

Stoic Motifs in the Cosmology of Maximus Confessor

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INTRODUCTION

Recent scholars have listened more attentively to the Neoplatonic resonances in Maximus, both pagan and Dionysian.¹ Origenism too, the great foil of much Maximian metaphysics, has earned its share of attention.² Stoicism less so, and Stoic

1 To name but a few: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. 2nd Ed. Translated by Brian E. Daley, S.J. (San Francisco, CA: 2003 [Orig: 1964]), 115-26; I.P. Sheldon-Williams, "St. Maximus the Confessor," in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 492-505; Walther Völker, "Der Einfluß des Pseudo-Dionysius auf Maximus Confessor," in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik: Festschrift für Ernst Klostermann zum 90. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Berlin, 1961), 331-50; Eric D. Perl, *Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, and Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1991); Antoine Lévy, O.P., *Le créé et l'incréé: Maxime le Confesseur et Thomas d'Aquin: Aux sources de la querelle Palamienne* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), esp. 129-204; Torstein T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); idem, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 2012); Vladimir Cvetkovic, "The Transformation of Neoplatonic Notions of Procession (*proodos*) and Conversion (*epistrophe*) in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor," in Mikonja Knezevic (ed.), *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy* (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2015), 171-84; Christophe Erismann, "Maximus the Confessor on the logical dimension of the structure of reality," in Antoine Lévy, Pauli Annala, Olli Hallamaa, and Tuomo Lankila (eds.), *The Architecture of the Cosmos: St Maximus the Confessor, New Perspectives* [=ACMC] (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2015), 51-69; Maximos Conostas, "Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism," *Analogia* 1.2 (2017): 1-12.

2 A sample: Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of Saint Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism* (Rome: Herder, 1955); Endre Ivanka, "Der Philosophische Ertrag der Auseinandersetzung Maximus des Bekenners mit dem Origenismus," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 7 (Graz-Köln: Verlag Hermann Böhlhaus Nachf., 1958), 23-49; Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 127-36; Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, "The Foundation of Origenist Metaphysics," in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* [=TOHMC] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 149-63.

cosmology (rather than psychology) still less.³ Strange, since Maximus scholars have long since reported hearing Stoic echoes in Maximus's cosmology, not least in one of its most pronounced notes—his doctrine of the *logoi* or “principles” of all creation.⁴

I want here to give ear to this Stoic sound. A short piece like this can only establish the promise of further pursuit. So I propose three motifs distinctive of both Stoic and Maximian cosmology:

1. the creative procession of Logos into *logoi*
2. the continuous creation of universals
3. the immanent and personal unity of the world the Logos is.

Each theme points up places where Maximus's cosmology is more Stoic and less Neoplatonic. Together they can show simply *that* his cosmology cuts a Stoic figure. Why it does must await a much larger undertaking.

3 Stoic influence on Maximus is typically restricted to psychology. For instance, see Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*. 2nd Ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 180-1; Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 159-61, 258. Joshua Lollar, *To See Into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor and His Predecessors* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 78-85, extends the Stoic comparison to the role of contemplating nature in the philosophical life, of which they are “the most consistent representatives” among Maximus's philosophical precedents.

4 I. Dalmais, “La théorie des ‘logoi’ des créatures chez S. Maxime le Confesseur,” *RSPT* 36 (1952): 246, observes that “Maxime assume au profit des *logoi* la théorie stoïcienne de la loi naturelle,” but without elaboration; Sherwood, 157, n. 15 notes that the *SVF* contain “not a few examples of the pair λόγος-τρόπος,” but again no further analysis; Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 125-6, sees Maximus's stress on the Logos's immanence in all things as Aristotelian and Stoic, though he immediately short-circuits the point by contrasting this immanence with God's “free” providence, which predominates and hovers over the natural law within the world (*logos*); Thunberg, 72, n. 157, stresses the reception of the Stoic *logos spermatikos* by Origen and later Christian Platonists like Evagrius and Dionysius; Nicholas Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*. Translated by Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, M.A.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010 [Orig: 1992]), 61, notices that *logos* in Stoicism names “a universal bond” that “provides the foundation for the world itself as a first principle,” but this serves mainly as a general precedent for *logos*-talk in Greek cosmology.

THREE STOIC MOTIFS IN MAXIMUS'S COSMOLOGY

1. *Procession of Logos into logoi.*

Maximus's justly celebrated doctrine of the *logoi* contains his most direct reflection on the God-world relation. Greek philosophy in general and Origenism in particular demanded such reflection. In *Ambiguum* 7 Maximus presents a concise but careful account of Origenist protology: "According to the opinion of these people, there once existed a unity of rational beings, by virtue of which we were connatural with God [τῶν λογικῶν ἐνάδα καθ' ἣν συμφεῖς ὄντες Θεῶ], in whom we had our remaining and abode."⁵ Before and deeper than problems concerning the metaphysics of motion, which scholars have rightly emphasized,⁶ lies the problem of whether the God-world relation is in some sense "connatural." If not,⁷ and if there is yet one Creator of the world, what precisely characterizes this relation? Answer this question and you begin to resolve perennial tensions in both Origenist and Greek philosophy, since for Maximus these come to the same.⁸

Maximus's answer, whatever its fuller complexity (certainly beyond this essay), is his *logoi* doctrine: "Who," he asks, "knowing

5 *Amb* 7.2, PG 91, 1069A. All translations from the *Ambigua* come from *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, edited and translated by Nicholas Conostas. 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). I translate passages from Maximus's other works. All translations and Greek of Stoic fragments come from A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), and *ibid.*, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 2: Greek and Latin Texts with Notes and Bibliography* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) [=LS].

6 Sherwood, 92-102; cf. too Sotiris Mitralaxis, "Maximus' Theory of Motion: Motion κατὰ φύσιν, Returning Motion, Motion παρὰ φύσιν," in Sotiris Mitralaxis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, and Sebastian Lalla (eds.), *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 73-91.

7 Maximus openly denies any *natural* relation between God and world, that is, between created and uncreated nature; cf. *Amb* 7.19, PG 91, 1081B, *passim*.

8 Maximus similarly faults "the Greeks" for conceiving the world's substance as but a qualified instance of God's (cf. CC 3.27-8). It's therefore not surprising that he here ascribes to Origenism "a rather facile interpretation [of creation], which in fact is derived largely from the doctrines of the Greeks" (*Amb* 7.2); cf. too the comment at Conostas, 478, n. 2.

that it was *in reason* and *in wisdom* [λόγῳ εἰδῶς καὶ σοφία] that God brought beings *into existence* out of nothing...would not fail to know the one Logos is the many logoi,” or that “the many logoi are one Logos”?⁹ Later Maximus invites us to consider how, apart from the divine essence he has in common with the Father,¹⁰ “the one Logos is many logoi and the many are One.” Maximus describes the Logos’s movement into *logoi* as “the creative and sustaining *procession* of the One into individual beings.”¹¹

The “procession” here might seem Neoplatonic. Both the circle-radii image that immediately follows and Maximus’s later appeal to Dionysius in support of his *logoi* doctrine suggest as much.¹² But as I have recently argued,¹³ Neoplatonic procession cannot explain a crucial characteristic of Maximus’s Logos-*logoi* procession: that the *logoi* constitute neither the interior perfection of the Logos’s nature (as they do, say, for Plotinus’s Intellect)¹⁴ nor lesser imitations of or participants in the world’s single Idea;¹⁵ no,

9 *Amb* 7.15, PG 91, 1077C, slightly modified. I also italicized “*in wisdom*” since it plausibly refers to *Wisd.* 9.2.

10 This is how I interpret the prelude to this consideration: “When, however, we exclude the highest form of negative theology concerning the Logos – according to which the Logos is neither called, nor considered, nor is, in His entirety, anything that can be attributed to anything else, since He is beyond all being [ὡς ὑπερουσίως], and is not participated in by any being whatsoever [οὐδὲ ὑπὸ τινος οὐδαμῶς καθ’ ὅτι οὐδὲν μετέχεται].” Cp. *Myst.* prol.

11 *Amb* 7.20, PG 91, 1081B-C, my emphasis: “τὴν ἀγαθοπρεπιῆ εἰς τὰ ὄντα τοῦ ἐνὸς ποιητικὴν τε καὶ συνεκτικὴν πρόοδον πολλοὶ ὁ εἶς.”

12 For the appeal to Dionysius, see *Amb* 7.24 (DN 5.8), and for the circle-radii image, see Torstein T. Tollefsen, “Christocentric Cosmology,” in *TOHMC*, 310-11.

13 Jordan Daniel Wood, “Creation is Incarnation: the Metaphysical Peculiarity of the *Logoi* in Maximus Confessor,” *Modern Theology* 34.1 (2018): 82-102, esp. 85-92.

14 Plotinus, *En.* VI.2 [43] 21; cf. Syrianus, in *Metaph.* 106, 26-107, 1 (cited at Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD: A Sourcebook: Volume 3: Logic and Metaphysics* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005], 146).

15 Plato, *Tim.* 30C-D. This moves Maximus still further from Origen’s more Middle Platonic view at *Princ* 1.2.2 and *Comm. in Jo.* 1.34-8. Contra Clement Yung Wen, “Maximus the Confessor and the Problem of Participation,” *The Heythrop Journal* 58 (2017): 3-16, who claims against Tollefsen that Maximian *logoi* are “distinctly differentiable from the Logos Himself” (9), and that the *logoi* (not the Logos) are divine energies “participated by created beings” (12). Maximus never says (and Wen never provides an instance where) we

the *logoi* are the Logos himself without qualification. They name his personal, generative immanence in all the world's ontological levels and temporal moments.¹⁶ The Word is "concealed within beings" as if "enclosed in a womb."¹⁷ In the *logoi* the Logos fashions every dimension of every particular being, from *within* it:

What are these *logoi* 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 [εἶδοπεποιήται], shaped [ἔσχημάτισται], and structured, and endowed with power, the ability to act, and to be acted upon...?¹⁸

Now compare three features in Diogenes Laertius's summary of Stoic cosmology¹⁹: [1] Stoics "think that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon"; [2] the passive principle is "unqualified substance, i.e. matter," the active "the reason [or *logos*] in [matter], i.e. god"; [3] the two fundamental

"participate" the *logoi* themselves, still less does he ever identify *logoi* and divine works. *Logoi* are principles of divine works, not the works themselves (CC 2.27). See Tollefsen, *Christocentric*, 174, following Perl 152.

16 So *Amb* 7.22, PG 91, 1084B: to "cleave affectionately" to the *logoi* simply means to "cleave affectionately to God Himself."

17 *Amb* 6.3, PG 91, 1068A-B. So too *Amb* 10.31, PG 91, 1129A: Maximus says of the 'words' encrypted in sensible beings (which are the 'letters' of the book of creation) that the "Word 'has wisely inscribed them' [ἐξ ὧν σοφῶς ὁ διαχαράξας καὶ ἀρρήτως αὐτοῖς ἐγκεχαραγμένος Λόγος]."

18 *Amb* 17.7, PG 91, 1228A-B, slightly modified: "Τίνες οἱ ἐκάστω τῶν ὄντων τῇ ὑπάρξει πρώτως ἐγκαταβληθέντες λόγοι, καθ' οὓς καὶ ἔστι καὶ πέφυκε τῶν ὄντων ἕκαστον, καὶ εἶδοπεποιήται, καὶ ἐσχημάτισται, καὶ συντέθειται, καὶ δύναται, καὶ ἐνεργεῖ, καὶ πάσχει..." See too *Ep* 15, PG 91, 561D, where Maximus specifies that the divine power causes each being by "emplacing" (ἐνθεμένης) "a *logos* in each creature which is constitutive of being (τοῦ εἶναι συστατικόν)."

19 Diogenes Laertius, 7.134; *SVF* 2.300 and 2.299; LS 44B. It's worth quoting at length: "They [the Stoics] think that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon [ἀρχὰς εἶναι τῶν ὄλων δύο, τὸ ποιοῦν καὶ τὸ πάσχον]. That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e. matter; that which acts is the reason in it, i.e. god. For this, since it is everlasting, constructs every single thing throughout all matter [τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον τὸν θεόν· τοῦτον γὰρ αἰδίων ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα]... They say there is a difference between principles and elements [ἀρχὰς καὶ στοιχεῖα]: the former are ungenerated and indestructible, whereas the elements pass away at the conflagration. The principles are also bodies ['incorporeal' in the Suda parallel] and without form [ἀμόρφους], but the elements are formed."

principles differ from the basic elements of the world, both because the principles themselves are “ungenerated and indestructible” and because, while themselves not formed, they endow all elemental matter “with form.” I treat the third feature below. The first, it’s true, derives from both Plato and Aristotle, though it attains “striking” economy in Stoicism.²⁰ But I want to take up the second feature.

The Stoic *logos*, very god (and not a lesser hypostasis below *the* god), both “brings forth [the world] from himself”²¹ and “comes to be in its parts.”²² Indeed, god comes to be in the entire substance of the universe precisely in and as the *logoi* of its parts:

The Stoics made god out to be intelligent, a designing fire which methodically proceeds towards the creation of the world, and encompasses all the seminal principles [τοὺς σπερματικούς λόγους] according to which everything comes about according to fate, and a breath pervading the whole world, which takes on different names owing to the alterations of the matter through which it passes.²³

Again:

[Stoics say that] god, intelligence, fate, and Zeus are all one, and many other names are applied to him. In the beginning all by itself he turned the entire substance through air into water. Just as the sperm is enveloped in -the seminal fluid, so god, who is the seminal *logos* of the cosmos, stays behind as such in the moisture, making matter serviceable to himself for the successive stages of creation.²⁴

20 Plato, *Soph.* 247d8-e4; Aristotle, *Top.* VI.9, 139a4-8; VII.7, 146a21-32. See LS, vol. 1, 270-1, and vol. 2, 269 (44H).

21 Diogenes Laertius, 7.137: “ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν.”

22 Origen, *Cels.* IV.41; *SVF* 2.1052. I have rendered “ἐπὶ μέρους” in the plural, partly because the immediate context implies it: Origen’s critique of the idea that God has a body. For Origen this must mean the Stoic god is, among other absurdities, composed of parts: “οὐδὲ γὰρ δεδύνηνται οὗτοι τρανώσαι τὴν φυσικὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔννοιαν, ὡς πάντῃ ἀφθάρτου καὶ ἀπλοῦ καὶ ἀσυνθέτου καὶ ἀδιαίρετου” (ibid.).

23 Aetius, *Plac.* I.7; *SVF* 2.1027; LS 46A: “οἱ Στωικοὶ νοερόν θεὸν ἀποφαίνονται, πῦρ τεχνικὸν ὁδῶ βαδίζον ἐπὶ γενεαίε κόσμου, ἔμπεριελιφόσ < τε > πάντα τοὺς σπερματικούς λόγους καθ’ οὓς ἅπαντα καθ’ εἰμαρμένην γίνεται, καὶ πνεῦμα μὲν ἐνδιήκον δι’ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, τὰς δὲ προσηγορίας μεταλαμβάνον κατὰ τὰς τῆς ὕλης, δι’ ἧς κεχώρηκε, παραλλάξεις.”

24 Diogenes Laertius, 7.135-6; *SVF* 1.102 and 2.580; LS 46B: “καὶ ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ γονῇ τὸ σπέρμα < τῷ ὑγρῷ > περιέχεται, οὕτω καὶ τοῦτον σπερματικὸν λόγον ὄντα τοῦ κόσμου, τοιόνδε ὑπολείπεσθαι ἐν τῷ ὑγρῷ, εὐεργον αὐτῷ ποιούντα τὴν ὕλην πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἐξῆς γενέσειν” (last part).

These and similar texts yield the very feature of Maximus's *logoi* doctrine Neoplatonic procession couldn't: for Stoics too, the *logoi* of all things both reside in and make personally immanent the one God, the Logos. Stoic *logoi*, like Maximus's, also perform the role of Aristotelian substantial forms while being themselves nothing other than the divine Logos within particular creatures. But this moves us to our next motif.

2. Continuous creation of universals.

Just after Maximus introduces his *logoi* doctrine in *Ambiguum* 7, he draws a puzzling implication:

From all eternity, He contained within Himself the preexisting *logoi* of created beings. When, in His goodwill, He formed out of nothing the substance of the visible and invisible worlds, He did so on the basis of these *logoi*. By His *word and His wisdom He created* [Wis 9.1-2] and continues to create *all things—universals as well as particulars—at the appropriate time.*²⁵

Particulars *and* universals are created. Context clarifies that “universal” here means species or genera, like “angel” or “humanity.”²⁶ Tollefsen seems right that Maximus's universals do not reduce to mere linguistic convention or to purely abstract concepts, but are “immanent essential wholes consisting of parts,” the “‘inner’ dimension of entities,” an “ontological unity” that discloses “a structure of communion in the real world.”²⁷ Interesting, then, that these immanent and real universals are not only co-created through an ongoing “process of mutual destruction and alteration” with particulars,²⁸ but in fact “naturally consist

Translation, slightly modified, is from Ricardo Salles, “Two early Stoic theories of cosmogony,” in *Causation and Creation in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Anna Marmodoro and Brian D. Prince (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13. Cf. too Aristocles in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Pr. Ev.* XV; *SVF* 1.98.

25 *Amb* 7.16, 1080A: “Τοὺς γὰρ λόγους τῶν γεγονότων ἔχων πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων προῦφεστάτας βουλήσει ἀγαθῇ κατ’ αὐτοὺς τὴν τε ὄρατὴν καὶ ἀόρατον ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὑπεστήσατο κτίσιν, λόγῳ καὶ σοφίᾳ τὰ πάντα κατὰ τὸν δέοντα χρόνον ποιήσας τε καὶ ποιῶν [Wis 9:1-2], τὰ καθόλου τε καὶ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον.”

26 *Amb* 7.16, PG 91, 1080A; here Maximus specifically avoids speaking of the *logoi* “of particulars” (ἵνα μὴ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστον λέγω).

27 Torstein Theodore Tollefsen, “The Concept of the Universal in the Philosophy of St Maximus,” in *ACMC*, 85, 87, 90.

28 *Amb* 10.83, PG 91, 1169C-D.

of particulars."²⁹ Remove particulars and "the corresponding universals would cease to exist."³⁰ Maximus (and to some extent Nemesius) moves well beyond Aristotle here. Universals "have their permanence and subsistence [διαμονή και ύπόστασις]" in particulars, true.³¹ And yet the deeper identity enabling this very reciprocity lies for Maximus precisely in the Logos's penetration "through all things" in and as every particular creature's *logos*.³²

Tollefsen observes that "against the background of Neoplatonic thought all this seems strange."³³ Sure, but not against a Stoic background. It's true that Stoic universals might not, at first blush, seem a promising parallel. For Stoics "only particulars exist,"³⁴ so universals (species and genera) designate a mere "collection of a plurality of concepts," and a concept is but "a figment of the mind."³⁵ They were accused of nominalism.³⁶ As others have shown, this is not the whole story.³⁷ Certainly the Stoic emphasis on concrete particulars accepts and radicalizes Aristotle's critique of independently subsistent Platonic Ideas.³⁸ A universal in Stoic

29 *Amb* 10.101, PG 91, 1189C: "ἐκ γὰρ τῶν κατὰ μέρος τὰ καθόλου συνίστασθαι πέφυκε."

30 *Amb* 10.101, PG 91, 1189D.

31 *Amb* 10.101, PG 91, 1192A; cf. Nemesius, *De nat. hom.* 43, 130, ll. 15-21. Both Nemesius and Maximus mean to combat Aristotle's view that divine providence attends only universals, not particulars (though it's perhaps better to attribute this exact formulation to Alexander of Aphrodisias; cf. Sharples and van der Eijk, 215, n. 1038). But Maximus, unlike Nemesius, embeds the universal-particular interplay in his own distinctive *logoi* doctrine.

32 *Amb* 10.102, PG 91, 1192B: "ὡς ἀγαθός και σοφός και δυνατός, δύνουμένος δια πάντων τῶν τε ὁρατῶν και τῶν ἀορατῶν, και τῶν καθόλου και τῶν μερικῶν, και πάντων τῶν κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰανοῦν οὐσίαν τὸ εἶναι ἐχόντων...και πάντα κατὰ τὸν ἐκάστων τοῦ εἶναι λόγον...."

33 Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology*, 87; cf. 33.

34 Syrianus, in *Metaph.* 104, 17-21; *SVF* 2.361; LS 30G.

35 Diogenes Laertius, 7.60-1; LS 30C.

36 Syrianus, in *Metaph.* 105, 21-5; *SVF* 2.364; LS 30H: "the Forms were introduced among these godlike men [Plato and his precursors] neither for the usage of linguistic convention, as Chrysippus and Archedemus and the majority of the Stoics later believed...."

37 LS, vol. 1, 182; David Sedley, "The Stoic Theory of Universals," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 87-92.

38 David E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 9. So Stobaeus I. 136, 21-137, 6; *SVF* 1.65; LS 30A:

ontology is so far from possessing independent existence that one could just as well reformulate generic definitions as conditional propositions about particulars: “man is a rational moral animal” simply means, “if something is a man, that thing is a rational mortal animal.”³⁹ Stoics can even repurpose Platonic participation-talk to say that “what we ‘participate in’ [μετέχειν] is the concepts.”⁴⁰

It would be quite wrong to conclude from this that Stoic cosmology deprived the world of objective universality. The central issue, as Sedley notes, is rather to reject a separate realm of Platonic Forms or Ideas in favor of an *internal* and *immanent* bond of universality, effected and sustained only by the *logoi*:

The world is already shaped by an immanent deity by means of the ‘seminal principles’ which underlie the generation of all natural entities, and our central conceptions [=universals] are no more than an empirical recognition of that ordering.⁴¹

The Logos pervades the universal substance and, *from within this substance*, constructs the cosmic hierarchy of “common qualities” (themselves levels of corporeality) that extend through and subsist as all particulars. Not only are “concepts” participated, then, but so too is the very “breathy and fiery power” running throughout all things—which is, as we’ve seen, God.⁴²

“The Stoic philosophers say that Ideas do not exist [ἀνυπάρκτους εἶναι].”

39 Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 11.8-11; *SVF* 2.224; LS 30I; cf. Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* 2.19, and the relevant comments in Sorabji, *Sourcebook*, vol. 3, 128-9. Maximus himself nearly approaches such a view at *Amb* 17.5, PG 91, 1225C, and *Ep.* 12, PG 91, 488B-C.

40 Stobaeus I.136, 31-137, 6; *SVF* 1.65; LS 30A: “καὶ τῶν μὲν ἐννοημάτων μετέχειν ἡμᾶς...”

41 Sedley, “The Stoic Theory of Universals,” 89.

42 Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1085C-D; *SVF* 2.444; LS 47G: “They say that earth and water sustain neither themselves nor other things, but preserve their unity by participation in a breathy and fiery power [πνευματικῆς δὲ μετοχῆ] καὶ πυρῶδους δυνάμεως τὴν ἐνότητά διαφυλάττειν]; but air and fire because of their tensility can sustain themselves, and by blending with the other two provide them with tension and also stability and substantiality [τόνον παρέχειν καὶ τὸ μόνιμον καὶ οὐσιώδες].” For the equation of the divine Logos (preferred by Zeno and Cleanthes) and “spirit” or *pneuma* (Chrysippus’s favorite), see the quotation from Aetius at n. 23.

The Stoic Logos within a thing, within its very body, infuses that thing with the common and particular qualities that characterize it. Here surfaces some of the same vocabulary we saw Maximus use above to describe the immanent *logoi*:

Yet [Stoics] maintain that matter, which is of itself inert and motionless, is everywhere the substrate for qualities, and that qualities are breaths and aeriform tensions in the parts in which they come to be, and [these tensions] give form and figure to every particular thing [εἰδοποιεῖν ἕκαστα καὶ σχηματίζειν].⁴³

And so the Stoics managed both to reject the *Timaeus*'s simplistic "blueprint of the divine architect"⁴⁴ and yet "combine pantheism and cosmic hierarchy."⁴⁵ They salvage the *order* of Platonic procession even on a strict horizontal trajectory: the divine Logos, who alone perdures in the cosmic conflagration which terminates and commences a new world cycle,⁴⁶ contains within himself all the *logoi* that give substantial and particular form to a thing,⁴⁷ in every age.

The Stoic schema therefore betrays two general features that typify Maximus's too. First, the divine Logos himself and not any intermediate chain of hypostases possesses, mediates, *is*, in fact, the immanent identity of the *logoi* which create and sustain both particular and universal reality. Fr. Maximos Constatas has recently observed that Maximus clearly departs from Dionysius on just this point: Maximus never uses the term "hierarchy,"

43 Plutarch, *St. rep.* 1054B; *SVF* 2.449; LS 47M, slightly modified; cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De mixt.* 18-27; *SVF* 2.1044.Cp. Maximus, *Amb* 17.7, cited above at n. 18.

44 Jean-Baptiste Gourinat, "The Stoics on Matter and Prime Matter: 'Corporealism' and the Imprint of Plato's *Timaeus*," in *God and Cosmos in Stoicism*. Edited by Ricardo Salles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 68.

45 Thomas Bénatouïl, "How Industrious can Zeus be? The Extent and Objects of Divine Activity in Stoicism," in *ibid.*, 33.

46 Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1067A; *SVF* 2.606; LS 46N; Seneca, *Ep.* 9.16; *SVF* 2.1065; LS 46O. So Michael J. White, "Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Edited by Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138, sees the Stoic god possessing "quasi-transcendental perfection."

47 Dirk Baltzly, "Stoic Pantheism," *Sophia* 42.2 (2003): 24, notes the parallel between Stoic *pneuma* and Aristotle's substantial form in *Metaph.* VII.17.

for instance.⁴⁸ Second, the Logos *continually* creates universals through the horizontal series of particulars, so that universals are, as Zachhuber has argued they were for Gregory of Nyssa, both “immanent and collective.”⁴⁹ Little wonder, then, that the *logoi*’s preexistence in the Logos, which might appear a fairly standard Platonic feature of Maximus’s *logoi*—i.e. that “things present and things to come...were not called into existence simultaneously with their *logoi*,” but “were created at the appropriate moment in time”⁵⁰—can claim Stoic vintage too: “the craftsman god, that is, reason” has always existed, “by which it is established both at what time each thing will come to birth and when it will perish.”⁵¹

48 Conostas, “Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite,” 4. And, as Balthasar, “The Problem of the Scholia to Pseudo-Dionysius,” in *Cosmic Liturgy*, 376, noted long ago Maximus never equates the *logoi* with Ideas either, though John of Scythopolis regularly did (cf. *SchDN* 329.1). I add that even when Maximus cites Dionysius’s authority for the *logoi* doctrine, he borrows the latter’s “predeterminations” and “divine wills,” but never “paradigms” (*Amb* 7.24; *QThal* 13; cp. *DN* 5.8). Remember too that Gregory Nazianzus, an important authority for Maximus, had openly maligned Plato’s Ideas (*Or.* 27.10).

49 Johannes Zachhuber, “Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals,” *JTS* 56.1 (2005): 96. Zachhuber explicitly says Gregory’s concept of the universal “has Stoic antecedents to evade the kind of ‘Platonic’ solution that Philo and, apparently to some extent, Origen had offered” (92). Gregory interprets Gen. 1.2, for instance, to mean “potentially all things were there in the first divine impulse towards creation when, as it were, a *germinal power was brought forth for the creation of the whole* [οἰονεὶ σπερματικῆς τινὸς δυνάμεως πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς γένεσιν καταβληθείσης = Maximus uses this very term at *Amb* 17.7, cited above at n. 18], while the particulars in their actuality were not there yet” (in *Hex.*, PG 44, 44D). Tollefsen, “The Concept of the Universal,” 85, n. 51, flags the parallel too, but stresses only the immanent and real character of Gregory’s universals. Yet what’s most striking here is that both thinkers insist on an organic or developmental generation of universals in and as the whole unfurling of particulars laid out historically, and that the most obvious philosophical precedent for this view is Stoicism. Maximus goes beyond Gregory, it seems, precisely by inscribing this conception of universals into his *logoi* doctrine, which, of course, makes Maximus’s an even more Stoic account.

50 *Amb* 7.19, PG 91, 1081A; cf. *Amb* 42.15, PG 91, 1329A.

51 Calcidius, 293; LS 44E: “silva tamen semper est et opifex deus, ratio scilicet, in qua sit fixum quo quidque tempore tam nascatur quam occidat.”

3. *The personal Logos, the immanent unity of the world.*

Maximus's proximate task in *Ambiguum* 7 is to interpret Gregory Nazianzen's ostensibly Origenist remark that each of us is "a portion of God that has flowed down from above."⁵² Maximus's *logoi* doctrine does not merely replace an Origenist primordial henad with a Middle Platonic Intellect containing Ideas. After all, Origen had the latter too, and he called them *logoi*.⁵³ Maximus did relocate the preexistent principles within the divine Logos; yet he also brought the very Logos down so that he himself resides within every creature—the "seed of the Good" within all.⁵⁴ Fitting, then, that his great cosmological axiom occupies the apex of the *logoi* exposition: "For the Logos of God, very God, wills always and in all things to actualize the mystery of His Incarnation."⁵⁵ It's the Logos in all things that makes all things one thing. And not in some generic sense. Somehow the historical Incarnation, a particular human existence, Christ, proved that "the whole creation is one, just as another human being."⁵⁶

Of course Stoics could never have correlated the unifying immanence of the Logos with the event of Christ. But their Logos did enter all things to produce and bind them into one:

And just as some *logoi* of the parts, coming together into a seed, are mixed and again separated when the parts are generated, so too all things are generated from one single thing and one single thing is formed out of all things.⁵⁷

52 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 14.7, PG 35, 865C (at *Amb* 7.1): "μοίραν ἡμᾶς ὄντας Θεοῦ καὶ ἄνωθεν ῥέυσαντας."

53 Origen, *Princ* 1.2.2.

54 *Amb* 7.21, PG 91, 1084A.

55 *Amb* 7.22, PG 91, 1084D, slightly modified and emphasized: "Βούλεται γὰρ αἰεὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος καὶ Θεὸς τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνσωματώσεως ἐνεργεῖσθαι τὸ μυστήριον."

56 *Amb* 41.9, PG 91, 1312B, slightly modified: "μίαν ὑπάρχουσιν τὴν ἅπασαν κτίσιν δείξας, καθάπερ ἄνθρωπον ἄλλον."

57 Stobaeus, *Ekl.*; *SVF* 1.101, 1.497 and 2.471; translation from Salles, "Two early Stoic theories of cosmogony," 14-15: "Καὶ ὡσπερ τινὲς Λόγοι τῶν μερῶν εἰς σπέρμα συνιόντες μίγνυνται καὶ αὐθις διακρίνονται γενομένων τῶν μερῶν, οὕτως ἐξ ἑνὸς τε πάντα γίνεσθαι καὶ ἐκ πάντων [εἰς] ἐν συγκρίνεσθαι."

The Stoic Logos, who is just as personal as any human being,⁵⁸ penetrates the world like a seed or tensile bond so that the whole world is likewise “an animal and animate and rational.”⁵⁹ Unlike in the *Timaeus*, the Stoic cosmos, a mixture of matter and god,⁶⁰ is the *only* universal animal. You might even say their cosmos just is the Logos’s successive “self-embodiment” in all things.⁶¹

For Maximus too, the Logos’s universal self-embodiment names the creation, sustainment, and perfection of the cosmos. I end with a passage that not only exemplifies our final feature, but the way all three features (numbered in the text) together shape Maximian cosmology.

[1] God, having completed...both the primary *logoi* of creatures and the universal essences of beings all at the same time, continues to work not only the preservation in existence of these same [essences], but also the actualizing creation of the parts potential in these essences, both procession and formation, [2] and still more, through providence, the assimilation of the parts to the universal whole, until, having united the rational impulse of the parts in the more naturally universal *logos* of rational being through the movement of the parts towards well-being, He might make them symphonious and synchronous in relation both to each other and to the whole, these parts having no gnomic difference towards the universals, [3] but one and the same *Logos* will be contemplated throughout the universe, not being distinguished in the modes of those [beings] according to which He is predicated, and in this way He will render active the grace that deifies the universe.⁶²

58 See the fascinating discussion of the Stoic’s “personal pantheism” in Baltzly, 9-14.

59 Diogenes Laertius, 7.138-9; *SVF* 2.634; LS 470; cited at Bénatouil, 32-3: “οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον ζῶν ὄντα καὶ ἔμψυχον καὶ λογικόν.”

60 Diogenes Laertius, 7.137; *SVF* 2.526; LS 44F.

61 Gerald H. Rendall, “Immanence, Stoic and Christian,” *HTR* 14.1 (1921): 4.

62 *QThal* 2, SC 529: “Τοὺς μὲν πρώτους τῶν γεγονότων λόγους ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὰς καθόλου τῶν ὄντων οὐσίας ἀπαξ, ὡς οἶδεν αὐτός, συμπληρώσας, ἔτι ἐργάζεται οὐ μόνον τὴν τούτων αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸ εἶναι συντήρησιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν κατ’ ἐνέργειαν τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς δυνάμει μερῶν δημιουργίαν προόδον τε καὶ σύστασιν, ἔτι μὴν καὶ τὴν διὰ τῆς προνοίας πρὸς τὰ καθόλου τῶν μερικῶν ἑξομοίωσιν, ἕως ἂν, τῷ κατὰ φύσιν γενικωτέρῳ λόγῳ τῆς λογικῆς οὐσίας διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸ εὖ εἶναι κινήσεως τῶν μερικῶν τὴν αὐθαίρετον ἐνώσας ὁρμήν, ποιήσειεν ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ σύμφωνα καὶ ταυτοκίνητα, μὴ ἔχόντων τὴν γνωμικὴν πρὸς τὰ καθόλου τῶν ἐπὶ μέρους διαφοράν, ἀλλ’ εἰς καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἐφ’ ὅλων θεωρηθῆσεται λόγος, μὴ διαφρούμενος τοῖς τῶν καθ’ ὧν ἴσως κατηγορεῖται τρόποις, καὶ οὕτως ἐνεργουμένην τὴν ἐκθεωτικὴν τῶν ὄλων ἐπιδείξεται χάριν· δι’ ἣν γινόμενος ἀνθρωπος ὁ θεὸς καὶ λόγος φησὶν ὁ πατήρ μου ἕως ἄρτι

CONCLUSION

I have argued that three features of Maximus's cosmology—the Logos-*logoi* procession, the creation of universals, and the Logos as personal unity of the universe—bear marks more Stoic than (Neo) Platonic. This is not to say Maximus is simply Stoic any more than his use of Neoplatonic motifs means he's simply Neoplatonic.⁶³ But the Stoic parallels here and many besides—perichoresis, for example⁶⁴—certainly suggest *that* Maximus's cosmology takes Stoic shape. That it does should not finally surprise. In *Ambiguum* 7, after all, Maximus names another alongside Dionysius as an authority for the *logoi* doctrine: "Pantaenus, the teacher of the great Clement." We know little about this pillar of Alexandrian Christianity, but we do know this: Pantaenus was a Stoic.⁶⁵

ἐργάζεται, καὶ γὰρ ἐργάζομαι, ὁ μὲν εὐδοκῶν, ὁ δὲ αὐτουργῶν, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος οὐσιωδῶς τὴν τε τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπὶ πάντων εὐδοκίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτουργίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ συμπληροῦντος, ἵνα γένηται διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάσι εἰς ὃ ἐν τριάδι θεός, ἀναλόγως ὅλος ἐκάστῳ κατὰ χάριν τῶν ἀξιουμένων καὶ ὅλοις ἐνθεωροῦμενος, ὡς ὅλα καὶ ἐκάστῳ μέλει τοῦ σώματος διχὰ μειώσεως ἐνυπάρχει φυσικῶς ἢ ψυχῇ."

63 There's no need to enumerate the many ways Maximus departs from Stoicism, though among the most conspicuous is that for him God, specifically the divine essence, remains utterly removed from created nature—simple, incorporeal—as is evident in *Amb* 7 itself (PG 91, 1080A, 1081B); cf. *Amb* 17.12, PG 91, 1232B; *passim*.

64 Peter Stemmer, "PERICHORESE: Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 27 (1983), 13, notes, "Daß das stoische Konzept einer vollständigen gegenseitigen Durchdringung bei Wahrung der Eigentümlichkeiten der sich durchdringenden Körper für die christliche Theologie interessant sein mußte, ist offensichtlich." All the more so with Maximus, who was perhaps the first to use perichoresis to describe the final state of union between God and creatures; cf. *Amb* 7.12, PG 91, 1076C; *Amb* 10.41, PG 91, 1136D-1137C; *Pyr.* 128, PG 91, 320D; cf. also Thunberg 429-30.

65 Eusebius, *H.E.* V.10; cf. Henry Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity: Selected Translations of Clement and Origen* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977), 16-17. In fact, Maximus's recollection of Pantaenus extends well beyond the one-line reference to Dionysius at *Amb* 7.24.