farrell's numbering of the paragraphs. See also *Ambigua* 5, PG 91.1060A; 7.1, PG 91.1076A.

¹⁰³ *Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1088B–C.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Aristotle *De Anima* 1.5, 411b14–30.

it had some otherworldly existence elsewhere; it is wherever the body is.

From these examples, Maximus applies *περιχώρησις* to three things. First, Christ's human and divine natures unite in his one person by *περιχώρησις*.¹⁰⁵ Because the natures unite, so do the natural properties: most important, the energies and wills.¹⁰⁶ Second, by *περιχώρησις* man becomes God in deification. God's glory permeates the saint as the soul permeates the body. The soul is made changeless; the body, immortal.¹⁰⁷ As Perl writes, "The *whole* man is *wholly* united with the *whole* God."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, by *περιχώρησις* all creation becomes God.¹⁰⁹ Finally, *περιχώρησις* is a synonym for *μέθεξις* (participation).¹¹⁰ Deification is one example of participation, but Maximus uses participation to explain being itself.

κυρίως and μεθεκτῶς

These words are adverbs meaning "properly" and "by participation." The noun form of participation is *μέθεξις*.

Maximus uses *μέθεξις* to explain one of the great mysteries of Christianity—creation—and thereby solve the ancient problem of the one and the many. The Greeks had no concept of creation.¹¹¹ Plato's *δημιουργός* was a shaper, not a creator, and even his shaping was according to the eternal Ideas that were co-eternal and not subject to His will. Aristotle's Prime Mover supplied motion but not being. "The first principle of all being, as Plato and Aristotle conceived it, integrally explains why the universe is what it is, but does not explain why it exists."¹¹² But Christianity teaches creation *ex nihilo*: God does not only shape; He brings being from non-being.

Creation implies that God is something totally different from all else. He alone is unmade; He alone simply is. Christian mystics understood this. No language of created beings is adequate to the uncreated God. Maximus writes, "We call God likewise a being, and a living thing, and light, and good, and intellect, and reason. . . . It is necessary either not to predicate these things of us, because they are divine, or not to call God these things, because we too are these."¹¹³ The most important name in this list is Being. God's Being set Him apart from all else. "What is properly being and what is improperly being never come together with each other."¹¹⁴ If beings are, then God is not. If God is, then beings are not.

The Greeks also understood that God was radically other, although for a different reason. Parmenides

¹⁰⁵ *Ambigua* 5, PG 91.1053B; *Opuscula* 4, PG 91.60B–C.

¹⁰⁶ *Disputation* 170, PG 91.337C–340A.

¹⁰⁷ *Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1088B–C.

¹⁰⁸ Perl 132.

¹⁰⁹ *Ambigua* 41, PG 91.1308B.

¹¹⁰ Perl 131–132.

¹¹¹ Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1991) 42–83, esp. 44–46.

¹¹² Gilson, *Spirit* 69.

¹¹³ *Epistle* 6, PG 91.428C–429A, trans. Perl 115–116.

¹¹⁴ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.6, PG 90.1085A–B. All citations trans. Berthold.

began with the principle that all being is intelligible. This is the first postulate of all reason, without which the world descends into senselessness. But it brought him to a paradox. The basis of intelligibility is unity. If all things are intelligible, then they must have something in common. The common element is Being. Everything that is has being. In this respect, all is one, hence homogeneous, hence undivided, hence incorruptible, hence eternal. By apparently sound logic, Parmenides went from what is common to all to what is common to none. He concluded that all beings, compared to Being, are illusion. The pure monism of Parmenides thereby collapsed into dualism as soon as he asked where the illusions come from. Since they could not come from the One, there must be something outside the One, in no way dependent on it. His system is both pantheism, because all is Being, and dualism, because nothing is Being.¹¹⁵

Plato called Parmenides “a man to be at once respected and feared.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, the rest of Greek philosophy grappled with his problem: how to explain the world in both its unity and its difference. The Neoplatonic answer was participation. Plato himself had taught particulars are what they are by participating in the eternal Ideas, but he gave no account for the existence of these particulars. Middle Platonists taught that matter is eternal and formless, existing independently of the Ideas, and God imposes form on matter. This accounted for particulars, but only by positing a dualism of God and matter. The contribution of the Neoplatonists was saying that participation gives to beings not only forms, but their very existence. Essence is the cause of existence.¹¹⁷ All beings, then, are emanations from the One. Between the One and material beings there exist various other emanations—Intellect, Soul, Life, the Ideas—and all in some way participate in the One. The One is above being, and therefore above intelligibility.¹¹⁸

Maximus knew this philosophical tradition via Dionysius and the Neoplatonists.¹¹⁹ The Cappadocians also used the idea of participation,¹²⁰ especially St. Gregory of Nyssa.¹²¹ Maximus rejected the Neoplatonic intermediate emanations, but he continued to use participation to explain being. Properly speaking, God is not essence. He is beyond every essence.¹²² God is Being itself.¹²³ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι,¹²⁴ αὐτοουσία,¹²⁵ αὐτοῦπαρξίς,¹²⁶ ὀντότης.¹²⁷ “God always properly (κυρίως) is, one and alone by nature.”¹²⁸ Beings, on the other hand, exist only by μέθεξις: “That which is not properly, although it is said to be, is and is said to

¹¹⁵Perl 12–17; Gilson, *Being* 6–7.

¹¹⁶Plato, *Theaetetus* 183e, cited in Gilson, *Being* 8.

¹¹⁷Perl 18–28.

¹¹⁸Perl 29–55; Bradshaw 73–152.

¹¹⁹Louth, *Maximus* 19, 29.

¹²⁰Bradshaw 172–178.

¹²¹Perl 91–111.

¹²²*Chapters on Knowledge* 1.1–1.10, PG 90.1084A–1087A.

¹²³Perl 114.

¹²⁴*Ambigua* 7, PG 91.1073C.

¹²⁵*Ad Thal.* 44, PG 90.416C.

¹²⁶*Chapters on Love* 3.27, PG 90.1025A.

¹²⁷*Chapters on Knowledge* 1.4, PG 90.1084C.

¹²⁸*Chapters on Knowledge* 1.5, PG 90.1085A.

be according to participation, by the will of that which properly is.”¹²⁹ Participation means that creatures have both unity and difference. They participate in the λόγοι, which themselves unify particulars and in the Λόγος are themselves unified.

It would seem that by his doctrine of μέθεξις, St. Maximus trades Christianity for Neoplatonism. Gilson, a Thomist, criticizes the Neoplatonic approach. He objects, first, to raising God above being. God’s name is ὁ ὢν, so being must be the highest principle. Any philosophy that places being below God cannot be Christian.¹³⁰ Although Dionysius said God was non-being, few Christians followed him.¹³¹ Second, Gilson objects to Neoplatonic mysticism: the idea that all things are intelligible except the supreme thing, which is supremely unintelligible. “Now, mysticism in itself is excellent, but not *in* philosophy.” By this approach, “Being is unable to give an intelligible account of itself.”¹³² Third, one might object that, like the emanations of Plotinus, μέθεξις replaces creation with pantheism.

But on the contrary, the Psalmist writes, “You thought I was just like you.”¹³³ There is nothing unchristian about μέθεξις, which implies both the transcendence and immanence of God. He is present, because all that is has being from Him, but He is absent, because He alone has being χωρίως.

To the first objection, I answer that ὁ ὢν does not name God in His essence. “He is entirely above essence and entirely above thought.”¹³⁴ Rather, this name indicates that God is the Creator and the source of all being,¹³⁵ and it indicates that He is.¹³⁶ But it does not indicate that He is as we are. Although Gilson complains about a God who “is not,” Dionysius is clear that we can say, with equal truth and falsehood, that God both “is” and “is not.” Indeed, Maximus prefers to say that God alone is χωρίως, and beings are only μεθεκτῶς. God is ὁ ὢν, and God alone.

To the second objection, Perl answers, “If mysticism is a good thing, this can only be because a mystical understanding of the world is true; and if it is true, then any philosophy which does not include mysticism will be false *as philosophy*.”¹³⁷ God’s unknowability is precisely a consequence of the Christian doctrine of creation. Because God alone creates, He is Being, forever beyond the understanding of beings. If anything, Gilson’s position is even stranger than that of Parmenides. He teaches that the act of existence is unintelligible,¹³⁸ and God’s essence is His act of existence—yet somehow (this is vague in Thomas¹³⁹) God renders

¹²⁹ *Various* 1.2, PG 90.1177B, trans. Perl 114–115.

¹³⁰ Gilson, *Being* 23–24, 30–31.

¹³¹ Gilson, *Being* 34.

¹³² Gilson, *Being* 40.

¹³³ Psalm 49:21.

¹³⁴ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.82, PG 90.1117A.

¹³⁵ Dionysius, *Divine Names* 5.4, PG 3.817C–D.

¹³⁶ John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* 1.9. Migne gives a bad text here. See Bradshaw 208n.72. The correct text appears in Bonifatius Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973) 32.

¹³⁷ Perl 313.

¹³⁸ Gilson, *Being* 2–5.

¹³⁹ *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3.51.4.

Himself intelligible to us.

To the third objection, I answer that μέθεξις does not imply Plotinian emanations. Maximus teaches a clear separation between created and uncreated, and all that is uncreated is the Trine God. Moreover, even in Plotinus, the total separation of the One from beings rules out pantheism. Gilson himself makes this argument.¹⁴⁰

God as Imparticipable and Participable

Neoplatonism, even with μέθεξις, never managed to solve the problem of the one and the many. The problem was how to account for the source of difference from the One. The One itself could not be participable, or it would not be simple.¹⁴¹ Successive philosophers introduced new levels of intermediate emanation, because the material world needed to participate in something that wasn't quite the One. By adding more levels of emanation, the Neoplatonists pushed difference further and further away from the material world and closer to the One, but always the difference remained outside the One itself.¹⁴²

In Maximus, the λόγοι serve the purpose of emanations. They make beings be what they are, and they account for the unity and difference of the world. But he is able finally to make unity and diversity touch, because the λόγοι are not emanations; they are the Λόγος, and the Λόγος is the λόγοι. While emanations remained outside God, the λόγοι are within God, though outside His essence.

Whereas Plotinus could not decide whether the One was participated or unparticipated, Maximus boldly teaches that God is both. “The holy angels know God by participation, though he is beyond participation.”¹⁴³ In His essence, He is unknowable. “The knowledge of Himself in His essence and personhood remains inaccessible to all angels and men alike and he can in no way be known by anyone.”¹⁴⁴ The most we can know is that He is there. “God is called the unknown, and among all knowable things only His existence can be perceived.”¹⁴⁵ He cannot be participated. “God infinitely transcends all things which participate or are participated.”¹⁴⁶

Yet creatures participate in Him.¹⁴⁷ They do not participate in His essence, but in the λόγοι and the τὰ περὶ θεόν (things around God).¹⁴⁸ We have already seen how creatures participate in the λόγοι and thereby in the Λόγος. Of the τὰ περὶ θεόν, Maximus writes:

¹⁴⁰Gilson, *Being* 25.

¹⁴¹Bradshaw shows Plotinus's ambivalence on this point in 73–91.

¹⁴²Perl 39.

¹⁴³*Chapters on Love* 3.22, PG 90.1024A.

¹⁴⁴*Chapters on Knowledge* 2.76, PG 90.1160C–D. See also 1.2, PG 90.1084A–B; 1.82, PG 90.1116B–1117A; 2.2, PG 90.1125C;

¹⁴⁵*Chapters on Knowledge* 1.8, PG 90.1128C–D.

¹⁴⁶*Chapters on Knowledge* 1.49, PG 90.1101A.

¹⁴⁷*Chapters on Love* 4.11, PG 90.1049C.

¹⁴⁸Bradshaw traces this term from the Cappadocians to Maximus and shows that it is one type of divine ἐνέργεια in 166–167, 188–191.

The works (ἔργα) of God which did not happen to begin in time are participated beings, in which participated beings share according to grace, for example, goodness, simplicity, immutability, and infinity, and such things which are essentially contemplated in regard to Him; they are also God's works, and yet they did not begin in time. . . . Such things have God alone as the eternal begetter of their being.¹⁴⁹

These works include even “being itself” (αὐτὴ ἡ ὀντότης).¹⁵⁰ They are eternal—hence uncreated. They are outside God's essence, yet they describe Him. The τὰ περὶ θεόν seem to be not exactly the same as the λόγοι, but like the λόγοι they are God as participated by creatures. Both λόγοι and τὰ περὶ θεόν are ἐνέργειαι of God. How the λόγοι and the τὰ περὶ θεόν are God remains a mystery. In this sense, Maximus has only slightly improved on the Neoplatonist dilemma. But if God is unknowable in His essence, then by necessity all things related to His essence must be unknowable in their relation.

γένεσις, κίνησις, στάσις

Origen uses these three terms to explain creation, although for him their order is στάσις–κίνησις–γένεσις. Origen taught that beings owe their difference and their matter to a fall. In the beginning, they were at rest (στάσις) in God. They were a single henad (ἑνάς).¹⁵¹ But they had too much of God; they reached satiety (χόρος). Therefore they moved away from Him (κίνησις) and fell from Being into becoming (γένεσις).

Maximus reverses this order. He cites Aristotle that a thing's end (τέλος) is its rest. Moses, David, Paul, and Our Lord knew this principle. Therefore, our στάσις must come not at the beginning but at the end.¹⁵² In addition, creation must precede movement. A thing cannot move unless it exists.¹⁵³ But movement is second only ontologically, not temporally, because to be created is already to be in movement.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, if appreciating good requires knowing evil, then good owes its goodness in some sense to evil. Maximus cannot accept this, because it creates a dualism where goodness depends on evil.¹⁵⁵ The good has being, but evil is an absence of being.

Evil neither was nor is, subsisting according to a proper nature, for neither has it being by anything whatsoever, whether nature or hypostasis or potency or actuality in the things that are, nor is it a quality, nor a quantity, nor a relation, nor a place, nor a time, nor a position, nor a creation, nor a movement, nor a habit, nor an experience, observed physically in some beings, nor indeed does it subsist in altogether any of these things by a proper nature. It is neither a beginning, nor a middle, nor an end. But in order that I might compass it as in a limit, I say evil is a defect (ἔλλειψις) of actuality towards the end of the potencies implanted in a nature, and other than this it is absolutely nothing. Or again, evil is an irrational movement to something

¹⁴⁹ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.48, PG 90.1100C–1101A.

¹⁵⁰ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.50, PG 90.1101A–B.

¹⁵¹ This term only appears in *De Principiis* 2.1.1, but it was apparently an important aspect of seventh-century Origenism. It was the primary target of Maximus's polemic. See Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua* 72–92.

¹⁵² *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1072C–1073B.

¹⁵³ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1072A–B.

¹⁵⁴ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1069B: “Everything that was brought from non-being to being is moved.”

¹⁵⁵ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1072A. See also *Disputation* 209–214, PG 91.349C–352B.

besides an end, by a faulty judgment of natural potencies. And the end I call the cause of beings from which all things are naturally sent.¹⁵⁶

Evil therefore has no being. And so it follows that goodness is good whether we know evil or not.

Contra Origen, we do not need to taste evil to overcome a supposed *κόρος* of goodness. Rather, we can never have enough of God, who is the Beautiful and hence the ultimate Beloved. “For those who enjoy fellowship with God who is infinite and beautiful, desire becomes more and more intense and has no limit.”¹⁵⁷ We are “ever insatiably satisfied with the one who is inexhaustible.”¹⁵⁸ How then could we fall away? Paradoxically, our *στάσις* is both a Sabbath¹⁵⁹ and a perpetual striving.¹⁶⁰

Finally, if beings could achieve satiety, then they might fall away again and again. “What could be greater reason to despair?”¹⁶¹ Rather, when beings have been deified, they cannot fall away. This is not for lack of free will, but because of their proper discernment. Our knowledge now is from reason (*λόγος*) and concepts (*νόησις*), but when deified we will know by participation (*μέθεξις*), sense (*αἴσθησις*) and experience (*πεῖρα*). This is a more perfect knowledge.¹⁶² As one who has seen the sun will never mistake it for the moon, so one who knows God by *πεῖρα* will never mistake Him with a creature.¹⁶³

τὸ εἶναι, τὸ εὔ εἶναι, τὸ ἀεὶ εὔ εἶναι

Being, well-being, and eternal well-being correspond to the stages of our deification, *γένεσις*, *κίνησις*, and *στάσις*.¹⁶⁴ Being is the “sixth day,” corresponding to nature and creation as prepared beforehand by God. Well-being is the “seventh day,” corresponding to our own activity in the present. Eternal well-being is the “eighth day,” corresponding to our hoped-for union with God.¹⁶⁵

We receive being because of our becoming. This is a gift from God. We attain well-being based on our movement. This depends on our own manner of living. We receive eternal well-being, again from God, as our rest.¹⁶⁶ Thus, our being and our eternal well-being are from God, but our well-being is our own, depending on our *γνώμη*.¹⁶⁷ Maximus calls being “natural” (*κατὰ φύσιν*) and well-being “voluntary” (*κατὰ γνώμην*).¹⁶⁸ In other words, being and eternal well-being are in our *λόγος*, but well-being is in our *τρόπος*.

¹⁵⁶ *Ad Thal.* Prologue, PG 90.253A–C. My translation. See also *Ad Thal.* 64, CCSG 22.239; *Centuries on Love* 3.4–5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ambigua* 7.3, PG 91.1089B.

¹⁵⁸ *Chapters on Love* 3.46. See also 2.48 and *Chapters on Knowledge* 2.88.

¹⁵⁹ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.35, PG 90.1097A; 1.47, PG 90.1100B.

¹⁶⁰ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.35, PG 90.1096C. This is reminiscent of *ἐπέκτασις* in St. Gregory of Nyssa. See Berthold 172n.38.

¹⁶¹ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1073C.

¹⁶² *Ad Thal.* 60, CCSG 22.77.

¹⁶³ *Ad Thal.* 6, CCSG 7.69–71.

¹⁶⁴ Sometimes Maximus shortens the third element to τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι (eternal being), but it means the same as eternal well-being.

¹⁶⁵ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.56, PG 90.1104C.

¹⁶⁶ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1073C–1076A.

¹⁶⁷ *Ambigua* 10, PG 91.116B. See also *Chapters on Love* 3.24–25, PG 90.1024A–C.

¹⁶⁸ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1073C.

We have being by nature and eternal well-being by grace.¹⁶⁹ But Maximus is not here using nature and grace in the scholastic sense. Our nature is not our own, but from God. Grace is necessary even for existence.¹⁷⁰ Only God is properly (κυρίως) being.¹⁷¹ When he says that we have being by nature, Maximus means that all men receive being as a matter of course; it is the way God has made us. We receive being at our birth, and we hope to attain eternal well-being at the resurrection.¹⁷²

But well-being is our contribution to this plan. It means subjecting our will to God. Maximus calls it ἐκχώρησις γνωμικῆ, variously translated “voluntary outpassing”¹⁷³ or “willing surrender.”¹⁷⁴ Maximus likens it to wax stamped by a seal. All things will have one ἐνέργεια with God. Later Maximus would retract the language of “one ἐνέργεια,” but the point remains that our ἐνέργεια matches the ἐνέργεια of God, much as Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was in harmony (συμφύα) and concurrence (σύννευσις) with God.¹⁷⁵ Therefore “God will be all in all.”¹⁷⁶ With Perl we might say, somewhat loosely, that Maximus’s triad operates by another triad: nature–choice–grace.¹⁷⁷

Our well-being depends on whether we act with or against our λόγος. To act with our λόγος is to conform our will to God’s. “If someone is moved according to the Λόγος, he will come to be in God.”¹⁷⁸ “The one Word of God is the substance of virtue in each person. . . . He is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification itself. . . . Every person who participates in virtue as a matter of habit unquestionably participates in God, the substance of the virtues.”¹⁷⁹ To act according to our λόγος leads to well-being.¹⁸⁰ To act against our λόγος leads to ill-being.¹⁸¹

But even our well-being is not our own entirely. It is a synergy of us with God. Like being, well-being is ours “by nature”—that is, implanted in us by God.¹⁸² The difference is that our will must actualize it. To begin our well-being, God gives us goodness and wisdom in potency, but these only become actual by our will. By acting in accord with goodness and wisdom, we attain well-being.¹⁸³ God also aids our efforts. This is the meaning of Christ’s words, “My Father is working even now, and I am working.”¹⁸⁴

Maximus also relates being, well-being, and eternal being to three types of love. Being signifies our

¹⁶⁹ *Chapters on Love* 3.25, PG 90.1024C.

¹⁷⁰ Perl 261 demonstrates this based on *Chapters on Love* 3.23–27, PG 90.1024A–1025A.

¹⁷¹ *Chapters on Love* 3.27–29, PG 90.1025A–C. Cf. 3.28, PG 90.1025B–C.

¹⁷² *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1325B–C.

¹⁷³ Sherwood, *Earlier Ambigua* 129.

¹⁷⁴ Wilken, *Cosmic Mystery* 52n.19.

¹⁷⁵ *Opuscula* 6, PG 91.65B–68A.

¹⁷⁶ *Ambigua* 7.1, PG 91.1076C.

¹⁷⁷ Perl 233–235.

¹⁷⁸ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1080C.

¹⁷⁹ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1081D.

¹⁸⁰ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1084B–C; 65, PG 91.1392A.

¹⁸¹ Perl 243–244, citing *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1329B and *Ambigua* 65, PG 91.1392C–D.

¹⁸² *Ad Thal.* 60, CCSG 22.79.

¹⁸³ *Chapters on Love* 3.25, PG 90.1024B–C.

¹⁸⁴ *Ad Thal.* 2, CCSG 7.51.

natural (φυσικῶς) care for one another. Well-being signifies spiritually (πνευματικῶς) loving another as oneself. Eternal being signifies a divine (θεϊκῶς) love for another even more than oneself. The first is given to all men and learned by the natural law (ὁ τῆς φύσεως νόμος). The second is learned by the scriptural law (ὁ γραπτὸς νόμος). The last is given according to the “law of grace” (ὁ τῆς χάριτος νόμος).¹⁸⁵

So on the one hand, our nature determines our end, but on the other, the end—God Himself—is outside our nature. By himself, man cannot attain his end.¹⁸⁶ Aquinas says the same thing.¹⁸⁷ Some Orthodox criticize him for this, but here he seems entirely consistent with Maximus.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, this is a basic teaching of Christianity: man’s end is not himself but God, and he can attain God only by grace.

φύσις and χάρις

Although man by deification becomes wholly God (see περιχώρησις), he is never confused with God. He remains distinct. This is because man is not God as God is God. It is God’s λόγος to be God; he is God by φύσις (nature); he is properly (κυρίως) God. But it is man’s λόγος to be man; he is God by τρόπος only, which is to say, he is God by χάρις (grace).¹⁸⁹ Man can never become God by λόγος, only by τρόπος, and the τρόπος available to man is χάρις.

Maximus describes χάρις as μέθεξις: God shares himself with man, and man participates in his grace. But even as man is deified, his φύσις remains man, and thereby he remains himself. φύσις is given to all men by virtue of their common οὐσία, but χάρις and μέθεξις vary for each ὑπόστασις. Man’s ὑπόστασις is what keeps him from losing himself and simply becoming God. Maximus thus follows the teaching of the holy Fathers that what God is by nature, man is to become by grace.

Perl reveals some of the difficulties in understanding nature and grace in St. Maximus. He writes that the distinction between nature and grace is the same as that between κυρίως and μέθεξις. But we have all things by μέθεξις, even our being. It seems then that we have all things by grace, and nothing by nature. But in that case, our deification would eliminate our otherness from God, and we would lose our individuality.¹⁹⁰

Perl is right that all is μέθεξις, and in that sense all is grace. But to line up nature and grace strictly with κυρίως and μέθεξις is to adopt the scholastic understanding, where creatures do not have their nature by participating in God but as an independent property. This is particularly odd in Perl, who criticizes Sherwood for doing the same thing.¹⁹¹ In Maximus, nature is not what we have κυρίως, but rather what

¹⁸⁵ *Ad Thal.* 64, CCSG 22.235–239.

¹⁸⁶ *Ad Thal.* 22, CCSG 7.141.

¹⁸⁷ *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3.48, 51–53.

¹⁸⁸ Unfortunately, this teaching in Aquinas is closely coupled with the supposed vision of God’s essence, which Maximus denies strenuously.

¹⁸⁹ *Mystagogy* 24, PG 91.712A. Translations from this work use Berthold.

¹⁹⁰ Perl 138–142.

¹⁹¹ Perl 251.

we have by virtue of our λόγος. Grace, on the other hand, affects our τρόπος. This is most clearly seen in Maximus’s discussion of being, well-being, and eternal well-being.

εἰκῶν and ὁμοίωσις

Maximus also uses the λόγος–τρόπος distinction to describe deification.¹⁹² According to their λόγος, all mens’ souls are the same, but according to their τρόπος, each soul “either chooses honor or accepts dishonor by its own deeds.” Man’s λόγος and τρόπος correspond to the εἰκῶν and ὁμοίωσις (image and likeness) of Genesis 1:26. We all are born with “the natural beauty of the image,” but by our acts we must add “the voluntary good of likeness.”¹⁹³ The εἰκῶν means that we are not born deified, but God is our natural end. The ὁμοίωσις is our success in attaining that end. “To the inherent goodness of the image is added the likeness acquired by the practice of virtue and the exercise of the will.”¹⁹⁴

Thus we see a correlation of several terms, at least when Maximus describes deification:

οὐσία	ὑπόστασις
λόγος	τρόπος
φύσις	χάρις
εἰκῶν	ὁμοίωσις

Adam and Christ

God is our end by nature. “The inclination to ascend and to see one’s proper beginning was implanted in man by nature.”¹⁹⁵ Moreover, God originally expected us to attain our end naturally: “Before the ages He had intended that man’s end was to live in Him, and to reach this blessed end He bestowed on us the good gift of our natural powers.”¹⁹⁶ But in Adam we misused our natural powers, violating our λόγος and “slipping down” to non-being (μη ὄν).¹⁹⁷ Because Adam sinned, God gave us over to death.¹⁹⁸ “The deviance (τροπή) of free choice introduced passibility (παθητόν), corruptibility (φθαρτόν), and mortality (θνητόν) in Adam’s nature.”¹⁹⁹ To avoid any hint of an Origenist “double creation,” Maximus teaches that Adam sinned “immediately with being created” (ἄμα τῷ γενέσθαι).²⁰⁰

¹⁹² *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.11–1.13, PG 90.1088A–C. See also *Mystagogy* 23–24, PG 91.697C–716B.

¹⁹³ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.13, PG 90.1088C.

¹⁹⁴ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1084A.

¹⁹⁵ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1084A.

¹⁹⁶ *Ambigua* 7.4, PG 91.1097C.

¹⁹⁷ *Ambigua* 7.2, PG 91.1085A.

¹⁹⁸ *Ambigua* 7.4, PG 91.1092C–1093A.

¹⁹⁹ *Ad Thal.* 42, CCSG 7.287.

²⁰⁰ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1321B; *Ad Thal.* 61, CCSG 22.85. Blowers twice incorrectly spells this “γίνεσθαι” in *Cosmic Mystery* 85n.10 and 131n.1. Maximus also uses ἄμα τῷ εἶναι in *Opuscula* 59, PG 91.613C.

God, in His “disciplinary economy,” punished us by adding a birth from sexual relations.²⁰¹ Sex—in the older sense of male and female, and presumably therefore in the modern sense of the act—was not originally necessary for our procreation.²⁰² Whereas from the beginning our λόγος gave us a γένεσις (becoming), now our τρόπος gives us a γέννησις (birth).²⁰³ In our present τρόπος, our γένεσις is via our γέννησις, but this was not the intended way.

Man was by nature incorruptible, but birth made him corruptible.²⁰⁴ Maximus calls our passibility a “second sin,” being an effect of Adam’s sin, but one that is innocent.²⁰⁵ Maximus applies his principle that all unnatural pleasure (ἡδονή) must result in pain (ὀδύνη). As unnatural pleasures end in pain, so birth by pleasure ends in death.²⁰⁶ We are also corruptible in a moral sense. Because we are born, we suffer from a “natural liability to passions.”²⁰⁷ We have lost our ἀπάθεια,²⁰⁸ and hence we fail to attain well-being.

Therefore “another way was introduced, more marvelous and more befitting of God than the first, . . . the mystical sojourn of God among men.”²⁰⁹ Mary’s conception of Jesus was without pleasure. St. John of Damascus would later teach that since Mary conceived without pleasure, she gave birth without pain.²¹⁰ Maximus drew a different inference: since there was no pleasure, there was no need for death. Jesus’ death was “unjust,” and therefore it abrogated our just death.²¹¹

Jesus also healed our own γέννησις. By remaking our nature, the Incarnation reconnected being with well-being.²¹² Christ did not change our nature’s λόγος, but rather its τρόπος.²¹³ Christ became man, hence He assumed our λόγος. He was born, hence He assumed our τρόπος. By virtue of His γένεσις, Jesus assumed Adam’s original “impeccability”; by virtue of His γέννησις, He assumed our “natural liability to passions but not sinfulness.” By His own sinlessness He united our γέννησις to our γένεσις, restoring incorruptibility and liberating us from “the same means of procreation as all the rest of the animals.”²¹⁴ Christ, “through His resurrection, introduced impassibility (ἀπαθές), incorruptibility (ἀφθαρτόν), and immortality (ἀθάνατον).”²¹⁵

²⁰¹ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1317D.

²⁰² *Ambigua* 41, PG 91.1309A.

²⁰³ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1320A.

²⁰⁴ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1317A–B. See also *Disputation* 126, PG 91.320B–C.

²⁰⁵ *Ad Thal.* 42, CCSG 7.285.

²⁰⁶ *Ad Thal.* 61, CCSG 22.85–87.

²⁰⁷ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1317A.

²⁰⁸ *Ad Thal.* 42, CCSG 7.285.

²⁰⁹ *Ambigua* 7.4, PG 91.1097C–D.

²¹⁰ John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith* 4.14, PG 94.1160C–D: “Where pleasure had not preceded, pain did not follow.”

²¹¹ *Ad Thal.* 61, CCSG 22.87.

²¹² *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1348D.

²¹³ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1345A.

²¹⁴ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1317A–C, trans. Blowers 82. Cf. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2.8: “purposing to change us from corruption to incorruption by the birth from above.”

²¹⁵ *Ad Thal.* 42, CCSG 7.287, trans. Blowers 121.

βάπτισμα and μετάνοια

We partake of Christ’s restoration at baptism, when we are united to His birth.²¹⁶ We put off the old birth from pleasure unto death, and put on the new birth unto life.²¹⁷ Baptism marks the beginning of our well-being. It confers the “grace of adoption” in potency (δυνάμει), by faith alone.²¹⁸ But we must strive to grow in well-being in actuality (κατ’ ἐνέργειαν), which requires will (γνώμη).²¹⁹ We receive the “grace of adoption” by baptism, but by our acts we reveal it.²²⁰ In so doing, we become incorruptible: “Baptized in Christ by the Spirit, we have received the first incorruptibility of the flesh; we await the final incorruptibility of Christ in the Spirit, that is, in keeping undefiled the first incorruptibility by a free gift of good works and by a voluntary death.”²²¹

If we sin after baptism, we lose our clear vision of Christ. “Those things that stain the mind do not permit it to see Christ dwelling in it by holy baptism.”²²² Post-baptismal sins require repentance. Maximus writes, “We were freed by holy baptism from ancestral sin (προγονική ἁμαρτία), but from the sin we had the effrontery to commit after baptism we are freed by repentance (μετάνοια).”²²³

This gives us several corresponding triads:

γένεσις	κίνησις	στάσις
τὸ εἶναι	τὸ εὔ εἶναι	τὸ ἀεὶ εὔ εἶναι
nature	choice	grace
γέννησις	βάπτισμα & μετάνοια	ἀνάστασις
φυσικῶς	πνευματικῶς	θεικῶς
ὁ τῆς φύσεως νόμος	ὁ γραπτὸς νόμος	ὁ τῆς χάριτος νόμος

διαστολή and συστολή

These terms mean expansion (διαστολή) and contraction (συστολή). Maximus uses them in several different contexts. First, he uses them to describe the Trinity.²²⁴ He begins with the passage, “There is neither Jew nor Greek.”²²⁵ The pagans have only διαστολή; they divide God into a pantheon. The Jews have only

²¹⁶ *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1325B–C.

²¹⁷ *Ad Thal.* 61, CCSG 22.97.

²¹⁸ *Ad Thal.* 6, CCSG 7.69. See also *Ad Thal.* 22, CCSG 7.139.

²¹⁹ *Ad Thal.* 6, CCSG 7.69–71. Blowers remarks that in this passage, Maximus had not yet given γνώμη its purely negative sense, *Cosmic Mystery* 104n.2. See also 112n.7.

²²⁰ *Mystagogy* 24, PG 91.712A–B.

²²¹ *Chapters on Knowledge* 1.87, PG 90.1120B.

²²² *Chapters on Love* 4.73, PG 90.1065C.

²²³ *Ascetic Life* 44, PG 90.956A, trans. Sherwood, except he uses “penance” for μετάνοια and treats it as the sacrament in *Ascetic Life* 78–79, 135.

²²⁴ *Our Father*, PG 90.892A–D.

²²⁵ Galatians 3:28.

συστολή: they hold a single God, but they deny the Trinity. The Christian teaching of three-in-one has both διαστολή and συστολή, unlike the errors of the pagans and Jews.

Maximus also uses διαστολή and συστολή to explain the difference among beings.²²⁶ By διαστολή, things move from the most universal to the most particular, and by συστολή, things move from the most particular to the most universal. This is similar to the pattern of Neoplatonic procession and return. Maximus uses this language to argue against Origen’s eternal creatures. Anything with διαστολή has a limit at its most particular, and anything with συστολή has a limit at its most general. But what is “scattered and gathered together again either by reason or force” must be moved. Since it is not unmoved, it must have a beginning and an end. But then it is not, contra Origen, eternal.

Thunberg associates διαστολή with creation and συστολή with deification.²²⁷ This is not stated explicitly in Maximus, but it makes sense. Creation is a going out from God, whereas deification is a return to Him. Maximus writes that God contracts us into unity with Himself inasmuch as He expands us by His condescension.²²⁸

μονή, πρόδος, ἐπιστροφή

This is not a triad that Maximus uses, but it is similar to other terms such as διαστολή–συστολή and γένεσις–κίνησις–στάσις. It was used by Proclus and Dionysius and therefore forms an important aspect of Maximus’s background. Finally, by considering the difficulties with this triad we can see the significance of Maximus’s thought for ontology.

This is the Procline triad of remaining, procession, and return.²²⁹ Proclus uses this triad to explain cause and effect. Every effect has these three acts. It remains in its cause, it proceeds from its cause, and it returns to its cause. Thus, the triad applies to the emanations.

Remaining signifies that the cause, to be a cause, must somehow contain the effect within itself. Procession signifies that the effect goes out from the cause and becomes its own thing. Thus, remaining signifies the unity between cause and effect, whereas procession signifies difference. Return is the natural desire of all things to return to their cause. In Maximus, procession and return could correspond to creation and deification.

But in Proclus, procession and return are the same act, considered first from the perspective of the cause, then from the perspective of the effect. Since they are the same act, there is never any true difference. The effect immediately collapses back into the cause. Proclus is left with strict monism—or, if he looks elsewhere

²²⁶ *Ambigua* 10, PG 91.1177B–1080A.

²²⁷ Thunberg 60–61.

²²⁸ *Ambigua* 33, PG 91.1288A, quoted in Thunberg 61n.76.

²²⁹ Perl 42–46.

for a cause of difference, he falls into dualism.²³⁰

Perl wants to pit Maximus against this dilemma in his teaching of creation and deification.²³¹ Why, he asks, aren't things deified immediately? Is creation equal to deification? He answers that they are indeed equal, but they are held apart by our own will. The movement from creation to deification depends on the creature's choice.²³² At the moment of creation, Adam fell, and thus deification was delayed. Had Adam chosen rightly, deification would have been achieved immediately.²³³

Because man fell, God became man to restore our lost end. The Incarnation restores deification to creation, because it is itself deification. By the Incarnation, Christ takes human nature into His divine hypostasis. This completes the movement of return. But Christ is not incarnate as man only. He wills that all creation be deified, and therefore incarnate. Already the Church and the Eucharist are deified as Christ's body.²³⁴

Perl asks whether Christ would have become incarnate had Adam not fallen. He says yes, but not as a particular man. Had there been no Fall, all creation would have been deified, which is to say incarnated. Thus the incarnation itself is not due to the Fall. But the passion is a result of the Fall, as is the incarnation "as one man among many."²³⁵

Therefore the Incarnation solves the Procline riddle. Apart from Jesus the God-Man, the diversity of the world remains inexplicable. He is the key to a coherent ontology. Therefore there can be no true philosophy apart from Him, no separation between natural and revealed theology. Christ is the answer to the mystery of being.²³⁶

Perl tells an interesting story with an appealing punchline, but it has several problems. First, there seems little textual evidence that Maximus was consciously solving a difficulty in Proclus. It may be instructive to compare his refutation of Origenism. Perl does not show that the Procline difficulty held any interest to Christians, unlike the threatening rise of Origenism. None of Maximus's letters warn against Proclus. Also, Maximus does not use the Procline terminology of *μονή-πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή*, whereas he does adopt and modify the Origenist terminology. Finally, this supposed breakthrough in philosophy went entirely unnoticed, although Maximus's writings were treasured and used in the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

Second, why follow Proclus and posit return as a necessity in the first place? Or if we do posit return, why insist that it is the same act as procession? It seems that Perl is going to great trouble to solve a

²³⁰Perl 48–55.

²³¹Perl 136–146.

²³²Perl 237–240.

²³³Perl 247–251.

²³⁴Perl 280–297.

²³⁵Perl 297–299.

²³⁶Perl 314–318.

problem that isn't really there. Nothing in Maximus suggests that he considered πρόοδος and ἐπιστροφή to be one act.

Third, is creation really the same as deification? Perl's conflation of the two seems to be the cause of his confused explanation of nature and grace, which ends in a paradox. He promises to return and solve the difficulty, but he never does.²³⁷ Creation, according to Maximus, is our participation in our own λόγος, and thereby our participation in Being. Deification means that by conforming our τρόπος to our λόγος, we participate in the Λόγος Himself and hence in all the λόγοι, including the divine perfections. Perl is correct that deification is delayed because of our will, but by imposing procession and return—foreign concepts in Maximus's thought—he misrepresents the process of deification. We do not retreat from our λόγος back to its Cause, but rather we participate in its Cause by becoming our λόγος.

Finally, even if we assume the Procline dilemma, is Christ really its solution? Perl seems to have solved it simply by saying that free will holds creation apart from deification. Christ is our Savior; he delivers us from death and invites us to union with God. But does His Incarnation explain the difference between procession and return? It seems rather that He heals the difference.

Conclusions

The ontology of St. Maximus is neither entirely Neoplatonist, nor Thomist. Perl is convincing that μέθεξις owes much to the Neoplatonic tradition and that it is compatible with the Christian Creator–God. Gilson is wrong to insist that God cannot be beyond being, or, as Maximus would say, that He alone is being κυρίως. This separation is what guards participation from pantheism.

But Perl is wrong, philosophically and exegetically, to say that existence derives from essence. His reasoning is flawed, and his reading tendentious. Given Maximus's Neochalcedonian understanding of ὑπόστασις, the textual evidence weighs in the other direction: existence is an independent aspect of being, complementary to οὐσία and not derived from it. This does not mean that Maximus is a Thomist, as some would have him, but it does mean that he is not, on this point, a Neoplatonist.

²³⁷Perl 138–142.