

THE REVISION OF THE BOUNDARY CONCEPTS *SYMBOL* AND *IMAGE* IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF
MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR IN RESPECT TO THE WORKS OF PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS THE
AREOPAGITE¹

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Abstract: We will try to illustrate and clarify with the help of one specific hermeneutic tool – the philosophical concept *boundary* – the Byzantine thinkers' solution in the face of Maximus the Confessor of the well-known problem with the symbolical interpretation of the sacraments and the Church in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

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I.

In *The Celestial Hierarchy* Dionysius makes the statement, that the only path towards God of the fallen man, who in this life has the sensitive perception as a condition of knowledge and cannot comprehend the incorporeal concepts and truths directly, needs the symbols to uplift him, and the higher hierarchic orders to lead one in his contemplation of these illustrative entrances to the upper levels of the mind and the understanding:

Filled by God, our first leaders generously sought uplifting and divinization for their subordinates. And so, using images derived from the senses they spoke of the transcendent. They passed on something united in a variegation and plurality. **Of necessity they made human what was divine. They put material on what was immaterial.** In their written and unwritten

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initiations, they **brought the transcendent down to our level.**

[376D]²

The main argument is double layered. Several times he emphasizes, that not only our ordinary dissimilarity is the cause, that “we lack the ability to be directly (ἀμέσως) raised up to conceptual contemplations, [and] we need our own upliftings that come naturally to us and which can raise before us the permitted forms of the marvellous and unformed sights.”³, but that it is ontologically impossible for them to be revealed through words, signs or similarities, which are characteristic of the corporeal essences. They can show themselves to us only through inexpressible and sacred parables – or, as Dionysius says, through *dissimilar symbols* – which reveal-*and*-conceal the innermost truth, that remains “inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*”, for “not everyone is sacred”⁴ and reveals itself to the few, who have managed to uplift their mind enough to see clearly beyond the visible signs. Precisely in this context gives us Dionysius a warning, that every similarity would be insufficient, for the transcendent Deity, as it *really* is, “is far beyond every manifestation of being and of life; no reference to light can characterize it; every reason or intelligence falls short of similarity to it”.⁵

In the same manner, when the author speaks of celestial essences, he mentions dissimilar similarities.⁶ This could seem contradictory and confusing at the beginning,⁷ but the lack of image of the representation helps the mind to tear itself away from the materiality and to turn beyond the sense perceptive world, because the mind is “not permitted to dwell on imagery so inadequate, but [is] provoked to get behind the material show, to get accustomed to the idea of going beyond appearances to those

2 PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, ‘The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy’ (=EH), in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, transl. by Colm Luibheid, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 199.

cf. P ROEM, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York, 1993, p. 93.

³ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, ‘The Celestial Hierarchy’ (=CH), in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, transl. by Colm Luibheid, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, II, 2, 140A, p. 149.

⁴ Ibid.; cf. EH, 176B, p. 226.

⁵ Ibid. CH, II, 3, 140D, p. 149.

⁶ This way of knowing God rests on the famous Bible passage Rom. 1:20: “or the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead” [King James Version].

⁷ cf. CH, II, 5, 145A, p. 152

upliftings which are not of this world”.⁸ And more – even the forms, “drawn from the lowliest matter”, could be signs for the intelligible beauty, as far as even this matter “owes its subsistence to absolute beauty”⁹

The condition of building this type of symbolism is the specificity, which Dionysius introduces, and that is the rule, that one should “use the similarities as dissimilarities (ἀνομοίωζ)”¹⁰ This specific characteristic of the similarity leads the symbol to its upper limit, because Dionysius almost extracts the images from their sense perceptive dependence by extracting not just the schematic structure, that could bring to the mind the idea of something similar, which the mind can, of course, comprehend and preserve, but by extracting the possibility of their material actuality – their bare existence as partial beings and the cause of their being, i.e. their presence as such is the one, which leads the mind up to the idea, that they are ontologically and essentially secured by some non-corporeal reality. Precisely their dissimilarity preserves us from “reading” these images within pure Neo-platonic context, that is why this requirement is so important for Dionysius, as far as he Christianizes the Neo-platonic discourse by using as a fundament of his ideas the doctrine of the creation and of the complete transcendence of the beginning in relation to the creatures.

The distinction between the symbols and the Divine Names¹¹, which are used as *similarities*, because the “sacred revelation works in a double way” – through similar sacred images and by the usage of “formations which are dissimilar and even entirely inadequate and ridiculous”.¹² In this sense only the dissimilar representations are appropriate for the invisible,¹³ when the affirmative expressions are further removed from the truth of Divine, than the negative ones. As we speak of material images such

⁸ *ibid.*, 145B, p. 153.

⁹ *ibid.* 144B, p. 151.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 144C, p. 152. “Using matter, one may be lifted up to the immaterial archetypes. Of course one must be careful to use the similarities as dissimilarities, as discussed, to avoid one-to-one correspondences, to make the appropriate adjustments as one remembers the great divide between the intelligible and the perceptible.”

¹¹ According to Dionysius, the status of the Divine Names is much higher than the one of the perceptible images (or the symbols), even if they are not completely similar to the absolute truth, cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *CH*, II, 2-3.

¹² *ibid.*, 140B-140C, p. 149.

¹³ *ibid.*, 141A, p. 150.

as the symbols, which are set lower than the Names, it is clear, that the dissimilar they are, the more appropriate they become, since higher-flown shapes could well mislead someone.¹⁴

Hence, as far as the symbols are corporeal things and because of their dissimilarity, they *can as a boundary* leads us beyond the sense-perceptive up to the intelligible. In that way preserves the symbol its material component, because the paradoxical boundary transgression from the visible *as such* up to the invisible remains – it transforms the representation of the corporeal thing, which now acts as if it is not just a piece of dead matter, but material-*being*. Here emerges the *being* of something, which *is, but could not be*,¹⁵ and the only reason of its existence is supported by non-corporeal, nonmaterial principle, which is completely dissimilar to any limited being. This ultimate “detaching” of the sensitive dimension of the symbol and of the corporeity of the symbolic dual unity, trough the requirement of using the similarities as dissimilarities, makes it easier for Maximus Confessor, who unfolds the energetic aspect of the image and manages to specify the way, in which the sacraments of the Church make possible our personal mystagogical co-*opera*-tion with God.

Dionysius lays particular stress on the dissimilarity not only in the context of the non-Neo-platonic “reading” of the symbol, but because it allows the uplifting of the mind, as far as it contains the indefeasible condition for knowledge in this state of the human nature – the sense-perceptive thing. Besides this, the dissimilar similarity offers to the mind the idea of dependency, which presumes the existence of an ontological guarantee for the being of the insufficient limited object.

¹⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 141B: “[...] I doubt that anyone would refuse to acknowledge that incongruities are more suitable for lifting our minds up into the domain of the spiritual than similarities are. High-flown shapes could well mislead someone into thinking that the heavenly beings are golden or gleaming men, glamorous, wearing lustrous clothing, giving off flames which cause no harm, or that they have other similar beauties with which the word of God has fashioned the heavenly minds.”

¹⁵ Later defines Thomas Aquinas *contingens* as corporeal being, which *could be or not be*, cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, Textum Leoninum Romae 1889 editum, I^a q. 52 a. 1 co.: “substantia incorporea sua virtute contingensrem corpoream continet ipsam” and I^a q. 86 a. 3 co.: “contingens est quod potest esse et non esse”.

In the *Mystical Theology* arranges Dionysius the *apophatic* theology higher than the *kataphatic* one,¹⁶ and meta-conceptualization¹⁷ is actually negation of the negations of all opposites and therefore it doesn't have the effect of double negation, which could become affirmation. This meta-negation actually signifies the impossibility of conceptual expression the superabundance of the perfect and unique cause, which is beyond any assertion or denial.¹⁸

Other priority of the dissimilarity is its *boundary duality*, which allows the wise men of God to

separate the "Holy of Holies" from defilement by anything in the realm of the imperfect or the profane. They therefore honour the dissimilar shape so that the divine things remain inaccessible to the profane and so that all those with a real wish to see the sacred imagery may not dwell on the types as true. So true negations and the unlike comparisons with their last echoes offer due homage to the divine things. **For this reason, there is nothing ridiculous about representing heavenly beings with similarities which are dissimilar and incongruous**, for the reasons mentioned. [145B]¹⁹

The higher, incorporeal realm of the angels is purely conceptual, beyond our spatial and temporal world of sense perception. In the natural context of this world, our physical senses encounter perceptible phenomena.²⁰ Because of God's providence, these perceptible things turn out to be symbols of the higher conceptual realm that

¹⁶ PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, 'The Mystical Theology' (=MTh), in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, transl. by Colm Luibheid, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, III-IV, 1033C – 1040D, pp. 140-141.

¹⁷ The highest step of signification, i.e. non-conceptual conceptualization of the supreme Cause, cf. *ibid.*, V, 1044D - 1048B.

¹⁸ cf. *ibid.*: "It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; it is also beyond every denial."

¹⁹ CH, II, 5, pp. 152-153.

²⁰ EH, I, 2, 373B, p. 197: "The heavenly beings, because of their intelligence, have their own permitted conceptions of God. For us, on the other hand, it is by way of the perceptible images (αἰσθητῶν συμβόλων) that we are uplifted *as far as we can be* to the contemplation of what is divine."

thus uplift us in proper hierarchical order to unity with God, that is, to divinization. Here we meet the author's central role for symbols, in extremely condensed form, as lifting us up to God. In the first chapter of *The Celestial Hierarchy* Dionysius writes:

All this accounts for the fact that the sacred institution and source of perfection established our most pious hierarchy. He modelled it on the hierarchies of heaven, and clothed these immaterial hierarchies in numerous **material figures and forms** so that, in a way appropriate to our nature, we might be uplifted (ἀναγογᾶς) from these most venerable images to interpretations²¹ and assimilations which are simple and inexpressible. For it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies without the aid of those **material means** capable of guiding us as our nature requires. [...] ²² And so it goes for all the gifts transcendently received by the beings of heaven, gifts which are granted to us **in a symbolic mode.**²³

The source of spiritual perfection provided us with **perceptible images** of these heavenly minds. He did so out of concern for us and because he wanted us to be made godlike. He made the heavenly hierarchies known to us. He made our own hierarchy a ministerial colleague of these divine hierarchies by an

21 On this use of the term "uplifting" (*anagogy*) to mean an "interpretation," see *CH*, 15, 337D, note 179; and cf. *ROREM*, op.cit., pp. 49-82; 186-219.

22 "Hence, any thinking person realizes that the appearances of beauty are signs of an invisible loveliness. The beautiful odors which strike the senses are representations of a conceptual diffusion. Material lights are images of the outpouring of an immaterial gift of light. The thoroughness of sacred discipleship indicates the immense contemplative capacity of the mind. Order and rank here below are a sign of the participation in Jesus", *CE*, 1, 3, p. 145.

23 These references to the Eucharist and to the beauties, odors, and lights there perceived by the senses suggest that the opening of *The Celestial Hierarchy* also introduces "our" hierarchy, more thoroughly discussed in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Chapter 3 of *The Celestial Hierarchy* concludes the introduction to both hierarchies; Chapter 4 then begins the specific discussion of the angelic hierarchy.

assimilation, to the extent that is humanly feasible, to their
godlike priesthood. [121C-124A]²⁴

This anagogical interpretation of biblical and liturgical symbols²⁵ by Dionysius is part of his overall metaphysics²⁶. The uplifting from perceptible images to their conceptual meanings, to the contemplation of the divine, is intimately related to the return upward toward God, which can be realized only through the hierarchical stages. The anagogy that occurs through interpreting symbols is itself the return to God.²⁷

Within the order of beings and within the order of symbols there is hierarchical succession – the sacraments cannot be arranged horizontally besides the visual similarities or the similarities, which represent the celestial orders, as far as they possess more intensive capacity for signification, because they participate in many ways in the movement of the hierarchy upwards to God. Every being is a theophany, and in the same way the signifying, the symbolizing power of every image is sacred.²⁸ Only within this hierarchical context, where the hierarchy is a sacred salvageable, but also cognitive movement in a specific order²⁹, there is sense of emphasizing the fact, that the decoding of all the layers of a symbol is not accessible for everyone – the highest minds only can forsake the visible as it is and perceives the invisible signified by it. Every hierarchical order is strictly constituted, and the higher one member moves, the more intensifies its cognitive power, which is a part of the personal

24 *CH*, I, 3, pp. 145-146.

25 “He revealed all this to us in the sacred pictures of the scriptures so that he might lift us in spirit up through the perceptible to the conceptual, from sacred shapes and symbols to the simple peaks of the hierarchies of heaven.”, *ibid.*

26 *Rorem*, p. 93.

27 *ibid.*

²⁸ Dionysius uses these “images shaped by the workings of the symbolic representations of God” [*MTh*, III, 1033B, p.139], when he examines the mysteries of the Church. He considers them as an actual hierophany. This symbolic layer of the mysteries will be removed by Maximus.

²⁹ The definition of hierarchy reads as follows: “If one talks then of hierarchy, what is meant is a certain perfect arrangement, an image of the beauty of God which sacredly works out the mysteries of its own enlightenment in the orders and levels of understanding of the hierarchy, and which is likened toward its own source as much as is permitted.”, *CH*, III, 2, 165B, p. 154;

For detailed analyze of the hierarchy cf. G КАРПЕВ, ‘The Teaching of Pseudo-Dionysius on Hierarchy and the Culture of Western medieval Europe’ [Учението на Псевдо-Дионисий Ареопагит за йерархията и културата на средновековна Западна Европа], in *byzantica minora*, Lik, Sofia, 2000, pp. 45 ff.

perfection. On one hand, the sacraments are symbolic, and that means, they are not fully similar to God, but at the same time, they contain great number of energetic layers, which are perceived uniquely by each person. This precisely is often underlined by Dionysius – that “for every member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God *as far as possible* (ἀναλογίαν).”³⁰

The dual necessity of these symbols³¹ is unfolded in the context of the teaching of the hierarchy. There are two reasons discussed above in chapter two of *The Celestial Hierarchy*, namely, **secrecy** and **accommodation**, and they are connected with the dynamic distribution of the cognitive action of the hierarchical structure.³² The symbols and the anagogical ascendance are not simply a formal instrument, which would work within every cognitive scheme – they are ontologically dependent on the hierarchical order of the whole world, which rules not only the arrangement of the material objects in it, but also the movement of the mind and the whole soul.³³

They did this for us, not simply because of the profane from whom the symbols were to be kept out of reach, but because, as I have already stated, **our own hierarchy is itself symbolical (συμβολική τίς) and adapted to what we are.** In a divine fashion it needs perceptible things to lift us up into the domain of conceptions. [377A]³⁴

There is a strict unbreakable ontological order of the capacity of understanding. Dionysius says, that the most mysterious passages of scripture, which contain “the

³⁰ CH, III, 2, 165B, p. 154. Here again Dionysius stresses on the analogical element of the symbolic ascendance, which is always a personal act and depends on the status of the unique person in the hierarchical order.

³¹ cf. CH, II, 2, 140A, p. 149: “Now there are two reasons for creating types for the typeless, for giving shape to what is actually without shape. First, we lack the ability to be directly raised up to conceptual contemplations. We need our own upliftings that come naturally to us and which can raise before us the permitted forms of the marvelous and unformed sights.”

³² cf. P ROREM, op. cit., pp.54-55.

³³ cf. EH, I, 5, 377A, p. 199: “Now the reasons for such symbolism were revealed to the divine sacred-initiators and it would have been wrong of them to explain them fully to those still on the road to initiation. They understood quite well that those empowered by God to lay down sacred norms went about organizing the hierarchy into fixed and unconfused orders, giving each, as was due, its appropriate allotment”

³⁴ EH, I, 5, 377A, p. 199

sacred and hidden truth about the celestial intelligences”, that is inexpressible in simple words or signs, may be inaccessible to the hoi polloi. “Not everyone is sacred, and, as scripture says, knowledge is not for everyone.”³⁵ The dynamic transition of the divine energy is strictly hierarchic ordered, the boundary between the orders of existing, understanding and participating is determinate by the principal of the hierarchy itself – the rays “have the capacities which lift up the lower to the higher and the providential powers which enable the superiors to come down to the level of those beneath them.”³⁶

Here comes the role of the ambivalent symbol, which in dialectic dynamics comprises the necessary for our sensual perception material, changeable, part and the layered intelligible part. The symbol acts as a positive boundary, which leads the contemplator, not simply epistemologically, but mainly ontologically, to the level of knowledge, accessible from his personal position and within his essential order. The Areopagite insist, that

This sacrament symbolizing (*συμβόλοις*) the sacred divine birth **has nothing unfitting or profane in its perceptible images. Rather, it reflects the enigmas of a contemplative process worthy of God**, and it does so by way of natural reflections suited to the human intellect. [397AB]³⁷

By the contemplating of the symbols we always have two dividable parts, but there are several levels of division. Whether it is similar or dissimilar, every symbol, like every divine name, has meaning only in the light of the divinization of the intelligence, which cannot be effected on the level of the symbol any more than on that of the name. The positive dynamic boundary essence of the symbol is grounded on the paradoxical unity of the opposites, which union is guaranteed by the grace of God and realized in the hierarchic law. The whole contemplation-sections, called *θεωρία*, concern the breaking of the symbol of every sacrament into its pieces, in order to be unfolding the divine meaning, pointed by it. When the hierarch uncovers the veiled gifts, when he makes a multiplicity of what had originally been one, when the distributed sacrament and those

35 *EH*, 140 A-B, II, 2, p. 148.

36 *DN*, IV, 2, 696B, p. 71.

37 *EH*, 1, *contemplatio* 1, p. 203.

receiving it are made perfectly one, he resorts “to the perceptible, to imagery, he makes clear that which gives life to our minds. He offers Jesus Christ to our view.”³⁸

The symbols are the necessary entrance up to the intelligible, to the perfection, and to the possible in this life and according to our personal measure divinization. The problematic element in the interpretation of Dionysius is, that he puts the symbolic decoding of the universe and the anagogical descending of the creatures towards the creator on one and the same level with the nature of the sacraments. In this way they are understood as one of the many phenomena in the order of all created things, and as some kind of very subtle symbolic representations, which can provoke the movement of mind towards God.

II.

When Maximus writes his *Mystagogy* with permanent referring to Dionysius, he does not contradict Dionysius directly, but implicitly points the main problem, which we could find in the interpretation of the Areopagite. True to the tradition, at the very beginning Maximus declares, that he would speak of the same things as his “most holy and truly divine”³⁹ predecessor, but notifies, “it should be known that the present work will not repeat these same things nor will it proceed in the same manner”⁴⁰. After these words Maximus appeals to Gods help, which move is also a method of foundation of a new interpretation, without declaring it for original.

According to the both authors is the Church an image of God because of the similarity, which consists of the truth, that they unify completely different natures, qualities and persons into one, without separating or merging them. This dynamic position is realized in different manner by every one of the theologians. By Dionysius is the similarity of meaning and signification leading, and it appeals to the human understanding, and by Maximus is the fundamental moment the similarity of action,

38 *EH*, 3, contemplatio 13, 444C, p. 221.

39 MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *The Church's Mystagogy* in Selected Writings, Paulist Press, New York – Mahwah, translated by George C. Berthold, Intro. p. 184.

40 *ibid.*

and it concerns the way of personal acting. Besides, Maximus uses **σύμβολον** rarely and almost everywhere **εἰκῶν**, perhaps to underline the difference in the interpretation.⁴¹ As an image the things are not only illustrating and pointing to their beginning and purpose, but, as Maximus many times stresses, they are acting *like* him, when they fulfil the optimum of their nature in the way they exist and thus they reveal God. Because if truth and goodness reveal God, as Dionysius maintains, then – supplements Maximus in Chapter Five:

Truth does this when the divine seems to be revealed **in its essence** [...]. **Goodness**, on the other hand, **reveals God, when it manifests him in its activities**: for the good is beneficent and provident and protective of everything that comes from it. [...] ... it is a bestower of being, continuation and movement to all beings.⁴²

As the action and the power come to the fore, becomes the image the statute of potential and actual bearer of certain actuality, in the very same way, as the bread and the wine are being inter-penetrated by the energies of God, and do not simply signify their meaning. Central is not the intellectual uplifting, but the experience of participating in the divine life, in the same way as the Church actually unifies in the same manner as God does, without separating or merging, and do not just gives us the opportunity of nearing intellectually the truth of the unity and of the one and first origin. That is why, according to Dionysius, after the symbolic theology there are coming the higher stages of the mystical theology, where the distinctive reasoning falls away completely.

In that sense – when we speak of Maximus saying that everything (literally every single thing, because every individual substance is a *υπόστασις*) is an image (*εἰκῶν*) of God, he means, that through its actions everything, depending of its essence, is a *τύπος* (in the English translation *figure*, but in the Latin is still *typos*) of Gods energies, which are “around” him, the *λόγοι*. Every individual is defined ontologically by several *logoi* – for

⁴¹ Of course, Maximus does not deny the symbolic interpreting, but he uses *σύμβολον* mostly in relation to specific objects, movements, words during the liturgy, but when he considers most detailed the sacraments (chapters I to III), he always uses *εἰκῶν*.

⁴² *Mystagogy*, 5, p. 191.

the essence, for the genus and the species, and so on till the complete defining of the individual.⁴³ But the individual thing is only cognizable not in its logos of the essence, or in any logos, but in its appearance, by the way this thing acts, and the way of acting is determined by the way, in which the concrete *hypostasis* realizes the way of existence (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως) of the essence.⁴⁴ The *logoi* themselves, which are present *hypostatic* in the second *hypostasis* of the Trinity – God-as-Logos,⁴⁵ could not be known discursive, but only through energetic participation (μέθεξις κατ' ἐνεργείαν), and that is namely personal experience.

What Maximus means by *eikon*, we can identify by considering his teaching of man. The man is an image of God by its logos of the essence (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας), and the finality (*enteleheia*) of man is *divinization* (θέωσις). That is acting like God, having the *potentia* (δύναμις) of participating in the life of God. Therefore, we could say, that according to Maximus, when we say, that one thing is an image of other, it means, that the one thing possesses the power of acting in similar way. And when we say, that one thing is an image of God, we say that it is put into existence and into action by God, and it acts as a manifestation of God.

In the case of the Church and the sacraments we have a special case of imagery, because here we have to deal not with the essential energy of the building, the cross, the bread or the wine – their substantial energies are present, but not through them is the Church's mystagogy. Here we need to consider the Christian truth, that the Church itself is the mystical acting of the hypostasis of the Son through the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit into the Church. It is not a created earthly substance, but the divine presence on Earth and eschatological entrance of the divine mystery into the world. The *eikon* implements similarity of acting, it is not only an instrument of the human understanding. The Church as an image is in this world, but it is not from it,⁴⁶ none of

⁴³ KAPRIEV, G. *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2005, S. 65.

⁴⁴ A. O., S. 57.

⁴⁵ A. O., S. 66.

⁴⁶ A. O., S. 84: "Die Kirche ist Abbild (εἰκών, τύποι) Gottes, das die Gläubigen in den göttlichen Energien einigt, und zwar auf die Weise, wie Gott es tut. Sie ist eine Einheit ihrer Hypostase nach und zerfällt nicht in eine Mehrheit wegen der Unterschiede ihrer Glieder. Die Kirche als ‚Abbild‘ ist die Mystagogie und der eschatologische Eintritt des Mysteriums Gottes in die Welt. Sie ist der enhypostasierte Knotenpunkt der Präsenz Gottes in der Welt und der Welt in Gott. Deswegen ist sie keine

its parts or actions could not be symbolic nor allegoric, because they are not in the order of any created nature and they cannot possibly build a pure symbolic figure.

In several passages⁴⁷ Maximus points out the dynamic energetic presence of the Church on Earth as an image and typos of God, pretending to explain the sense of the interpretation of Dionysius:

Now that blessed man [Dionysius] used to say that at the first level of contemplation **holy Church bears an imprint (τύπος) and image (εἰκών) of God since it has the same activity (ἐνέργεια) as he does by imitation and in figure.** For God who made and brought into existence all things by his infinite power contains, gathers, and limits them and in his Providence binds both intelligible and sensible beings to himself and to one another. [...] It is in this way that the holy Church of God will be shown to be working for us **the same effects** as God, in the same way as the image reflects its archetype.⁴⁸

If the symbol by Dionysius is an illustration of something invisible through something visible, in order our uplifting from one level of understanding up to another and finally – to God, the image by Maximus is the actual fulfilment of the similarity by our own action and willing together with the divine Grace, because every essence is recognized and cognizable by its effects or – doings. In the baptizing is the whole divine grace given, but it's complete unfolding depends on the person.⁴⁹ In the Eucharist the “whole” God is present by its natural actions, and the completeness of the symbolic actions during the liturgy do not only represents the invisible sense of these rituals, but actually accomplishes them as effect by the reality of their personal doing.

The mystical dynamic actuality of Church is most strongly present and evident in the sacraments and especially in the Eucharist, where Gods energies of the divinized in the hypostasis of Christ human nature inter-penetrate the bread and the wine, and in this

geschöpfliche „Substanz“. Die Kirche ist in der Welt, aber sie steht nicht in der Ordnung der in der Welt daseienden Naturen.“

47 *Mystagogy*, Ch. 1, Ch. 24.

48 *Ibid.* 1, p.186-187.

49 KAPRIEV, S. 84-85

way the man can participate in the divine life energetic, and by the grace of God. This boundary-concept of perichoresis gives us the clearest understanding of the byzantine dynamic metaphysics after Maximus. The wine and the bread are actually, and that means “in the way they act”, bread and wine, but simultaneously through the perichoresis with the divine energies they are acting as flesh and blood, without substantial transformation.

It is clear, that here we do not observe the compositum, which we have seen by the pure symbolic interpretation. By Maximus is to be found one very specific for the byzantine thinking dynamic asymmetry of the participation and of the indwelling of the energies, based on the immeasurable difference between the intensity and the purity of Gods essential energies and the energies of every created nature. Therefore, we may say that the perichoresis acts as a negative boundary, insofar it actually leads to the indefinable dynamic limit of essential energetic interacting between the finite and the infinite nature, without forming any conceptual understanding of the Communion. This prevents the interpretation of the sacraments purely symbolic.

The dynamic of the anagogical symbolism of Dionysius is as strong as by Maximus, but it always presupposes the distinctive thinking, which has to separate the material part of the symbol and the several sense levels of the invisible part of the boundary symbolic integrity.