

Beyond Dualism and Monism: Saint Maximus the Confessor's Mediation of Wholeness

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Wisdom and Logos open doors for human beings to become or to be-in-God. The relation between the two has been of interest to sophiologists like Sergey Bulgakov, Vladimir Solovyev, and Pavel Florensky who describe Wisdom as the connection between God and the world, between created and uncreated, between divine and non-divine beings. We also have the God-Logos or Christ as the paradigm for fulfilling the task to unify the divided universal hypostasis according to St. Maximus the Confessor's text, his *41st Ambigua*.

Bridging the gap between creation and Creator in Wisdom and Logos means crossing the limits of certain categories of practice and thought. In this respect dualism and monism will be looked upon and reflected from the view point of Maximus's anthropology. This will give possible answers to contemporary tensions in Orthodox anthropology and even ecology.

The Logos is the second hypostasis of the Trinity and the paradigm for human beings to unite the divided hypostasis of this world in the same way that in Christ created and uncreated natures are united. In *Ambigua 41* we read that all beings can be divided into uncreated (consisting only of the blessed Trinity) and created beings. Created beings belong to intelligible and sensible realms. Each of these classes can be further subdivided: intelligible beings into celestial ones (that is, angels), and terrestrial beings (that is, humans); and sensible beings into living and lifeless ones. Living beings are divided into

sentient and non-sentient ones; sentient beings into rational (humans) and irrational ones (animals). In this human being embraces all divisions in created reality.

Created human nature is to grow in virtues that represent the hypostasized virtue, Christ the Logos. The tradition before Maximus (e.g., Evagrius) differs between the levels of purification of body and that of mind. In Maximus, the insistence on actualization of virtues or disciplining the passions is not because of the separation of the body from soul/mind, but because of their perichoretic union and interdependence in the Logos. This unifying tendency and holistic worldview is a key motive in all of Maximus's thought. The ultimate task before humans is to mediate between God and creation and to re-create the world after the paradigm of Christ, to correct the fallen state of human being into a human being-in-Christ.

The perichoresis of the soul-body composite of the human being results in unification of all the soul's faculties in knowledge of God. This phenomenal unity of the human being (something that he describes in *Amb.Io 41*: the overcoming of the divided universal hypostasis in the hypostasis of Christ) requires a unity of the various faculties, motions, and acts on an ontological basis: divine-human communion is the bridge that overcomes the ontological gap between Creator and creation. One of the main contributions of St. Maximus in re-writing the Dionysian ontological scheme is the subordination of both ontological and epistemological categories in the hierarchy of being. Instead of the gradual rejection of the lower by superior ones, in Maximus they are integrated in a compositum: the whole human being becomes a perichoresis of capacities, a dialogue of differences that constitute the human part (-icipation) in the divine-human dialogue. In this the superior faculty holds the acts of the inferior one as its own.

Sensory things activate the process of ascent only when perception is rightly oriented toward the nature of things (or to their logos). This means that the decisive part of perception is its "rationalization" or its dependence on human inclination and disposition towards being in wisdom and truth (the two divine names representing the final achievements of human practice and contemplation, respectively). In this, Maximus

succeeds in overcoming the dualistic Platonic division between sensible and intelligible. Likewise he “rewrites” the Evagrian and Origenist separation where the soul is freed from the body. In the first case, he does this by emphasising that through perception of the visible, sensory things, their inner, intelligible, perceptive logos is revealed, and in the second – by a unification of psychological acts of knowledge by subordinating all activities to the one path of union with/in divine energies.¹

The patristic view of the human being is based on the revealed Truth that God is Person and man is created in his image and even if created, he is also a person. The fathers speak about the created man as a Godcentric, Christocentric being that lives naturally and normally, i.e. in a healthy way in relation and communion with God. The human being is not a completed static given thing, but a person that needs to be accomplished in a dynamic way in a personal relation with God. For the realization of the telos of being, man is given self-determination which is not the usual moral choice between good and bad, but a choice of the way of existence between life and death.

The path of ascent and of the growing presence of the Logos in human life repairs the postlapsarian existence of human nature. The paradigm of this return is given by God in His descent and Incarnation. The final cause of Logos embodiment is not only the salvation of human being, but also the accomplishment of the existential mission of human creation.

For Maximus, not merely the mind or the soul but the whole composite human being is the image of God. Its task is to acquire similarity to God, not least through self-determination, which Maximus identifies with the natural will: “Then by the same reasoning, the self-determinative motion [is one of the principles] in the rational [nature].”² Hence the relation between operations of the mind/reason along with the actuali-

¹ See Amb.Io.10 PG 91 1113C in Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996,) 101.

² Joseph P. Farrell, trans., *The Disputation with Pyrrhus of Our Father Among the Saints Maximus the Confessor* (St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1990), 22.