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Hierarchic Anthropology of Saint Maximus the Confessor

Abstract

Although much attention has been recently paid to different aspects of St. Maximus' anthropology, no complete and comprehensive overview of his doctrine of human nature within the hierarchical order of the world existence has been produced so far. In this article an attempt is made to trace main features of the human hierarchical nature incorporated in the creation in general. Man is considered as a binder of the material and spiritual worlds, as a hierarchical center of the created universe. Human dual nature is analyzed in terms of its original plan of God and distortion through the Fall. Christ oriented character of the anthropology of St. Maximus is revealed. A very vivid antithesis of the corrupted body of Adam and the holy body of Christ is noted as a special contribution of St. Maximus. Special place to the human mind, as the highest part of the soul possessing some unique functions is reviewed. It is discussed that the highest hierarchical priority is allotted by the Confessor to the concept of person or hypostasis in the man. The latter is defined as the highest integrative principle, unifying the human body and soul. The key characteristic of human likeness with God given in the anthropological heritage of St. Maximus is claimed to be as follows: the key feature of the

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human conformity to God is the hypostasis-nature unity of the objective reality of a human. Such important features of St. Maximus anthropology as Christo-centrism, multi-layeredness, dynamics and subordination to the principles of the determined hierarchy as in the inner organization so in the involvement of the human nature in the hierarchy of the cosmic reality are underlined. On its highest level the hierarchical nature of the human includes in itself the uncreated Divine energies.

Keywords

Maximus Confessor, hierarchic Anthropology, human being, Christ-oriented anthropology, logoi, Divine energies

Many scholars who have conducted research on the heritage of St. Maximus the Confessor agree that he can be called the „father of Byzantine theology”¹. He was the first to create principles of an integral system of understanding the world which, due to its unique systematized and integral character, came to be a significant alternative to Origenism. Christology and closely related to it Christian anthropology are the focus of St. Maximus’s theological system. It is exactly this close link between Anthropology and Christology that becomes vital in St. Maximus’s theology as he sees the Incarnation to be „the heart of the world existence - not only in terms of redemption but also in terms of the creation of the world”².

Theology of St. Maximus has become a subject for vivid scientific analysis. Already traditional seminars on the heritage of St. Maximus under the auspices of the International Patrological Conference in Oxford have marked growing interest towards the theology of St. Maximus. Although much attention was paid to different aspects of Maximus’ anthropology, no complete and comprehensive overview of his doctrine of human nature within the hierarchical order of the world existence has been produced so far.

I. Hierarchical principle of creation in general

The principle of hierarchy according to St. Maximus is one of the basic principles of the created world, inherent to it from the very beginning.

¹ John Meyendorff, rev., *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Russian tr. Moscow, OSTTU, PSTBI, 2000), p. 147.

² Florovsky George, rev., *Byzantine Fathers of the Sixth to Eight Centuries* (Russian tr. Moscow, 1992), p. 200.

Maximus' theology having borrowed many elements from the works of St. Gregory the Theologian and from the Areopagite corpus, continued developing the issue of hierarchy, especially with respect to the doctrine on human being³.

Insisting on the dogma that the world was created from nothing St. Maximus underlines the limitless (ἄπειρον) difference between the created and uncreated nature⁴. It is important to point out that, refuting the teachings of origenists, St. Maximus outlines the border between God and the whole of creation very distinctively. Both the invisible world of angels and the material world are positioned together behind this border. According to St. Maximus God is totally not cognizable and lies beyond understanding of both visible and invisible creatures: „For it is beyond the understanding of both visible and invisible creatures to comprehend what He is”⁵. At the same time, one should realize that the doctrine of the qualitative distinction of all small and large parts of the Universe as well as material and nonmaterial world from God is not at all negative in ontological sense.

The teaching of St. Maximus is free from any type of echoing neoplatonic understanding of the world as a hierarchical ladder leading to God. On the contrary, the world which is ontologically separated from God is supposed to reach integrality in itself so that within its integrality (not in its separate, „most noble parts”) it could become a place of fulfillment of the Creator's providence, of „praise and service to the Unlimited One”⁶.

The hierarchy of the Universe according to St. Maximus is of completely different character in relation to that of Origen or of neoplatonics. Reasoning about the abyss (χάσμα⁷) that separates the created and non-created world he at the same time gives deep positive implications to the cosmos hierarchy. Unlike origenists whose teaching inevitably implies

³ Naasonov M.U., Connection of Cosmology and Anthropology in the Teaching of st. Gregory the Theologian, *Nachalo*, Saint-Petersburg, 1996, № 3-4, p. 55 (54-62).

⁴ S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col.1077A.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 1288 B.

⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, San Francisco, 1988, p. 172.

⁷ “Χάσμα γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς φοβερόν τε καὶ μέγα μεταξὺ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶν” S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambigua to John*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1172 A). The term χάσμα was used yet by the ancient authors in the sense of the “Tartar” (Gesiod, Evripidis) (see Liddel, Scott). Christian authors used it in the sense of an abyss or tartar, and in the exegetics as a term to denote the abyss between the rich man and Lazarus (Lk.16:26) (st. Gregory of Nissa, st. John Chrysostom), sometimes as a gap between good and evil, virtue and vice. St. Maximus is the first to use it in order to denote the ontological gap between God and men (according to the TLG data).

disregard to lower elements of the hierarchy, no creature is deemed useless or worth of disregard in the teaching of St. Maximus.

The hierarchical principle is most clearly manifested in the teaching of St. Maximus on *logoi* of creation. Notwithstanding that scholars interpret the concept of *logoi* differently⁸ all of them admit the interrelation of multilevel complex structure of the world with the set of multiple *logoi*-projects of creation.

Comparing numerous particular *logoi* with the Unique Logos - the Word of God, St. Maximus employs a metaphoric example of beautiful birds sitting on the branches of the Gospel mustard tree. „The Word of God is like a mustard seed which seems small before it is planted. But when planted, it becomes so large that all sublime *logoi* of material and intelligible creatures can find their resort on its branches, like birds. For the *logoi* of all things rest in the Word of God and are contained within It, yet, none of the created does contain It”⁹. The example of the tree with numerous branches reflects probably most expressively the Divine plan of the world hierarchical structure as of a live and integral organism.

The unity in plurality is one of the key topics of St. Maximus¹⁰. On every level where plurality is present, it is due to differences introduced by God into the system of cosmic organization. But differentiation does not prevail, because the differentiation between, for instance, species on the lower level is „released as it were from the variety caused by difference, and the species find identity with one another”¹¹.

II. Man as link between the material and spiritual world

Man according to St. Maximus was initially created with two *logoi* which dominate in the soul and in the body¹². It is due to this duality that Adam was introduced into the world as a „sort of a natural link (συνδεσμός τις

⁸ Thus, for example, Lossky defines them as “first causes, which are in fact God’s ideas-volutions, contained in His energies” (Lossky V.N., *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, SVS Press, 1997; Russian tr. Moscow, 1991, p. 76). Rev. Andrew Louth rejects the direct connection of these two notions in the heritage of st. Maximus “‘Logoi’ are in fact the will of God and predestinations (...) they are not to be considered as ontological realities” (Louth A., rev., *St. Maximus’ Doctrine of the logoi of Creation*, *Studia Patristica*, vol.48, Leuven, 2010, p.82).

⁹ S. Maximus Abbas, *Capita Theologica et Oecumenica* 2.10, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1129A.

¹⁰ Tollefsen T., *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford 2008), p.100.

¹¹ S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1312 D.

¹² S. Maximus Abbas, *Quaestiones et Dubia*, in *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca* (Vol. 10, Edidit Jose H. Declerck, Brepols-Turnhout: Leuven University Press, 1982), q. 18.

φυσικός)¹³, mediating (μεσιτεύων) by his different parts between all the extremities¹⁴, including those of material and intelligible worlds. It is due to this role of the mediator (μεσίτης), the binder of the extremities of the dual world, a kind of a workshop where the unity is forged (τι τῶν ὄλων συνεκτικώτατον ἐργαστήριον)¹⁵, that Adam was the last to be created out of all rational and irrational beings.

Thus man being integrated into the cosmic hierarchy had been from the very start assigned by the Creator to occupy ontologically central position in the Universe. His „soul is in the middle position between God and matter and possesses the power that connects it to One and to another”¹⁶.

St. Maximus indicates two powers of the human soul - the reason and the senses - that are meant for cognition of God and of the material world respectively and that possess the „energy of connection” (σχετικήν ἐνέργειαν)¹⁷.

The universal goal and purpose of man is manifested even in his nature. St. Maximus defines human nature as a „microcosm”¹⁸. In his *Mystagogia* St. Maximus draws an analogy between the world of „visible and invisible creatures” and human being. „Man consisting of body and soul” is called a „world”. St. Maximus also shows the internal correspondence of intelligible essences (angels) and human soul. In the same way he shows that material world objects and human body are mutually dependent¹⁹. The affinity of spiritual and material worlds is what St. Maximus underlines. After the end of these ages we live in „the body will become like the soul and physical like intelligible”²⁰.

¹³ S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1305 B.

¹⁴ The man is in between of all oppositions (τοις καθόλου ... μεσιτεύον ἄκροις). Ibidem, col. 1304B. There are mentioned five oppositions (διαίρέσεις) in this chapter: ibidem, col. 1304D-1305B) between created and uncreated; intelligible and physical; heaven and earth; paradise and the world; male and female (*Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 48, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 436A-B). In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 60 a different set of oppositions is given.

¹⁵ S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1305 B.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 1193 D.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 1305 B.

¹⁸ Idem, *Epistolae VI*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 429.

¹⁹ Idem, *Mystagogia*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 684 D.

²⁰ Ibidem, col. 684 BC.

The concept of human being viewed as a hierarchical „centre of the universe” is often dealt with in the works of St. Maximus. By defining human nature as a compound one (σύνθετος)²¹ St. Maximus teaches that it is due to „intrinsic natural connection” (σχέσεως) between the elements of human nature and also common characteristic traits of these elements and other parts of the universe, that human being „embraces and is being embraced”. It is „characteristic of human being, as it consists of body and soul, to be embraced by intelligible and material [creatures] and embrace them (...) as it is capable of feeling and understanding”²².

According to Maximus „the major characteristic of human person is that he or she is given, from the moment of creation, the task of uniting in oneself, as in a ‘microcosm’ the entire cosmos and through the attainment of one’s own union with God thereby to unite this cosmos with God”²³.

III. Dual nature of the human being

In his Ambigua to John St. Maximus states that human soul and body „are not identical in terms of their essence” (κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν), neither their existence is identical (ἀλλήλοις μὴ ταυτόν ἐστι τὸ εἶναι)²⁴. The *logoi* of their creation differ accordingly.

In the meantime St. Maximus often mentions the *logos*-project of the unity of human body and soul, the *logos* of compound human nature (φύσις σύνθετος)²⁵. Unlike Origen and contrary to him St. Maximus consistently underlines the simultaneous origin of individual body and soul. The integrity of human being and the existence of soul and body in the form of a unique species is a strong argument. Neither soul nor body „exist in terms of creation before or after one another”²⁶, but only together they form a unified, common species (εἶδος)²⁷.

²¹ Idem, *Capita Theologica et Oecumenica* 2.65, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1288 D.

²² Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1153 AB.

²³ Nellas P., *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the nature of the Human Person* (New-York, 1987), p. 54.

²⁴ S. Maximus Abbas, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col.1321C.

²⁵ Idem, *Epistolae* 12, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 488 C – 489 B.

²⁶ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1324 A.

²⁷ Idem, *Epistolae* 12, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 488 D.

The arguments of St. Maximus can be viewed as the „realism of being“. If one of the elements (soul) had existed before the other, i.e. had already become a hypostasis, it would not have been capable of forming a new hypostasis with the other element (body) „without decay and without becoming what it did not use to be“²⁸.

Epistle 13 shows three intrinsic properties of compound nature. Firstly, the association of elements of a compound nature into a whole is inherent and involuntary. Secondly, its elements are contemporary to each other and to the nature itself and start existing at the same time, so that no element appears before the other. Thirdly, it is created for the sake of unity „embracing everything. For any compound nature has such definition, logos and principle“²⁹.

St. Maximus often considers the issue of unity of human nature and affirms that perfection consists in harmonic unity of body and soul. The body and soul are so closely related to each other that they cannot exist separately³⁰. It is only „imaginatively that they can be separated one from the other“, these „parts form by their unification an integral species“³¹ by existing together from the moment of their origin. This connection does not cease to exist even after bodily death.

Even after death and decay of the body, the soul is not called soul in general but human soul, the soul of some particular person. For even upon parting with the body the soul still retains human traits as its quality, the traits „defined from the relations of whole and its part“³². The same is true about the body.

The relation of body and soul (in the original Greek text we find the term „σχέσις“ which St. Maximus used to designate the relationship of the human body and soul) indicates both their differences and the unity „as parts of the integral human species“. Such relation does not contradict any of „their intrinsic *logoi*“ but connects them with such unity that makes it impossible „to find or to name an abstract body or an abstract soul“. St. Maximus considers this *logos*-project of the body and soul unity to be fundamental and not subject to changes (ἀκίνητος)³³.

²⁸ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1324 A.

²⁹ Idem, *Epistolae 13*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 516 D – 517 B.

³⁰ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1100 D.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 1100 C.

³² *Ibidem*, 1101 B.

³³ *Ibidem*, 1101 C.

Thus, except for particular *logoi* of body and soul, the „logos of their relation” to each other and to what they are part of (i.e. to human being as integral species) (ὁ τοῦ πρὸς τι ... λόγος)³⁴ exists. Therefore, a hierarchy of *logoi* of human nature can be distinguished. The *logos* of human as a whole is to some extent higher than the *logoi* of the body and the soul in particular and provides the basis for their unity. This teaching is certainly manifested in the quotations from St. Maximus that we have made, though it is not formulated directly. Unlike neoplatonics who taught about the *logos* of human soul³⁵, St. Maximus does clearly teach about the *logos* of the whole human being. He refutes the teaching of prior existence of souls and their absolute superiority over the body.

Of course the position of the body in the anthropologic hierarchy, according to St. Maximus, is the lowest. At the very beginning of the Chapters on Love he makes the following analogy: „if the soul is better than the body and incomparably better than the created world is God, then the one who prefers the body to the soul and the created world to the God is in no way different from idolaters”³⁶. The distortion of the above indicated hierarchy leads to direct or spiritual idolatry³⁷. It is important, though, to distinguish ontological and ascetic hierarchy. They are often entwined in many of the discourses of St. Maximus.

Placed on the verge of two worlds - tangible and spiritual - the human nature was designed to enjoy free use of matter³⁸. St. Maximus views this freedom as opposed to unnatural dependence of humans from matter, but not as the indication of disregard to body or matter as elements of the reality.

However, some of the statements by St. Maximus regarding body are disparaging, so that one could presume the influence of Alexandrian spiritualism. Thus, in one place he even calls for „neglecting the wellbeing of the body” as of something „scornful, inevitably doomed to extinction”³⁹. Furthermore, this is when body is found guilty of „all sores of soul” - ὡς πάντων τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς στιγμάτων ποιητικῆς⁴⁰.

³⁴ Ibidem, 1100 C-D.

³⁵ For Plotinus the identity and difference of each soul is provided by its *logos*, by its idea (see *Enn.* 5.7).

³⁶ S. Maximus Abbas, *Capita de Charitate*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 961C.

³⁷ Ibidem, col. 964D, 993C.

³⁸ Idem, *Epistolae*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 376 D.

³⁹ Ibidem, col. 373 D.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, 376 A.

The „scornful thing” may refer to the „wellbeing”, though „scornful thing inevitably doomed to extinction” is more applicable to the body, accounted for the fact that it is also claimed to be „unable to reach beyond its bounds”. The words „body” and „wellbeing” are in the genitive in the original Greek text, therefore, „scorn” may be applicable to both.

While mentioning the need to minimally care for body, St. Maximus immediately calls it „the worst part”⁴¹. He applies the words of Christ calling for rendering to „Caesar what is Caesar’s” to human body⁴². Being better part of human nature, soul is compared to the „fragrant right nostril”⁴³, while the body - to the left, worse part⁴⁴. St. Maximus underlines that soul has the priority of not being related to either time or space limitations⁴⁵ and compares the soul and body to the two thieves crucified with Christ on the Golgotha. He indicates that they are symbols of bodily and spiritual aspirations respectively⁴⁶.

IV. Distortion of hierarchy through the Fall

The teaching about the Fall and its consequences plays a very important role in the theology of St. Maximus. This fact is very significant in the context of our investigation because St. Maximus interprets the sin itself as enticement by „the exterior of matter”⁴⁷- διὰ τῶν τῆς ὕλης ἐπιφανειῶν ⁴⁸. Thus the original sin is explained as the distortion of hierarchy in the consciousness of intelligent creatures, in the perception and will direction of Adam. But in brief the result of the event is described as attachment to matter κατένευσεν πρὸς τὴν ὕλην ⁴⁹. It is exactly in this context that the question of why „matter” (Greek - ὕλη) is found to be accompanied by different negative epithets in St. Maximus texts so often should be answered.

⁴¹ Idem, Quaestiones et dubia, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 853 D.

⁴² St. Maximi Confessionis, Quaestiones et Dubia, in *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca* (Vol. 10, Edidit Jose H. Declerck, Brepols-Turnhout: Leuven University Press, 1982), q. 89.

⁴³ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia.17, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 853A.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 853 D.

⁴⁵ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 832C; Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia 127, col. 828C.

⁴⁶ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia 118, in *Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca* (Vol. 10, Edidit Jose H. Declerck, Brepols-Turnhout: Leuven University Press, 1982), TLG 118. 16-29.

⁴⁷ According to another possible translation – “external appearance of matter”.

⁴⁸ S.Maximus Abbas, Quaestiones et dubia, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col 801 C.

⁴⁹ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 64, TLG 64.9.

Man plunged into anti-natural state after the Fall - εἰς τὸ παρὰ φύσιν ἐξωλίσθησεν⁵⁰. The nature of Adam and his descendants became unstable (ἀγχίστροφον)⁵¹, blackened (μελανθείσης)⁵², devastated (κενωθεῖσαν)⁵³. Human nature became powerless and was ruined by diabolic fever - ἡσθένησεν ...καὶ τῷ διαβολικῷ κάυσωνι ἐθανατώθη⁵⁴. Participation of the evil powers in Adam's falling away from God's plan is repeatedly mentioned by St. Maximus. The substance of the material world was used as a peculiar lure and thus had a direct role in the act of the Fall.

Through this devil's lure human soul had been tied „by means of senses” to the material world, which is passionately perceived through bodily sensation. Demons can act in human soul by stimulation of passions⁵⁵, creating idols of „visible things” in minds of Adam's off-spring through delusion of „illusive images”. It's important that underlining the positive ontological value of matter St. Maximus finds it necessary to point out at the absence of natural linkage between these idols and visible things themselves: „idols are not something present in visible things by nature”⁵⁶. Elsewhere Maximus several times insists that „there is nothing evil in existing things”⁵⁷.

It is the fallen spirits who kill in the soul „all the godly impulses”⁵⁸; „destroy strength of our souls through the perceptible”⁵⁹. However, even the demons themselves are considered by Maximus not to be evil „by their nature”, but having acquired this quality „through misuse of natural powers” (ἐκ παραχρήσεως τῶν φυσικῶν δυνάμεων)⁶⁰.

In terms of his doctrine of *logoi* St. Maximus expresses distortion of harmonious hierarchy of the newly created man by the phrase that Adam's *logos* was „concealed in passion”⁶¹. Whereas the true goal of human spiritual calling consists in offering to God in his soul „by means of mind and according to natural contemplation” of *logoi* of perceptible things

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 191, TLG 191. 19.

⁵¹ S. Maximus Abbas, Quaestiones et dubia, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 812 C.

⁵² Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 185, TLG 185.4.

⁵³ Ibidem, 35, TLG 35. 22.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 11, TLG 11.6.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, 109, TLG 109. 11-12.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 30, TLG 30.12.

⁵⁷ S. Maximus Abbas, Capita de Charitate 3.4, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1017 C; Also, for example: “neither mind (...) nor things or senses are evil” (Ibidem., 2.15, col. 988 C).

⁵⁸ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 122, TLG 122.31-32.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 118, TLG 118. 30-31.

⁶⁰ Idem, Capita de Charitate, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus ...* col. 1020 A.

⁶¹ Idem, Quaestiones et Dubia, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 18, TLG 18. 19.

„thoroughly purified in spirit of matter”⁶². However, the „purification” of the *logoi* of matter does not stand for negation of matter and body as such. For in the same text as well as in other texts we come across thoughts that „ascetic’s body as a temple should adorn practical faculty of the soul, accomplishing commandments according to the moral philosophy”⁶³.

All the ascetic teaching of St. Maximus at scrupulous analysis appears to be focused not on freeing from matter but on restoration of the hierarchy of human existence and of the world surrounding him according to how it had been preplanned by God. Christian life is viewed as a spiritual war against the powers of evil which employ material world as a weapon against human beings”⁶⁴.

As a result of the defeat at this „spiritual battlefield” man was damaged both in his soul and in his body due to „injure of both *logoi*”⁶⁵. Human soul therefore is depicted by St. Maximus in the Gospel image of a crooked to earth woman⁶⁶. Christian ascetic endeavors are considered necessary exactly due to distortion of the primordial hierarchy of human nature.

St. Maximus in his ascetic writings constantly underlines strict ascetic attitude of a Christian towards his body and bodily senses. For example, body is described as a friend but such that it shouldn’t be rendered special service so that it doesn’t turn into an adversary: „so that no plots of enemies and haters would be displayed in you” (μήποτε ... τά τῶν ἐχθρῶν καὶ μισούντων ἐν σοὶ ἐνδείξῃται)⁶⁷. Nevertheless, the final aim of Christian exploit should be restoration of harmonious hierarchy of soul and body, their consonance (For example: „having brought his body in accordance to the soul - ἄρμოსάμενος τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὴν ψυχήν) through virtue has become a cithara, flute and temple of God”⁶⁸), their passionless and peaceful state (ἀπαθής καὶ εἰρηναία τῆς τε ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος κατάστασις)⁶⁹ and joint divinization.

This process of divinization starts according to St. Maximus from human mind which is by its nature closer to God in comparison to the rest of

⁶² Idem, *Mystagogia* 4, in in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 672 B-C.

⁶³ Ibidem, 672 B.

⁶⁴ Idem, *Quaestiones et Dubia*, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 165, TLG 165.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, 18.16-19.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, 176.8.

⁶⁷ Idem, *Quaestiones et dubia*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 833 D.

⁶⁸ Idem, *Capita Theologiae et Economiae*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1172 D-1173 A.

⁶⁹ Ibidem, col. 1153 A.

human essence. Soul and body acquire divinization indirectly through human mind⁷⁰.

Behind the image of God in man St. Maximus often implies just the soul or just the mind⁷¹. However in *Mystagogia* it's explained that „man is and is called to be man mostly due to his thinking and intelligent soul, in accordance with and due to which he is an image and likeness of his Creator”⁷². Noticing the word „mostly” and remembering St. Maximus doctrine that human being was created as a double-nature unity, one comes to a conclusion that the image of God is present in the totality of man. We can suppose that in St. Maximus theological framework the degree of likeness can be considered to be different for soul and body according to the initial principle of human hierarchical structure.

St. Maximus asserts inseparable kinship of the spiritual and corporal worlds, as well as of soul and body already in this age: „it is impermissible to assert that peculiar qualities encompassing both of the worlds in themselves and leading to their differentiation and separation possess more powers than friendly kinship mystically given to them in unity”. At the accomplishment of ages the power of unity will prevail even more „and the body will become like the soul in its splendor and glory (...) while the physical will become like the spiritual”⁷³.

V. Christ-oriented Anthropology of St. Maximus

Initial God's plan of human development was for Adam to be in progressive motion upwards the hierarchical ladder of existence. Perverted order of the hierarchy in the conscience and cognition process

⁷⁰ Idem, *Quaestiones et dubia*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 833C; Larchet J.-C. *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*. P., 1996, pp 638-639. According to Benevitch G. Here one can see influence of Christian neo-platonism. St Maximus follows Areopagite in considering the unity with God of a unified with the Supreme One to be the highest type of theology. S.Maximus Abbas, *Quaestiones et dubia*, in Russian. transl. (*Voprosy I nedoymeniya*, Series visantiiskaya filosofia, 6, M., 2010), p. 233, note 557.

⁷¹ S.Maximus Abbas, *Quaestiones Ad Thalassium*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 741B; Idem, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91), col. 268A.

⁷² Idem, *Ad Thalassium*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 684C-D.

⁷³ Idem, *Mystagogia VII*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 684 D. Confirmation to the aforesaid we find at the end *Mystagogy*: “they can according to the adoption and grace be called gods because God has filled them totally (διὰ τὸν αὐτοὺς ὅλως πληρώσαντα ὅλον θεόν), not leaving anything in them which would be void of His presence” (*Mystagogy 21, PG 91, col. 697 A*).

became the reason of the Fall and all-cosmos catastrophe: „In the beginning the man was created in order to climb through the loving aspiration to the Cause, and only afterwards come down to the creation ... and having acquired knowledge he was to derive their origin from the Creator; but the man did not do so, but has leaned down to the matter”⁷⁴. Man who „has received as his lot dominion over the whole world, by a misuse of this great gift (...) submitted himself and the whole world to the reign of mutability and death”⁷⁵.

Christ becomes the new Adam in order to restore the broken harmony and hierarchy of existing beings: „In order to save the perishing man and having united (ένώσας) (...) the gaps of the whole creation (...) to fulfill the great council of God the Father, having placed Himself at the head of all (ἀνακεφαλαιώσας)”⁷⁶. According to the thought of St. Maximus, starting from Christ Himself the harmony of existing beings spreads over the whole humankind and the whole universe.

In fact, Christ alone has fulfilled the God’s plan about human nature and person. It is only Him who „preserved in Himself the God’s goal (σκοπὸν)”⁷⁷. The body of the incarnated Lord became a spring of the water of knowledge (τό τῆς γνώσεως ὕδωρ)⁷⁸. The flesh of Christ is „coloured (πεποικιλμένον) by godly virtues”⁷⁹ and it is life-giving (ζωοποιός)⁸⁰ for the all humankind. It is this holy flesh through which the illness of human nature is being healed and which became both material and spiritual leaven of the renewed humankind.

In the theological heritage of St. Maximus the orthodox idea of Christ as a new Adam has received a rather full continuation and development. The goal of God’s Incarnation is seen by him as a re-creation in Christ of Adam’s nature in its initial state. Saint Maximus is using for description of this act the following verbs - ἀνέκτισεν, ἀπεκατέστησεν⁸¹.

Saint Maximus elaborated a very vivid antithesis of the corrupted body of Adam and holy body of Christ. We shall not go into a long investigation of his passages on this subject but will give only the starting point of his discourse. Thus, St. Maximus gives a clear idea of Christ as the bearer of

⁷⁴ Idem, *Quaestiones et dubia*, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 64, TLG 64.9.

⁷⁵ Idem, *Epistolae* 10, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 449 B.

⁷⁶ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1308 D.

⁷⁷ Idem, *Quaestiones et dubia*, in *Corpus Christianorum...*, 118, TLG 118.6-7.

⁷⁸ Idem, 68, TLG 68.10-11.

⁷⁹ Idem, 25, TLG 25.16.

⁸⁰ Idem, 54, TLG 54.

⁸¹ Idem, 62, TLG 62. 5-6.

the restored Adam's nature when he points out that „God the Word became the seed of His own flesh”⁸². By this he is trying to underline the similarity to the creation of the first man and the contrast of the natures of the fallen Adam and incarnated Word.

Christ as the new Adam is the head of the renewed in Him hierarchy of Christian humankind. In Him we are collected in one body (ἀνακεφαλαιούμενοι) in God the Father through His Son and our Lord Jesus Christ⁸³.

VI. Mind and Hypostasis

Generally saint Maximus is following the Church tradition of dichotomy when describing the human body and soul as symbolical icons of the two major parts (intelligible and physical) of the universe (Mystagogy, VII). „The nature of human being is seen to mirror the ontological distinction in the created world between the intelligible and physical”⁸⁴. However, he is allotting a very special place to the human mind, considering it as the highest part of the soul possessing some unique functions⁸⁵. One of its most interesting functions according to St. Maximus is an integrating one. Moreover it is presented as responsible for the giving up to passions⁸⁶, for it penetrates down even to the most low and gross feelings⁸⁷.

The mind is capable of and is destined to achieve the height of contemplation of God⁸⁸; it „can abide in God and pray in a proper

⁸² Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1052 D.

⁸³ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1097 A.

⁸⁴ Telepneff Gregory, rev., *The Concept of the Person in the Christian Hellenism of the Greek Church Fathers: A study of Origen, st. Gregory the theologian, st. Maximus the confessor* (Berkeley, California, 1991), p. 318.

⁸⁵ On the history of dichotomy and trichotomy before st. Maximus see Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, (Chicago, 1995), pp. 217-218.

⁸⁶ S. Maximus Abbas, *Quaestiones Ad Thalassium* 16, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Garnier Fratres, 1865) col. 300 C – 301 B; Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua ad Thomam en Epistula secunda ad eundem*: kritische editie met Nederlands vertaling en aantekeningen / Janssens B. [ed.], Van Deun P. [promotor] Leuven 2000.331. // CCSG 48, L. 69-70, “sin was invented by mind since it started to move against nature”.

⁸⁷ Idem, *Capita de Charitate* 3.92, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1045 B; 1.84, col. 980 B-C; idem, *Capita de Charitate* 1.85, col. 980C; idem, *Capita de Charitate* 2.73, col. 1008A-B; idem, *Capita de Charitate* 2.48, col. 1000 C-D.

⁸⁸ Idem, *Capita de Charitate* 1.50; in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 969 C; idem, *Capita de Charitate* 1.68, col. 976 A on “the daring (παρρησία) of the mind” towards God.

manner”⁸⁹. The mind „while openly conversing with God becomes godlike (θεοειδής)”⁹⁰ and can be partaking of the knowledge of the Holy Trinity⁹¹.

As the most close to God part of the human nature the mind bears the most responsibility for the state of this nature (comparing to the physical part). A very vivid example of spreading of the sin down the hierarchical ladder of human being can be found in the Liber Asceticus: „when the mind starts neglecting God, the soul through a mental fulfilling of fornication leads the body to the unlawful deed”⁹².

The nature of the mind is supposed to give it a ruling power over the movements of the flesh⁹³, but in the present state of humankind this dominion of the mind is ruined. The theologian gives also many thoughts on the dependence of the human mind on different virtues which play important role in overcoming the passions⁹⁴, on the insufficiency of the mind to please and serve God⁹⁵. Most of all, the Confessor stresses the need of the virtue of love which preserves the mind „undamaged in everything”.

Human mind is apt to constant changes which are subject to greater growth as the mind is turning towards the created things and are lessened since it is turning towards God. The mind „when accepting the thoughts on material things is usually changing its shape in accordance with each

⁸⁹ Idem, Capita de Charitate 3.97, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1017 A; idem, Capita de Charitate 2.100, col. 1072 C.

⁹⁰ Idem, Liber Asceticus 24, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 929 C.

⁹¹ Idem, Capita de Charitate 1.86, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 980 C. “Nous” is considered in St. Maximus ‘the highest faculty of the soul’, ‘the most direct and primary faculty for communion with God’ Telepneff G., p. 319.

⁹² Liber Asceticus 23, PG 90 929 B.

⁹³ Idem, Capita de Charitate 4. 45, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1057 C: “The mind is acting according to its nature when holding the passions subdued, contemplating the meaning of all beings and abides with God”.

⁹⁴ Idem, Capita de Charitate 3.44, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1029 B.

⁹⁵ The mind “has a need in a blessed companionship (πάθος) of the holy love which binds it with spiritual contemplations”, idem, Capita de Charitate 3.67, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1037 A-B; 3.66, idem, Capita de Charitate, col. 1036 D-1037 A; idem, Capita de Charitate, 1.10, col. 964 A; idem, Capita de Charitate, 1.6, col. 961 C; idem, Capita de Charitate 4.61, col. 1061 B; idem, Liber Asceticus 19, *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 925 D-928 A.

thought (...) but when being in God it becomes completely shapeless and without any form (...) becoming Light bearing one"⁹⁶.

In many aspects one can trace a certain opposition of the mind and the human nature overall in the texts of St. Maximus⁹⁷. This fact is confirming the observation of Lossky V. N. who noted that the Holy Fathers usage of the term „the mind” (nous) was very close to the concept of personality⁹⁸, although they never equated these two notions.

Meanwhile St. Maximus certainly considers the mind as a part of human composite hierarchical nature. A great evidence to this fact bears the following characteristic given by the Confessor to the mind nature: „passions bind the mind by material things bending it down to the earth, pressing on it, likewise a heavy stone, whereas the mind in its nature is lighter and thinner than fire”– φύσει ὄντα αὐτὸν πυρὸς κουφότερον καὶ ὀξύτερον⁹⁹.

Man according to the Confessor’s thought is a composite hypostasis, marked by „a sum of distinctive features, characteristic to each of the natures comprising the union”. This means that hypostasis incorporates in itself the sum of properties of each nature including higher component of the soul – mind. *Logos* „having been simple and non-composite in his nature became composite in his hypostasis”¹⁰⁰. One can say that St. Maximus sees human being to be analogous to Christ in singleness of hypostasis and in distinction of natures, one person and different in essence soul and body. For in the same way „in the Master Christ one and the same Person but different essences, one Hypostasis but one essence of Divinity and another essence of man”¹⁰¹. According to St. Maximus there are two natures in man united ontologically, existentially but without confusion which make up one person”¹⁰². Things „united in one hypostasis are called homo-hypostatic — ὁμοὑπόστατα¹⁰³ while being in inseparable union ... preserving distinction of natures¹⁰⁴. And as only within dynamics

⁹⁶ Idem, *Capita de Charitate* 3. 97, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1045D.

⁹⁷ Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, Chicago, 1995, p.119.

⁹⁸ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, M. 1991. p. 152.

⁹⁹ S. Maximus Abbas, *Capita de Charitate* 3.56, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1033 B-C; Massimo Confessore, *Capitoli Sulla Carita*, Aldo Ceresa, Castaldo, Roma, 1963, p.170.

¹⁰⁰ Madden N., *Composite Hypostasis in Maximus Confessor*, in *Studia Patristica* (Tomus XXVII, Leuven, 1991), p.188.

¹⁰¹ S. Maximus Abbas, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 145 C-148 A.

¹⁰² Madden N., *Composite Hypostasis in Maximus Confessor...*, p.175.

¹⁰³ Epistle 15, PG 91 552 C.

¹⁰⁴ Madden N., *Composite Hypostasis in Maximus Confessor...*, p. 187.

of the mystery of the composite hypostasis one should consider communication of natures' properties in Christ¹⁰⁵ in the same way, only within dynamics of human composite hypostasis is it possible to describe adequately the interweaving of soul and body and their components' properties in the united hierarchy of human essence.

Identifying concepts of Person and hypostasis in Christ as an integrative principle in the God-man, St. Maximus also gives the highest hierarchical priority to the concept of person or hypostasis in the man. Πρόσωπον or ὑπόστασις are thus defined as the highest integrative principle, unifying the human body and soul. According to St. Maximus, the human hypostasis is the „basis (σύστασις) of the objective reality of his nature, which gives this nature independence, unity, individuality and uniqueness”¹⁰⁶.

The mind, as the highest part of the soul, is undoubtedly seen by the saint theologian as the peak of the hierarchy in the human nature. That is why the mind shows most prominently the characteristic traits of the human hypostasis, which is understood exactly as the personality and which is the reflection and icon of Personality in God Himself. However, saint Maximus, who expressed opposition to the Apollinarism more than once, never identified the concepts of mind and hypostasis.

In his essays on anthropological questions St. Maximus usually discusses on the qualities of the soul and the mind, but not about the hypostasis-personality. From our point of view the reason for that is that the concept of the hypostasis-personality is „super-natural”, in other words it is different from the human nature. The hypostasis-personality doesn't have any kind of its own nature, but shows itself uniquely through the comprised nature of the soul and the body. It is important to remember that St. Maximus, who always thought systematically didn't always have an opportunity to express his ideas in a systematic way.

In relation to the whole of the human being the mind occupies the main position as a controlling and integrative principle. This is the mind that the power of taking the decisions is ascribed to. It is stated that the „reasonable power moves autocratically” (ἐξουσιαστικῶς κινουμένης)¹⁰⁷ and the whole human being depends on its decisions. With the correct direction of the mind the rest of the human nature occupies inferior

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, p.191.

¹⁰⁶ Stead D.J., The Meaning of Hypostasis in Some Texts of the 'Ambigua' of St Maximus the Confessor, *The Patristic and Byzantine Review*, 1989. Vol.8. № 1., p.32.

¹⁰⁷ S. Maximus Abbas, *Mystagogia V*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 672 D.

hierarchical place¹⁰⁸. „When the mind moves to the God, the body becomes the mind’s slave”. It is exactly through the mind that the otherwise not observed hypostasis of the man shows itself.

In the writings of the Church fathers there are different explanations and levels of understanding of the concept of „image of God” in human beings. According to the Holy Scripture, the uniqueness of it in the human in relation to the whole universe is obvious. We think that it is adequate to interpret the anthropological heritage of St. Maximus in the following way: the key feature of the human conformity to God is exactly the hypostasis-nature unity of the objective reality of a human. This unity may be defined with the following words of the Confessor, „the state of the objective reality in nature and hypostasis is contemplated” – τῶν ὄντων σύστασις ἐν οὐσίᾳ καὶ ὑποστάσει θεωρεῖται)¹⁰⁹.

However, the highest part that doesn’t belong to the human, but that is vital for the harmony of his nature, is the gift of uncreated Divine energies. St. Maximus uses the term “περιχώρησις” (ὡς ὅλος ὅλοις τοῖς ἀξίοις ἀγαθοπρεπῶς περιχορήσαντος)¹¹⁰, which is typical for the Christology for description of the communion of the uncreated energy with a human which results in making the human „god-like”¹¹¹. This can be seen as an additional aspect of the hierarchical organization of the human as in this hierarchy one can see the supernatural part which is closely related through the περιχώρησις to the other parts of his nature.

All in all we can summarize that the anthropology of St. Maximus is characterized by such important features as Christo-centrism, multi-layeredness, dynamics and subordination to the principles of the hierarchy as in the inner organization so in the involvement of the human nature in the hierarchy of the cosmic reality. The holy Theologian always speaks not only about the *logos* of the human nature, but also about the *tropos* of the existence of this nature, which reflects the dynamic vision of this very nature. Describing the dynamics of the objective reality of the hierarchically organized human nature, *tropos* can renew itself and enrich itself. New mode of existence (*tropos*) is explicitly linked by St. Maximus „with the union between the Uncreated and created being”¹¹².

¹⁰⁸ Idem, *Capita de Charitate* 3. 12, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 90, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1020 C.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 272 B.

¹¹⁰ Idem, *Ambiguorum Liber*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus 91, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), col. 1076C.

¹¹¹ Telepneff Gregory, rev., *The Concept of the Person...* p. 372.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p. 368.

On its highest level the hierarchical nature of the human includes in itself the uncreated Divine energies. These hierarchically related divine *logoi* define the hierarchical organization of a human, support his existence on the level of the lowest nature (both of the soul and of the body). At the same time *logoi* enlighten the higher levels of the human - his mind and hypostasis (personality) and enrich them by the partaking of the uncreated divine energies which provide these higher parts with the power of hierarchical harmonic supremacy over the human nature.

This is fulfilled by partaking of *logoi* coming from the One Supreme Logos - which has become the incarnated Son of God and by whose image the whole humanity is being organized.