

STRUCTURES OF TIME IN BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

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The article analyzes the interpretation of the nature of time according to the view of Byzantine philosophers, highlighting its receptive distance from the Hellenic tradition and its significant divergence from Western Christian philosophy, as well as from the Descartes-Newtonian concept of time. The definition of time that forms the core of Byzantine philosophical thought on the temporal and trans-temporal dimensions of being was coined by Basil the Great: time is an interval (or extension - *διάστημα*) coextensive with the existence of the cosmos. Crucially, time is not necessarily tied to motion, there is no causal connection between time and movement. Time and aeon, with all the differences between them, are diastemic, but eternity is not. However, they are not simply parallel and distinct, but genetically related. The beginning (*ἀρχή*) of time itself has an adiastemic character. It includes in itself significant properties of the aeonic and the eternal. The dynamic interaction of time, aeon and eternity is still found in Jesus Christ himself and in the *topoi* of the divine actions in the world. Time, aeon and eternity form a network in which they work and are together in a common dynamic. It is the network of world history which will be removed only after the end of the world.

In posing the question of the interpretation of the nature of time according to the view of the Byzantine philosophers, it should be noted that they determined themselves as Christian philosophers.¹ Their pre-predicative basis is the Christian worldview. Their concepts of time, however, differ in significant ways from the understanding of Western Christian philosophy and already decidedly from the Descartes-Newtonian concept of time. I am inclined to believe that the Byzantine

¹ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromateis*, VI, 8, 67, in *Clementis Alexandrini Opera*, vol. III, ed. D. Wilhelm, Oxford, 1869, 177,16; Gregorius Nyssenus, *De vita sancti Gregorii Thaumaturgi*, in: PG 46, 905C; Maximus Confessor, *Mystagogia*, 5, in PG 91, 673B. Already Paul actually writes about a *φιλοσοφία κατὰ Χριστὸν*, which is opposed to *the φιλοσοφία κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* - Colossians 2. 8.

view is able to enter into an analogical isomorphism² with the time understanding of quantum mechanics. I have my reasons to think that this view can be helpful for the present scientific and everyday searches to form a more adequate understanding of time.

The definition of time that forms the thought of the Byzantine philosophers about the temporal and trans-temporal dimensions of being was coined by Basil the Great: *Χρόνος δέ ἐστι τὸ συμπαραεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα* – time is the interval coextensive with the existence of the cosmos.³ This definition both draws on and distances itself from a massive Hellenic tradition.

1. The Hellenic Tradition

First and foremost is Plato's concept unfolded in *Timaeus* 37c-39e. According to Plato, time begins with the formation of the world. He associates time with movement and relates it to the movement of the seven 'wandering' stars: time began when the heavens, i.e. the seven stars, were formed.⁴ Plato's proposition that time began to exist with the creation of the cosmos was inevitably followed by the Christian authors. Plato problematises time in the perspective of becoming (*γένεσις*) with its impermanent character. Therefore he tries to grasp time from the perspective of 'eternity' (*αἰών*): Time is a moving image (*εἰκών*) of eternity,⁵ which is postulated as a motionless paradigm of the happening, the becoming in the course of time. It should be noted that Plato uses *αἰώνιος* and *αἰδῖος* synonymously in describing the intelligible.

Aristotle also considers time as something that inevitably belongs to movement without being movement itself.⁶ Time is determined as a number of movement (*ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως*), and it is what is counted, not that with which we count.⁷ Time is a measure of motion and of being moved.⁸ Aristotle points out that time cannot be associated with

² Cf. Stoyan Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology & Physics*. From Controversy to Encounter (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017) 89.

³ Basilus Magnus, *Contra Eunomium* 1, 21, in PG 29, 560B.

⁴ *Tim.* 37e1-3; 38b6-7; 38c3-6; 38e4-5.

⁵ *Tim.* 37d7-e1.

⁶ *Phys.* 4.11, 219a9-10.

⁷ *Phys.* 4.11, 219b1-8.

⁸ *Phys.* 4.12, 220b32-221a1.

a particular movement since 'time is present equally everywhere and with all things'. Furthermore, movements have speed, that is, they can be fast or slow, whereas time does not. In addition, fast and slow are defined by time.⁹ The 'now' (νῦν) is like the unit (μονάς) of number. Time is both made continuous by the 'now' and divided by it.¹⁰ Hence time is not a number in the sense in which there is a number of the same point because it has a beginning and ends, but rather as the extremities of a line form a number, and not as the parts of the line.¹¹ The 'now' is the boundary of the past and the future. For we say 'before' and 'after' with reference to the distance from the 'now'. The 'before' and the 'after' are within time, because the 'now' is within time.¹² Therefore the 'now' is not a part of time. As a boundary it is not time, but an attribute of it (συμβέβηκεν). The 'now' is a number only insofar as it computes (ἀριθμεῖ).¹³ So 'before' and 'after' are in time, they are time because they are calculable.¹⁴ Aristotle asks the question: If soul did not exist would time exist or not?¹⁵

Both the Platonic and Aristotelian views of time were questioned early enough. As late as the beginning of the 3rd century BC, Zeno of Kition stipulated that time was not a ἀριθμός or μέτρον, but a διάστημα. According to him, the term 'extension' better expressed the idea of continuity in the temporal and spatial plan. Time was determined as 'extension of motion' (κινήσεως διάστημα). Zenon also pointed out the difference between different διαστήματα, which were produced by beings moving with different speeds between two points. His concept was further developed by Chrysippus of Soloi, who also applied it to the motion of the universe. A διάστημα expresses the movement of a body between two points, but time does not stop with it. Therefore Chrysippus speaks about a twofold character of time: the movement of a body between the points A and B is only a segment of the whole course of time.¹⁶ At the same time he postulates an equation between

⁹ Cf. Mark DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 509. Cf. Phys. 4.10, 218b13-18.

¹⁰ Phys. 4.11, 220a4-6.

¹¹ Phys. 4.11, 220a15-18.

¹² Phys. 4.14, 223a4-8.

¹³ Phys. 4.11, 220a21-22.

¹⁴ Phys. 4.14, 223a28-29.

¹⁵ Phys. 4.14, 223a21-28.

¹⁶ Three main representative definitions of Chrysippus are: 'the extension of the movement

space and time. They are two infinite extensions or protractions in the void-κενόν, one spreading in three dimensions, the other infinitely in the past and in the future. That is why he does not talk about a unit of time or indivisible now (νῦν ἀμερές), because time is considered as a non-interruptible, continuous stream, infinitely divisible. Chrysippus, however, emphasises that time does not exist in its entirety, but only as a now, due to which the past and the future are present.¹⁷ The Stoics took a 'less subjectivist' view in speaking of time not as something countable or counted by someone conscious by counting but as merely depending on the existence of movement.¹⁸

Philo of Alexandria, for example, adopts the definition of time as protraction, interval or extension (διάστημα) of the motion of the cosmos. With the term αἰών he designates at the same time the life span of the intelligible world. Clement of Alexandria, following him, will use the term ἀδιάστατον only in reference to God, meaning 'without division' or 'without dimension,' or perhaps both.¹⁹ Alcinoüs, who lived in the second century AD and is considered a Middle Platonist, emphasised that God created time as an extension to the movement of the cosmos (τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα), as an image of eternity, which is the measure of the stability of the eternal cosmos. For his part, Galen criticised the Aristotelian definition of time and, moreover, postulated that the existence of time is completely independent of motion.²⁰ Especially significant in our context are Plotinus' reflections on time.

He begins with the sharp distinction between everlastingness (αἰών) and time (χρόνος): The αἰών refers to the nature that is everlasting (περί τὴν αἰδίων εἶναι) and time to what comes to be with this universe.²¹

of the cosmos' (διάστημα τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως) 'the extension accompanying the movement of the cosmos' (τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει) and 'the extension of movement according to which one speaks of the measure of fastness and slowness' (κινήσεως διάστημα καθ' ὃ ποτὲ λέγεται μέτρον τάχους τε καὶ βραδυτήτος) – cf. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 516.

¹⁷ Владимир Цветковић, *Бог и време. Учење о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш: Центар за црквене студије, 2013, 216-226.

¹⁸ DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, 516.

¹⁹ David Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 327-328 et 331.

²⁰ DelCogliano, 'Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato', 514-515 et 519.

²¹ Plotinus, *Enneades*, 3, 7, 1. English translation: Plotinus, *The Enneads*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018.

With regard to the idiosyncrasy of time, he speaks unequivocally: The movement can be interrupted and brought to a halt, but the time cannot be: time is continuous.²² Plotinus describes its nature as extension/*διάστημα*, which unfolds through changes and activities.²³ Time itself is not a measure. It is the one being measured. It is not really the measure of the movement, but only accidentally. Time is not a measure of itself. The measurer is a certain 'I'. Plotinus asks directly: Who is actually this I? It is that in accordance with which the measuring takes place. Time is not actually a measure.²⁴ Plotinus is in solidarity with Plato that time is neither measuring nor being measured by something and repeats his thesis that it came to be simultaneously with heaven with eternity as its model and as an image that is moving. It is thereby a moving image, because time does not rest if the soul does not rest. The being of time is associated with the world soul. Time is everywhere in the visible world because soul has removed itself from no part of the universe, just as the soul in us has not removed itself from any part of us. Time is also in us. It is in all souls of the appropriate kind and in an equal manner in each soul, and all souls are one. For this reason, time is not scattered apart; for neither is eternity which is present in another manner in all things of the same kind.²⁵

Plotinus expresses himself extensively about everlastingness. He calls the whole intelligible cosmos everlasting (*αἰώνιος*) and eternal (*αἰδίδιος*) and asks himself is it identical with eternity-*αἰδιότητα* or does eternity depend on everlastingness.²⁶ He does not answer the question. In any case, in several places²⁷ he calls the intellect/*νοῦς* both aeonic (*αἰώνιος*) and eternal (*αἰδίδιος*). The *αἰών* is a unitary nature that exists without extension (*ἀδιαστάτος*),²⁸ but is at the same time a complex of forces and multiples (*μὴν μὲν οὖσαν, πολλὰ δὲ δυναμένην καὶ πολλὰ οὖσαν*). Plotinus names essence, motion, stability, difference, and identity, emphasising the inexhaustibility of activity (*τῆς ἐνεργείας τὸ ἄπανστον*), the stability and the constant lack of extension. Plotinus determines the forces summarised in One (*εἰς ἓν*) – as it is typical for

²² Cf. Ibid., 3, 7, 8.

²³ Ibid., 3, 7, 12.

²⁴ Ibid., 3, 7, 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 3, 7, 13.

²⁶ Ibid., 3, 7, 3.

²⁷ E.g., ibid., 2, 4, 3; 3, 1, 1; 3, 5, 7; 5, 1, 4; 5, 1, 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 3, 7, 2.

the Hellenic tradition – by the term ‘life’. He defines the *αἰών* as life abiding forever in the identical state and possessing everything in its presence, not now this, again something else, but all at once, and not now some things, now others, but a partless perfection. It is just as in a point where all things are together and none of them ever flows forth but remains in identity in itself and never changes, being always in the present because nothing of it has slipped away or again will come to be, but what it is is what it is. So, *αἰών* is not the substrate but that which, in a way, shines forth from the substrate itself due to the identity which it proclaims consisting in the fact that it is not going to be but already is, that it is so and not otherwise. The *αἰών* is the life which belongs to Being in its essence, all together, full, and completely without extension.²⁹

2. Basil the Great. The Cappadocians.

Confronted with this background, Basil the Great develops the first systematic conceptualisation of time in Christian culture. Already in the fifth paragraph of the First Homily on the Hexaemeron he presents the basic lines of his view: ‘It appears, indeed, that even before this world an order of things existed of which our mind can form an idea... The birth of the world was preceded by a condition (*κατάστασις*) of things suitable for the exercise of supercosmic powers (*τῆς ὑπερκοσμίοις δυνάμεσι πρέποσα*), outstripping the limits of time, everlasting and eternal (*ἡ ὑπέρχρονος, ἡ αἰωνία ἡ ἀίδιος*). The Creator and Demiurge of the universe perfected His works in it, spiritual light for the happiness of all who love the Lord, intellectual and invisible natures, all the orderly arrangement of pure intelligences who are beyond the reach of our mind and of whom we cannot even discover the names’.³⁰ The three dimensions are already mentioned: time, everlastingness and eternity.

Reflecting on the nature and existence of time, Basil connects the succession of time (*τοῦ χρόνου διέξοδος*) with the addition to the existing of the visible cosmos – a home for beings destined to be born and to die. The nature of this succession is analogous to the nature of the world. Time is ever pressing on and passing away and never stopping in its course. Is not this the nature of time, where the past is no more, the

²⁹ Ibid., 3, 7, 3.

³⁰ Basilus Magnus, *Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron*, 1, 5, in PG 29, 15A.

future does not exist, and the present escapes before being recognised? Its nature is in accord with beings subject to change.³¹

Basil poses the question about the beginning of time, about the beginning of the world, that point where time's first movement originated. After discussing a wide range of meanings of the term 'ἀρχή', he postulates that creation occurred rapidly and in no time. It is therefore said 'In the beginning created' because the beginning is something indivisible and instantaneous. It is ἀδιάστατος – without extension. 'The beginning of the road is not yet the road, and that of the house is not yet the house; so the beginning of time is not yet time and not even the least particle of it. If some objector tells us that the beginning is a time, he ought then, as he knows well, to submit it to the division of time – a beginning, a middle and an end. Now it is ridiculous to imagine a beginning of the beginning. Furthermore, if we divide the beginning into two, we make two instead of one, or rather make several, we really make an infinity, for all that which is divided is divisible to the infinite. Thus then, if it is said, 'In the beginning God created,' it is to teach us that at the will of God the world arose in less than an instant'.³²

The beginning of time is a very special node. That which principles the time is timeless in principle. It borders on the aeon of the intelligent world and thereby corresponds with it. The beginning of time, after all, is not aeonic according to its character. It is ἀδιάστατος. But only eternity lacks an extension. The nature of the ἀρχή of time thus raises in itself essential features of the aeonic and the eternal, in that this ἀρχή is exactly the beginning of time. It is a metaphysical nucleus that initiates the physical along with its history and acts within it.

The world created from nothing was non created in time, the world is created with time.³³ Already in Athanasius of Alexandria, in his second discourse against the Arians, it can be read that the world has a diastemic beginning of its being (διαστηματικὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἔχει). The theme is further unfolded by Basil. He defines time as a διάστημα coextensive with the existence of the cosmos: 'Rather, time is the extension coextensive with the existence of the cosmos

³¹ Ibid., 15B.

³² Ibid., 17A.

³³ Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology & Physics. From Controversy to Encounter*, 141.

(συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα). All motion is measured by time, whether of the stars, of living creatures, or of anything else that moves. On the basis of time we say that one thing is quicker or slower than another. The quicker is what traverses a longer interval (διάστημα) in less time; the slower is what moves a shorter interval in more time³⁴ Time is thus coextensive with the existence of every mode of created being. The διάστημα is constitutive to both time and everlastingness (αἰών).³⁵

The term ‘διάστημα’ – interval, extension – is used in respect of spatial as well as temporal relations. In the second case, it generally fixes the interval or distance between two points in time and is indivisibly connected with the time-χρόνος or with the course of time. Eastern Orthodox Christian thinkers speak of both horizontal and vertical διάστημα in terms of time and the aeon. While the course of man in the world and the course of the world itself are within the scope of the horizontal, the ascent – both of the human soul and of the angels – to God – is identified with the vertical διάστημα.³⁶

The review of the quoted passage testifies to another specificity of Basil’s concept of time. In the considerations about the ‘faster and slower’ and the measurement of the movement by the time an approximation to the argumentation of Galen and other authors can be observed that the existence of the time is not necessarily connected to the movement of the objects, including the celestial bodies. There is no causal connection between time and movement at all. Time is not identified with movement and not the movement makes its existence possible, but the movements – with their quickness or slowness – are measured by time. Time is their measure. For Basil, the existence of time does not depend on the existence of movement, but on the existence of the cosmos. Time is not dependent on the things that God has created, but on God himself.³⁷ When God instituted the nature of time, He gave

³⁴ Basilius Magnus, *Contra Eunomium*, 1.21, in PG 29, 560B: ‘Χρόνος δέ ἐστι τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα. ὃ πᾶσα παραμετρεῖται κίνησις, εἴτε ἀστέρων, εἴτε ζώων, εἴτε οὐτινοσοῦν τῶν κινουμένων, καθὼ λέγομεν ταχύτερον ἢ βραδύτερον ἕτερον ἑτέρου. ταχύτερον μὲν τὸ ἐν ἐλάττονι χρόνῳ πλεῖον διάστημα μεταβαίνειν, βραδύτερον δὲ τὸ ἐλάττον ἐν πλείονι χρόνῳ κινούμενον.’ Cf. Ibid 2.13, PG 29, 593C.

³⁵ Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, 336-337; DelCogliano, ‘Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato’, 525.

³⁶ Цветковић, *Бог и време. Учење о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, 207 and 215.

³⁷ DelCogliano, ‘Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A

as measures and signs the intervals of days.³⁸ The time is measured by the weeks: the week counts up the movement of the time. The week is always repeated (*ἀεὶ*) according to the figure (*σχήμα*) of the circle. The same can be said about the αἰών, adds Basil – it returns within itself and never ends.³⁹

Therefore he did not call the beginning of the time the first, Basil continues, but a day, so that it had already in the naming the relationship with the everlasting (*τὸ συγγενὲς ἔχει πρὸς τὸν αἰῶνα*). ‘It was, in reality, fit and natural to call ‘one’ the day whose character is to be one wholly separated (*μοναχοῦ*) and isolated from all the others. If the Scripture speaks to us of many ages (*αἰῶνες*), saying everywhere, ‘age of age, and ages of ages,’ (*αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, αἰῶνας αἰώνων*) we do not see it enumerate them as first, second, and third. It follows that we are hereby shown not so much limits, ends and succession of ages, as distinctions between various states and modes of action.’⁴⁰

Basil’s notion of the ‘extension’ of the existence means in the first place the interval from the beginning of the creation to its end. It characterises the radical bifurcation of the divine and the created orders of existence.⁴¹ It applies to the aeon as well. Because created, the aeon is limited by its beginning. Therefore it is not to be called ‘eternity’, although it is infinite and not temporal. Basil understands eternity as lack of limit. As an aeon, he describes above all the state older than the creation of the world, the kingdom of the angels. The angelic powers are infinite because they have God not only for their beginning, but also for their end. And God is infinite. The angelic kingdom is called by Basil both *αἰώνιος* and *ἄτλιος*.⁴² Rather, this marking is self-evident. In this kingdom (the ‘paradise’) as well as in the kingdom of God any everlasting being and God himself co-exist. In itself, however, the invisible and noetic world belongs to the creation just like the visible world. Aeonian

Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, 522-526 et 530.

³⁸ Basilius Magnus, *Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron*, 2, 8, in PG 29, 49C: ‘ὁ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου φύσιν κατασκευάσας Θεὸς, μέτρα αὐτῷ καὶ σημεῖα τὰ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐπέβαλε διαστήματα’.

³⁹ Basilius Magnus, *Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron*, 2, 8, in PG 29, 49C.

⁴⁰ Basilius Magnus, *Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron*, 2, 8, in PG 29, 49CD.

⁴¹ DelCogliano, ‘Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato’, 529.

⁴² Цветковић, *Бог и време. Уčenje о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, 151-152.

is also the 'eighth day' which is without evening, without succession and without end (*ἀνέσπερος καὶ ἀδιάδοχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος*).⁴³

John of Damascus presents several meanings of 'aeon,' keeping valid Basil's instructive proposition that it is a matter of different states and relations, but not of sequences, constellations, implications, or mutual sublations. In everyday language, what is meant by aeon is the life of the individual. It is also called the time of a thousand years, as well as the entire present life. Moreover, it is spoken about seven *αἰῶνες* of this world – from the creation of heaven and earth to the common end and resurrection of people. So is also called the eighth day, that is, the future infinite life after the resurrection. Aeon is also called the state before the creation of the sun, when it was not a measurable aeon, but something that is describable by a quasi-temporal movement and extension. Aeon is admittedly also it, which runs at the same time with the eternal like a temporal mobility and extension (*οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα*). Therefore, God is also called *αἰώνιος*. But he is also called *προαιώνιος* because he created the αἰών itself.⁴⁴

God is called *πρὸ αἰῶνος* – 'existing before the ages'. God stands above and before all aeons and dwells in eternity (*αἰδιότης*). Eternal is also the community-*κοινωνία* of the divine persons, and they mutually unite without any extension (*ἀδιαστάτως*): their being together is not delimited by any mediator (*μηδενὶ μέσῳ*). God has not appeared from non-being into being.⁴⁵ As *ἀδιαστάτος*, God is distinct from all – temporal and aeonic – creatures. Therefore, eternity par excellence is not rewritten by diastemic – temporal or aeonic – terms or predicates. It is rather stated as existence or life of a special kind.

The description, coined by John of Scythopolis in the 6th century entirely in the spirit of the Cappadocians, states that the eternity of the Creator of the aeons is an infinite life, present in its wholeness, and nothing of it disappears into the past, but it lingers and emerges immovable and unchanging as a unity. This life emerges outwardly (*προεστῶσαν*). That is why the actually *ἄϋδιος* God is also called *αἰών*, because the aeons – the sphere of the noetic and invisible – are created by him. The Aeonian participates in the nondiastemic and infinite life.

⁴³ Basilus Magnus, *Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron*, 2, 8, in PG 29, 52A.

⁴⁴ Iohannes Damascenus, *Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae*, 2, 1, in: PG 94, 861A-864C.

⁴⁵ Basilus Magnus, *Contra Eunomium*, 2.12, in: PG 29, 593BC.

God, the Timeless, ὁ ἄχρονος, is also called time-χρόνος because He is the one causing time. What the aeon is to the noetic, time is to the things of the senses. Time also rested in the Eternal Being and was uttered καθ' ὑπόβασιν – according to going downwards, when the visible nature was to appear. 'Time' is called the procession-πρόοδος of the divine goodness-ἀγαθότης into the visible things at their creation. The movement of divisions (διαστάσεις) of segments, hours, days, and nights, on the other hand, is not time, but something homonymous with time. The Arranger (διατάξας) and Causer of the aeons and of time dwells super-aeonically and timelessly. About him one must not say 'he was', 'is' or 'will be' – he is above all that. His being is super-being, transcendent to being – ὑπερουσίως.⁴⁶

The foundations of these definitions, laid in the 4th century, are common to the Cappadocians. Gregory the Theologian mentions as characteristics of the divine accessible to our imagination the lack of limit and end and the beginninglessness (τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ ἀνέκβατον, ἀναρχον). The immortality and the imperishability are indeed typical to it and to the aeon. The aeon is neither time nor part of time and it cannot be measured. But for it a mobility similar to the temporal one, as well as the extension (οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα) are characteristic. The everlasting and the temporal are present in the realm of economy and not theology.⁴⁷

Gregory of Nyssa never describes eternity by the word 'αἰών'. God is beginningless and endless, that is, timeless (ἄχρόνως), and He is the eternity of the aeon (τῶν αἰώνων ἀϊδιότης). God is ἀδιάστατος. 'Extension' (διάστημα) is the characteristic common to time and the aeon. Gregory goes as far as to say that 'διάστημα is nothing other than the creation itself'. The aeon is limited by a διάστημα that extends with it: the aeon has its beginning and its limit – πέρας. By the term 'διάστημα' the difference is drawn between created and uncreated. The διάστημα in the realm of the physical is principally different from the διάστημα belonging to the aeon. On the eighth day, the physical

⁴⁶ Glossa ad De divinis nominibus, l. 5, c. 4, in: PG 4, 313D-316AC. Cf. David Bradshaw, *Divine Freedom: The Greek Fathers and the Modern Debate*, in: *Philosophical theology and the Christian traditions: Russian and Western perspectives*, ed. David Bradshaw, (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 90-92.

⁴⁷ Gregorius Theologus, *Orationes*, 38, 8, in PG 36, 320AB. Cf. Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, 338; DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato*, 523.

διάστημα, the horizontal, fails; in contrast, the vertical, the spiritual, remains present.⁴⁸ The physical or natural διάστημα is an ontological gulf between the Creator and us. In this world we are separated from God by the temporal extension. Everything that exists in time is created and has a place in the temporal order. It is related either to the beginning of time, or to other temporal beings and events, or to the end of time and the second coming of Christ.⁴⁹

The Cappadocians formulated the crucial points of the Byzantine understanding of time. The divisive term is the extension-διάστημα. It separates the two major spheres: God is not diastemic and creation – the realm of the intelligible and the visible cosmos – is diastemic. The divine eternity, which is around God – God is eternity and at the same time he transcends eternity (for this reason creatures could actually participate in eternity)⁵⁰, is attainable by humans only by means of their imagination. The realm of the extensive, on the other hand, is recognisable, whereby time and the aeon have no causal relationship with movement. They are conditioned by the existence of the creation.⁵¹

3. Maximus the Confessor

Also, for Maximus the Confessor the availability or the lack of διάστημα is the decisive criterion for the distinction between the everlasting and temporal on the one hand and eternity on the other. The marvellous greatness of the divine infinity, the *θεία ἀπειρία*, is something that has not quantity, is indivisible, and completely nonextensive (*παντελῶς ἀδιάστατον*). The unknowability of the divine essence is also based on this. Truth is being God around whom the intellect-*νοῦς* moves ceaselessly and not forgetting (*ἀλήστως*) without being able to stop its movement, because there is no limit to be found

⁴⁸ Цветковић, *Бог и време. Учење о времену Светог Гризорија Ниског*, 241-262. Cf. Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, in *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 335-336.

⁴⁹ Vladimir Cvetkovic, *St Gregory's argument concerning the lack of διάστημα in the divine activities from Ad Ablabium*, in: *Gregory of Nyssa: the minor treatises on trinitarian theology and Apollinarism*, eds. Volker Henning Drecoll, Margitta Berghau, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 373.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, 320-321 et 353.

⁵¹ Cf. Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, 341-342; Brandon Gallaher, 'Chalice of Eternity: An Orthodox Theology of Time' in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 57, 1 (2013), 14; Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Creaturehood*, in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol. III: *Creation and Redemption* (Belmont: Massachusetts, 1976), 43.

where there is no extension (*μὴ εὐρίσκων πέρας ἔνθα μὴ ἔστι διάστημα*). In no way is it possible to comprehend the limit of something that has no *διάστημα*.⁵² The eternal God, the Creator of the aeons and times, fills everything with His eternal light (*φῶς αἰδίου*) through the rays of His goodness.⁵³ Everything created by God, i.e. the nature of beings and time (*ἡ φύσις τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὸν χρόνον*), when God appears in any form, shows itself together with him because He is its cause and creator.⁵⁴

At the same time Maximus decisively distinguishes between eternity and the aeon. Eternity remains quite indifferent to everything diastemic – the everlasting and the temporal. In contrast, he sees the kinship between the last two. Time becomes aeon when movement stops, and the aeon becomes time when it is measured as carried by the movement; his ‘eternity’ is by no means identified with the divine eternity or conceived in an analogy with it. The definition of Maximus is: ‘The aeon is time deprived of motion, whereas time is the aeon measured by motion.’⁵⁵

The aeon as meant in this definition is the whole of the time-duration of the creation, the whole time volume in which the created being is present. It is the totality of time and in this sense the ‘eternity’ of times, in which they are all simultaneously enclosed and therefore immovable. This ‘eternity’ is identical with the common history of the created world in its existence between the point of its creation and its end, conceived in its total unity. This aeon is the integral quantitative and qualitative concentration of time.

Reflecting on the created beings and the aeons in general, Maximus notes that they are moving and circumscribable, being determined by the principle/*λόγος* of quiddity, quality and qualified being (*πῶς εἶναι*). Everything that moves and has been created has a beginning and is temporary in an absolute sense, although – accentuated Maximus – there is also such a time that is not measurable by the motion. The emphasis is on the time-conditioned existence. It is time in which the existent begins to be and it is an extension-*διάστημα* since it begins to

⁵² Maximus Confessor, *Mystagogia*, in PG 91, 677A.

⁵³ Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua ad Johannem*, 46, in PG 91, 1357B; trans. Nicholas Conostas in Maximus the Confessor, *The Ambigua*, Cambridge, Mass. – London 2014.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10, 9, in PG 91, 1164A.

⁵⁵ Ibid., in PG 91, 1164C.

be. Everything that is and is in motion is subject to nature and time. But in one sense it is subject to time by the movement and in another sense by being – by its existence.⁵⁶

In the second sense, first of all, the action of the natural or essential energies is meant. The presence and the intensity of the existence, i.e. the expression of the energies, unfold in time, but they are not movement in the general meaning of the word and they are actually not to be measured by the movement. Just reflecting on the relationship between movement and stasis, Maximus more sharply circumscribes the profile of ‘movement’ and draws the distinction between two modes: between ‘movement’ par excellence (κίνησις) and ‘carrying’ (φορά). Movement is specific to all that is subject to generation and corruption. In those, ‘more’ and ‘less’ can be noticed.

In contrast, the ‘carrying’ means the ‘circling’ of the essence, the ‘motionless movement’, which determines the being-structure of the thing. In it are constituted its nature, force and energy (οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια), its unchanging order and sufficiency of being (τάξις καὶ διαμονή), as well as its unchanging natural properties. Indeed, the principles/λόγοι of things and their acting in the things are to be distinguished.⁵⁷ The activity of the completely unchangeable divine principles is varied in its own limits by virtue of the relative self-existence of the being. The unchangeable ‘law of the natural’ works in the dynamics of existence and therefore comes into relations with the movement. At least the non-measurability of the existential activity by the movement remains valid.

Time and movement, generally meant as change, stand in no necessary being-correspondence. The sensible and temporal things are created in matter. The material is given to Adam as mediator to look at the spiritual through his spiritual eye. But he remained in the realm of the material, which he separated from his spiritual core. Such material is decaying and perishable. By his detachment from God, Adam introduced death to himself and to his descendants. He himself has brought forward death ‘for the whole time of the present temporal duration’ (κατὰ πάντα τὸν χρόνον τοῦ παρόντος καιροῦ). Death lives in the course of the whole of this temporal extension (ὁ θάνατος ζῇ δι’

⁵⁶ Ibid., 67, in: PG 91, 1397AB.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 15, in: PG 91, 1216D-1217C.

ὅλου τοῦ χρονικοῦ τούτου διαστήματος). It lives permanently (ἀεί) – in the whole aeon of this world.⁵⁸ The time of the created cosmos is a historical time.

The aeon or the aeons of the intelligible natures also have their history. These beings are created, they have a beginning of their being, their duration has their διάστημα.⁵⁹ The historical time does not necessarily presuppose movement, it is not to be measured obligatorily by the movement. But it presupposes the unfolding of events, in which the modes of existence of the natures of the created beings can be changed or transformed. The interaction and interrelation between the constant principles of essences and the varying modes of existence of natures in the course of historical time are made possible thanks to the incarnate principle of principles.

Jesus Christ receives the whole being, the whole time and all aeons. But in him they are present in a completely different way than in their contingent existence. In him, the creator of those and their cause, they are present in eternity according to their logoi. Both the aeon and time are 'suspended' in their eternal logoi and therefore in the eternal divine Logos⁶⁰, who himself became man and thus a historical person. God is the eternity par excellence. Through the ray of his creative energy he introduces the non-being into being and sets the beginning of the lifetimes or the aeons, embracing and constituting the whole of their course and their end. The wholeness and the completion of all aeons is the completion of their history. But the cosmos is penetrated with it at the same time also by the natural divine energies, the own existence of God, the eternal light. The divine goodness given in this way fills the whole created cosmos with all its aeons. By this light also the worthy among the people, the deified in their existence, are filled. The 'limitedness' of God by means of the man in the God-man makes possible the analogical dwelling of the man as the representative of being and the figure of the time and the aeons.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10, 28, in: PG 91, 1156C-1157A.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 67, in: PG 91, 1397B.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10, 9, in: PG 91, 1164AB.

⁶¹ Ibid., 46, in: PG 91, 1357BC.

4. Michael Psellus

After the work on conceptualising time, as well as the aeonic and eternity, done by Greek-speaking Christian thinkers from the Cappadocians to Maximus the Confessor, their findings have been accepted as commonly valid. There are almost no attempts to doubt their determinations or to go beyond them. Symptomatic in this regard are the descriptive list of meanings of 'aeon' and the meager account of time and eternity in John of Damascus.⁶² The same is valid for the systematic work of Gregorius Palamas. He devotes the first 29 chapters of his *150 chapters* to the description of the contingent world and the way of its knowledge. He is content to explain already in the first chapter that the world and time come into being together, as Moses recorded it.⁶³ The nature of time is not commented at all. Shortly after, it is noticed that the celestial bodies move perpetually (ἀεί) and the self-determined bodies (αὐθαίρετα) move differently at different times.⁶⁴ Much later it is noted in a polemic on the divine energies, that God rules over creatures in time and aeon and over the aeons themselves (ἐν χρόνῳ καὶ ἐν αἰῶνι καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν αἰώνων) through his uncreated energy, which is distinct from his essence.⁶⁵ It is to be pointed out that the terms are used without any discussion of the peculiarity of the nature of time, aeon and eternity. The corresponding considerations of Michael Psellus are remarkable.

In his pseudo-pedagogical writing *De omnifaria doctrina* he regenerates the Aristotelian-Plotinian notion of time as a mental concept. Time is human thought, concept and name. Time is neither a self-existent thing (πρᾶγμα), nor a visible body, nor some disembodied hypostasis, but only a thing (πρᾶγμα) that exists only in thought. The philosophers, insists Psellus, have called time the measure of the motion of the beings arising and passing away under motion. These arising and passing away beings are contrasted with the perpetual beings (αἰώνια), whose being is everlasting (ἀεί) and immobile.⁶⁶ It is

⁶² Iohannes Damascenus, *Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae*, 2, 1, PG 94, 861A-864C; *Dialectica*, 55, in PG 94, 641C; *Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae*, 2, 3, PG 94, 868B.

⁶³ Gregorius Palamas, *Capita 150*, 1, in: Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, ed. Robert Sinkewicz, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 82.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3, 84.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 125, 228.

⁶⁶ Michael Psellus, *De omnifaria doctrina*, 102, *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina. Critical Text and Introduction*, ed. Leendert Gerrit Westerink, (Nijmegen: Centrale Drukkerij 1948), 57-58.

the comparison with the aeonic that nudges Psellus to recognise time as having determinations of being as well. By considering that man has his origin-γέννησις in the ἄπειρον, but begins his available being in the completeness of time-καιρός⁶⁷, Psellus introduces the dimension of time-χρόνος that is fundamental for humanity and its ways of knowing.

Every intellect (νοῦς) has everlasting (αἰώνια) essence, power and activity-ἐνέργεια, explains Psellus. The intellect understands (νοεῖ) everything at once and not the past as past and the future as future, but everything as present. It does not move, but recognises everything at once at as a whole. Because it is stationary, it is neither its essence nor its power and activity beneath the measure of time⁶⁸. In the reflection on aeon and time (περὶ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου) Psellus remarks: The bodiless being has an everlasting essence and energy, like the intellect. Its essence is immovable and its energy is unchangeable. Heaven is everlasting according to its essence, but is subject (κείμενος) to its movement according to time. The bodies have both the essence and the energy in time, ἔγχρονος. This also concerns our body. The soul is everlasting in essence, but participates in time (μετέχει) in energy. It does not have all νοήματα in itself at the same time, but it goes (μεταβαίνει) from one thought to another⁶⁹. Already earlier he has stated with emphasis that the essence of the soul is everlasting, but its energy is in accordance with time (κατὰ χρόνον) and with that of the time following (τὰ τούτοις ἀκόλουθα).⁷⁰ In the soul aeon and time are in mutual connection. But the aeon is the paradigm of time. It is supra-temporal and knows no change. In it dwell the identity, the good, the just and the similar grounds, which are immovable.⁷¹

While aeon and time are in a clear, though asymmetrical relationship, the divine eternity can not be compared to them. The difference is made by the answer of the question if and how the divine (τὸ θεῖον) is infinite (ἄπειρον). The whole being being (πᾶν τὸ ὄντως ὄν), the creation as a whole, is neither its quantity (πλήθος) nor its size (μέγεθος) infinite, but only its power (δύναμις). But God is not a quantity, but the One par excellence (κυρίως ἓν). It has no size and it is bodiless. His activity

⁶⁷ Ibid., 20, Westerink, 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 23, Westerink, 27.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 107, Westerink, 59.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 52, Westerink, 38.

⁷¹ Ibid., Appendix II, Westerink, 102-104.

(ἐνέργεια) is not limited by any border, but all his energies and powers are infinite and non-exhaustive. He is still infinite according to his principle and his goal. He is not principled (ἄναρχος) and not limited (ἀτελεύτητον) and he is the universe of aeons (ζύμπαν αἰώνιον).⁷² Got is eternal (ἄϊδιος), his state is the eternity (ἁιδιότης).⁷³

Nevertheless, eternity is not totally separated from the aeon and time. A universal mediator of eternity in creation is nature. In a departure from the other Byzantine philosophers, Psellus differentiates between essence-οὐσία and nature-φύσις. While 'essence' characterises the being-constitution of the being, 'nature' means a special power-δύναμις. It is implanted by God himself in the bodies, that is, in the elements and that which is composed of them. It is an instrument of God (ὄργανον τοῦ θεοῦ). Φύσις is the dynamic principle of motion and standstill, as well as of existence, which pervades all created things and is to be seen on the part of man only through the vision of the νοῦς.⁷⁴ It is the constituting form through which the natural thing first gets its form and then actually becomes a φυσικόν.⁷⁵ Another mediating instance is just the structure of the noetic.

The first, supercosmic, non-participating and demiurgic νοῦς is 'πάντων ὑποστάτης'. It lays the foundation of the specific and unchangeable, as well as of the changeable and the temporal in everything that exists. It creates 'everything at the same time in an instant (ἐν μιᾷ ῥοπῇ σύμπαντα)'. The beings come forth according to their order and specificity: some by virtue of noetic property, some by virtue of mental mediation, some by virtue of physical motion.⁷⁶ No soul can directly participate in the first intellect, the supramundane one. However, the soul is able to participate in the inner-worldly intellect (ἐγκόσμιος νοῦς), which follows and participates in the first intellect.⁷⁷ Each intellect understands itself, or that which is above it, or that which is below or behind it (τὸ μεθ' ἑαυτόν). But it recognises that which is above it only in so far as it recognises itself.⁷⁸ The participating intellect (ὁ μεθεκτός

⁷² Ibid., 16, Westerink, 24.

⁷³ Ibid., 15, Westerink, 24, 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 57, Westerink, 40.

⁷⁵ Linos Benakis, Ein unedierter Kommentar zur *Physik* des Aristoteles von Michael Psellos, in Linos Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens: Parousia, 2002), 364.

⁷⁶ De omnifaria doctrina, 24, Westerink, 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 21, Westerink, 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 22, Westerink, 26-27.

νοῦς), which is after the non-participating intellect, noetically possesses both the first intellect and the insight (εἶδησις) of all understanding. The non-participating intellect, however, grants to the νόες under it an appearance imprint (ἐμφασις) of its own existence. Based on this, according to the measure of their own nature, they recognise both the *intelligibilia* and the *sensibilia* according to their own causes.⁷⁹ All noetic species (πάντα τὰ νοερά εἶδη), that is, souls, intellects, angels, archangels, powers, and those similar to them, are both in each other, as well as existing in themselves. These asomatic noetic species, like the θεωρήματα in a soul, are united in each other, being no less separate and distinct.⁸⁰ Each intellect is filled with the divine εἶδη.⁸¹ But the highest intellect wholly contains the high species. The lower intellects contain them only partially.⁸²

The proceeding with the time on the part of Psellus proves two things. It is not problematic to see that he does not actually coin any innovative or different determinations of time, aeon and eternity.⁸³ Thus, at the same time, he demonstrates virtuosity largely not only in their determination and differentiation. Virtuosity is also his approach to bring to appearance the togetherness of the temporal, the aeonic and the eternal, the dynamic network woven by them and their asymmetrical, but nevertheless unified interaction.

5. System of interaction of the structures

As a first step, the firm coherence between time, place and comprehending thinking (understanding, κατάληψις) is to be noted here. In his groundbreaking consideration 'On the Place of God and on the fact that only the divine is indescribable (ἀπερίγραφτον)',⁸⁴ John of

⁷⁹ Ibid., 25, Westerink, 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 26, Westerink, 28.

⁸¹ Like these of goodness, blessedness, justice, identity, likeness and those similar to them.

⁸² Ibid., 27, Westerink, 28.

⁸³ This is confirmed by the other texts of Psellus published by Linos Benakis specifically dedicated to time and the eon (also dealing with the theme of eternity). There Psellus describes rigorously and exhaustively the characteristics of them already fixed before him, quoting most of all Gregory the Theologian, but also Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus (especially copiously), Porphyrius, Proclus, Simplicius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa. He adds no conceptual corrections to the known definitions – cf. Λίνος Μπενάκης, Χρόνος καὶ αἰών. Ἀντιπαράθεση ἑλληνικῆς καὶ χριστιανικῆς διδασκαλίας στὸ ἀνέκδοτο ἔργο τοῦ Μιχαήλ Ψελλοῦ, in: Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, 463–486.

⁸⁴ Johannes Damascenus, *Expositio accurata fidei orthodoxae*, I, 13, in: PG 94, 849B–860A.

Damascus points out that as ‘subject to description (*περιγραπτόν*)’ is to be determined that being which can be determined according to place or time, or as encompassed in comprehension. Indescribable is that which is not determinable in any of these ways.⁸⁵ Thus, the boundary between diastemic and non-diastemic is sharply drawn. In the following, the systematic connection of their structures is explained.

First, the difference and congruence between the various forms of the describable based on their local determinations are outlined. The bodily place (*τόπος σωματικός*) is the limit of the surrounded (*πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος*).⁸⁶ The bodies are each described according to their beginning and end, according to their physical location and as conceptually graspable.⁸⁷ Parallel with it exists the intellectual place (*νοητὸς τόπος*), in which is the noetic and bodiless nature. It has no figure (*σχῆμα*) and cannot be surrounded bodily.⁸⁸ About the angel it is said that it occupies place because it dwells intellectually and acts according to its nature. But the angel is also described according to time, because it has received beginning of its being, as well as, although intellectually, according to the place, as well as is graspable in the comprehension. It is circumscribed at its place of action.⁸⁹ The common connection and interpenetration of the somatic and noetic, which are determined spatially, temporally and conceptually at the simultaneously, are recognised as a common network by the specifics of their effect and interaction.

Only God is able to act simultaneously and everywhere.⁹⁰ The divine is indivisible, it is completely everywhere, in everything and above everything.⁹¹ Because God is non-material and indescribable, He could not be bound in one place only. He is himself place, in that He fills everything, is exalted above everything and holds everything together. The Divine has ordained everything that does not depend on us in its proper and appropriate place and time. However, it is said that God is also in place: where his energy is manifested. He penetrates unmixed through everything and communicates his energy to everything – according to its nature and receptivity. Place of God, therefore, means

⁸⁵ Ibid., 853D.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 849C.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 853A.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 852A.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 853AB.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 853B.

⁹¹ Ibid., 852C.

that which participates in a higher degree in his energy and grace. Everything is distant from God not by place but by nature.⁹² That God, who is invisible by his nature, becomes visible through his energies, we recognise through the constitution of the world and its guidance.⁹³ God, whose energy composes, directs and permeates the world, is also actively located in this network. He participates in it. It is not a matter of a homogeneous presence: his energy does not reveal itself with the same intensity. It is there in consideration not only of the diversity of natures, but also of the unique power of comprehension of the individual hypostases.

The 'place' thus meant is not a point where nature is present, but a center of natural energy (*ἐνεργεῖ*) and a reference of its noetic apprehension. 'Place' is understood in terms of mental concentration of the activity of being (the energy, *ἐνέργεια*) that irreversibly engages existence. The temporality of the physical world is not static. The local and temporal extensions are given to each creature as determinants of their hypostatic existence. God enters into a relationship of being with the world: The divine energy permeates the created world. The place of God is the limit of his activity in the created world, his presence in the existence of creatures, which in a special kind dwells in the existence of those who willingly accept him. All places and times of the created things are localisations of the divine energy.⁹⁴

The relational understanding of space and time in John of Damascus corresponds with the views of modern physics, in which space and time are considered as the result of the presence of matter and energy. John still insists in his relational concept that cosmic space receives its significance as a divine place. It is not measured as conventional distance between objects. The cosmos gives space to the mutual relationship between God and man without abolishing or annulling the distance separating the uncreated from the created nature.⁹⁵

The relational network, which is unfolded by the being together of time, place and comprehension, has in no single point an abstract

⁹² Ibid., 852AC.

⁹³ Ibid., 856A.

⁹⁴ Smilen Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015) 127-129.

⁹⁵ Stoyan Tanev, 'The Concept of Energy in T. F. Torrance and in Orthodox Theology' in Participatio. *The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship*, 4 (2013): 210.

character. It is permanently present, because it is the actual history of the cosmos and of mankind. One must notice that everything, including time, has its principle in the divine λόγοι/principles. The beginning point of the creature's movement does not belong to the trajectory of the movement itself. This beginning is the divine logos of the creature, which is not the creature itself.⁹⁶ They are λόγοι for everything: universal and specific. Not only for the essences, properties, etc., but also for the local situatedness, time, movement.⁹⁷ The logoi are pure dynamics carried by the causative divine energies and are in a permanent correspondence with the whole network of energies.

The logoi are eternally founded in God, but the things begin to exist according to the decision of the divine wisdom and will at a moment suitable to them (ἐπιτήδειος καιρός).⁹⁸ By virtue of creation they receive their truly creaturely existence with its relative independence. Their development and decay are also connected with it. The beings with their essences, properties, relations etc. are created with the time. They exist thanks to the eternal logoi but also thanks to the energy of their own essence.⁹⁹ The single created being is completely included in the network which is constructed by the logoi, but as created from nothing it deviates in its existence more or less from its principles. Their existence is primarily connected with the movement in the time and with the history. The nature of everything created, i.e. of everything that is not God, exists in actuality only in history and becomes recognisable within historical existence.

God with his eternity is also not foreign to history, he is actually present in it. The interaction of eternity, aeon and time are evident and acting for the believer directly in the Eucharist. The liturgy is the καιρός τοῦ ποιῆσαι τῷ Κυρίῳ – the kairos of God's action. The divine eternity enters into the course of time and passes through it. The course of times is transformed by the divine eternity.¹⁰⁰ Its historical action is to be identified with the permanent activity of the logoi as well as with the physical presence of the divine Logos in the world. Just the physical

⁹⁶ Вадим Лурье, *История византийской философии – Формативный период*, Санкт Петербург: Аxiōma, 2006, 372.

⁹⁷ Cf. Maximus Confessor, *Epistulae*, 12, in: PG 91, 485D; *Ambigua ad Johannem*, 7; 15; 17, in PG 91, 1217AB; 1228A-1229A; 1080A; 1245B.

⁹⁸ *Ambigua ad Johannem*, 7, in PG 91, 1081A.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1081AB.

¹⁰⁰ Цветковић, *Бог и време. Уčenje о времену Светог Григорија Ниског* 155-156.

existence of Christ gathers the temporality of the world as the dynamic point of its ultimate state of being.¹⁰¹

The interconnection and interaction of time, eternity and aeon are fully present in the act of human divinisation (θέωσις) in the history of this world as conceived by the Eastern Christian tradition. The worthy, i.e. the saints, will be filled with the divine natural energy. They become all that God is, not however, according to their essence, but –through God's own existence working in them – according to their energy. They remain human beings by nature and their human natural energy works together with the divine one. In this synergy also the co-operation of time and eternity is realised, as it is modelled in Christ himself and in the Eucharist.¹⁰² The existence of the saints and their experiential knowledge of the divine are to be defined as a 'borderline experience' of the world and its limit and to be interpreted as the point of contact with the divine par excellence.

Being at this boundary, however, is still not a presence in eternity itself, but rather a preparation for entering it. It could be said that it has an everlasting character. The standstill achieved in this state is similar to, but not identical with, the standstill in eternity. The relation with the divine at this limit is a relative compensation of the gap between God and man, which cannot be crossed in this world. The nature of man as well as of the whole creation will enter into a state of rest only after the end of the world.

The perfect deification of the worthy is attainable only at the goal, i.e. in the Kingdom of God, which is the space of standstill (στάσις). This standstill, in its turn, is not only stability, but also a 'movement' that transcends any movement. The standstill and the movement itself are overcome in God.¹⁰³ Therefore Maximus the Confessor speaks about a standstill in permanent movement and about an identical movement in standstill,¹⁰⁴ about a δρόμος αεικίνητος, about an eternally moving course.¹⁰⁵ This process is admittedly not realised in time – movement and time have no necessary connection. The movements of the deified

¹⁰¹ Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, 129.

¹⁰² Cf. Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology & Physics. From Controversy to Encounter*, 141.

¹⁰³ H.U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln 1961, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Quaestiones ad Thallasium, 65, in PG 90, 760A.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 17, in PG 90, 304CD.

in the kingdom of God, which are connected with the eternal life of God, are independent of time.¹⁰⁶ Man is deified infinitely, his deification knows no limit.¹⁰⁷

6. Closing observations

In a brief concluding reflection, one should first confirm the conclusion that the central innovation of the Eastern Christian understanding of time, aeon, and eternity as divine processions is that they are not simply parallel and distinct, but genetically related.¹⁰⁸ Their connectedness does not cancel the difference between adiaستمic and diastemic in the created cosmos. It is to be remembered in this context that one asserts both an extension of the whole cosmos and an innumerable set of concrete extensions which form the course of time. The aeon of the cosmos differs from the aeons of the noetic natures with their extensions and stands in a dynamic relationship to them. But it should not be forgotten that the beginning of time has an adiaستمic character. The nature of the beginning-ἀρχή of time includes in itself significant properties of the aeonic and the eternal. Time, aeon and eternity form in this world a network in which they work and are together in a common dynamic. It is the network of the world history which will be removed only after the end of the world.

This network is not to be determined as substantial at all. It is not constituted by causal structure and corresponding processes. It is the network of existence. Abraham Joshua Heschel explains that the religious philosophy does not consider the proceedings in the world as causal structures, but as events.¹⁰⁹ One should think in the case of Byzantine understanding around event-συμβάν – coming together, convening, coinciding. In the terms of Heschel we may say that what happened in the system ‘time-aeon-eternity’ is not a causal effect and not a separated and rigid moment, but a dynamic extent – a happening.

¹⁰⁶ Ambigua ad Iohannem, 10, 31a, 9, in PG 94, 1164B.

¹⁰⁷ Quaestiones ad Thallassium, 22, in PG 90, 320D. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 545-674.

¹⁰⁸ Bradshaw, *Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers*, 360.

¹⁰⁹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1994, 16-17.