

Addictions and Orthodox Spirituality. A Focus on Ontological Passivity*

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Abstract:

This study, part of a broader research into the relationship between the conceptualization of several behavioral disorders as addiction and the concept of passion in Orthodox Christian spirituality, highlights the ontological substratum of two of the most remarkable and, at the same time, controversial features of these behaviors, namely their large prevalence and their involuntary character. The argument is based on the work of one of the most prominent theologians of Orthodox Christian spirituality that is St. Maximus the Confessor.

Keywords:

addiction, passions, ontology, passivity, Orthodox Spirituality, St. Maximus the Confessor

Addiction is one of the most prevalent and relevant phenomena of human behavioral pathology. These days we are witnessing both large scale abusive consumption of traditional or synthetic substances and the vertiginous problematic use of the virtual environments (Internet, social networks) alongside other types of compulsive behaviors such as gambling, shopping or even work.¹ Despite the growing efforts, both in research and in public health, the phenomenon continues

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¹ For a comprehensive perspective, see Barbara S. McCrady, and Elizabeth E. Epstein. *Addictions: A comprehensive guidebook*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

to increase.² Furthermore, the diagnosis, the etiopatology, the therapy, the definition and even the proper nomenclature continue to be the subject of wide divergences in both the scientific and the popular environments.³ In this context, theoretical and the practical appeals to various sources of traditional inspiration, especially to the extreme oriental spiritualities are emerging.⁴ The latter seem attractive as an alternative to the most widespread psychotherapeutic approach to addictions, one inspired by the Christian tradition, namely, the 12-step model, developed in the last century by the Anonymous Alcoholic movement and taken over by many other “anonymous” groups, as well as by various psychotherapeutic, more or less eclectic programs. Despite being intensively studied, including from a neurological point of view, this model remains marginal in the preoccupations of the contemporary psychology and psychiatric medicine.⁵ In this context, it is not surprising that another traditional approach to behavioral diseases, namely the Christian-Orthodox one - which can be identified through the main expression “Orthodox spirituality” or through the most concrete term “repentance” (*metanoia*) - plays an almost insignificant role in the field of fundamental research and in the public therapeutic programs, as well. Of course, for most members of the Orthodox Church, this is the current approach, but only for the everyday, practically universal forms of behavioral problems, while the difficult cases are related to the professional mental health services.⁶ On the other hand, there are signs of increasing interest in what has recently been called “Orthodox psychotherapy” among the Orthodox theologians or professionals, but also among some non-Orthodox.⁷

² See, Joanne Csete et al. “Public Health and International Drug Policy: Report of the Johns Hopkins–Lancet Commission on Drug Policy and Health.” *Lancet (London, England)* 387.10026 (2016): 1427. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)00619-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00619-X).

³ See, Hanna Pickard, Serge H. Ahmed, and Bennett Foddy (eds.), “Alternative models of addiction.” *Frontiers in psychiatry* 6 (2015).

⁴ For example, see Edo Shonin, William Van Gordon, Mark Griffiths, *Mindfulness and Buddhist-Derived Approaches in Mental Health and Addiction*, Springer International Publishing, 2016.

⁵ For a most recent review, see John F. Kelly, “Is Alcoholics Anonymous religious, spiritual, neither? Findings from 25 years of mechanisms of behavior change research.” *Addiction* (2016), doi:10.1111/add.13590, and the subsequent commentaries in the same journal.

⁶ An important aspect here is the degree of social acceptance of behaviors such as alcoholism that makes them often considered closer to normal than pathological, and thus therapeutically unaddressed. Of course, the addictions’ gradual aetiology take its part to this attitude.

⁷ Amongst the most relevant, see Jean-Claude Larchet, *Thérapeutique des maladies spirituelles*, Cerf, 1997; Meletios Webber, *Steps of transformation: An Orthodox priest explores the twelve steps*, Conciliar Press, 2003; Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, *The Science of Spiritual Medicine: Orthodox Psychotherapy in Action*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2010; C.C.H. Cook, *The Philokalia and the inner life: on passions and prayer*, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2011; Alexis Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2011; Stephen Muse, *When hearts become flame: An Eastern Orthodox approach to the dia-logos of pas-*

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In the “Orthodox psychotherapy” literature, the particular problem of the behaviors commonly designated as addictions is put in the traditional category of passions. What justifies this option is an issue which hasn’t been carefully addressed.⁸ At first glance, it is natural to consider the abusive use of alcohol or of other substances with a strong psychotropic effect - which concentrate most concerns in the field of addictions - as a passion from the perspective of the Orthodox spirituality since, in reality, the behavior is the same, the epistemological paradigms involved in its understanding being different. However, a mere evocation of the famous eight major passions in the catalogue of Christian ascetics (greed, lust, avarice, sloth, sadness, anger, vain glory and pride)⁹ makes us aware that, beyond the mild association of alcoholism with greed, the equivalence between our addictions and the passions of the Fathers is not very obvious. First of all, it is not clear, for example, whether or not an addictive behavior such as smoking can be easily considered greed, let alone a passion from their list. Of course, excessive eating or pornography can easily find their correspondences, but gambling or the use of television or social networks cannot. On the other hand, sloth and sadness seem to correspond to contemporary depression, not to addictions. Furthermore, can vain glory and pride be considered addictions, even though we interpret them as vanity and pride, thus as disorders of the self-esteem?

This study is part of a larger project dedicated to the investigation of the relationship between addictions and passions, and the ideas that the contemporary sciences and the traditional Christian-Orthodox inspired wisdom can provide to each other to better understand and correct the behaviors in question. I start here from recognizing the ubiquity of such behaviors in our lives. For the Orthodox spirituality, passions express the human condition altered by a primordial event with universal genealogical effects and, as such, belong to the most common experience. For contemporary addictology, one of the major difficulties of this field is precisely to determine of the boundary between normal and pathological (excess, abuse, dependence), without which the category of addiction risks to include us all (not necessarily in the same way).¹⁰ Why passions/addictions are so familiar historically and geographically, racially and culturally, economically

toral counseling, Orthodox Research Institute, 2011; Zoran Vujisic, *The Art and Science of Healing The Soul: A Guide to Orthodox Psychotherapy*, VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010.

⁸ Cf. Victor Mihailoff, *Breaking the Chains of Addiction: how to use ancient Orthodox spirituality to free our minds and bodies from all addictions*. Regina Orthodox Press, 2005.

⁹ See Larchet, *op. cit.*, for a thorough treatment.

¹⁰ See, J. Billieux et al, “Are We Overpathologizing Everyday Life? A Tenable Blueprint for Behavioral Addiction Research”, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* 4(3):119-123, 2015, DOI: 10.1556/2006.4.2015.009.

and intellectually, throughout our entire life is the main question of this study, yet delimited by the following premises. First of all, there is the phenomenological identity between passions and addictions.¹¹ The working perspective is that of the Christian-Orthodox spirituality, particularly that expressed and interpreted in the work of one of the most famous Byzantine patristic theologians, St. Maximus the Confessor.¹² The objective of this study is to highlight, through the writings of St. Maximus, the ontological substrate of one of the most invoked, evoked and, at the same time, controversial features of passions/addictions that is their involuntary character. After a brief definition of addictions, according to the contemporary scientific authorities that recognize the feature mentioned above, I shall examine some passages of the Maximian work which are significant for the way he understands passions in general and their pathetic ontological substrate.

1. Addictology's definitions

According to the latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V), "the essential feature of substance use disorder is a cluster of cognitive, behavioral and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance-related problems."¹³ The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) interpreted this feature from a neurological perspective as follows: "Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors."¹⁴

In addition to DSM-V, the definition of the ASAM gives both a biological explanation (neural circuits) and a psychological one (pursuing reward and/or relief). We note that the common denominator of the definitions is the self-harmful

¹¹ For further arguments, see S. Moldovan, "Stewardship, Philanthropy, Social Services? The Orthodox Church and the Challenge of Addictions", *Revista Teologica*, 95, 1(2013):157-177; Id., "Addictions as passions. Ancient wisdom for modern issues." *Journal of Modern Foreign Psychology* 3.1 (2014): 125-158.

¹² The most recent comprehensive monographs are Jean-Claude Larchet, *Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, 2ème éd. Paris, 2013; Pauline Allen, and Bronwen Neil, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Peter van Deun, Pascal Mueller-Jordan, „Maxime le Confesseur”, in C. G. Conticello (dir.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, I.1, Turnhout, 2015, pp. 375-515; Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

¹³ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th Edition, APA, 2013, p. 483.

¹⁴ American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2011, <http://www.asam.org/quality-practice/definition-of-addiction>, last accessed 14.05.2016.

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and persistent nature of behavior. If we consider that this is pathological, it is because we consider that a persistent behavior normally pursues good and avoids evil or that the behavior gets limited when it becomes harmful. In both cases it is necessary to exercise the capacity of self-control. To persist upon a direct or indirect self-harmful behavior, is interpreted as a lack of self-control. Is this a moral deficit, as judged by the common sense, or a brain disease, as the standard medical model states? In other words, is it, a free choice or an involuntary suffering? These questions are central for the current efforts to understand addiction.¹⁵

The relationship between voluntary and involuntary is also the most relevant theological, philosophical and moral aspect of passions. Christianity has recognized this aporia through St. Paul's famous statement in the Epistle to the Romans: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. [...] I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom 7:19.23; KJV). Understanding sin and passions as enslaving has become universal in the Christian tradition.¹⁶

2. Voluntary enslavement

"Preferring to become a slave of the passions"¹⁷ - an expression of St. Maxim which confirms and increases the aporia. We not only do what we do not want to, but do we also choose to be slaves? What the passions are and where they are located and where their domineering (or submissive) force originated from, were current concerns in his era.¹⁸ They also wondered whether evil was to be found in beings or in any other power outside them. St. Maximus stated that it was nei-

¹⁵ See, Neil Levy, ed. *Addiction and self-control: Perspectives from philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience*. Oxford University Press, 2013; Lubomira Radoilska, *Addiction and weakness of will*. Oxford University Press, 2013; M. Lewis, *The biology of desire: Why addiction is not a disease*, Public Affairs, New York, 2015.

¹⁶ A generic expression is the refrain "take from me the heavy yoke of sin," from the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete; accessible here: <https://www.orthodox.net/greatlent/great-canon-fifth-week.html>, last visited 14.05.2016.

¹⁷ τὸ δοῦλον εἶναι παθῶν ἐπιλεγόμενος, in *Ambiguum* (= *Amb*) 6, ANC, p. 74. The quotations from St. Maximus are from the following sources: Massimo Confessore, *Capitoli sulla carità*, Roma: Studium, 1963; Maxime le Confesseur, *Questions à Thalassios* (1-40) Sources chrétiennes (=SC) 529, Cerf, 2010; Maxime le Confesseur, *Questions à Thalassios*, (41-55), SC 554, Cerf, 2012; Maxime le Confesseur, *Questions à Thalassios*, (56-65), SC 569, Cerf, 2015; Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vols. I and II, ed. Nicholas Constas (=ANC). Excepting the last work, translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

¹⁸ As shown, for example, in the introduction to his *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (= *QT*), where St. Maxim outlines a systematic plan of investigating the passions through a long series of questions, each with its own answer.

ther in them nor outside them, but in the “neglect of the natural operations of the mind”.¹⁹ This brief and comprehensive remark is reiterated in the Maximian corpus. For example: “Passion is a motion of the soul contrary to nature.”²⁰

The motion “according to nature” is “the most general of all the natural qualities that naturally belong to nature,” as stated in *Ambiguum* 5, a passage concerned with the reality of Incarnation. The fact that Christ is truly human, that He assumes the human nature in its fullness, is evidenced precisely by His exertion of the constitutive operation or movement of nature which gives it a specific form of manifestation.²¹

It is important to observe that by nature St. Maximus designates a substantial and constitutive reality that expresses the ontological relationship of creatures with the Creator. Viewed from the perspective of the Creator and His intentions in the act of creation, this relationship is designated by the concept of divine principles (*logoi*), a refined philosophical way of pointing to the original, supra-temporal counsel or plan of God concerning the created beings (see Ephesians 1).²² In one expression, the famous “principle of nature” (*logos tes phuseos*), this manifests the will of the Creator and at the same time represents the possibility of the creature to know it and fulfil it.²³

¹⁹ ἡ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ νοῦ ἐνεργειῶν ἀμέλεια, in *Chapters on Love* (= CC) 2.82. However, he speaks in *QT* 37, about „the evil and destructive power hidden in the nature of the sensible things” (ἐγκεκρυμμένην τῇ φύσει τῶν αἰσθητῶν πονηρὰν καὶ ὀλέθριον δύναμιν), SC 529, p. 386; cf. *QT* 27.

²⁰ Πάθος ἐστὶ κίνησις ψυχῆς παρὰ φύσιν; CC 2.16; an almost identical expression, somewhat earlier, is “a culpable passion is a motion of the soul that is contrary to nature.” (Πάθος ἐστὶ ψεκτὸν κίνησις ψυχῆς παρὰ φύσιν); CC I.35.

²¹ “The only valid proof that this [“essence”] is its natural, constitutive power, which one would not be mistaken in calling a “natural energy,” properly and primarily characteristic of the nature in question, since it is the most generic motion constitutive of a species, and contains every property that naturally belongs to it, apart from which there is only nonbeing, (Ἦς μόνη τε καὶ ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν ἀπόδειξις ἢ κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῆς συστατικὴ δύναμις, ἣν οὐκ ἂν τις ἀμάρτοι της ἀληθείας “φυσικὴν” φήσας “ἐνεργεῖαν,” κυρίως τε καὶ πρώτως χαρακτηριστικὴν αὐτῆς, ὡς εἰδοποιῶν ὑπάρχουσαν κίνησιν γενικωτάτην πάσης τῆς φυσικῶς αὐτῆ προσούσης περιεκτικῆς ιδιότητος, ἥς χωρὶς μόνον ἐστὶ τό μή ὄν), *ANC* I, p. 31.

²² “the intelligible principles that were first embedded within the subsistence of beings, according to which each being is and has its nature, and from which each was formed, shaped, and structured, and endowed with power, the ability to act, and to be acted upon, [...] the differences and properties in terms of quantity quality, relation, place, time, position, movement, and inclination.” (οἱ ἐκάστω τῶν ὄντων τη υπάρξει πρώτως ἐγκαταβληθέντες λόγοι, καθ’ οὓς καὶ ἐστὶ καὶ πέφυκε τῶν ὄντων ἕκαστον, καὶ εἰδοπεποιήται, καὶ ἐσχημάτισται, καὶ συντέθειται, καὶ δύναται, καὶ ενεργεῖ, καὶ πάσχει, [...] τὴν ἐν τῷ ποσῷ τε καὶ τῷ ποιῷ, καὶ τῇ σχέσει, καὶ τῷ τόπῳ, καὶ τῷ χρόνῳ, καὶ τη θέσει, τῇ τε κινήσει καὶ ἔξει διαφορὰν καὶ ιδιότητα), *Amb* 17, *ANC* I, p. 388-389.

²³ It also plays the role of a fundamental heuristic principle in Maximian theology; e.g., “there will be reason all by itself to lead naturally rational beings to the first Principle”, Commentary on

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Not less important, these (pre)defining principles not only that do not eliminate the contribution of the human beings to their own existence, but make it possible, endowing it with the nature's constitutive powers or capacities of operation. To the logos of nature, common to all individuals in whom the nature subsists, corresponds a "mode of existence" (*tropos tes huparxeos*), a concrete, particular manner in which every individual operates, uses, moves or realizes in their lives the powers received along with their creation as exemplars of the nature.²⁴ The degree in which man participates in the life of his Creator and the quality of this participation depend on this operation. St. Maximus has a consistent doctrine about the relationship between man and God seen as a participation illustrated by the triad creation - motion - rest, which he expresses in several variants, often in the form of being, well-being, and eternal well-being.

If the ontological dimensions of the triad - to exist and to exist eternally - are exclusively the work of God, the quality of this existence - so to say its moral dimension - is the man's own contribution to the sharing of existence offered by God. The first term of the triad designates the idea of benefiting from the act of creation, with all its constitutive endowments contained in the concepts of nature (*phusis*), substance (*ousia*) and power/capacity (*dunamis*); the middle term denotes the activity/operation (*energeia*), motion (*kinesis*) or use (*chresis*) of the capacities received as the content of the former; the final term consists of another exclusive work of God (*charis*), which, on the one hand, is inaccessible to the human natural operation - which, for this reason, is a rest (*stasis*) - and on the other hand, gives eternity precisely to this state achieved throughout the middle term.²⁵

the Our Father, in *Maximus the Confessor. Selected Writings*. Translated by George C. Berthold. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Irénée-Henri Dalmis, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 112. The concept of logos of nature is a dynamic one, justifying its dialogical interpretation by Nikolaos Loudovikos in his work, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010; also, see Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford University Press, 2008; Dragoș Bahrim, "The Anthropic Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor", *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Science*, 3, 2008, pp. 11-37.

²⁴ On the topic of participation, see Torstein Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*. Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 147-158; Marius Portaru, *The Vocabulary of Participation in the Works of Maximus the Confessor*, in Octavian Gordon, Alexandru Mihailă (ed.), *Via lui Nabor. Studia theologica recentiora*, Cluj-Napoca 2012, pp. 295-317; *Id.*, „Gradual Participation according to St Maximus the Confessor”, *Studia Patristica*, vol. LX-VIII:16, Peeters, 2013, pp. 281-294.

²⁵ A relevant place is *Amb 65, ANC II*, p. 276-278. Loudovikos has identified no less than 11 variants; in his order: being - well-being - eternal being; becoming - movement - stasis (fixity); nature - gnomic will - fulfilment; natural birth - baptism - resurrection; goodness of God - love of God - providence of God; essence - free choice - grace; essence - aptitude - grace; potentiality -

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The middle term provides the ontological framework of free-will (*autexousia*) or self-determinating operations (*autenergeton*), and it will be the focus of our interest further on.

3. The principle of passivity

Within this framework there is also the possibility of a movement or an operation which, as we have already seen, is contradictory to the *logos* of existence respectively to the original intentions of the Creator for His creature. For St. Maximus, this possibility does not correspond to any divine reason or intent, so that it can only represent abuse or rebellion: “For what is contrary to reason and law is by the abusive mode of movement and not by reason of power by nature. [...] For there is no reason in nature of something above nature, there is also no reason of something against nature or in rebellion to it.”²⁶

A virtually identical appreciation occurs in a scholion to *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 22 where the idea that we have the natural power neither for what is above nature, nor for what is contrary to nature, comments on the expression “principle of passivity” (*tou paschein logos*) found in the text of the answer. By interpreting St. Paul’s phrases about the “end of the ages” (1Cor 10.11) and “the ages to come” (Eph 2.7), St. Maximus distinguishes between the “reason of activity,” (*tou poein logos*) specific to the life here, ordained by God for the Incarnation of the Son, first in His own hypostasis, then in the active life of the worthy, and the “reason of passivity”, specific to the life that will follow, in which those who have worked the virtues with the power of nature will suffer deification, i.e. the operation beyond the power of nature, of grace.²⁷

activity – rest; place of the present – place after death – age to come; practical philosophy – natural contemplation – theological mystagogy; practical aspects of the soul – reason (*logos*) – intellect; op. cit., p. 80. We can add: beginning (*arche*) – middle (*mesotes*) – end or goal (*telos*) (e.g., in *QT* 19); natural power (*dunamis*) – relation (*schesis*) – grace (*charis*) (e.g., *Amb* 20). *Schesis* is an important category in St Maxim’s thought, with antecedents in Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, still under-examined. The parallelism between the three stages in these variants is not perfect, but we will not address this issue here.

²⁶ Τῷ γάρ κατά παράχρησιν τῆς κινήσεως τρόπῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῷ κατά φύσιν τῆς δυνάμεως λόγῳ, τό παρά λόγον καί νόμον ὑφίσταται ... Ὡς γάρ οὐδεὶς ἐν τῇ φύσει λόγος τοῦ ὑπέρ φύσιν, οὕτως οὐδέ τοῦ παρά φύσιν καί στασιάζοντος, *Tomus dogmaticus ad Marinum presbyterum*, PG 236C.

²⁷ “As we have no natural power for what is above us, so we have no power by nature for what is not. We therefore suffer the deification by grace as one that is above nature, but we do not make it. For we have by nature no power capable of deification. And we again suffer evil as an accident contrary to nature, [accepted] with our will. For we have no natural power to bring evil into existence.” (Ὡς γάρ τοῦ ὑπερόντος φυσικῆν οὐκ ἔχομεν δύναμιν, οὕτως οὔτε τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἔχομεν φύσει τὴν δύναμιν. Πιάσχομεν οὖν ὡς ὑπέρ φύσιν οὔσαν κατά χάριν, ἀλλ’ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν θέωσιν.

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The interpretation of evil as a passion (“we suffer evil as an accident contrary to nature”) is of central interest to our subject. It reminds us of the definition of passion as motion, in the texts quoted above and they can both intrigue us. *Paschein*, from which *pathos* derives, shows the situation of passivity in relation to an external agent whose action is borne - for example, to suffer a change, an influence or an imprint - while the motion of the soul is an activity and is placed precisely in the context of the middle term of the triad of existence, characterized by man’s own motion. How can this operation be a passivity, or how is something active a passion?

If eternal deification is properly designated as “the reason of passivity” since it appears as inscribed in the Creator’s “all-merciful untold plan” for the worthy, and is a work of grace, not of nature, the passion of evil can be considered neither belonging to the *logos*, unless attributing it to the creative intent, nor pure passivity, unless strictly attributing it to another power outside the human nature and the Creator. Surely, the alternative doctrine about the role of the devil in the appearance and manifestation of evil, is ubiquitous in St. Maximus, as in the entire former and later Christian tradition. In the quoted scholion however, he considers evil to be a deliberate passivity - with of one’s own will (*gnomike*) - although it is an “accidental” will (*kata sumbasin*).

4. Created for activity

The relationship between activity and passivity in human existence is an extremely significant aspect of the Maximian theology, not only with regard to the eschatological condition discussed in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 22. Its ontology has an aetiological-teleological structure, since everything that exists has an origin or a cause and a finality in the Creator. In this respect, the activity- to move or to operate, specific to the middle term - is a given, not a choice, the choice consisting only in the particular mode- the “how” - of this operation. In *Ambiguum* 15, he states: “For no being is completely self-actualized, since it is not self-caused, and whatever is not self-caused is necessarily moved by a cause, which is to say that it is actualized by being naturally set in motion by its cause, for which and to which it continues in motion.”²⁸ Passivity appears as an inherence not only of existence, but also of its own motion, so that we are constrained to recognize the ambiguo-

Οὐ γάρ ἔχομεν δεκτικὴν φύσει τῆς θεώσεως δύναμιν. Καὶ πάσχομεν πάλιν ὡς παρὰ φύσιν γνώμη κατὰ σύμβασιν τὴν κακίαν· οὐ γάρ ἔχομεν πρὸς γένεσιν κακίας φυσικὴν δύναμιν.) *QT* 22, scholion 5, *SC* 529, p. 272. The similarity with the passage quoted above is obvious, which pleads in favor of maximal authenticity.

²⁸ Οὐδέν γάρ τῶν ὄντων παντελῶς ἐστὶν αὐτενέργητον, ὅτι μηδέ ἀναίτιον, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀναίτιον, κινεῖται πάντως δι’ αἰτίαν, ἐνεργούμενον δηλονότι τὸ κινεῖσθαι φυσικῶς ὑπὸ τῆς αἰτίας, δι’ ἣν καὶ πρὸς ἣν ποιεῖται τὴν κίνησιν. *ANC* I, p. 368.

ity or, more precisely, the ambivalence of this creation, which God produces so that it can be active in relation its existence. In the same place, by resorting to a wordplay, he also expresses the divine intention and the goal /limit/end (*telos*) of this work as the perfection (*teleios*) of the created beings.²⁹ The original will of the Creator is not only to produce other beings, but also to destine them to a fulfilment to which they can bring their own contribution, at least in the case of humans.

The specific nature of this contribution appears more clearly expressed elsewhere. In the introduction to the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, the Confessor examines the problem of evil in the form of the “passions that upset us” and denies again to evil any subsistence, content or natural determination - including passivity. Obviously, not the existence itself of evil is denied, but its natural ontological character, which is its necessary as such. Evil can only be affirmed as contingent and contingency can only belong to the middle term of existence. As we have seen, this is a period of becoming or moving, therefore evil can only be a type of movement, a particular way of participating in existence or, rather, of altering this participation.³⁰ Here St. Maximus states:

“Evil (*to kakon*) is the deviation (*elleipsis*) of the operation of the capacities /faculties (*dunameon energeia*) planted in one’s nature (*phusis*) from their goal (*telos*) and nothing else. Again, evil is the irrational motion (*alogistos kinesis*) of the natural capacities, toward something other than their goal, based on a misleading judgment (*esphalmene krisis*). I define this goal as the cause of the things which exist, that all the things naturally long for (*ephietai*).”³¹

We should notice the statement that all creatures are naturally attracted to their Goal by virtue of the fact that this Goal is, at the same time, their Cause.³²

²⁹ Ἐπ’ ἐνεργεία γάρ τά γενόμενα γέγονε [...] Τό γάρ τέλος μή ἔχον τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ενεργειῶν οὐδέ τέλειόν ἐστι, τέλος δέ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ενεργειῶν. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

³⁰ “Evil is not to be contemplated as related to the substance of the created beings, but to their erroneous and irrational motion.” (Ὁὐ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν γεγονότων τὸ κακὸν θεωρεῖται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐσφαλμένην καὶ ἀλόγιστον κίνησιν.) *CC* 4.14.

³¹ τὸ κακὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῶν ἐγκειμένων τῆ φύσει δυνάμεων ἐνεργείας ἐστὶν ἔλλειψις, καὶ ἄλλο καθάπαξ οὐδέν. Ἡ πάλιν, τὸ κακὸν τῶν φυσικῶν δυνάμεων κατ’ ἐσφαλμένην κρίσιν ἐστὶν ἐπ’ ἄλλο παρὰ τὸ τέλος ἀλόγιστος κίνησις· τέλος δέ φημι τὴν τῶν ὄντων αἰτίαν, ἧς φυσικῶς ἐφίεται πάντα. *SC* 529, p. 132-134.

³² An argument the Confessor developed in the context of combating Origenism, by reference to the Cappadocian and Dionysian traditions, with influences from Neoplatonic philosophy; see Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier “Ambigua” of Saint Maximus the Confessor and his refutation of Origenism*, by Polycarp Sherwood, Herder, 1955; Id., “Maximus and Origenism. Arche kai telos”, *Berichte zum XI. Intern. Byzantinisten - Kongress*, III, 1. München 1958, pp. 1-27; Grigory Benevich, “Maximus the Confessor’s polemics against anti-Origenism. Epistulae 6 and 7 as a con-

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In other words, God created the creatures “towards Himself,” so that their whole nature, constitution and endowment is defined by this orientation which the text makes us view both as a launching and as an attraction. This natural orientation of the creatures from-towards their Creator as their fulfilment or completeness, synonymous with good, truth, beauty, rest, well-being or happiness represents the very principle or the general logic of their existence and of their movement or activity.³³ Actually, it is precisely by attracting the entire movement of the creature towards itself that the Confessor defines the good.³⁴

5. Eros and agape

To emphasize the ontological, thus irresistible nature of this attraction, St. Maximus uses two emphatic terms from the previous tradition: passion and love. This time passion is not used in its common pejorative sense, of suffering through corruption or alteration, but precisely in the sense of ontological passivity of those created in relation to the act of creation, which endows them with the content of powers of nature and thus, provides the motion towards a fulfilment anticipated by bringing them into existence, and realizable by self-actualization of the natural capacities, according to the logos of nature.³⁵ Although they are potentiality and motion - not actuality, and rest or pure impassibility, such as the Creator- the creatures are not like this in themselves, but through their relationship with God which is both causal (by providing the nature as potentiality for motion) and final (by arousing their orientation towards achieving fulfilment or happiness). St. Maxi-

text for the Ambigua ad Iohannem.” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 104.1 (2009): 5-15; Vladimir Cvetković, “The teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor about the motion”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke* 142 (2013): 33-48 (in Serbian); P. Mueller-Jourdan, The metaphysical position of the divine as ‘desirable’ in Proclus’ Platonic theology and Maximus Confessor’s thought, in A. Levy et al. (eds.), *The architecture of the cosmos. St Maximus the Confessor: new perspectives*, Luther-Agricola-Society, 2015, pp. 141-152.

³³ “... the more general principle of the rational being by the motion [of the particular] to well-being” (τῷ κατὰ φύσιν γενικωτέρῳ λόγῳ τῆς λογικῆς οὐσίας διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸ εἶναι κινήσεως) *QT2, SC* 529, p. 158; similarly, in *QT* 54 and *Amb* 10.51.

³⁴ “For whatever is not good and desirable in itself, and that does not attract all motion to itself, strictly speaking cannot be the Beautiful.” (πάν γὰρ ὃ μὴ δι’ εαυτὸ αγαθὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἐραστὸν καὶ πάσης ἐλκτικὸν κινήσεως οὐ κυρίως καλόν.), *ANC* I, p. 78.

³⁵ “It is important to understand correctly what is meant by this “passivity,” for the kind of passivity spoken of here does not refer to that which is according to change or destruction of power, but to that which by nature coexists with beings. For all things that have come to be passively experience being moved, since they are neither motion itself nor power itself.” (Εὐγνωμόνως δὲ τοῦ πάθους ἀκουστέον· οὐ γὰρ τὸ κατὰ τροπὴν ἢ φθορὰν δυνάμει ἐνταῦθα δηλοῦται πάθος, ἀλλὰ τὸ φύσει συνυπάρχον τοῖς οὐσι. Πάντα γὰρ ὅσα γέγονε πάσχει τὸ κινεῖσθαι, ὡς μὴ ὄντα αὐτοκίνησις ἢ αὐτοδύναμις.), *ibid.*, p. 87.

mus generically defines any natural power as an active work (*energeia drastike*) and as passion (*pathos*), since both are an imperious (*epeigomene*) motion towards a goal that represents its own fulfilment.³⁶ Moreover, the passion of the motion as a launch and irresistible attraction from-toward the Creator paradoxically coincides with the free-will of the creatures: “If, then, rational creatures are brought into being, then surely they are subject to motion, since they are moved from their natural beginning (*arche*), in being (*to enai*), toward a voluntary (*kata gnomen*) end (*telos*), in well-being (*to eu enai*).”³⁷

If the term „passion” determines not only a relationship, but also an absolute ontological difference between the created and the uncreated, which is inherently impassible and motionless, on the contrary, the reference to the second term, love reveals an unexpected similarity.³⁸ Following St. Gregory the Theologian, interpreted by Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus identifies in the act of creation a bivalent movement of the Creator, directed both towards himself and towards creatures, a motion Dionysius designated for both valences, with two terms for love which are apparently contradictory: *eros* (which expresses attraction, thus passivity or passion) and *agape* (expressing generosity, therefore voluntary, deliberate action).³⁹

According to the first valence, the Creator “moves Himself” to create and endow His creation with the natural power of the motion; according to the latter, “He moves” as He attracts those created to Himself. Here we find the previous idea of

³⁶ “Motion which is impelled toward its proper end they call either a “natural power,” or else a “passion,” that is, a motion that “passes from one thing to another,” having impassibility as its end, or an “effective activity,” having self-perfection as its end.”; (Ταύτην δὲ τὴν κίνησιν “δύναμιν” καλοῦσιν “φυσικὴν” πρὸς τὸ κατ’ αὐτὴν τέλος ἐπειγομένην ἢ “πάθος,” ἥτοι κίνησιν “ἐξ ἑτέρου πρὸς ἕτερον” γινομένην τέλος ἔχουσαν τὸ ἀπαθὲς ἢ “ἐνέργειαν δραστηκὴν” τέλος ἔχουσαν τὸ αὐτοτελές. *Ibid.*, p. 80-82. See the important study of V. Cvetkovic, “St Maximus on *Pathos* and *Kinesis* in Ambiguum 7”, *Studia Patristica*, vol. XLVIII:16, 2010, pp. 95-104.

³⁷ Εἴ τοίνυν γενητὰ ὑπάρχει τὰ λογικά και κινεῖται πάντως, ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατὰ φύσιν διὰ τὸ εἶναι, πρὸς τέλος κατὰ γνώμην διὰ τὸ εὖ εἶναι κινούμενα. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁸ On the famous and controversial relationship between *eros* and *agape*, see Catherine Osborne, *Eros Unveiled, Plato and the God of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994; from the Eastern Patristic perspective, see Florin Cătălin Ghiț, *Αγάπη και ερωσ. Η προταση των πατερων της ανατολης και ο διαλογος με τη δυση*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2011 (accessible here: <http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/127003/files/GRI-2011-7049.pdf>; last visited, 15.05.2016).

³⁹ “the Divine is moved to the extent that it creates an inner condition of desire and love among beings capable of receiving them, and it moves insofar as it naturally attracts the yearning of those who are being moved to it. And again, it moves and is moved, since it “thirsts to be thirsted for,” desires to be desired, and loves to be loved.” (Κινεῖται μὲν ὡς σχέσιν ἐμποιοῦν ἐνδιάθετον ἔρωτος καὶ ἀγάπης τοῖς τούτων δεκτικοῖς, κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐλκτικὸν φύσει τῆς τῶν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ κινουμένων ἐφέσεως· καὶ πάλιν· Κινεῖ καὶ κινεῖται, ὡς διψῶν τὸ διψᾶσθαι, καὶ ἐρῶν τὸ ἐρᾶσθαι, καὶ ἀγαπῶν τὸ ἀγαπᾶσθαι.); *ANC II*, p. 6-7.

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launching into the existence, oriented or attracted to the Creator, complemented by the distinction between the two valences of the creative act corresponding to the two defining aspects of the human motion: the passive one (receiving nature and its constitutive capacities) and the active one (mobilizing these capacities in a particular personal way). “Moves Himself” institutes the existence of the creature, thus establishing its passive character, and “moves” attracts or drives its motion, giving it the possibility of a certain active participation in existence. In terms of love, the passive dimension of the existence expresses a divine eros and the active volitional one expresses a divine agapic love. Surely, in order to remain consistent with the absolute transcendence of the Creator,⁴⁰ we should understand the divine eros as another paradoxical, unexplainable form of agapic love - generously, God moves Himself - while understanding the human agapic love as a paradoxical, but heuristic form of erotic love - in his very free-will, man follows an attraction.

The reference to the terminology of love is not a mere analogy, however admirable it may be. For St. Maximus, love, in its various possible ways, is the proper name of the ontological, protological and teleological relationship between God and man. Using the famous Athanasian soteriological adage, according to which “the Son of God became man so that we might become God”, transformed by St. Maximus into the central principle of his entire theology, he does not hesitate to assert that God and man are paradigms or models of each other,⁴¹ precisely through the love that motivates them, makes them seek and empowers them to realize the “Mystery of Christ,” the original intent and ultimate goal of the Creator for His creation.⁴²

⁴⁰ “That which is impassible is in no way subject to the movement of the passions, for there is nothing that it desires, neither can it be moved by desire toward something else.” (Οὐ γὰρ πάσχειν πέφυκε καθόλου τό ἀπαθές, τὴ μὴτ' ἐράν ἄλλου ἢ κινεῖσθαι πρὸς ἄλλο τι κατ' ἐφεσιν.), *Amb 7, ibid.*, p. 82-3.

⁴¹ *Amb 10*: “For they say that God and man are paradigms of each other, so that as much as man, enabled by love, has divinized himself for God, to that same extent God is humanized for man by His love for mankind; and as much as man has manifested God who is invisible by nature through the virtues, to that same extent man is rapt by God in mind to the unknowable.” (Φασι γὰρ ἀλλήλων εἶναι παραδείγματα τον Θεόν καί τον ἄνθρωπον, καί τοσοῦτον τῷ ἄνθρώπῳ τον Θεόν διὰ φιλανθρωπίας ἀνθρωπίζεσθαι, ὅσον ὁ ἄνθρωπος εαυτὸν τῷ Θεῷ δι' ἀγάπης δυνηθεὶς ἀπεθέωσε, καί τοσοῦτον ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τον ἄνθρωπον κατὰ νοῦν ἀρπάζεσθαι πρὸς τό γνωστον, ὅσον ὁ ἄνθρωπος τον ἀόρατον φύσει Θεόν διὰ των ἀρετῶν ἐφάνέρωσεν), *ibid.*, p. 166-7.

⁴² *Amb 7*: “... a power that divinizes man through his love for God, and humanizes God through His love for man. And by this beautiful exchange, it renders God man by reason of the divinization of man, and man God by reason of the Incarnation of God. For the Logos of God (who is God) wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of His embodiment.” (τινὴν δύναμιν, τὴν καὶ τον ἄνθρωπον τῷ Θεῷ θεοῦσαν διὰ τό φιλόθεον, καὶ τον Θεόν τῷ ἄνθρώπῳ διὰ τό φιλάνθρωπον ἀνθρωπίζουσιν καὶ ποιούσιν κατὰ τὴν καλήν ἀντιστροφὴν, τον μὲν Θεόν ἄνθρωπον, διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου θέωσιν, τον δὲ ἄνθρωπον Θεόν, διὰ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνανθρώπησιν). Βούλεται γὰρ αἰεὶ καὶ

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We shall only pursue two of the many aspects of this comprehensive vision.

First of all, as most at hand, we can read all the three dimensions of the human existence in the register of love. If, in relation to its existence and eternity, man is passive, he is active in seeking it, whether good or bad, fulfilled or unfulfilled, happy or unhappy, so that the triad can be renamed as: *eros* (natural) - *agape* (volitive) - *eros* (supernatural). Also, if the second term has a passive, erotic nature as an activation of the natural attraction towards God, the final term also has also an agape aspect, since communion with Him offers eternity to their particular habitual manner of reporting to God along the middle interval.

6. The desiring power

Secondly, we shall try to bring more light to this interval and to its paradoxical, both passive and active nature. Therefore, its specificity lies in its active character (received through making/launching and stirred through goal/attraction) and in the crucial role played here by the will of man. As we know, the significance and the role of the will were at the centre of the Christological controversies in which St. Maximus took part as a protagonist. When he defines the natural will (*thelema*) as constitutive and therefore inherent to nature- including to the one assumed by Christ, if incarnation was “like as we are yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15) - which he distinguishes from the determined will (*boulesis*) and from the dispositional will (*gnome*) - the latter being a manifestation of alienation from God and hence lacking in Christ - the defining element of this capacity that makes man active is precisely its attractiveness:

“Natural will (*thelema*) or willing (*thelesis*) is a desirable power (*dunamis orektike*) of what is in accord with nature and which holds together all the attributes (*idiomata*) which are essentially of nature. For the essence (*ousia*) naturally contained in it aspires (*oregetai*) to be and to live and move in accordance with the sense and the mind, striving (*ephiemene*) for its natural and full existence (*ontotetos*). For the nature (*phusis*) was constituted as one which wants itself and all that belong to its constitution, being hung (*epertemene*) as a desire (*orektikos*) for the principle (*logos*) of the existence (*tou einai*) after which it is as it is done.”⁴³

έν πάσιν ό του Θεού Λόγος και Θεός τής αυτού ένσωματώσεως ενεργείσθαι τό μυστήριον), *Ibid.*, p. 106-7; see also, *QT* 60.

⁴³ Θέλημα γάρ εΐναι φυσικόν, ήγουν θέλησιν, δύναμιν του κατά φύσιν όντος όρεκτικήν· και τών ουσιωδών τή φύσει προσόντων συνεκτικήν πάντων ιδιωμάτων. Τούτω γάρ συνεχομένη φυσικώς ή ούσία, του τε εΐναι και ζήν και κινείσθαι κατ' αΐσθησιν τε και νουν όρέγεται, τής οικείας έφιεμένη φυσικής και πλήρους όντότητος. Θελητική γάρ έαυτής, και τών όσα σύστασιν αυτης ποιείσθαι πέφυκε, καθέστηκεν ή φύσις· τῷ του εΐναι αυτης λόγω, καθ' όν έστι τε και γέγονεν όρεκτικώς έπηρημένη. *Ad Marinum presbyterum*, PG 91, 12CD.

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Through this “desiring power” the human being hopes, aspires, tends naturally and essentially to their own anticipated fulfilment offered through the act of creation and inscribed (as in an ontological genetic code) into the divine logos of its existence.

If what and by what humans move, operate or bring to actuality has the nature of a desire or aspiration, then all the attributes of their nature are of this type. St. Maxim inherits and develops a dualistic cosmology - intelligible/sensitive - and an appropriate anthropology - man at the frontier/interface between the two universes as a “microcosm and mediator” (L. Thunberg) - composed of soul and body, each endowed with a series of specific capacities/powers/faculties. As a rule, he uses a classification of the soul’s powers into cognitive and emotional faculties, often detailed as mind (*nous*) and intellect/reason (*logos*) (sometimes treated as a single entity called intellect/reason, in this case), interfacing with the intelligible universe, and appetite (*epithumia*) and vigour/impulse (*thumos*), often referred to under the generic name of irrational faculties, at the interface with the sensitive body and the material universe.⁴⁴ It is important for us to note that natural will encompasses all these faculties, for it

⁴⁴ In the sense that they are not the reason, not that they would necessarily behave aberrantly. In Amb. 10.3, St. Maximus lists the motion of the soul “according to mind (*nous*), according to intellect (*logos*), and according to sensation (*aisthesis*).” Sometimes he designates the whole person as mind, as he does, for example, in *QT* 54 and 55. The motion of the mind is an ineffable communication *with* God as a person, for example, through prayer; the reason’s motion is to intermediate between the senses and the mind, discerning in the visible entities their divine principles - it is a knowledge *about* God as the cause - and communicating this knowledge to the mind. The appetite movement is to direct the person towards a desirable goal, and the vigour’s is to mobilize her to achieve that goal or to keep it once it is attained. E.g.: “The power of intellect is used by man in the search for the cause and the goods around the cause; by the appetite to desire the searched ones, and by the vigour to their guarding and love.” (κέχρηται γὰρ τῷ μὲν λογιστικῷ πρὸς τὴν τῆς αἰτίας καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν αἰτίαν καλῶν ζήτησιν, τῷ ἐπιθυμητικῷ δὲ πρὸς πόθον τῶν ζητούμενων, τῷ δὲ θυμικῷ πρὸς φυλακὴν καὶ στοργήν), *QT* 55, *SC* 554, p. 244. The reference monograph remains the classic Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Open Court Publishing Company, 2nd ed., 1995. The research of St. Maxim’s psychology did not go much further. Of particular value for this theme are the studies of Paul M. Blowers: “The Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of Human Passions.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4.1 (1996): 57-85; Id., “The Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire in Maximus the Confessor.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65.4 (2011): 425-451; Id., “Aligning and Reorienting the Passible Self: Maximus the Confessor’s Virtue Ethics.” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26.3 (2013): 333-350. Rendering the names of these powers in modern terminology is a rather confusing issue. To avoid the pejorative suggestion of terms like “anger” for *thumos* and “concupiscence” for *epithumia* – as well as the more abstract “desire”, reserved to express the ontological attraction, in the latter case -, I preferred the more morally neutral vigour and appetite, according to the constitutive, not lapsarian or pathological nature, of these faculties; with respect to this, see *QT* 1.

is the power that “contains all the natural attributes”.⁴⁵ This fact draws our attention to an extremely relevant aspect, namely that, being constitutive to it, all these faculties are of the same type as will, i.e. “desiring powers”. St. Maximus affirms this in *Ambiguum 7*:

“If an intellective being is moved intellectually, that is, in a manner appropriate to itself, then it will necessarily become a knowing intellect. But if it knows, it surely loves that which it knows; and if it loves, it certainly suffers an ecstasy toward it as an object of love. If it suffers this ecstasy, it obviously urges itself onward, and if it urges itself onward, it surely intensifies and greatly accelerates its motion. And if its motion is intensified in this way, it will not cease until it is wholly present in the whole beloved, and wholly encompassed by it”.⁴⁶

The passage does not explicitly mention all the different faculties of the soul, but only the knowledge and the erotic impulse, which reinforce each other in an accelerated movement toward God, in which the passive (“suffers”) and the active character (“hastens,” “intensifies”) combine.⁴⁷ If we attribute knowledge to the intellectual capacity, we can assume that ecstasy is manifested in the affective, irrational faculties, though they appear to be operating synergistically, not separately. In *Quaestiones ad Thalassium 49*, interpreting Hezekiah the King of Jerusalem (2 Par. 32.2-3) as the mind and his commanders as the three powers of the soul - intellect, appetite, and vigour – he says that “from the gathering and unification around the divine things of the capacities of the soul, i.e. of the rational, impulsive and appetitive capacities, love is born.”⁴⁸ Here love is seen both as the result of the operations of these powers, identified with the three theological virtues - faith,

⁴⁵ Therefore, it is not one amongst other faculties, as many exegetes seem to suppose; e.g., “Natural will is the essential desire of the constitution of the nature. The dispositional will is the self-chosen impulse and the motion of thought on both sides.” Θέλημα φυσικόν ἐστίν, οὐσιώδης τῶν κατὰ φύσιν συστατικῶν ἔφεσις. Θέλημα γνωμικόν ἐστίν, ἢ ἐφ’ ἐκάτερα τοῦ λογισμοῦ αὐθαίρετος ὁρμή τε καὶ κίνησις. *Variae definitiones*, PG 91, 153A.

⁴⁶ Εἰ δε κινεῖται ἀναλόγως ἑαυτῷ νοερώς τό νοερόν, κα’ ἰ νοεῖ πάντως. εἰ δέ νοεῖ, καί ἐρά πάντως τοῦ νοηθέντος· εἰ δ’ ἐρᾷ, καί πάσχει πάντως τήν πρός αὐτό ὡς ἐραστόν ἐκστασιν· εἰ δέ πάσχει, δηλονότι καί ἐπιείγεται· εἰ δέ ἐπιείγεται, καί ἐπιτείνει πάντως τό σφοδρόν τῆς κινήσεως· εἰ δέ ἐπιτείνει σφοδρώς τήν κίνησιν, οὐχ ἴσταται μέχρις ἄν γένηται ὅλον ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ ἐραστῷ καί ὑφ’ ὅλου περιληφθῆ, ἐκουσίως ὅλον κατὰ προαίρεσιν τήν σωτήριον περιγραφὴν δεχόμενον, in *Amb 7, ANC I*, p. 86-8.

⁴⁷ About the relationship between knowledge and love, see Ty Monroe, “I Know You Above All; I Know You Not: Maximus the Confessor on Divine and Human Knowledge and Love.” *Forum Philosophicum*. 20:2, 2015, pp. 139-156.

⁴⁸ Οὐκοῦν τῆς κατὰ τό αὐτό περὶ τὰ θεῖα συναγωγῆς τε καί ἐνώσεως τῶν ψυχικῶν δυνάμεων, Τουτέστι τῆς λογικῆς καί θυμικῆς καί ἐπιθυμητικῆς, ἡ ἀγάπη καθέστηκε γέννημα. *SC 554*, p. 96.

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hope, agape love - and as the specific operation of the appetitive capacity “through which the love of God is established.”⁴⁹

Likewise, in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 55, he spiritually interprets Zerubabel, freed from the Persian slavery (3 Ezra 4) as the contemplative mind, his Jewish servants as the intellect (*logos*) and the mentation (*dianoia*) and the pagan servants as the vigour and the appetite. While the cognitive faculties serve the mind with the toil of the practical philosophy for six years for achieving dispassion, in the seventh year they are released because they have reached the measure of spiritual contemplation, the affective capacities- which are likely at any time to passionately get attached to the sensitive things approached to satisfy the natural necessities – they must remain subject to the contemplative mind until the beginning of eternal life, when they are released to become both ecstatic and active⁵⁰ loving powers toward God.⁵¹

7. Disorientation of desire

The special concern of St. Maximus - and of the entire neptic tradition - illustrated in this passage over the two emotional faculties expresses, on the one hand, the role that they play in the actualization and the manifestation of the “desiring power” of the human nature. Although, as we have seen, all the faculties of the soul have this pathetic constitution,⁵² the determinant role in the pursuit of attrac-

⁴⁹ καθ’ ἣν ἡ θεία συνέστηκεν ἀγάπη, *ibid.*, p. 98. See also the scholion 6. Note how the three virtues are attributed to the three powers: intellect - faith and hope (which implies reference to a future good, that is to say, a desire), appetite - love. The role of vigour here is to support the urge of appetite (he uses the verb *stupho* – to narrow; we can render here with to focus.) The relationship between the faculties and the theological virtues is central to the famous *Epistula* 2, On Love, to John the Cubicularius, Engl. transl. in Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, Routledge, 1996.

⁵⁰ Referring to the final, eschatological state of the saints, in *Ambiguum* 7, he describes it as pleasure (*hedone*), since it is the end (*telos*) of natural works, as joy (*euphrosune*), as it does not suffer change, but also as passion (*pathos*), “As an ecstatic power elevating the passive recipient to the state of an active agent”, (πεῖσιν δε, ὡς ἐκστατικὴν δύναμιν πρὸς τὸ ποιοῦν τὸ πάσχον ἐνάγουσαν), *ANC* I, p. 114-15. He usually refer to an analogy with the hot iron, or the lightened air, denoting a change of qualities not of the nature. But observe the contrast with QT 22.

⁵¹ “... liberates the anger and the appetite, transforming the latter into pure pleasure and the righteous attraction for the divine love, and the former into spiritual ardor, in stubbornness and in sober madness [...] the lust is transformed into the desires that delight in the divine, and the vigour in the endless tension of the longing for that they enjoy.” (ἐλευθέρους ποιεῖται τὸν τε θυμὸν καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, τὴν μὲν πρὸς τὴν ἀκήρατον τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρωτος ἡδονὴν καὶ τὴν ἄχραντον θέλξιν μετασκευάζων, τὸν δὲ πρὸς ζέσιν πνευματικὴν καὶ διάπυρον ἀεικινήσιαν καὶ σώφρονα μανίαν μεταβιβάζων [...] τὴν μὲν ἐπιθυμίαν ποιῶν ἔφεσιν τῶν θεῶν ἀπολαυστικὴν, τὸν δὲ θυμὸν, τόνον ἀπολαυστικῆς ἐφέσεως ἄληκτον.) *SC* 554, p. 254. Also see *scholion* 25, as well as *scholion* 1 to *QT* 28.

⁵² The pathetic constitution of knowledge is less exploited by current research. See, among other relevant places, *Capita theologica* 1.12; 2.5, 41, 79-82; *QT* 16; 49; 65; *Amb* 23. . Apart from

tion to various goals that can satisfy, really or apparently, the need for fulfilment is attributed to appetite and vigour, the latter being the capacity of mobilization towards the desideratum indicated by the first.⁵³ On the other hand, it is precisely this function of directing the human subject towards desirable objectives that makes these two capacities responsible for its disorientation from-towards God, in whose communion lies the true fulfilment, towards objectives which are only apparently fulfilling. There is a leitmotif of the Maximian work that passions - passivity in its aberrant pathological condition – mostly, but not exclusively affect precisely these powers, often designated as “passionate faculties” or “the passionate part” of the soul.⁵⁴

Consequently, when human beings aspire to fulfilment sought through desirable natural powers, especially appetite and vigour, to something other than the One that is the Cause and at the same time their Goal, an ontological goal written in the reason of nature, they give rise to another pathetic way of existence, to another love irrational, since they deviate from their original natural logos, and tragic as, by detaching themselves from the Source of existence and life, they alter the human and cosmic existence to death and non-existence:

“... our forefather Adam misused his freedom and turned instead to what was inferior, redirecting his desire from what was permissible to what had been forbidden. [...] being deceived he chose to estrange himself from the divine and blessed goal, preferring by his own choice to be a pile of dust rather than God by grace - God, who does whatever is necessary for our salvation, in His wisdom and love for mankind, [...] affixed the appropriate punishment alongside the irrational movement of our intellectual faculty, where it would not fail to do what was required. [...] The aim was that, by

relationship (*schesis*), several other notions play here an important role, like giving form (*morphosis*) and receptivity (*dektikos*). About the importance of the last, see Cyril K. Crawford, “‘Receptive Potency’ (*dektike dynamis*) in the Ambigua ad Iohannem 20 of St. Maximus the Confessor,” *Studia Patristica* LXVIII: 16, pp. 313-324. For an important precursor, see Kathleen Gibbons, “Passions, Pleasures, and Perceptions: Rethinking the Evagrius Ponticus on Mental Representation,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity* 19.2 (2015), pp. 297-330.

⁵³ An eloquent passage: “Scripture figuratively names appetite wood. This is because it has been written that wood first corrupted its motion, turning it against nature and therefore it is the soul capacity susceptible to any passion, like wood is to fire.” (“Ἡ μήποτε ξύλα φησὶ τροπικῶς ἢ γραφὴ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν – ξύλον γὰρ ταύτης πρῶτον ἀναγέγραπται παρὰ φύσιν διαφθεῖραν τὴν κίνησιν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο παντὸς πάθους, ὡς τοῦ πυρὸς ἢ ξυλώδης ὕλη, ταύτην δεκτικὴν εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν δύναμιν.”) *QT* 62, *SC* 569, p. 138.

⁵⁴ This is common terminology in the first writings; e.g., *CC* 3.35; 3.98 (faculties/faculty); *CC* 2.48; 3.51; *QD* 113 (part).

Addictions and Orthodox Spirituality. A Focus on Ontological Passivity

experiencing pain we might learn that we have fallen in love with what is not real, and so be taught to redirect our power to what really exists.”⁵⁵

For the Orthodox spirituality, whose brilliant representative is St. Maximus the Confessor, the origin of passions lies in the ontological and teleological dependence on God, manifested in the pathetic structure of all the constitutive elements of the human nature, including the human powers and activities. Created with an irresistible desire for fulfilment, always attracted to it in all his quests, capable to receive in his existence here on Earth gifts that would reveal the Giver and develop into a habit his ability to be fully receptive to Him, thus to be happy, for eternal existence⁵⁶, man can desire for gifts - including the existence of his own self - without their Giver, becoming dependent on them for survival and susceptible to their abuse as surrogates of authentic fulfilment. The way that the primordial disorientation took place, the proliferation upon the original pathetic constitution of other interconnected types of passivity - such as the passions as addictions, the subject of our wider research - through the work of salvation in Jesus Christ, as understood by St Maximus is the objective of another investigation. What this excursus gave us is the recognition of the ontological premises of any possible addiction and everyone’s vulnerability to it.

⁵⁵ ἐν δὲ τῷ προπάτορι τῷ ἐτοίμῳ προς εξουσίαν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον ἐχρήσατο, μετενεγκὼν ἐκ τοῦ ἐπιτετραμμένου προς τὸ κεκωλυμένον τὴν ορεξίν [...] τῇ παραλόγῳ κινήσει τῆς ἐν ἡμῖν νοεράς δυνάμεως παρεπομένην δεόντως τὴν τιμωρίαν παρέπηξεν, αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο τυχόν κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον κολάσας θανάτῳ, περὶ ὃ τὴν κατὰ νοῦν μόνῳ Θεῷ χρεωστούμενην τῆς ἀγάπης δυνάμιν κατερῆξάμεν, ἵνα τοῦ μηδενός ἐρῶντες διὰ τοῦ πάσχειν ποτέ μαθόντες προς τὸ ὄν πάλιν ταύτην ἐπανάγειν διδαχθῶμεν τὴν δύναμιν.), *Amb 7, Ibid.*, p. 120-122; cf. *QT 61*.

⁵⁶ “The grace of the Holy Spirit does not work wisdom in the Saints without the mind to receive it; nor does knowledge, without the reason capable of it ... nor any of the other gifts, without the skill and the power capable of all. But again, man will not acquire any of the things enumerated only by the natural power, without the power of God, Who will bestow them.” (Οὐκοῦν οὔτε ἡ χάρις τοῦ παναγίου πνεύματος ἐνεργεῖ σοφίαν ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις χωρὶς τοῦ ταύτην δεχομένου νοός, οὔτε γνῶσιν χωρὶς τῆς δεκτικῆς τοῦ λόγου δυνάμεως οὔτε τι ἕτερον τῶν λοιπῶν χαρισμάτων χωρὶς τῆς ἐκάστου δεκτικῆς ἕξεώς τε καὶ δυνάμεως· οὔτε μὴν πάλιν ἐ τῶν ἀπηριθμημένων ἀνθρώπος κτήσεται κατὰ δύναμιν φυσικὴν δίχα τῆς χορηγούσης ταῦτα θείας δυνάμεως.), *QT 59, SC 569*, p. 58-60. An excellent commentary offers Lars Thunberg, “Spirit, Grace and Human Receptivity in St Maximus the Confessor.” *Studia Patristica 37*, pp. 609-611.