

# Pagan Energies in Maximus the Confessor: The Influence of Proclus on *Ad Thomam* 5

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**M**AXIMUS THE CONFESSOR (580–662) employed Proclus' (412–485) theory of energy in order to gain the upper hand in the monoergist debate.<sup>1</sup> The discussion arose from a controversial passage in Dionysius the Areopagite's fourth letter, which was explained by Maximus the Confessor in his *Ambigua ad Thomam* 5.<sup>2</sup> Maximus, while repeating verbatim the entire text of Dionysius, can be seen to employ ideas taken from Proclus' neoplatonic theory of energy, in order to explain θεανδρική ἐνέργεια, divine-and-human activity, the phrase employed by Dionysius to define the nature of Christ. Larchet has pointed out similarities on some points

<sup>1</sup> On Maximus some recent works are L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund 1965); V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur. Essence et énergies de Dieu* (Paris 1993); A. Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Edinburgh 1994); J. C. Larchet, *Saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris 2003); H. Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco 2003); D. Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ* (Oxford 2004); A. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford 2005); Th. Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford 2008). For a philosophical analysis of monotheletism see M. Frede, "John of Damascus on Human Action, the Will, and Human Freedom," in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* (Oxford 2002) 63–95. Still important is S. L. Epifanovič, *Prepodobniji Maksim Ispovednik i Vizantiskoje Bogoslovije* (Kiev 1915).

<sup>2</sup> Ed. B. Jansens, *Maximi Confessoris Ambigua ad Thomam* (CCSG 48) (Turnhout 2002); transl. J. Lollar, *Maximus the Confessor: Ambigua to Thomas and Second Letter to Thomas* (Turnhout 2010). Dionysius is cited from G. Heil and A. M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (Berlin 1991).

between the doctrine of energies in Proclus and in Maximus,<sup>3</sup> but has not addressed the direct link with Proclus and why Maximus would seek pagan philosophical help for an Orthodox theological difficulty.<sup>4</sup> This should not be surprising if one considers that Dionysius the Areopagite employed terms and ideas familiar from pagan thought to express Christian ideas. Thus Maximus employed Christian texts for Christian aims but with a pagan argument.

The question which both Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus attempt to answer is how was Jesus both God and Man (Dionys. Areop. *Epist.* 4.1 = Max. Conf. *Ad Thomam* 5.1):

πῶς, φήεις, Ἰησοῦς, ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα, πᾶσιν ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος οὐσιωδῶς συντεταγμένος; οὐ γὰρ ὡς αἷτιος ἀνθρώπων ἐνθάδε λέγεται ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ' ὡς αὐτὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ὄλην ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος ὢν.

You ask: how is Jesus, who is above all, connected in essence to all humans? For he is here called human, not as cause of men, but because he is truly a man in his entire essence.

Thus the question is whether Jesus had a human nature beside the divine, and it is formulated in such a way as to require an explanation based on the nature or being of Christ. Dionysius' original answer was that "he behaved as a human, though superior to humans," ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἄνθρωπου.

<sup>3</sup> J.-C. Larchet, "La conception maximienne des énergies divines et des *logoi* et la théorie platonicienne des idées," *Philotheos* 4 (2004) 276–283. Surprisingly he does not discuss the question in J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines: des origines à saint Jean Damascène* (Paris 2010). In this work he describes in detail various patristic opinions about the energies. In the section devoted to Proclus (50–53) he points to the existence of a doctrine of energy but places it beside the notion of participation (μέθεξις).

<sup>4</sup> Others who indicate the connection between Proclus but do not study it in relation to the doctrine of energies are Karayiannis, *Maxime* 157–159; Bathrellos illustrates the problem of energies only with Christian precedents (*The Byzantine Christ* 195–196, 204–205); Nichols indicates neoplatonism as a sign of Maximus' broad education (*Byzantine Gospel* 15, 251); Thurnberg shows the similarity of the triadic structure of reality to the Proclan one rather than the energies (*Microcosm* 137, 194, 391).

This he explains philosophically as “he truly came into being and obtained being beyond being,” εἰς οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς ἐλθὼν ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν οὐσιώθη (*Epist.* 4.9–10). Dionysius is concerned with the being (οὐσία) of Christ, but adds the issue of the manner in which Jesus behaved. He indicates that two aspects of Christ, the divine and the human natures, had established a new combined divine-human activity. Thus he focuses on the question of Jesus’ activity, not only his being or nature (4.18–20):

καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ Θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ’ ἀνδρωθέντος Θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος.

And therefore he acted not divinely as God, nor humanly as a human, but as God made human, living among us according to a new divine-human activity.

This change of focus from being to activity began a new debate. Indeed this very sentence was employed in 633 to establish the single activity and energy of Christ, the “theandric energy.” This view was defended by Cyrus of Phasis, patriarch of Alexandria from 631 to 641.<sup>5</sup> The opinion was condemned by patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem (634–638)<sup>6</sup> and by Maximus the Confessor<sup>7</sup> in *Ad Thomam* 5, where he says that some have tried to alter the original text of Dionysius (τινα τὴν

<sup>5</sup> For Cyrus of Phasis see A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt* (Oxford 1902), esp. 168–193 and 508–526. Cyrus discussed the monophysite question with the emperor Heraclius when he visited Phasis (Poti, Georgia) in 626 during an anti-Sasanid campaign. The support of patriarch Sergius and the emperor allowed his election as patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt. His letters survive in the acts of the Lateran Council of 649 which however condemned him. He was also condemned at the sixth ecumenical council held at Constantinople in 680–681.

<sup>6</sup> See most recently P. Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy* (Oxford 2009).

<sup>7</sup> The texts of Maximus where he deals with the question of the theandric energy are *Ad Thomam* 5, the *Letter to Marinus*, and the *Letter to Nicander*: PG 91.91–113. Also important is the dispute with Pyrrhus on the question of the wills of Jesus, 91.287–353.

θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν) by adding a word: a *single* energy, μίαν (*Ad Thomam* 5.236–248):

οὐ δ' αὖ πάλιν “μίαν,” ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως νοηθῆναι τῆς καινῆς, καθά τισιν ἔδοξεν, ἢ μιᾶς δυναμένης. ποιότητος γάρ, ἀλλ' οὐ ποσότητος ἢ καινότης, ἐπεὶ καὶ φύσιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἑαυτῇ συνεισάξει τοιαύτην (εἴπερ πάσης φύσεως ὄρος, ὃ τῆς οὐσιώδους αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας καθέστηκε λόγος), ἦν οὐ δὲ πλάστης εἴποι ποτ' ἂν τραγελάφων μύθοις φιλοτιμούμενος. πῶς δὲ καὶ τούτου δοθέντος, ὃ τοῦτο πεφυκῶς μίαν ἔχων ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ταύτην φυσικὴν, ἐπιτελέσει τῇ αὐτῇ τὰ θαύματα καὶ τὰ πάθη, λόγῳ φύσεως ἀλλήλων διαφέροντα, δίχα στερήσεως ἐπισυμβαιούσης τῇ ἀπογενέσει τῆς ἕξεως; οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ὄντων μιᾶ καὶ τῇ αὐτῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τὰναντία πέφυκε δρᾶν, ὅρῳ τε καὶ λόγῳ συνεχόμενον φύσεως.

Again [I do not mean] ‘a single [energy]’ so that one could think, not of a new one, as some have thought, but of a possible one. Innovation concerns quality, not quantity, since it will necessarily unify such a nature to itself (since the definition of each nature stands as the reason for that substantial energy). In this way the Creator would never say he presents the mythical ‘goat-stag’. Given this, if he was born with one energy, a natural one, how will he do miracles and sufferings, which differ from each other by reason of their nature, without loss that accompanies the death of the body? For no being can do what is opposite to its one and the same energy, being bound by the definition and reason of its nature.

This point allows one to date Maximus’ *Ad Thomam* 5 after 633. It is also certain that the aim of the letter is to condemn mono-ergism as expressed by Cyrus of Phasis. Thus the text is part of the debate over the activities or energies of Christ: Maximus and Sophronius argued that Christ had two energies while Cyrus argued for a single energy. Maximus understood that Dionysius’ letter 4 was the key to this issue and needed to be explained in more detail. In *Ad Thomam* 5 Maximus defines two energies of Christ, one divine and one human, although neither of these energies is discussed explicitly by Dionysius. This is quite unusual since *Ad Thomam* 5 is the only commentary and explanation in the *Ambigua* of a text of the Areopagite. Thus,

Dionysius writes about a theandric energy of Christ, which Maximus understands to mean a divine energy and a human energy.

Maximus quotes the entirety of Dionysius' letter, but adds clarifications directly within the text to points he finds unclear. It is in these additions that he demonstrates the limits of the original text and allows the reader to detect where he believes clarifications are needed. He argues that if Christ has two natures, each must have its own activity (*Ad Thomam* 5.124–138):

τί γὰρ καὶ τίς, ποῦ τε καὶ πῶς φύσις ἔσται, συστατικῆς ἔρημος γενομένη δυνάμεως; τὸ γὰρ καθόλου μηδεμίαν ἔχον δύναμιν, οὔτε ἐστίν, οὔτε τί ἐστίν, οὔτε ἔστι τις αὐτοῦ παντελῶς θέσις, φησὶν ὁ πολὺς οὗτος διδάσκαλος. εἰ δὲ τούτων λόγος οὐδεὶς, εὐσεβῶς ὁμολογεῖσθαι χρὴ τὰς τε τοῦ Χριστοῦ φύσεις ὧν αὐτὸς ὑπόστασις ἦν, καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας ὧν αὐτὸς ἔνωσις ἦν ἀληθῆς κατ' ἄμφω τὰς φύσεις, εἴπερ ἑαυτῷ προσφυῶς, μοναδικῶς ἤγουν ἐνοειδῶς ἐνεργῶν, καὶ διὰ πάντων ἀχωρίστως τῇ θεϊκῇ δυνάμει συνεκφαίνων τῆς οἰκείας σαρκὸς τὴν ἐνέργειαν. πῶς γὰρ ἔσται φύσει θεός, καὶ φύσει πάλιν ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτός, οὐκ ἔχων ἀνελλιπῶς τὸ φύσει κατ' ἄμφω πεφυκός; τί τε καὶ τίς ὑπάρχων γνωσθήσεται, μὴ πιστούμενος οἷς ἐνήργει φυσικῶς, ὅπερ ἐστὶ μὴ τρεπόμενον; πῶς δὲ πιστώσεται, καθ' ἓν τῶν ἐξ ὧν, ἐν οἷς τε καὶ ἅπερ ἐστὶν ἀκίνητος μένων καὶ ἀνενέργητος;

What, who, where, and how will there be a nature which is without constituent activity? That which has no activity at all does not exist, nor is it anything, nor does it have any position, says this great teacher. If there is no reason for these, one must profess the natures of Christ of which he was the hypostasis and to profess his natural energies, of which he was true unification in respect to both natures, operating naturally, singularly, and in unity, and in all things manifesting the activity of his own body indivisibly from his divine force. For how will he be God by nature and again man by nature, the same, while not lacking anything of what is natural to both? What and who will he be known to be, if he is not made trustworthy by the things which that which is not changed operates naturally? How will he be

trustworthy with respect to one of those aspects out of which, in which, and for which he remains immobile and inactive?

This is an idea not present in the letter of Dionysius, but it does reflect a principle contained in Dionysius' *Divine Names*, as Maximus himself says (φησὶν ὁ πολὺς οὗτος διδάσκαλος). Thus Maximus believes that each nature requires one energy:<sup>8</sup>

καὶ μὴν Νεστόριος, δύο πρόσωπα λέγων μίαν δογματίζει ἐνέργειαν. εἰ δὲ ταῖς ἐνεργείαις πρόσωπα καθ' ὑμᾶς συνεισάγεται, καὶ τοῖς προσώποις ἀκολούθως αἱ ἐνέργειαι συναχθήσονται· καὶ βιασθήσεσθε, τοῖς ἰδίοις ἐπόμενοι κανόνισιν, ἢ διὰ τὴν μίαν ἐνέργειαν τῆς ἁγίας Θεότητος, καὶ ἐν λέγειν αὐτῆς πρόσωπον· ἢ διὰ τὰς τρεῖς αὐτοῦ ὑποστάσεις, τρεῖς καὶ ἐνεργείας· ἢ σχετικῆν, ὡς Νεστόριος, λέγειν ἔνωσιν· ταύτης γὰρ ἢ μία ἐνέργεια ἢ ἔνωσις, ὡς αὐτὸς Νεστόριος καὶ οἱ τῆς αὐτοῦ φατρίας ἐν τοῖς αὐτῶν ἀπέδειξαν γράμμασι. καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῶν δέ, ἐπειδὴ μία μὲν ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἶδος ἐνέργεια, πολλὰ δὲ αἱ ὑποστάσεις· ἢ διὰ τὴν μίαν κατ' εἶδος ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ἐν τῶν πάντων λέγειν πρόσωπον· ἢ διὰ τὰ πολλὰ πρόσωπα, πολλὰς καὶ ἐνεργείας· καὶ διαπέπτωκε τοῖς Πατράσιν οὕτω γε ὁ φάσκων λόγος· “τὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ὄντα οὐσίας, καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς εἶναι ἐνεργείας.”

And Nestorius, says there are two persons, but professes one energy. If he will introduce persons with energies among us, it follows that the energies will also be operated by the persons. So you will be forced, following the same logic, either to say that the person has a single energy, because of the single energy of the Holy Divinity, or that there are three energies, because it has three hypostases. Otherwise again you will have to say that unity is insubstantial, as does Nestorius, for a single energy is unity, as Nestorius himself says and those of his fraternity have shown in their writings. In our opinion there is one energy in each form but multiple are the hypostases, and we say either that (because there is one energy in each form) each person has one of them, or that (because there are many persons) there are also multiple energies. And it trips against the church fathers to speak thus: “beings of the same essence are also of the same energy.”

<sup>8</sup> Max. Conf. *Disp. cum Pyrrho*, PG 91.336–337.

At this point Maximus understands Christ as having two natures and two energies. The solution is important since it allows one to compare the two aspects of Christ which had become separated. There seemed to be a deep chasm between the divine and human aspects of Christ. Indeed Christ's divine nature was defined as ὑπερούσιος, "beyond being," and therefore without any connection with the mortal nature which was tied to being. However the aim of Maximus in *Ad Thomam* 5 is to bridge this chasm and demonstrate that Christ could effectively operate as God and Human at the same time. The doctrine of the two energies and how these operate at the same time within Christ allows one to combine both the supernatural and natural deeds of Christ as recounted in the Gospels.

The novelty of *Ad Thomam* 5 is that Maximus adopts ideas of the neoplatonist Proclus in order to complete his reading of Dionysius' letter 4. The question does not lie in the intention or the result of the doctrine, but rather in the method, the meaning of these energies themselves. *Ad Thomam* 5 supplies more insights into Maximus' opinion and reveals a dependence on Proclus' theory of power and energy. Maximus believes that his own understanding of energies is implied in the expression θεανδρική ἐνέργεια, but does not find a definition or discussion of the term in Dionysius. Therefore, he turns to a recent neoplatonic doctrine to help him.

Since the time of Plotinus, the term 'energy' (ἐνέργεια) had gained a new meaning, which no longer signified actuality in contrast to potentiality as it had for Aristotle.<sup>9</sup> Energy, ἐνέργεια, had become a synonym of δύναμις, so that both came to mean *power*. As Lloyd has pointed out, the doctrine of

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Arist. *Phys.* 3.4–6. One should not forget the important and ancient doctrine already expressed in Plato in which activity was considered superior to being. Pl. *Soph.* 247D8–E4 (an important passage for neoplatonists): λέγω δὴ τὸ καὶ ὅποιαν οὖν τινα κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἴτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ἕτερον ὅτι οὖν πεφυκὸς εἴτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν καὶ σμικρότατον ὑπὸ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου, κἂν εἰ μόνον εἰς ἅπαξ, πᾶν τοῦτο ὄντως εἶναι· τίθεμαι γὰρ ὄρον [ὀρίζειν] τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις. See also Plot. *Enn.* 6.8.20.

energy as power was interpreted in different ways by different neoplatonists.<sup>10</sup> Proclus argued against Plotinus' view of energy and developed his own theory (*Theol. Plat.* III 40.2–6 S.-W.):

εἰ δὲ ἄμορφόν τινα καὶ ἀνεΐδεον φύσιν καὶ ἀόριστον ἐπὶ τὴν νοητὴν οὐσίαν ἀναπέμπουσι, τῆς Πλατωνικῆς ἀμαρτάνειν μοι δοκοῦσι διανοίας. οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὕλη τοῦ πέρατος τὸ ἄπειρον, ἀλλὰ δύναμις· οὐδὲ εἶδος τοῦ ἀπείρου τὸ πέρας, ἀλλὰ ὑπαρξις.

If they attribute a shapeless, formless, and undefined nature to the intelligible being, I think they mistake Plato's intention. For infinity is not the matter of limit, but the power of it, and the limit is not the form of the infinite, but its existence.

Proclus' view is that infinity is represented by power and finitude by being. Thus he sees reality as a mixture of what is finite with what is infinite, a mixture of power and being. Applied to Christianity, the mystery of the incarnation would be defined by the conjunction of what is finite with what is infinite. Maximus chooses this approach which explains his insistence on contrasting precisely these two terms (*Ad Thomam* 5.73–84):

καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνήργει τὰ ἀνθρώπου, τὴν τῶν στοιχείων ἀπαθῶς καινοτομήσας φύσιν ταῖς βάσεσι. καὶ δηλοῖ σαφῶς ὕδωρ ἄστατον, ὑλικῶν καὶ γερῶν ποδῶν ἀνέχον βάρος, καὶ μὴ ὑπεῖκον, ἀλλ' ὑπερφυεῖ δυνάμει πρὸς τὸ ἀδιάχυτον συνιστάμενον, εἴπερ ἀληθῶς ἀβρόχοις ποσὶ, σωματικὸν ὄγκον ἔχουσι καὶ ὕλης βάρος, τὴν ὑγρὰν καὶ ἄστατον οὐσίαν μεταβατικῶς ἐπεπόρευτο, περιπατῶν ἐπὶ θαλάσσης ὡς ἐπ' ἐδάφους, καὶ τῆ δυνάμει τῆς ἑαυτοῦ θεότητος ἀχωρίστως διὰ τῆς μεταβάσεως συνεκφαίνων τῆς οἰκείας σαρκὸς τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἐνέργειαν, εἴπερ φύσει ταύτης ἡ μεταβατικὴ καθέστηκε κίνησις, ἀλλ' οὐ τῆς ἠνωμένης αὐτῆ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ὑπεραπείρου καὶ ὑπερουσίου θεότητος.

And he acted divinely as a human and without passion he fundamentally renewed the nature of the elements. The still water reveals this clearly, since it supported the weight of the material and earthly feet, and did not yield. By supernatural power it

<sup>10</sup> A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford 1990) 108–110.



remained unconfused, since he truly crossed the liquid and still being with dry feet, which bear bodily volume and natural weight, walking on the sea as if on a surface. By the power of his divinity inseparably he revealed his natural energy through the movement of his own body. By its nature the transitional movement began naturally, while the divinity beyond infinity and beyond being was not unified hypostatically.

Thus one may see that Maximus has left aside the question of the natures and replaced it with a concern for Christ's activities or energies. Once Maximus had focused on energies, he could employ Proclus' distinctions of power and being. The pagan neoplatonist believed that being itself is a limited power and distinguished between an infinite and finite power.<sup>11</sup> The distinction allowed Proclus to identify the finite power with being itself.<sup>12</sup> Thus Proclus defined a power which is infinite and another which is finite. Such a notion appears often in Proclus, considered one of the principles which generates all levels of reality.

Thus Proclus had combined the infinite with δύναμις and the finite with ἐνέργεια. Such a view was convenient for Maximus since he could apply such definitions to the two natures of Christ and remove the chasm between the mortal, finite physical nature and the immortal, infinite, divine nature. Maximus' adoption of such a strategy is clarified by his distinction of a divine power and human energy (*Ad Thomam* 5.127–133):

εἰ δὲ τούτων λόγος οὐδεὶς, εὐσεβῶς ὁμολογεῖσθαι χρὴ τὰς τε τοῦ Χριστοῦ φύσεις ὧν αὐτὸς ὑπόστασις ἦν, καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ φυσικὰς ἐνεργείας ὧν αὐτὸς ἔνωσις ἦν ἀληθῆς κατ' ἄμφω τὰς φύσεις, εἴπερ ἑαυτῷ προσφυῶς, μοναδικῶς ἤγουν ἐνοειδῶς ἐνεργῶν, καὶ διὰ πάντων ἀχωρίστως τῇ θεϊκῇ δυνάμει συνεκφαίνων τῆς οἰκειᾶς σαρκὸς τὴν ἐνέργειαν.

<sup>11</sup> *Elem. Theol.* 78.1: πᾶσα δύναμις ἢ τελεία ἐστὶν ἢ ἀτελής.

<sup>12</sup> Procl. *In Tim.* I 371.24–25 D.: τῆς δὲ δυνάμεως ἀνέκλειπτον καὶ ἄπειρον πρόοδον ἐχούσης, τῆς δὲ ἐνεργείας τελειότητα καὶ οὐσιώδη ποίησιν λαχούσης.

If their argument is wrong, it is necessary to profess piously the natures of Christ (of which he is hypostasis) and his natural energies (of which he is the true unification in both natures), and that they act appropriately, uniquely or individually, and that he reveals the energy of his own flesh by divine activity through all things inseparably.

Maximus here expresses that both natures of Christ employ both energies. Adopting Proclus' distinction of finite energy and infinite power, Maximus can bridge the chasm dividing the mortal and immortal natures of Christ. Dionysius was interested mainly in the power beyond-infinity of God rather than the powers appropriate for each entity.

Maximus' interest in Proclus' energies is also revealed by incidental remarks. At 5.92 he employs *αὐθυπόστατος*, "self-constituted," a term which never appears in Dionysius but is a favourite word of Proclus, who dedicated a number of propositions in the *Elements of Theology* to define it (42–47). Maximus employs it in conjunction with the term *δύναμις* when discussing the human activities of Christ (*Ad Thomam* 5.85–98):

ἅπαξ γὰρ ἀνθρωπικῶς οὐσιωθεὶς ὁ ὑπερούσιος Λόγος, μετὰ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης οὐσίας ἀμείωτον εἶχεν ὡς ἰδίαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὴν γενικῶς αὐτὸν ὡς ἄνθρωπον χαρακτηρίζουσιν τῆς οὐσίας κίνησιν, πᾶσιν οἷς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐνήργει φυσικῶς εἰδοποιουμένην, εἴπερ ἀληθῶς γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος, ἀναπνέων, λαλῶν, βαδίζων, χεῖρας κινῶν, προσφυῶς ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι χρώμενος εἰς ἀντίληψιν τῶν αἰσθητῶν, πεινῶν, διψῶν, ἐσθίων, ὑπνῶν, κοπιῶν, δακρύων, ἀγωνιῶν, καίτοι δύναμις ὧν αὐθυπόστατος, καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα, οἷς, αὐτουργικῶς ψυχῆς δίκη φυσικῶς τὸ συμφυῆς σῶμα κινούσης, τὴν προσληφθεῖσαν φύσιν κινῶν, ὡς αὐτοῦ καὶ γενομένην ἀληθῶς καὶ λεγομένην, ἢ κυρίως εἰπεῖν, αὐτὸς δίχα τροπῆς τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἐστὶ πραγματικῶς ἢ φύσις γενόμενος, ἀφαντασιάστως τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν οἰκονομίαν πεπλήρωκεν.

Once the Word beyond being was incarnate as a human, he also maintained the movement of his essence undiminished, since it was his own, together with human essence. It generally characterized him as a human, and formed him with all those elements by which he acted naturally as a human, since he became truly a

man: breathing, speaking, walking, moving his hands, naturally employing his senses in order to capture sensations, being hungry, thirsty, eating, sleeping, being tired, crying, suffering, even though he is a self-constituted power and all the rest. With these (senses) he moves his own nature (as the soul moves naturally its attached body), since it truly is and is called his, or to speak properly, without changing he became that which nature really is, and invisibly fulfilled the plan for us.

He exemplifies all types of human activities but incidentally remarks: “even though he is a self-constituted power.” This is in marked contrast to the pagan Proclus, who never employs the term ‘self-constituted’ with either power or activity. What is self-constituted derives its origin from something superior but otherwise is entirely independent. Dodds points out that one of the characteristics of the self-constituted is freedom of action.<sup>13</sup> It is precisely for this reason that Maximus employs the term which defines freedom and so he also adds that Christ’s divinity suffered voluntarily (*Ad Thomam* 5.192–195):

ὡς μὲν Θεός, τῆς ἰδίας ἦν κινητικὸς ἀνθρωπότητος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος δέ, τῆς οἰκείας ἐκφαντικὸς ὑπῆρχε θεότητος, θεϊκῶς μὲν ἴν’ οὕτως εἶπω τὸ πάσχειν ἔχων (ἐκούσιον γάρ), ἐπεὶ μὴ ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος ἦν.

As God, he moved his own humanity; as man, he revealed his own divinity. He was able to suffer as God, so to speak (for it was voluntary), since he was not a mere man.

The addition of ‘voluntarily’ was not necessary, unless he thought it typical of the divine nature. This self-constituted divine power is contrasted with human energy.

*Ad Thomam* 5 is earlier than the debates on the wills of Christ, i.e. the monothelite controversy. His line of argument reveals how it would be possible to pass from an argument about energies to one concerning wills, a step not yet undertaken at this date. The interest in the human and divine energies is important as it explains how Christ as a human could perform

<sup>13</sup> E. R. Dodds, *Proclus, The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1967) 223–224.

miracles, since divine activities expand through human nature (5.193–195). By positing two energies which each interact with both natures, he can explain the complete humanity of Christ, which had been an intellectual problem for monophysites and dyophysites, due to the strict separation of human and divine natures. Thus the natures are clearly distinct but the activities are intertwined.

Maximus' strategy allows him to retain the distinction between the divine and human natures, but also to explain how Christ could exhibit both divine and human actions. The strict dyophysite point of view made it difficult to explain how both divine and human characteristics could be seated within one person. It is for this reason that Maximus explains the human functions of Christ (such as walking eating, suffering) as well as the divine ones (absolute freedom of choice). By adopting the Proclan distinction of energies he thought to be able to convincingly reunite the account of Christ as a single person with two natures and two energies which he read in the Gospels.

Maximus' adoption of energy to define the activity of Christ depended on Dionysius the Areopagite, but his interpretation of a divine power and human energy was based on Proclus' view of the nature of energy or power. The importance of such a nuance is that Maximus adopted a different manner of viewing existence, a view based on relations rather than ontological units. It is for this reason that he and his opponents could misunderstand each other, as witnessed in his dialogue with Pyrrhus. Maximus' opponent allegedly confused nature with hypostasis and found it difficult to see the activities as being typical of each nature rather than of the single hypostasis (*Disp. cum Pyrrho*, PG 91.340):

τοῦτο καὶ περὶ τῶν φύσεων ἕτερος λέγει πρὸς σέ, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπειδὴ δυαδικὴ αὐτοῦ ἡ φύσις, ἥδη καὶ δύο εἶησαν, καὶ λεχθείησαν αἱ φύσεις· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ μία ἦν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὑπόστασις, μία ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ ἡ φύσις, καὶ λέγεται. πλὴν ἵνα πάντα παραλίπω, ὅσα περὶ τούτου ῥηθῆναι δύναται, μίαν ἐνέργειαν λέγοντες, ὁποῖαν ταύτην λέγειν ἀξιοῦτε; θεῖαν, ἢ ἀνθρωπίνην, ἢ οὐδετέραν; ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν θεῖαν, Θεὸν μόνον τὸν Χριστὸν λέγετε· εἰ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνην, οὐδὲ ὅλως Θεόν, ἀλλ'

ἄνθρωπον μόνον ψιλόν· εἰ δὲ οὐδετέραν τούτων, οὐδὲ Θεόν, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἀνύπαρκτον δογματίζετε τὸν Χριστόν.

Someone else tells you this about his natures: not because he has two natures, let them be two and let them be called natures, but because his hypostasis is one, it is said that one is his nature. Nevertheless, let me leave aside all that can be said about this. If they profess one energy, which one do you think they are defining? Divine or human or neither? But if divine, you claim Christ is only God? If human, he is not wholly God but only a simple man? If neither of these, neither God nor man, then you define Christ as inexistent.

Such a passage illustrates that Maximus and Pyrrhus were talking at cross purposes, for one was interested in natures and the other in energies. In other words, what for Pyrrhus was self-constituted was nature, while for Maximus it was power. This illustrates the influence of such new developments in thought as expressed in Proclus.

Maximus' aim is to explain more easily passages from the New Testament. Indeed, in the dialogue with Pyrrhus the only time he uses the technical term 'self-constituted' is for the purpose of exegesis (*PG* 91.321):

καὶ ἐτέρωθι πάλιν· “κἀκεῖθεν ἀναστὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος. καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἰκίαν, οὐδένα ἤθελε γνῶναι· καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαθεῖν.” εἰ καθ' ὃ Θεὸς ὁ Χριστὸς δύναμις ἦν ἀνυπόστατος· καθ' ὃ δὲ ἄνθρωπος, ἀσθενεία· εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐσταυρώθη, φησὶν ὁ θεῖος Ἀπόστολος, ἐξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῆ ἐκ δυνάμεως Θεοῦ· ἄρα καθ' ὃ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ οὐ καθ' ὃ Θεός, εἰσελθὼν εἰς οἰκίαν, οὐκ ἤθελεν ἵνα τις γνῶ· καὶ οὐκ ἠδυνήθη λαθεῖν· καὶ θελητικὸς ἦν ὁ αὐτός, καὶ καθ' ὃ ἄνθρωπος.

And elsewhere once more: “He rose from there and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house, but did not wish anyone to recognize him. And he could not escape their notice.” If Christ, as God, was a self-constituted force, then however, as man, a weakness. For if he was even crucified out of weakness, as says the divine Apostle, yet he lives by God's force. Therefore, as man not as God, he entered the house and did not wish that someone recognize him, and could not escape notice. So he was willing, as man.

Maximus is trying to give a further interpretation to the difficult question of the will of Christ while on the cross, as he could have saved himself since he was divine. The influence of Proclus is due to his elaboration of the Platonic doctrines of power and energy which could be convenient for Maximus to explain what he thought were ambiguities in Dionysius the Areopagite. Contemporaries were aware of these strategies and the new employment of Proclus in theological debate. The poet George of Pisidia criticized Proclus in a poem dedicated to the Patriarch Sergius (610–638), who had supported monoergism.<sup>14</sup> Thus at the imperial court the connection between Maximus' new interpretations and the pagan ideas of Proclus was known.

In the development of Byzantine thought, the innovation of *Ad Thomam* 5 is fundamental for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the direct understanding and application of principles found in Proclan thought to Christian theology in the seventh century. This had been done already by Dionysius the Areopagite, but the study of Proclus continued also in the seventh century. And it would seem that Proclus was employed by an opponent of the patriarch Sergius, while the latter's followers condemned the pagan thinker. Second, the fundamental shift from considering power instead of being as central allows the further development of the doctrine of the knowability of the energies of God (such as the uncreated light of Mt. Tabor) which is central to the hesychast controversy nearly seven hundred years later. Such a success in interpreting both the Christological problem and Dionysius the Areopagite is a tribute to the subtle mind of Maximus the Confessor.

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<sup>14</sup> *Hexaemeron* 60–61: ὁ σοφιστὰ Πρόκλε, τῶν κάτω λόγων | ὁ πολλὰ βροντῶν ἐκ νεφῶν λοξοδρόμων, κτλ.